

Corruption and nation building in Nigeria since 2015

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Abstract

Nation-building in the Nigerian situation is a work in progress. This is because since independence, successive governments have devised ways in addressing the myriad of post-independence challenges like, poor leadership, nationality question, bribery and corruption, boundary conflicts, poverty, environmental degradation, gender issues, unemployment, and insecurity. While the subject of this study is not new, this paper is conceived to examine corruption within the period of the Buhari's Administration because of the audacious impunity of the corrupt and the encumbrances to deterrence, all coming as a cog in the wheels of nation-building. The study relies on written sources and adopts the Principal-Agent and the Collective Action Theory of Corruption as explanatory tools. It is observed that corruption conjures negative impact on the country both domestically and internationally. However, the establishment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) to combat corruption has been frustrated by executive encumbrances and the complicity of compromised anti-graft leadership and judiciary. The paper concludes that, institutional overhaul to guarantee the independence of the EFCC and ICPC, and a collaborative effort involving civil society groups, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, election management body (EMS) and the masses are critical in combating this national embarrassment.

Key Words: Corruption, Nation-Building, Nigeria

Introduction

The attainment of ersatz independence failed to resolve Africa's challenges.¹ There have been frantic efforts at nation-building in post-

1 See D. L. Imbua, S. O. Onor, & P. O. Odey. A Companion to African History in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. (Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2017), 271; P. O. Odey & D. O. Ntui. "The Role of History in National Integration: A Study of Nigeria in the 21st



independent Nigeria, but corruption has posed a major challenge to this effort. Chinua Achebe's famous work, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (1993) diagnosed among other things, corruption as a national ailment in Nigeria. Achebe reacts to Shehu Shagari's in effete remark on corruption thus,

... anybody who can say that corruption in Nigeria has not yet become alarming is either a fool, a crook or else does not live in this country. Shagari is neither a fool nor a crook. So, I must assume that he lives abroad. Which is not as strange or fanciful as some might think. Many Presidents, especially Third World Presidents, do not live in their country....²

Onigu Otite contends that corruption "simply means the perversion of integrity or state of affairs through bribery, favor, or moral depravity".³ Otite explains further that, corruption involves the injection of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events and altering judgments and positions of trust. It consists of the doers', givers', and receivers' use of informal, extra-legal, or illegal acts to facilitate matters. In a 2006 study, Transparency International describes the hydra-headed nature of corruption, "affects all sectors of society from construction (France), education (Uganda), police (Malaysia), to parliament (Japan), judiciary (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Israel, and Nepal) and even the church (Greece)".⁴ Commenting on the effects of corruption, Dreher et al. divulge in their study, that "corruption is the most significant contributor to low income and growth in many of the poor countries."⁵ Shleifer and Vishny, argue earlier that corruption is both pervasive and significant around the world and that "in some developing countries such as Zaire and Kenya it probably amounts to a large fraction of the Gross National Product".⁶ Within the global concept, corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, affecting developing and developed countries.⁷ The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) made a similar observation:

Corruption is a complex social, political, and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. Corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development, and contributes to governmental instability. Corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law, and creating bureaucratic quagmires whose only reason for existing is the soliciting of bribes. Economic development is

Century" International Journal of History and Philosophical Research Vol.7, No.4, pp.9-19, October 2019.

2 C. Achebe. *The Trouble with Nigeria*. Essex: Heinemann, 1993, p.37.

3 O. Otite. "On the Sociological Study of Corruption." In *Nigeria: Corruption in Development* edited by F. Odekunle. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1986, p. 12.

4 O. Otite. "On the Sociological..." p. 19.

5 A. Dreher, Kotsogiannis, C., &McCorriston J. "Corruption around the World: Evidence from a Structural Model." *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 35(3), 2007, p. 443. Acc

6 A. Shleifer & R. Vishny. "Corruption." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 108(3), 1993, p. 599.

7 C. Gopinath. "Private corruption: Recognition and Justification." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 82, 2008, p. 747. doi:10.1007/s10551-007-9589-8.

stunted because foreign direct investment is discouraged and small businesses within the country often find it impossible to overcome the “start-up costs” required because of corruption.⁸

Corruption is an act by individuals or groups of individuals. The behavior is pronounced in Nigeria where corruption has become endemic and has a negative effect on every dimension of Nigerian life. Acutely embarrassing scandals have plagued the politics of Nigeria since the time of the colonial regime and even more so since independence in 1960.⁹ Nigeria is often perceived as the “giant of Africa” by most Africans, perhaps, because of its remarkable achievements in the continent in the past three decades. Today, the same country is looked upon by the rest of the world as a “crippled” giant, a veritable modern moral wasteland, a nation where corruption is extolled as a national culture, tradition; as a nation of business scams and fraudulent investment and contractual opportunities.¹⁰ In spite of a series of laws and reforms directed at waging war against corruption in Nigeria, Transparency International still ranks Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. During the earlier days of the Buhari’s Administration in 2015, Nigeria was derided as “fantastically corrupt” by the British Prime Minister.

