

Elite's Brinkmanship and the Politicization of Anti-corruption Project in Nigeria: An Overview of the Anti-corruption War under the Buhari Administration

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Abstract Nigeria appears to be under siege from the cankerworm of corruption that has continued to retard the fabric of its development. While it appears that the worst hit by the problem of corruption are the ordinary people, the under privileged class; the institutional weaknesses induced by corruption have worked to ensure that the privileged class also suffer from its consequences. Fast rewinds into pre 2015, two issues were at the centre as far as the current anti-corruption effort is concerned. Firstly, there was the attempt to redefine the boundaries of corruption as contained in a remark by President Goodluck Jonathan that stealing is not corruption. Secondly, the gang-up by the opposition outside and within the ruling PDP, which coalesced to form the APC to, among others, fight corruption. Now that the 'chips' are 'down', the body language of some of the political elites towards the fight against corruption appears to have changed. This study distilled these various discordant tunes and concluded, amongst others that the fight against corruption has rekindled public perception on the phenomenon of corruption and is likely to further shape political events especially in the build up to the country's 2019 election.

Keywords: Elites, Politicization, Brinkmanship, Anti-corruption

1. Introduction

A defining decimal in the interrogation of state versus citizen relationship is the social contract theory, which ensconced the responsibility of the respective parties to the contract and the need on both sides to abide by the terms, as a necessary precondition in ensuring the ultimate survival of the state and the citizenry. By way of emphasis, while the specificities in the social contract entails, amongst others that the citizen must submit to the state by way of allegiance to all

set terms, respect its paraphernalia, as imposed in the terms and condition of the citizenship; the state on its part is expected to ensure the wellbeing and security of the citizenry. Overtime however, there has set in a growing erosion of State's capacity to deliver on the terms as contained in the social contract, a failure usually associated by the growing phenomenon of corruption.

While the phenomenon of corruption has, no doubt, become a global issue, the degree to which it is carried out and its impact on individual countries differ (Abubakar; Osoba; Alamu)[1,2,3]. It is the latter which thus, exposes Third World countries as the worse culprits. This assertion and other similar assertions seemed concurred with by the Global Corruption Perception Index Report, 2015 (CPI). For instance, on a scale of 0-100 and a global average score of 43, the EU and Western Europe scored 67, with Denmark at the top with 91 and Bulgaria at the bottom with 41. In Asia and Pacific, the average score was 43. New Zealand topped the list with 88, with North Korea at the bottom with 8. In the Americas, average score was 40, with Canada scoring the highest at 83; Haiti and Venezuela were at the bottom with 17 each. In Middle East and North Africa, the average score was 39, with Qatar and Sudan scoring 71 and 12 respectively. 33 was the average point in Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Georgia topped the list with 52, Turkmenistan was at the bottom with 18. Sub-Saharan Africa had average score of 33, Botswana was at the top with 63, with Somalia at the bottom with a score of 8 (Transparency International) [4].

Cascading further down with specific reference to Nigeria, while Transparency International (TI) Perception Index (1999), "ranks Nigeria as the second most corrupt nation in the world" (Obasanjo)[5 p468], the same Transparency Report of 2015, also placed Nigeria at the bottom of the scale with a score of 26 and ranked 136, along with countries like Comoros and Tajikistan. Prior to this report, past TI reports appear to have also consistently seen Nigeria dominating the lower rung of the global Corruption Perception Index (CPI). For instance, while the 1996, TI report had ranked Nigeria as

the 2nd most corrupt nation among 54 nations survey; Nigeria was also ranked as the 2nd most corrupt nation out of TI 85 countries study in 1998 (Lipset & Kents)[6]. Furthermore, in 2009, TI rated Nigeria 130th out of the 180 countries survey; she was ranked 134th out of 178 countries assessment in 2010 (Abiodun)[7] and was rated 143 most corrupt nation out of the 183 countries surveyed, amongst others (Business Day, 2012 cited in Emma, Bartholomew & Ugwu)[8 p68]. These facts, no doubt, further lent credence and reinforced three issues which are at the heart of the narratives on corruption in Nigeria.

First, is in reference to the assertion by Professor Akin Oyeboode that, “if drastic measures are not put in place urgently to contain it, corruption might ultimately result in the mortality of Nigeria as a nation-state”[9]. Secondly, there is the allusion in a “2012 report which estimated that Nigeria have lost (sic) over \$400 billion to corruption since independence”; this was followed by another news reportage of a study which estimated that by 2030 over 30% of Nigeria’s GDP would have been lost to corruption, if it is not stemmed (France 24)[10].

The third issue is in reference to the rampant cases of theft and brazen looting of state’s resources by private individuals in cahoots with government officials in the immediate past administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. This development was, no doubt, in the front burner of the myriad of discourses (prominent of which were the alleged non remittance of over \$20 billion proceeds of oil sales into the federation account; the alleged diversion of funds meant for the execution of military operation in the North East against Boko Haram), in the lead up to and the eventual defeat of the then ruling party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 Presidential Elections.

Since the inception of the Buhari administration in May 2015, with less than two years to the end of the administration’s constitutional four year term and the war against corruption defined as the cardinal objectives of the administration, the fight against corruption appears to be losing steam. This situation has often been adduced to the brinkmanship of the country’s political elite and ostensibly, the politicization of the fight against corruption. This study therefore, examines the trends in the politicization of the anti-corruption war of the Buhari administration and even more so, interrogated the arising implication of the issues thrown up.