Nation-building involves the processes of constructing an enduring national identity through the instrumentality of legitimate state power. Its goal is to entrench unity among the people of the state so that it remains politically virile, stable and viable. Endeavours at nation-building could take the form of the development of infrastructure to foster social harmony and economic growth; but, most importantly, through inculcating in the citizenry the various dimensions of the peoples’ past experiences that make for social cohesion, national consciousness, loyalty and true nationhood.¹¹ OkonUya argues among other things that the “pollution of values evidenced in massive corruption, indiscipline and moral decadence”¹² has been a cog in the wheel of nation-building.

Theoretical Framework

Corruption occurs in both government and the public services. However, the impact varies from countries- developed and developing. McMullan M. in his comparative study of corruption in British colonies and ex-colonies in West Africa, contends that, “only very recently, and in only a handful of countries has

8 United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime. UNODC’s Action against Corruption and Economic Crime. unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption. Accessed 01/10/19.

9 E. F. Oluyitan. *Combatting Corruption at the Grassroots Level in Nigeria*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 3.

10 C. C. Ojukwu & J. O. Shopeju. “Elite Corruption and the Culture of Primitive Accumulation in 21st Century Nigeria” *International Journal of Law and Legal Studies*, Vol. 6(2), p. 10.

11 C. N. Ajaebili. “A Century after Amalgamation: Reflections on History and Nation Building in Nigeria, 1914-2014” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 24, 2015, p. 98. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24768931> Accessed: 20-09-2019.

12 E. O. Uya. “Nigerian Intellectuals and the Challenge of Nation Building” Convocation Lecture Delivered at the University of Uyo, 24 April 2009, p. 5.

such corruption been so far reduced as to be practically negligible, that is to say, so far reduced that it does not normally enter into a citizen's relations with his government".¹³ The complex nature of corruption makes it difficult to deploy a single theoretical framework of analysis. In this light, this study will consider the Principal-Agent Theory and the Collective Action Theory. The Principal-Agent Theory conceived by Ronald Coase in the early 1930s, a strand of the Neo-institutional Economics is appropriate in representative democracies. The Principal-Agent Theory has two dimensions- the principal which is corrupting and the agent who is corrupted.¹⁴ The principal often fails to effectively monitor the agents, which creates the risk that an agent may act in his/her own interest, rather than that of the principal(s).¹⁵

The Collective Action Theory of corruption presupposes that systemic corruption flagrantly persists despite extant laws and agencies in some countries. This theory moves a step higher than the Principal-Agent Theory by emphasizing the importance of factors like trust and the behavioural perceptions of individuals. The corrupt individual considers corruption as a societal norm. Thus, "it doesn't make sense to be the only honest person in a corrupt system".¹⁶ This disposition of the corrupt individual(s) described by Heather Marquette and Caryn Peiffer frustrates anti-corruption measures of the State. Therefore, the Principal-Agent and the Collective Action theories are considered appropriate in the Nigerian typology wherein subsisting anti-corruption agencies are frustrated because of the lack of the political will by the principal to rein in erring agents, undue political interferences and lack of independence of the EFCC and the ICPC, and the societal acceptability of corruption as a norm which predisposed public officers to corruption.

Corruption and Nation-building

Corruption is not new to man. It is an anti-social and self-centred activity whose objective is beneficial to no one else than the perpetrators, their cronies, and some unscrupulous security operatives and operatives of the anti-corruption institutions, for political power and material wealth.¹⁷ Michael Johnston's fighting corruption study identifies and conceives corruption from two dimensions,

Corruption is said to be systemic or endemic when the integrated and essential aspects of the economic, social, and political system are embedded in a wider situation

13M. McMullan. "A Theory of Corruption" *The Sociological Review* Volume 9, Issue 2, 1961, p. 181.

doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1961.tb01093.x. Accessed 20th September, 2022.

14 N. Groenendijk. "A Principal-Agent Model of Corruption" *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 27, 1997, p. 207.

15 M. Stephenson. "Corruption is BOTH a "Principal-Agent Problem" AND a "Collective Action Problem"" *balanticorruptionblog.com*. Accessed 20th September, 2022.

16H Marquette & C. Peiffer. "Corruption and Collective Action" *Research Paper* 32, 2015. *gsdrc.org*. Accessed 20th September, 2022.

17 S. O. Okputu & P. O. Odey. "Corruption and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Challenges and Options in the Fourth Republic." *NDUNODE Special Edition of Calabar Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. 12, No. 1, January, 2017, p. 260.

that helps sustain it. The major state-owned institutions and processes are routinely dominated and used by corrupt individuals and groups, and leaving the majority of the people with no alternatives to dealing with corrupt officials. Examples of states include, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, Cameroon. Political or grand corruption involves any transaction between public and private sector actors through which collective goods are illegitimately converted into private-regarding payoffs. This occurs at the higher levels of the political system with the laws and regulations are abused by the rulers, side-stepped, ignored, or even tailored to fit the perpetrator's interest.¹⁸

Therefore, corruption is a moral defilement which manifests in the failure to carryout proper public responsibilities because of pursuit of private gains.¹⁹In Nigeria, the vice of corruption has become a way of life. However, the issue of corruption has been at the heart of policy and public discourse since the country emerged from colonial rule. Successive governments, spurred by mounting public pressure, have come with one form of anti-corruption programme and initiative or the other. Many of these efforts have failed to yield any meaningful result, leaving the problem to soar notoriously.

In 1964, labour unions sympathetic to the AG's democratic socialist tendencies launched a general strike, protesting wage inequality, rising inflation, and elite corruption.²⁰ Military incursion into politics from January 15, 1966 failed to address the official corruption perpetrated by the civilian administration. The Gowon's regime became unpopular because of corruption by his cohorts in power and his inept handling of the challenge. By 1974, the governors were publicly discredited, but the SMC was incapable of removing this large bloc of votes from its membership; since the abolition of federalism preceded the civil war, states' rights remained a highly sensitive issue. Amid widespread charges of corruption in 1970, Gowon was able to dismiss only one governor.²¹ Through their positions on the SMC, the other governors thwarted his ability to make reappointments. Over the course of his nearly eight years in office, he successfully dismissed only two governors despite several other attempts.²²

Corruption had been identified as the major cause of the coup, which attracted variously description by several national dailies. For the *National Concord*, "At no other time in the history of the country had corruption been so deep-seated and widespread," calling the coup "the verdict of the people." Another newspaper, *The Guardian*, noted, "Nigerians had had enough." And the *Punch*

18 Cited in E. Byrne. "The Moral and Legal Development of Corruption: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Corruption in Ireland." Ph.D Thesis, University of Limerick, 2007. <http://elaine.ie/2009/07/31/>. Accessed April 9, 2016, p. 45.

19 Z. Zimako O. *Face of A Nation: Democracy in Nigeria, Foreign Relations and National Image*. Modern Approach, 2009, p. 46.

20 L. Diamond. *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic*. (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 179.

21 Cited in C. A. LeVan. *Dictators and Democracy in African Development. The Political Economy of Good Governance in Nigeria*. (New York: Cambridge University, 2015), p.68.

22 Cited in C. A. LeVan... p. 68.

called the coup “a welcome change notwithstanding the excruciating experience” with previous military regimes.²³ Any relief the citizens of Nigeria felt was short lived, as the country began a sixteen-year stretch of authoritarianism. Major C. K. Nzeogwu’s January 15, 1966 coup speech on Radio Kaduna identified perpetrators of political corruption as the enemies of Nigerians: “...Our enemies are the political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 per cent...”.²⁴ This was in an attempt to achieve the desired change at independence. Okputu and Odey wonder,

If the Balewa’s Administration could provoke a revolution that altered Nigerian democratic history, what will be the reaction of Nzeogwu and his inner-circle revolutionaries in their graves or the admixture of murderous rage and guilt to have exterminated the elites of the Fourth Republic and probably chastised those who fell to their revolutionary bullets with few *kobokolashes*.²⁵

Corruption and its intractable and systemic nature in Nigeria has had multiple consequences on different aspects of life. These range from economic, environmental, political, and social. Politically, the electoral frauds that birth political leaders result in crisis of legitimacy of the constituted government, characterized by political instability/violence. Economically, the poor economic performance or indicators, like high poverty rate, inequality, inflation, poor infrastructure, low investments, capital flights, brain-drain, and low economic growth among others. The environmental effect of corruption involves criminal activities such as poaching, trade in endangered species, illegal exploitation of natural resources (the destruction of the environment). The erosion of the social values of a people such as dignity in labour and social trust are some of the identified impact of corruption in Nigeria (Enweremadu 28). Between 1970 and 2007, Nigeria was said to have lost \$ 400 million oil revenue to official corruption (Agbo 27), and an unimaginable level of loss ever since.