The presentation in the paper was divided into seven major parts with this first part as introduction. The second part of the paper defined keywords of the study; the third part thus distilled the history of corruption in Nigeria. In the fourth part, the paper provided insight into anti-corruption project in Nigeria, with the fifth part providing glimpse into Buhari administration’s war against corruption. While the sixth part of the paper overviewed the trends in the politicization of the anti-corruption project, the seventh part of the paper provided concluding remarks and recommendations of the study.

2. Definition of Keywords

Politicization

While it is important to note that the word politicization derived from the word politics, it also behooves that any attempt to conceptualize politicization needs to begin with an understanding of the word politics. The word politics is a term subjected to different interpretation depending on context and depending on who is defining it. For instance, Oyediran [11 p2], defines politics as simply, that process which involves the use of power, rule and authority in any human relationship. In the context of the reference to human relationship in the latter, this fits into an earlier allusion by Aristotle that, ‘man is a political animal’. This could be extrapolated to mean, every human activity encompasses the realm of politics. It was no surprise that, while Vermon cited in Mahajan [12 p86], sees politics as “consisting of struggles among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues”, the term politics was also used in a “special sense to describe personal competition, manipulation and intrigues” (Dimock cited in Mahajan) [13 p86].

Contextualized within the foregoing, the word politicization needs to be situated within any attempt at bringing a political character or flavor (dictionary.com)[14], to bear on any issue or subject matter. In other words, politicization connotes the employment of subterfuge or intrigues (attributes associated with politics) and the manipulation of the war against corruption within the prism of regional, tribal or any sort of sentiment and platform with a view to achieving any desired objective. To the extent of its usage in this study, it was used strictly in reference to the manipulation of whatever sentiments, the action or inaction of political office holders, regional and ethnic groups with a view to, in any way, impacting on the current anti-corruption project of the Buhari administration in Nigeria.

Corruption

As in the above, attempt to conceptualize anti-corruption needs to proceed by consciously understanding the word corruption. This therefore, calls for a caveat: corruption carries with it wide ranging connotations depending on context and usage. Accordingly, for instance, Nye, sees corruption as a behavior which deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (family, close private clique), pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behavior as bribery (use of reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private regarding uses [15 p419].

In the same vein, Khan’s view is that, “corruption is an act which deviates from the rules of conduct governing the

action of someone in position of public authority because of private regarding motives such as wealth, power and status” (Khan cited in Ekpo, Chime & Enor)[16 p62]. While the terms deviation and private gains, as captured in both the former and the latter remains reinforcing in the attempt at conceptualizing corruption, there appears a consensus, as Osoba [17 p1] avers, corruption is generally a “social behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms (which attendant consequences turn out) to undermine the authority’s capacity to secure the welfare of its citizens”. To the extent of the use of the term here, it was used in reference to the manner in which state’s resources were/are hijacked for private purposes by public officials either individually or in connivance with private individuals or groups and thus, helping to undermine the capacity of the state to secure the welfare of its citizens.

The factor of corruption, no doubt, while impinging on the capacity of Nigerian state to deliver on its social contract obligations; it remains a recurring major crisis of governance and leadership that has bedeviled Nigeria’s national life. The term anti-corruption as it is used in this study is in reference to any deliberate attempt to fight corruption and control the menace it poses to the country’s national life. In the proceeding analysis, the term was interchangeably used to refer to either as war or the fight against corruption.

3. Interrogating the History of Corruption in Nigeria

Although the history of corruption in Nigeria dates as far back to the pre-colonial period, some of its early and officially recorded cases date back to the pre independence period. Amongst such cases was, firstly, the case of Nnamdi Azikwe, then as Premier of Eastern Nigeria, indicted by the Foster Suffon Tribunal of Enquiry of 1956, in the case of African Continental Bank (ACB). Azikwe was accused of abuse of office, associated with the diversion of large sum of Eastern Nigeria government’s funds into his own bank, the then African Continental Bank (ACB). The second was the 1962 commission of enquiry, headed by GBA Coker, which found Obafemi Awolowo, guilty for diverting huge sums of money, which were allegedly shared with his colleagues and party members (Osoba; Emma, Bartholomew & Ugwu)[18,19]. Before proceeding however, it is expedient to ask, how/why were cases of corruption in the pre-colonial period near non existence and how did it eventually seep into the country’s development lexicon?

On the one hand, it is easy, in a pedestrian sense, to situate the former within the absence of modern communication methods (this thinking, of course, proceeds in the assumption that cases of corruption, even if in minute sense, did exist), that could have brought such cases to limelight. But it also needs to be interrogated in other factors that are germane to the understanding of the pre-colonial societies like Nigeria. Foremost, societies which existed in pre-colonial Nigeria

were complexly knitted politically, economically and socially. The values which held sway in such societies hardly would have allowed cases of corruption; not only on account of the attendant shame and opprobrium it could bring to its perpetrators and their entire family. But more so as the system operated, amongst others, a safeguard which allowed individuals, not necessarily in any position of authority, to serve as a check against excesses of one another by raising alarm against material possession of any individual seen as beyond one’s legitimate earnings or means.

On the other hand, attempt to locate the seeping corruption into Nigeria’s national life, according to wikipedia, could further be understood in, (1) the foisting of modern system of public administration; (2) the advent of oil in Nigeria’s political economy[20]. In a fundamental sense however, the former needs to be contextualized, as Alavi alluded, in the very nature of state in post-colonial societies, which has allowed the imposition of an over developed Military-Civilian bureaucratic state structure[21], for purposes of the colonial enterprise, without the necessary safeguards that could prevent such institutions from being deployed for purposes other than the national interest. As a corollary, the point being made is that, the imposition of a bureaucratic super state structure, while not outside any consideration of colonial interest, was without a commensurate development in State-Civil relations that could help in checking the excesses of both the State and its officials in post-colonial societies like Nigeria. The latter could especially be said to have found vent in the new pattern of life and the consumption habit foisted by colonialism and the profligacy, which occasioned the advent of petro-dollars in the country’s national life.