The political system favours corruption as emphasis is placed on money politics which compels the political gladiators to plunder the treasury of the country to finance the electoral process. Such loyalty to those in power provides fertile ground for corruption in Nigeria. Toyin Falola avers that “Nigerian politics was little concerned with good government or the reconciliation of competing demands. Rather, it was devoted primarily to primitive accumulation and extraction of resources to satisfy the demands of politicians”.²⁶

Corruption destroys Nigeria both domestically and internationally. In a satirical piece, Bajae James Adie graphically captures the corruption situation in Nigeria in a poetic epilogue:

23 Cited in R. Akinola. *Fellow Countrymen: The Story of Coup d’etats in Nigeria*. (Lagos: Rich Konsult, 2000), pp. 71–72.

24 O. Obasanjo. Nzeogwu. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1987), p. 97.

25 S. O. Okputu & P. O. Odey. “Corruption... p. 258

26 E. F. Oluyitan. *Combating Corruption at the Grassroots Level in Nigeria*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 12. Also see, T. Falola & M. M. Heaton. *A History of Nigeria*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Please say my regards to
Mr. Bribery Look Good
Mr. Corruption So Fat
Mr. Injustice Too Robust
Mr. Tax Very Fresh
Mr. Sincere Dry Skin
Mr. Justice agama lizard
Mr. Patriotic only head.²⁷

Adie paradoxes depict the features of the corrupt and incorruptible and the consequential societal preferences which often deodorizes corruption and threaten the incorruptible with scornful insecticides. Corruption defies age, class, creed, and ethnicities. Like the Nigerian musico-activist, Chinagorom Onuoha also known as, African China, in his *Mr President*, (2006) reveals,

Poor man wey thief maggi
Omo, dem go show him face for crime fighter (Crime fighter)
Rich man wey thief money
Omo, we no dey see their for crime fighter
Tell me something I don't know...²⁸

African China argues in his satire, *Mr President*, that corruption is a common thread that weaves both the rich and the poor together. However, "maggi" and "money" metaphorically denote the two parallel classes- the poor and the rich respectively, and the consequences of their actions. While the poor, who probably stole maggi cube to survive as a result of the activities of the big rich thieves is paraded before the camera, tried and jailed, their rich counterparts in crime often get pat on their wrists and cases dropped if political (re)alliances are struck.

The House of Representatives Committee on Public Accounts queried the misappropriation of funds amounting to N139.317billion between 1st January 2013 and June 2018. In a 96-paged audit report on the activities of the IMC-led NDDC. Some of the issues raised include:

Irregularities in the execution of a contract awarded to MessrsSetraco Nigeria Ltd for the construction of Gbaregolor-Gbekbor-Ogulagha road phase 1- N16,157,782,480.20; unauthorized revision and variation of contract sum without due process and payment above completion level on the contract for construction of Kaa-Ataba road and bridges- N10,930,414,996.45....²⁹

Impunity played out and the Managing Director of the Interim Management Committee (IMC) of the Niger Delta Commission (NDDC), KemebradikumoPondei, flagrantly ignored the summon. Only to appear on a

27 B. J. Adie. *The Letter to My Fellow Passengers*. (Grace-manuel Print, 2018), p. 222.

28Chinagorom Onuoha aka African China song, *Mr. President* released in 2006

29 S. Tordue. "Alleged N139.3Bn Fraud: MD NNDC Shuns Reps Summons" Vanguard October 21, 2020. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 17th September, 2022.

latter date with appalling theatrics of fainting. The recurring nonchalance of corrupt individuals with deep links with the corridor of power portray the nation in a terrible light. This calls to question the mental fabric of these category of people. Imagine an individual in his/her 60s crudely stealing billions and trillions of naira at the twilight of their service year. How much longer are they guaranteed to live?

The Nigerian subsidy regime for Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) remains a cesspool of corruption by successive regimes. Characteristic of politicians in opposition and desperate for power, Muhammadu Buhari and his party, the APC, politicized national issues and described the subsidy regime as a scam and got elected twice- 2015 and 2019. Granted that Nigeria's economy is predominantly oil-based, the economic saboteurs targeted the oil industry as their cash cow for decades. Allowing the oil refineries moribund with hugely remunerated staff as a deliberate policy of government to fritter the often-reported scare funds, the government continues to service the 'scam' subsidy regime under very controversial circumstances. The actual consumption quantity of fuel cannot be scientifically ascertained in the 21st century as budgetary allocations continue to soar. For instance, it was reported that the Buhari's Administration without recourse to the National Assembly, diverted N378billion Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) dividend for subsidy.³⁰The superintendence of Muhammadu Buhari over fraud in the petroleum industry is revolting. He doubles as the President of Nigeria and Minister of Petroleum yet unable to discharge his responsibility to the State as such. One thing is evident- the once touted Mr. Integrity may have been bitten by the corruption bug or inundated by the enormity of the offices. Was he ever prepared for governance? The N6trillion subsidy for PMS in 2022remains fraudulent. The Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Hameed Alli questioned the NNPC lifting of 98 million litres as daily consumption rate of PMS after declaring 60 million litres, leaving an unaccounted 38 million litres.³¹