Be that as it may, it suffices to proceed by saying that, the advent of military in Nigeria’s national political scene, an action they (military), often justified within the quest for nation building and eradicating corruption (Fayemi [22 p208], on the contrary, it had seen cases of corruption growing in leaps. This could be seen with the regime of Gen. Yakubu Gowon, during which were reported cases of corruption involving the importation of cement, or as it was then known, the ‘Cement Armada’. Other cases involved the highhandedness, abuse of office and corrupt practices of many of the then *super* Permanent Secretaries, Federal Commissioners and the then Military Governors (Okolie; Emma, Bartholomew & Ugwu)[23][24]. The latter, as Fayemi further alluded, no doubt, exposed General Gowon’s weak leadership, given his failure to reign in on state governors who were behaving more “...like provincial chiefs in a decentralized patrimonial order, charged with plundering the new-found oil resources” [25 p210].

Although the regime of General Murtala which took over power from Gowon was short lived, it was reputed to have initiated the earliest official attempts at fighting corruption in Nigeria. This is seen in the manner the regime set off a panel which probed assets of all the former governors; administrators of Eastern and Western states and some

federal commissioners. The outcome of the investigations thus, led to the confiscation of assets of many of these officials, then estimated at about N10 million. While the successor regime of General Murtala, General Olusegun Obasanjo, was alleged to have shielded corruption with the promulgation of Decree No.11 of 1976 (Public Officer Protection Against False Accusation), which gave protection and further shielded corrupt public officials; the regime was also accused of inflating contract for the international trade fair complex, Lagos; involvement in the missing N2.8 billion from the coffers of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). The latter however, was said to have later been found in a London Bank and returned to the Nigerian government three years later (1977-1980) (Nwaobi, cited in Ekpo, Chime & Enor) [26 p64].

However, the return to civilian administration and democratic rule in 1979 had seen cases of corruption growing in bounds, with the country further marred by rising official heist of public resources that nearly outstripped the former regimes (Welch)[27]. This situation, the military had claimed, justified another military take over with General Muhammad Buhari, as the Head of State in 1983. General Buhari's assumption of office, marked another bold attempt at purging corruption in the country's national life, using the War Against Indiscipline (WAI), introduced in 1984. The regime also introduced the Public Property Decree and the Public Officers (special provision) Decree of 1984 (Emma, Bartholomew & Ugwu; Emma)[28,29].

The Babangida's regime that followed between 1985 and 1993 was seen by many as a reactionary palace coup. It was no wonder thus, the regime was, (a) accused of institutionalizing corruption and taken corruption to another level in the annals of the country's history and; (b) indicted by the Pius Okigbo led panel for embezzling \$12.4 billion, being windfall from Gulf War oil sales (Derin; Dike)[30,31]. The latter could however, not have been any different given that, as a way of shoring up the regime's legitimacy, monies had to be "...used in fueling massive spending binge that diverted revenues into corruption, funded patronage, sharply expanded extra budgetary expenditures and bloated an already inflation-ridden economy" (Fayemi)[32 p215].

With the advent of General Sani Abacha's regime, the heist of public resources for which the Babangida's regime was accused of became more like a child's play, especially as revealed by record of corruption and autocracy of the new regime. This fact was attested to by the regime's looting of over \$20 billion of the country's resources and the recovery of over 600 million dollars and 75 million British pounds from the family of Abacha, after his death. Added to this, while the United Nation's Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had it that about \$107 billion was kept in private accounts in Switzerland by General Sani Abacha, another report from the United States also had it that over N400 billion were looted from the State treasury during the regime (Derin; Emma)[33,34].

Albeit General Abdulsalami Abubakar, the successor to

late Abacha spent only 12 months in office, his regime was also indicted by the chairman of the National Economic Intelligence Committee (NEIC), Prof. Aluko, for the disappearance of \$50 million from the national coffers. Furthermore, the regime was accused to have, without regard to extant laws, awarded N15 billion for the construction of CBN headquarters; spent N19 billion for the hosting of World Youth Championship; hurriedly privatized Nigeria's public corporations through a process which, as alleged, allowed General Abdulsalam and his cronies, take over State's enterprises using proxies. But even more so, for the brief period it lasted in office, the regime was said to have expended humongous 650 billion; awarded 4072 new contracts; granted 576 new licenses; made 807 new appointments; gave 111 approvals and made 807 awards and honours (Edo cited in Ekpo, Chime & Enor)[35 p66].

The transition from authoritarian rule to a civilian democracy in 1999 came with high expectations that the rampant cases of corruption witnessed in the past military regimes would be a thing of the past. This, of course, derived in the thinking that inherent in the new civilian dispensation (lost since the military coup of 1983), especially the type Nigeria opted for, is a Presidential system of government, tailored along that of the United States of America (USA), with in-built and clear demarcation of power between three arms of government, viz: the executive, legislative and judiciary. The wisdom in this arrangement was not only for the purpose of allowing one arm of government to check the excesses of the other, but it also confers on the legislature the power of oversight on matters of policy implementation and in the expenditure of public funds. Additionally, the system recognizes a citizen-based rights (although often observed in breach), which allows public scrutiny of government actions and sometimes, in-actions as far as matters of public policy and public funds were concerned. However, such high expectations appear misplaced as the fortunes of corruption, as shall be seen in the proceeding analysis, have continued to soar. This situation has often been adduced to either weak institutional base or in the misconception of what governance and holding public office is all about, amongst others.