Budgets are padded since 2016. The padding of the 2016 budget by some principal officers of the National Assembly to the tune of N481billion attracted public outcry and subsequent litigation by the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Projects (SERAP) at a Federal High Court in Lagos. The court ruled that the anti-corruption and the security agencies to commence the prosecution of indicted lawmakers.³² Tony Adewale, the Deputy Director of SERAP, declares, "This judgement confirms the pervasive corruption in the budget process and prevailing culture of impunity of our lawmakers as well as the failure of the authorities to uphold transparency and accountability in the entire budget process and implementation."³³ This act of economic sabotage has

30P. Shaibu. "Subsidy: Buhari's NNPC as Cesspool of Corruption" The Guardian, 11th November, 2018. guardian.ng. Accessed 17th September, 2022.

31 A. Adebisi. "N6trn Subsidy Claim A Fraud, says Customs Boss" This Day, 2nd September, 2022. www.thisdaylive.com. Accessed 17th September, 2022.

32Vanguard. "Budget Padding: Court Orders Buhari to Prosecute Indicted Lawmakers" 30th May, 2018. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

33Vanguard. "Budget Padding: Court Orders Buhari to Prosecute Indicted Lawmakers" 30th May, 2018. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

the complicity of the politicians, the civil servants and the government. The deliberate nonchalance of the government and enforcement authorities to dispense appropriate sanctions on culprits and be proactive in combating this national scourge, account for the pervasiveness of budget padding.

The recent discovery by the ICPC on budget padding reveals that Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) padded the 2021 and 2022 budgets with N300billion and 100billion respectively.³⁴ The ICPC also tracked N49.9billion collected as salaries by ghost workers from January to June 2022.³⁵ Drawing parallels between Nigeria and South Africa, Ramphele M., contends that “solidarity and loyalty are major costs in the quality of democracy”³⁶. The premium placed on party loyalty at the expense of patriotism challenges Nigeria’s democratic sustainability. Thus, Ramphele notes,

Acquiescing to corrupt practices to advance one’s business is both immoral and unethical. It is immoral in that it undermines the long term good for business and society in general. It is unethical because the corruptor knows that it is wrong to perpetuate corruption by rewarding those involved. Corruption is a cancer that threatens the sustainability of business and societies.³⁷

with the politics of patronage, political proteges and cronies are appointed into critical sectors to plunder funds for elections given the monetization of the electoral process. Now, with the crashed value of the naira, the electoral process is heavily *dollarized*- Nigerian politicians buy votes during elections. One of the paradoxes of the Nigerian State is that, foreign exchange for economic development are not accessible to investors but politicians.

There is a trend of animals and insects (*monivore*) eating or swallowing humongous sums of public funds in the custody of some public servants, that has become a national embarrassment because of the anti-corruption posturing of the Buhari Administration since 29th May, 2015. Philomena Chieshe, a clerk of the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board, (JAMB) Makurdi, Benue State claimed that a whopping N36 million was swallowed by a mysterious snake.³⁸ When did snake start eating or swallowing money? How big is the snake? What specie of snake? Where else does this joke happen if not Nigeria? Whether the reptile is a code name or a metaphor, it is disgraceful and insulting for such stories to be concocted and distilled to the public. However, Chieshe later confessed to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) that the

34D. Chukwu. “Duplicated Projects: MDAs Padded 2021, 2022 Budgets with N300bn, N100bn- ICPC” 17th September, 2022. newtelegraphng.com. Accessed 20th September, 2022.

35T. Omogbolagun. “ICPC Uncovers N400bn Fraud in 2021, 2022 Budgets” 16th September, 2022. punchng.com. Accessed 20th September, 2022.

36 M. Ramphele. Conversations with My Sons and Daughters. (Johannesburg: Penguin, 2012), 75.

37 M. Ramphele... p. 75.

38 J. Ehirim & A. Adesoji. “Snake Allegedly Swallows N36 million from JAMB Office Vault, Nigerians React” Vanguard, 17th February, 2018. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

N36million was collected by one of her superiors, Samuel Umoru.³⁹ An audacious monkey was reported to have carted away N70million at Senator Adamu's farm in Nasarawa State. The money was said belong to Northern Senators Forum.⁴⁰ Another bizarre allegation of corruption involving huge amount was the 'termites-gate'- termites ate up documents containing expenditure worth N17billion in the Nigeria Social Investment Trust Fund (NSITF).⁴¹ This disclosure was made during a Senate Committee Panel by the Managing Director, Michael Akabogu when he states, "The container the said documents were kept by past management has not only been beaten by rains over the years but even possibly being eaten up by termites".⁴² So, the Nigerian corruption experience has been notoriously embellished with 'snake-gate', 'monkey-gate', and 'termites-gate' or 'monivore'(money-eating animals).