It was no surprise that the inception of the administration of Olusegun Obasanjo as civilian president in 1999, had on the one hand, come with renewed commitment and a pledge to fight corruption (the efforts of this administration and other efforts at fighting corruption in the country's history will be taken in the next segment). The administration, on the other hand, was also accused of being a bastion of corruption. For instance, the administration was accused of perpetrating corrupt cases, as seen in the diversion of N10 billion voted for poverty reduction with party members (Edo cited in Ekpo, Chime & Enor)[36]. Other cases of corruption levied against the Obasanjo administration include, the alleged inflation in the cost of constructing the country's new ultramodern stadium to N60 billion, with contractors still owed N500 million; the alleged bribe of the Nigerian Senate into voting

in favour of Obasanjo's 'Third Term bid', an acronym for tenure elongation; the scandalous Halliburton bribery case involving \$579 million given to some top government officials to secure contracts in Nigeria; the Siemens \$1.6 billion settlement scandal; the Sillbros Inc's \$32 million scandal. Others are the Nigerian National Identity Card Scheme scandal and the Sagem \$200 million bribe to senior government officials (Mohammed)[37].

Nonetheless, there were other cases of corruption and corrupt practices as reported in many of the country's 774 local governments and the states too were not spared. The latter could, amongst others, be seen in the cases of Governor Chief D. S. P. Alamiyesiegha of Bayelsa State, who was arrested in London in September 15, 2005, over the £2 million found in his house; Governor Joshua Dariye of Plateau State, who was also arrested and tried for money laundering in London in 2004, but jumped bail and returned to Nigeria before his next court appearance (Edo cited in Ekpo, Chime & Enor)[38 p66].

The history of corruption in Nigeria was however, said to have reached its apogee during the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. In an interview he granted to a media outfit, President Jonathan, not only attempted to redefine 'stealing is not corruption', but was also alleged to have paid no heed to the daylight onslaught and near debauchery of the country's treasury by political appointees in conjunction with his kinsmen and other party stalwarts. For instance, in addition to the cases of corruption at the various levels of the federation, there were reports of President Jonathan's alleged complicity in the theft of over N5 trillion of government funds in 2012; the loss, as reported by Nuhu Ribadu led Petroleum Task Force Report, of 250,000 barrels of crude oil daily, valued at the cost of \$6.3 billion (N1.2 trillion) a year and thus, putting the country's total oil lost to theft in two years at over \$12.6 billion (N2 trillion); the fraud discovered by the House of Representatives Committee on Environment of tree seedling monies worth N2 billion by the Ecological Fund Office; the alleged sale of Nigerian Telecommunication sector of the 450MHz frequency initially valued for \$50 million for less than \$6 million by Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC).

There were other cases, as seen in the alleged N255 million illegal purchase of two bulletproof BMW cars by the Aviation Minister, Ms. Stella Oduah; the fraud by the NNPC in collaboration with Independent Petroleum Marketers, of selling Kerosene to Nigerians at N170-250, when the actual cost was subsidized by government to sell for N40-50; the misappropriation and heist of N195 billion worth of pension funds by the Alhaji Maina's committee, charged with the verification of pensioners in the country; and the Nigerian Parliament Report on fraudulent payment of \$6 billion in respect of the country's fuel subsidy regime between 2013 and 2015, amongst others.

At this point, it is important to note that the foregoing near detailed cases of corruption under President Jonathan

administration were deliberately reproduced here, not only for the purpose of demonstrating how well entrenched the cases of corruption were under the administration. But more so, in exposing why matters of corruption and the war against it became an issue in the 2015 Presidential campaign and especially in shaping its outcome.

4. Changing the Landscape of Corruption: Understanding the Anti-corruption War Under the Buhari Administration

Two or three issues are at heart of the narratives on corruption and the anti-corruption project in Nigeria. One, Nigeria is not in deficit of laws that could be used in matters of corruption and the fight against it. This much was, at least, attested to by Obasanjo and David Cameron, citing President Muhammad Buhari. For instance, while the former had enthused that, "we (Nigeria) had many laws in our statute book dealing with different aspects of corrupt practices" [39 p427], the latter went further by reinforcing, *inter-alia*, that "for years Nigeria had laws and anti-corruption agencies, (what is lacking), is a complete political will to strengthen these agencies and faithfully enforce the laws" [40]. This is true, as a casual perusal of these laws includes but are not limited to, the Corrupt Practices Decree of 1975; Public Complaints Commission of 1975; The Public Officer Investigation of Assets Decree of 1976; Code of Conduct Bureau of 1979; and Corrupt Practices Decree of 1984.

The missing link however, in addition to the absence of political will which David Cameron has alluded to earlier, is in the absence of proper coordination of these laws. This view is in tandem with Obasanjo's insistence, in reference to matters of corruption and the fight against it, that all Nigeria requires is the "...consolidation, updating, deepening and widening" [41 p427], of the laws. It was thus, no surprise that the newly anti-corruption agencies created by him (President Obasanjo), "...were given relatively broad powers and mandates to fight corruption and other related offences" (Enweremadu)[42 p7].

Two, it is in tandem to also argue that, issues on corruption and the fight against it, as revealed by the historiography of the war against corruption in Nigeria, preceded the current administration of President Mohammed Buhari,. For instance, while General Murtala and Buhari's regimes were reputed to have laid the naissance in the country's war against corruption, a robust attempt at building the country's institutions for the war against the phenomenon of corruption was said to have been founded by the Obasanjo administration in 1999 (we shall come back to this shortly). Three, there appears a nexus between political elites of the former administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, who indeed, have remained in the corridors of power in the last 17 years of the return to democracy and still are strategically placed in the current administration of President Mohammad

Buhari. This, it needs to be argued, partly forms the crux in the politicization of the war against corruption.

Returning to the earlier allusion on the war against corruption of the Obasanjo administration, Enweremadu [43 p5-6], seeks to contextualize President Obasanjo's new efforts in, amongst others, (i) the unprecedented corruption of the Abacha's regime; (ii) the refusal by the succeeding regime of Abdulsalam Abubakar to prosecute those found guilty in corrupt cases; and (iii) the genuine consideration by the Obasanjo administration to redefine Nigeria's national image for purposes of attracting foreign investments and the country's much sought-after debt relief from Paris Club debt. Such arguments, apart from being in tandem with the country's new realities, they also explain the haste with which the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) Bill was submitted to the parliament, barely a fortnight into Obasanjo's assumption of office as president in 1999. The intendment of the ICPC Bill was to reduce public officer's susceptibility to corruption in the conduct of government business. This is in addition to the enactment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act in 2002, further amended in 2004, with powers of fighting all financial crimes in the country (Obasanjo; Enwereonye, Christopher, Egbe & Ibeh) [44][45].

Thus, it is not out of place to contend that President Obasanjo's renewed war against corruption needs to be further located within the broader consideration of what corruption might portend for the country; the need to overcome the past shortcomings experienced in the country's war against corruption and by implication, update, deepen and widen the anti-corruption laws. But even at this, analysts such as, Enwereonye, Christopher, Egbe, & Ibeh [46 p45], have criticized Obasanjo's war against corruption as mere political showmanship. Enweremadu, [47], for instance, lent credence to this view as he asserts that, it was a mere vendetta against political foes. The latter argument could, as alleged, be gleaned especially in the manner the EFCC was often deployed against President Obasanjo's political rivals in the build up to the 2003 election. This is evident in the case of his Vice President, Atiku Abubakar and as earlier alluded, the case of former Governor of Bayelsa State, D.P Alamieyeseigha and former Governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye. It was also typical in the manner Obasanjo, not only influenced the attempted tinkering of the country's constitution, so as to pave way for his 'Third Term Agenda', but also in the way state's resources were deployed towards achieving same objectives, amongst others.

Regardless, there were also other allusions which view Obasanjo's war against corruption as a laudable. This could be seen not only in the manner in 2007, the EFCC secured conviction in over 400 of close to 1000 of its court cases; its successful prosecution and conviction, for the first time in Nigeria's history of highly placed public officers, such as a serving Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun and the former Governor of Bayelsa State, D.P Alamieyeseigha (Enwereonye, Christopher, Egbe, & Ibeh) [48 p45], both of

whom over cases of corrupt enrichment and money laundering. But more so, in the comportment with which the twin institutions of ICPC and EFCC have become the framework within which the country's fight against corruption is prosecuted.

The latter is much attested to in the fact that, subsequent administrations of President Yar'adua, Acting President and later President Jonathan, had relied on the institutions of ICPC and EFCC, in prosecuting their anti-corruption projects (even though the political leadership of the period had ensured that the powers enjoyed by these institutions were subtly watered down, owing to political interests, as could be seen especially in the case of James Ibori, during Yar'adua; and Stella Odua, during President Johnathan, amongst others). More pronounced however, is the manner in which the institutions of ICPC and EFCC have become an integral part of the war against corruption of the current administration of President Muhammad Buhari.

With reference to the earlier insinuations of corruption as a background issue in the lead up to the 2015 presidential election, it suffices at this point to again argue that the eventual outcome of the election represents, at least so it seemed, an endorsement of the then opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and now, the ruling party's electioneering campaign which was premised around,

- i Fighting corruption;
- ii Addressing the country's rising insecurity and;
- iii Improving the country's economy.

In the same vein, it is not out of place to also argue that it represents a seeming national consensus around what the menace of corruption could portend and the need to confront it head on, as President Muhammad Buhari has promised to do in many of his campaign promises. Gleaned from this is, for instance, Buhari's February 2015, Chatham House speech, London, in which he vowed, if elected, to tackle the two ills of waste and corruption that had characterized the administration of Goodluck Jonathan. But this was also followed by his other campaign speeches, amongst which, was the one laced with his insistence that, "corruption had debilitated the country and its institutions and that his administration plans to put priority in tackling corruption that had become blatant and widespread" (Ekpo, Chime & Enor) [49 p68].

Such deportments however, appeared to have further been encapsulated in Buhari's [50] declaration following his assumption of office as president that, "...removing the cancer of corruption from the system is the key not only to restoring the moral health of the nation, but also freeing our enormous resources for our urgent social economic development". These statements were closely demonstrated and reinforced by the administration's commitment, especially in what it eventually settled down to do. This is seen, for instance, in the setting up of the Presidential Advisory Committee on the Fight Against Corruption (PACAC), in August 11, 2015, to advice on how to reform the Nigeria's criminal justice system and the steps needed to

be taken in the fight against corruption; and to advice on strategies on the arrest, detention and confiscation of suspected looted funds or properties.