Apart from the 'monivores' some highly politically exposed Nigerians like ex-governors like Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame of Plateau and Taraba States respectively. The duo were sentenced for corruption and only acquitted in August 2022 under suspected politically-motivated circumstances. The former Secretary of the Federal Government, Babachir David Lawal was accused of corruption in two scandalous grass cutting contracts amounting to over N500million.⁴³And the N109billion fraud committed by the suspended Accountant General of the Federation, Ahmed Idris. The humongous amount was stolen through the manipulation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS).⁴⁴ It should be noted too, that while the continued vehement rejection of the IPPIS by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) of federal public universities and belatedly, other university-based unions, the reluctance of the Federal Government to jettison this neocolonial, oppressive and corruption-riddled payment system forcefully deployed in the system persist. The arrest and trial of Ahmed Idris, the disgraced Accountant-General of the Federation vindicates ASUU. The ASUU National President, Comrade President Emmanuel Osoodeke remarks,

We have said it over and over again that IPPIS is a fraud.
We've also said that the Accountant-General's Office is a fraud, and they are using IPPIS to relocate all the activities to

39 C. Asadu. "JAMB Official makes U-turn, says N36m 'collected by superior'- NOT Snake" The Cable, 6th March, 2018. www.thecable.ng. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

40 N. Nseyen. "Police Promote Ex-EFCC Chairman, Ibrahim Magu, others" DAILY POST, 16th May, 2022. dailypost.ng. Accessed 22nd September, 2022.

41 A. Alao. "Termites, Snakes, other Animals Accused of 'Swallowing' Money" The Nation 17th August, 2022. thenationonlineng.net. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

42 Isuwa, Sunday. "Termites Ate Vouchers of Our N17.1bn Spending, NSITF Tells Senate". LEADERSHIP, August, 2022. leadership.ng. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

43 W. Odunsi. "Babachir Lawal grass cutting Scandal: What happened in Court Thursday" DAILYPOST, 4th July, 2019. dailypost.ng. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

44 THE NATION "N109b Fraud: How Suspended AGF Diverted TSA, IPPIS Funds, by Witness" 30th July, 2022. thenationonlineng.net Accessed 16th September, 2022.

one centre, which is the Accountant-General's Office and we have been vindicated. This is our position.⁴⁵

The government claim through the Head of Service, that, the IPPIS payment platform saves N2billion annually after dictating irregularities like ghost workers,⁴⁶ the manipulation of the payment platform under the suspended Accountant-General of the Federation, Idris, leading to the hues and cries of discrepancies in payment and non-remittances of deductions, and the damning report by the underfunded Office of the Auditor-General of the Federation, are credible evidences of an irredeemably failed payment platform. The office of the Auditor General of the Federation reported that between 2011 and 31st December, 2020, the Federal Government spent over US\$27,411million, €8,490million and N6,518billion on the Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), despite not fully opening the platform, identified financial irregularities amounting to over N4,394billion on IPPIS platform, in addition to duplication of personnel data and irregular entry of data for workers.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, why it becomes impossible for the self-acclaimed anti-corruption government, to discard and adopt the credible home-grown UTAS payment system by the nation's academia at no cost to the government is worrisome.

The claim of paucity of funds leading to justify the unprecedented borrowings and heavy debt servicing by the Federal Government on the one hand and the unwise economic policies, priorities and profligacies on the other is worrisome. During the earlier days of the Buhari's administration, on a Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) current affairs show, *Politics Nationwide*, the former Publicity Secretary of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Olisah Metuh, passed a verdict on the current government's trident policy on economy, insecurity, and anti-corruption as both "unserious and insincere". Metuh's prognosis may have been dismissed due to opposition politics, nevertheless, the prevailing realities vindicates his verdict. Ibrahim Babangida on an ARISE TV show, in a comparative analysis disclosed that those who served in his regime were saint unlike Buhari's. Babangida declares,

... I think we are saints when compared with what is happening under a democratic dispensation. I sacked a governor for stealing or misappropriating less than N313,000 but today, those have stolen billions and are in court are parading themselves on the streets. So, who is better at fighting corruption?⁴⁸

45F. Olowolagba. "N80bn: Accountant-General's Arrest Proves IPPIS is Fraud- ASUU" Daily Post, 19th May, 2022. dailypost.ng. Accessed 17th September, 2022.