Against this background, other strategies adopted by the new administration includes, improving the country's financial management through the introduction of Treasury Single Account (TSA), meant to centralize government's payment and accounting system; ensuring reform and passage by the parliament of Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015, for the purpose of removing the impediments and other shenanigans employed by defense counsels in matters of corrupt cases before the courts; strengthening and funding the institutions of EFCC and the ICPC, in addition to appointing experienced and trusted leadership at their helm; reform of the country's oil industry which had, amongst others, seen the increasing participation of Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency International (NEITI) in matters of petroleum exploration in the country's extractive industry, for purposes of ensuring accountability.

Further to this, there was also the adoption of a whistle blower policy, which allows individuals to provide leaks on stolen proceeds/activities; collaboration with international community not only at tracking stolen funds, but at tracing assets derived from such funds and the individuals involved (Buhari)[51]. The latter, in fact, formed the basis of the various bilateral agreements between Nigeria and other countries, such as the one signed with Abu Dhabi in January, 2016 and further ratified with 9 agreements with UAE on August, 24th 2017, meant to strengthen the anti-corruption efforts of the administration.

Beneath the foregoing however, two contending scenarios have emerged to dominate the conversation on Buhari's anti-corruption project. The first scenario or group basks in the euphoria of the successes so far recorded and the second is centered on the criticisms of the strategies deployed in the execution of the war against corruption. While the former appears canvassed by government appointees and other proponents of the administration cutting along its loyalists, some of their arguments are especially situated in the various recoveries and seizures of monies, assets and properties, being proceeds from corruption. Further insight to this was, as provided in the Interim Report of Financial and Assets Recoveries made by the Federal Government of Nigeria

from 29th May 2015-25th May 2016, released by the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, as contained on Table 1.

Giving further holistic view of additional recoveries, the EFCC, through its Acting Chairman, Ibrahim Magu, disclosed that between January and August 30th 2017, has recovered the following sum of monies being proceeds from corrupt enrichment: #409,270,706,687.75; \$69,501,156.67; Euro 10,816.20; Dirham 443,400.00 and Saudi Riyals 70,500 (Nigeria News Network) (nnn.com)[53]. These, many proponents of the Buhari administration have viewed as quite a feat in the country's war against corruption.

The second contending scenario or group comprises up dissenting views of other Nigerians, prominent among who are Chief Olu Falae, a former Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF); Dr Frederick Fasheun, founder of the Oodua People's Congress; Debo Adeniran, Executive Chairman, Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders, amongst others. Many in this group have viewed Buhari's war against corruption as wrong (wikipedia)[54], especially for being selective, citing cases of former governors and other public office holders accused of corrupt practices who, in fact, have pending cases in courts, but were left off the 'hook' for being members of Buhari's cabinet and by extension, the ruling party. The insinuation arising from this is that only members of the opposition elements and members of the former ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) are being hounded on charges of corruption (Ekpo, Chime & Enor)[55 p69]. In the same vein, there are other criticisms which centred especially on some of the strategies deployed in the execution of the war against corruption by the administration. In the context of the latter, for instance, scholars such as, Ekpo, Chime & Enor, have critiqued President Buhari's anti-corruption, insisting that the methods employed were mere window dressing and tend to rather, as they contend, place more emphasis in fighting the manifestations of corruption and negating its root causes.

Interestingly, arising from the foregoing is the attendant brinkmanship that had seen to the politicization of the anti-corruption of the Buhari administration. It is pertinent at this point to pause and ask, why the politicization? What trend does it take and what implication, if any, does it portend?

Table 1. Statistics of Recoveries made by the Federal Government of Nigeria from 29th May 2015-25th May 2016

S/No	Retrieved Funds	Recoveries under Interim Forfeiture	Funds awaiting Return from Foreign Jurisdictions	Non Cash Recoveries of Farmland, Buildings and Maritime Vessels, ets.
1	#78,325,354,631.82	#126,563,481,095.43	-	239
2	\$185,119,584.61	9,090,243,920.15	321,316,726.1	
3	3,508,355.46 Pounds Sterling	2,484,447.55	6,900,000	
4	11,250 Euros	303,399.17	11,826.11	

Source: premium times [52].

5. Elite's Brinkmanship and the Politicization of Anti-corruption Project: An Overview of the Buhari Administration

It is platitudinous to proceed by arguing that, there had been efforts at fighting corruption in the past and indeed, such efforts had suffered one form of politicization or the other (Obasanjo; Enweremadu)[56,57]. However, the spate in the politicization of the current war against corruption appears to have raised more questions given (as earlier alluded), the seeming near national consensus as evident in the victory of the APC in the 2015 Presidential election, on the threat corruption poses to the country's national life and the need to confront it.

Added to this, it is also important to assert that the politicization of the war against corruption proceeds from what may be described as the institutional to the most mundane level. For the purpose of this analysis, the former is restricted to the executive, the legislative and the judicial arm. At the level of the executive, for instance, it could be seen from the context of the executive's initial non response and subsequently, the near attempt to exonerate the Secretary of the Government of the Federation (SGF), over allegation of corrupt practices; the alleged role of presidential aides and the Department of State Security's (DSS) report in the alleged attempt to smear and scuttle President Buhari's nominee for the office of the Chairman, Economic and Financial Commission (EFCC); the statements credited to Vice President Yomi Osibanjo, following the Senate's second refusal to confirm the President's nominee for the office of the chairman, EFCC; and the bickering between the office of the attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and the EFCC on matters of jurisdiction and prosecutorial powers, amongst others.

At the level of the legislature however, in addition to the way the Nigerian Senate handled the screening of the President's nominee for the office of the anti graft agency, the EFCC, the politicization of the war on corruption took the form of various posturing, actions and inactions surrounding the trial of the Senate President on charges of corruption; the budget 'padding' and other posturing related to, but not limited to budget matters and legislative oversight. In the case of the judiciary, politicization could be located not only in matters related to the recent alleged cases of corruption brought against the justices of the nation's courts and the manner in which the issue was handled by agents of state security, but also in the way the judiciary has so far either handled or discharged itself in many of the various cases of corruption before it.

At the mundane level, the politicization of the war against corruption could be contextualized in the manner the war appears to have taken ethnic and sectional colorations. This is the context to which, Enwereonye, Christopher, Egbe & Ibeh, [58 p42], refers to as ethnic politics or what could

connotes to mean, the *ethnocization* of corruption. Related to this, for instance, is in the department of not only the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta against the trial of the former First Lady, Dame Patience Jonathan and Diazeni Allison Maduekwe, former Minister of Petroleum Resources over offences related to money laundering and charges of corruption. But also the manner in which other ethnic groups, including a group from Southern Kaduna, who stood up against the recent arraignment of one of their own, former Group Managing Director (GMD) of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC), for money laundering and other charges of corruption.

In interrogating the sources of the politicization of the war against corruption, it needs to be understood that while many of these insinuations could flippantly fit into the narratives of 'corruption fighting back', a phrase often credited to President Buhari and Professor Patrick Lumumba, Kenya's foremost former anti-corruption crusader, the specificity of this problem needs to be further interrogated in the very nature of the Nigerian state and its corollaries.

For instance, this needs to be seen especially in the fact that, the Nigerian state remains the locus within which the country's elites and bourgeoisie 'nests' around (owing to their non entrepreneurial spirit), a fact which has allowed not only a political culture predicated on the abuse of national resources. But has also allowed identity and ethnicity to become tools with which political elites and their counterparts in the bureaucracy, access political power and control over the management and allocation of state's resources (Enwereonye, Christopher, Egbe, & Ibeh) [59 p43]. The advantage acquired by these elites, owing to the above, has thus conferred on many of them the position of 'puppet masters' who, by implication of their access and control of state's resources, could either mobilize or redirect their ethnic stocks for or against policies initiated by the state however laudable. This, in fact, further forms the brinkmanship within which the politicization of the war against corruption needs to be understood.

More so, there is the fact that, as the state abdicates its responsibilities to the citizens owing, as often argued, economic problems and the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP), imposed especially in the 80's, many of the hitherto roles reserved for the state were thus, hijacked by primordial associations whose membership was based on appeal to the sentiment of tribe and other fault lines. While the failure of state and the ascendancy of these groups have helped to deepen the disenchantment and the chasm between the state and these groups, this has in, *parri-passu*, allowed the emergence of certain fundamentals that have continued to undermine the current war against corruption of the Buhari administration from many angles.

Firstly, it has fostered a sort of binary image, an 'us' versus 'them' relationship which, apart from helping to deepen the bond and allegiance in and within group members, it also renders and weakens the relationship between the state and other groups as secondary. Secondly and as a corollary to

the above, the sentiments created around these have often than not become the basis upon which members of some of these groups who eventually find themselves in the 'corridors of power' to see themselves as; (a) representatives of their group/interest and; (b) on a revenge mission and thus, the resort to looting state's resources. (This, in fact, helps to further explain the spates in the cases of corruption in Nigeria). A clamp down by the state against any group member in the name of fighting corruption is therefore, seen not against the individual. But is often collectivized and misconstrued as a move against the larger group and its interest.

At this point, the question that needs to be asked is, what implication does this portend and how best could the Buhari administration and indeed Nigeria, tackle the menace of corruption that has continued to undermine governance and development in Nigeria?

In an attempt to answer these questions, it is significant to take cognizance of the fact that, a fundamental implication arising from the foregoing, as argued elsewhere, is the tendency which had seen the fight against corruption being latched up and sometimes, moderated along the country's fault lines. In view of the sensitivity of these fault lines in the management of the country's diversity and co-existence, more caution than necessary had to be employed by the authorities. But such cautionary trajectories have often had the potentials of allowing perpetrators of crime go scot-free. This is evident, at least even if impliedly, in the case of the former Governor of Delta State, James Ibori, during the administration of late President Yar'adua. His trial over matters of money laundering and corruption charges had seen waves of demonstration from his region and ethnic stock and despite, as alleged, the enormous evidences against him, he was eventually discharged and acquitted by the Nigerian courts. But he was thereafter, rearrested by Interpol in Dubai and repatriated to United Kingdom (UK), (where some the funds were laundered), was put to trial and was eventually convicted.

Concomitantly, while the general implication arising from the politicization of the fight against corruption is a tendency which ensures that the fight is not only whittled down, it also has the potentials, as alluded earlier, of allowing public officials who looted get away with it. And at the end, (by virtue of the resources they have amassed), such persons are often celebrated as models/reference point within their ethnic stock, other groups and sometimes, the larger society. Looters of public resources are then recycled, the looting spree continues and thus, further undermining governance and development of the larger society. This conversation remains at the heart of the crisis of governance that had paved way for the emergence of the Boko Haram (BH), insurgency in the North East; the growing irredentist groups in the South-South and recently, in the emerging secessionist threat of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) in the South Eastern part of Nigeria.

6. Conclusions

Thus far, the above analysis provided an overview of corruption and its ascendancy in Nigeria's national life, with the trends in the war against corruption by the administration of President Buhari, forming its kernels. Two issues appear discernible. Very central is the creeping politicization of the fight against corruption, albeit not new as veneer of same had existed in the past administrations of Obasanjo, Yar'adua and Goodluck Jonathan. But the politicization of the war against corruption surprisingly seems to have taken a life of its own in a dispensation whose selling point, in the first place, was to fight and therefore, stem the tides of corruption in the country's national life. Although Nigerian leaders, both past and current, were not immune from the trend and might have been privy, however much the politicization of the war and its implication might portend, the outcome of the 2015 Presidential election appears a near consensus amongst Nigerians, on the dangers of corruption and the need for a collective action towards confronting it.