46Elumoye, Deji. "HoSF: 3,657 Federal Civil Servants Facing Prosecution over IPPIS" THIS DAY July, 2022. www.thisdaylive.com. Accessed 17th September, 2022.

47THE NATION, "AuGF picks holes in IPPIS Operations" January 9, 2022. thenationonline.net. Accessed 16th December, 2022. Also, Uche Usim. "IPPIS, GIFMIS robbing FG of Billions, says Audit Report" THE SUN, 6th January, 2022. sunnewsonline.com. Accessed 16th December, 2022.

48Daily Trust. "IBB: Corruption under Buhari worse than when I was in Power", 6th August, 2021. dailytust.com. Accessed 16th September, 2022.

The brazenness of corrupt public officers and the failure of a government that rode to power as an anti-corruption crusader, to deliver on its campaign promise by combating corruption is inimical to economic development. The multiple financial leakages have plunged the country into a cul-de-sac. The external dimension of the impact of corruption on Nigeria manifests in diminishing the image of the country attracting damaging commentaries. For instance, Collin Powell, a former US Secretary of State had remarked: "and what they could have done with their wealth over the last 20 years they just pissed it away. They just tend not to be honest, Nigerians, as a group frankly, are marvelous scammers. I mean, it is their national character".⁴⁹This remark credited to Powell at worst is an expression of personal and group (foreign) opinion of Nigeria and Nigerians.

Political appointments and contracts are distributed to cronies who act as proxies of their principal to plunder funds for electoral purposes of themselves, principals, and/or party. In the 2019 election, there was a case of the APC national leader and current presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu with a bullion van on election eve. This suspicious occurrence caused some Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to petition the EFCC to investigate the source of the money conveyed in bullion vans to Tinubu's home on the eve of the 2019 presidential elections.⁵⁰The 2023 general elections appear to be the most expensive in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. The two major political parties, the cost of presidential nomination forms for All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) cost N100million and N50million respectively. The ruling APC for instance, had ministers like those of Transportation (Chibuike Ameachi), Education (State, Emeka Nwajiuba), Petroleum (State, Timipre Silva), Science and Technology (Ogbonaya Onuh), and the Governor of the Central Bank, Godwin Emefile among others paid N100million for presidential form. What is the monthly salary of political appointees in a country where the minimum wage of N30,000.00 is of no consequence before inflationary forces? The presidential primaries were irksome with reckless display of dollars (*dollarization* of the electoral process) as electorates and aspirants were bought over. Now, candidates are simply outspent to win elections with mostly looted funds.

This paper contends that the beneficiary of graft is as condemnable as the thief. How? These politicians who most times do not pay tax, pilfer the common patrimony of taxpayers of their home country and starch up these looted cash in foreign banks, contributing to the building of the latter's economy. If these foreign agents of grand corruption have not collaborated, would these corrupt Nigerians successfully plunder the economies of their countries of origin? How did these huge funds sneak into these sophisticated economies unnoticed? The negative image created by corruption has caused shameful profiling of Nigerians in foreign lands even by countries whose economy have been boosted

49Z. Zimako O. Face of A Nation: Democracy in Nigeria, Foreign Relations and National Image. (Modern Approach, 2009), p. 239.

50 G. Ewepu. "CSOs calls on EFCC to Investigate Tinubu over alleged Money conveyed in Bullion vans" Vanguard, October 25, 2019. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 21st September, 2022.

by graft. Adie's optimism expressed in his swansong, *My Letter to My Fellow Passengers*,

... I believe that these [corrupt] practices in a very veryvery near future will be a thing of the past. Because very soon when a better percentage of the inhabitants of the society realizes that the systems of the society need complete overhauling; because there are corrupt people everywhere there will come together hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder, with a unified focus and strong determination...".⁵¹

Institutional failures on the part of the anti-graft agency and other agencies- the Directorate of State Security (DSS), the Police, and the judiciary have nurtured political corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Politics has become the exclusive preserve of the rich who become so rich by looting public funds. Very often every election year expose new political enemies and friends alike to either be persecuted or rewarded. State-owned agents on the orders emanating usually from above arraign one-time allies of the incumbent in the courts for fraud. Part of the looted funds are deployed to hire a battery of legal luminaries to frustrate the judicial process. The looted funds are mostly unrecovered while time and resources are wasted. When the judiciary is compromised, corruption festers like cancer. The inadequate legal framework has been manipulated to acquit corrupt officials or provided them with soft landing in the form of plea bargain and the like.⁵²

The establishment of the EFCC and the controversial appointment of a Chairman despite Senate confirmation as constitutionally provided further demonstrates the insincerity and unseriousness of the principal (the Buhari's Administration) in its anti-graft campaign. The Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice accused Ibrahim Maguof corruption, insubordination to the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation, extravagance, nepotism, and incompetence. The allegations include,

Discrepancies in the reconciliation records of the EFCC and the Federal Ministry of Finance on recovered funds; declaration of N539billion as recovered funds, instead of N504billion earlier claimed; insubordination to the Office of the AGF; ...alleged favouring of some investigators called Magu Boys; reporting some judges to their presiding officers without deferring to the AGF; alleged sale of seized assets to cronies, associates and friends...(Vanguard, July 8, 2020).

In a 14-paragraph security report by the DSS dated October 3rd, 2016 submitted to the Senate on Magu, contained reasons why Magu should not be confirmed as substantive chairman of the EFCC. This informed the decision of the Bukola Saraki-led Senate, to decline his confirmation based on security reason.⁵³

51B. J. Adie. *The Letter to My Fellow Passengers*. (Grace-manuel Print, 2018), p. 220.

52 S. O. Okputu & P. O. Odey. "Corruption..." p.260.

53 Ndujihe, Clifford, et.al. "Why Magu can't be EFCC Chairman- Senate" Vanguard, 16th December, 2016. www.vanguardngr.com. Accessed 22nd September, 2022.

Typical of a government that is notorious in observing the principles of separation of power and the rule of law, foisted Magu on the EFCC as acting chairman for years despite the constitutional provision of six months acting capacity and the decision of the Senate. The imposition of Magu adjudged by the DSS to have failed integrity test informing the decision of the Senate, speaks volume to the intendment of the administration in its anti-corruption campaign. What would have been interpreted as the intention of keeping Magu to perform the hatchet job for the administration manifested in his arrest and subsequent suspension from office for corruption in 2020. Why did it take so long? Another twist to the Magu's situation is the promotion of the former Acting Chairman of the EFCC from the rank of Commissioner of Police to Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) alongside seven others by the Police Service Commission (PSC).⁵⁴ What a way to reward corruption. Therefore, institutional failure is largely responsible for the intractability of corruption in Nigeria as a result of executive encumbrances. Thus, the cliché, "corruption is fighting back".

Conclusion

Corruption like a canker-worm has devastated the economic, political, and moral fabric of Nigeria both domestically and internationally. Efforts at nation-building have been truncated by this national evil for several decades. The battered Nigerian image as a result of corruption led to the anti-corruption war at the beginning of the Fourth Republic. However, the trident campaign issues of the Buhari's Administration since 2015- economy, corruption and security have blatantly remained in the realm political propaganda as the audacity of corrupt public officers continue unabated. The failure of the anti-graft agencies (EFCC and ICPC) and others, demand urgent and committed institutional overhaul. The independence of these institutions is critical for a successful anti-corruption campaign, as justice should be seen done with no interference or nepotistic encumbrances.

Fighting corruption is not about arrest and incarceration. Often times, the executive overbearing influence in the activities of these institutions compromise their independence and integrity. Alleged offenders are arrested and detained while the anti-corruption agencies start ferreting evidence for prosecution. This smacks ineptitude and lack of independence. While people of proven integrity should be empowered to be anti-graft campaigners in a conducive work environment there is need for training and re-training opportunities in tandem with contemporary realities. There should be relevant amendments to extant laws on corruption to curb the legal rhetoric due to constitutional ambiguities.

While civil society groups like SERA Pare involved in combating corruption in the interest of the nation, the government must view them as partners in progress rather than 'political rivals. The school curricula should be fashioned to reflect anti-corruption courses to prepare the younger generation for the herculean task of nation-building in Nigeria. The electoral process should be rid

54 N. Nseyen. "Police Promote Ex-EFCC Chairman, Ibrahim Magu, others" DAILY POST, 16th May, 2022. dailypost.ng. Accessed 22nd September, 2022.

of money politics as is prevalent today, because, the humongous cost of elections is one source of corruption. By humanizing and weaponizing poverty, the gladiatorial political class have deployed stolen State funds to perpetrate vote-buying and vote-selling, therefore perpetuating bad leadership. The INEC through the Electoral Act 2022 (as amended) and the anti-graft agencies should rise up to their responsibilities of ridding the society of bad leadership and corruption. This can be achieved through the arrest and prosecution of offenders- the procured electorates, agents, and candidates (beneficiaries of electoral fraud). Prosecuting the impoverished electorates and/or agents letting the major beneficiaries (candidates) of this electoral malfeasance off the hook, will only allow it fester. Finally, corruption ruins Nigeria's economic, socio-cultural and political institutions and become a national embarrassment internationally.