To this extent, it is pertinent to also argue that, while the politicization of the fight against corruption must be seen as nothing new and merely reinforces a typical response pattern of elites and other reactionary elements against change, the national consensus expressed via the outcome of the 2015 Presidential election, no doubt, raises optimism that, (a) all hope is, after all not lost, with further commitments and redefined efforts a new page against the fortunes of corruption could be turned around; (b) the conversation around corruption and the dangers it portend will not only remain, but it would certainly further shape elite's brinkmanship in the build up to the country's 2019 election.

As a corollary (and most importantly, in view of its wider implication), the menace of corruption signposts a glaring failure of governance by the Nigerian state, as exemplified in the failure of its various arms, viz: the executive, the legislative and the judiciary to deliver on the State's own part of its bargain to the citizens, as embedded in the 'social contract'. While this failure has often been explained within the seeming weakness of the institutions of state, a fact which further gives vent to the haste with which they were, in the first place, engrafted by the colonial overlords, it also seems to have concurred many of the insinuations that those who hold important positions in these institutions, either as appointed or elected officials, were privy to cases of corruption that have become rampant.

The foregoing fact however, could not have been any different given the widespread misconception as to what governance is seen or perceived to be. For instance, occupying public office is no more seen as service. Rather, it is seen as a 'commodity' to be traded for the purpose of enriching those who occupy them, at the detriment of the larger society. It is thus no surprise that those privileged to occupy any position of authority and who, for whatever reason, left without 'helping themselves' or 'take advantage' of their offices are often derided and ridiculed as failure.

This, no doubt, forms part of the contexts within which the role of State's institutions in matters of corruption and in the politicization which follow the fight against it, especially by people sworn in positions of authority need to be further interrogated. But it is pertinent to also note that this problem, as earlier alluded, is not peculiar to Nigeria. Indeed, it is part of a wider problem which cuts across Kenya and other African countries. In the case of Kenya, for instance, not too long ago, the head of the country's anti-corruption agency was forced to resign on account of the politicization of the anti-corruption project in Kenya. It is also not an exaggeration to assert that matters of corruption have remained a recurring decimal not only in post-colonial societies, where State's institutions remain weak. It is, in fact, a global issue. This situation, if allowed to persist, could hold dire consequences for the good governance, democracy and the quest for an enduring development of Africa and indeed other developing economies.

Contextualized within the above is fundamentally the argument that, while the rising cases of corruption have the potentials of further undermining the legitimacy of State, its institutions and the confidence in its leadership, the concomitant effect from these also have the potentials of depriving many of these countries the very critical ingredients needed in state building, the promotion of democracy and democratic consolidation. The implication arising from this is that the development aspiration especially of Nigeria and by extension, Africa will continue to remain only a wishful thinking.

Recommendations

1. There is the need to re invent the state by ensuring that the state takes back its lost spaces and by so doing, reducing the hold with which mundane groups and associations have over the citizenry. This can be done and better enhanced through efforts that would re-calibrate and help not only in building strong executive, legislative and judicial arms of government, but indeed other institutions of state;
2. The war against corruption needs to be redefined and made all-inclusive of the citizenry. To this extent, this calls for the need to rekindle and blend the old traditional method which allows for every member of community to play a role in checking the excesses of other individual members in their respective communities. This calls for the formation of a Community Anti Corruption Vanguard (CACV), with view to ensuring that the fight against corruption is not left or seen as solely that of government. The alarming trend in the heist of public resources demands that the citizens take central role in the anti-corruption project, it needs to be owned and operated as a citizen-based project/efforts;
3. The fight against corruption entails a step-up in public enlightenment campaigns. This strategy calls for both the conventional media and especially the internet be further harnessed in sensitizing the threat of corruption on the country's development aspirations. Even more so, this calls for the need to effectively deploy the media in the promotion and ensuring synergy between government agencies with statutory responsibility in the fight against corruption and civil based groups with a biased in anti-corruption project;
4. There is the need for the promotion of periodic all-stakeholders sensitization campaign at the community, the local government, the state and at the federal levels not only against the menace of corruption, but more so on the dangers the politicization in the fight against corruption could bring to bear on the country and the general wellbeing of its people;
5. The anti-corruption efforts also calls for further streamlining and where necessary, establishing clear and unambiguous jurisdiction in and amongst government's anti-corruption agencies. So doing would not only ensure information sharing, but would further aid in removing many of the frictions often associated with the operation of the country's anti-corruption agencies that often undermine the anti corruption efforts;
6. The menace of corruption has its international components. This is more so as studies have shown that, apart from the fact that corruption is often perpetrated using external assistances, its proceeds are most often laundered across national borders. Any attempt at fighting corruption must therefore, involve deliberate and coordinated cross border strategies amongst both states and non states actors and lastly;
7. At the heart of the problem of governance in Nigeria is the issue of corruption which stems, partly, from the perception that borders on holding public office and leadership. Any attempt at turning around the tides around this situation needs to proceed through a deliberate appreciation and a change in people's mindset that, the whole essence of governance and holding public office is about service and not an enterprise. Added to this, deliberate attempts must be made at ensuring that those entrusted into any public positions, whether elected or appointed, must pass through rigorous integrity vetting and test.

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