

Combating Corruption in Nigeria: A Case Study of Public Prosecution under Buhari's Administration (2015-2023)

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Abstract

The menace of corruption in Nigeria has lingered on for years, the conscious awareness towards this malady has gained prominence over the years, to the extent that the main opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC), ascended to power in the 2015 General Elections, emerging victorious at the polls with anti-corruption campaign, echoed by the change mantra. This study dissected the much-anticipated fight against corruption in the eight years of Muhammadu Buhari's APC led administration; it unravels that the principle of rotation of power with its patron-client network and identity politics are enablers of corruption in Nigeria. Similarly, it is posited that plea bargain constitutes a huge hindrance to the successful eradication of corruption in Nigeria, just as the poor reward system for career public office holders constitutes a challenge to the fight against

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corruption in Nigeria. The study concluded that the Buhari administration's fight against corruption, although had Nigerians filled with hopes from inception, could not achieve much in the end with the anti-corruption Caesar (Ibrahim Magu) removed in what appears as a power play. We recommend the establishment of institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption, review of reward system for public officers, creation of credit system to facilitate citizens' immediate access to meeting their needs, prosecution of civil/public servants who are complicit in corrupt practices, and compensation of whistleblowers, among other measures.

Keywords: Corruption, Prosecution, Administration, Abuse, Arraignment.

Introduction

Nigeria's Fourth Republic was ushered in on 29th May, 1999. This was amidst great anticipation for development, after a long era of military rule. Military rule in Nigeria was characterised by flagrant abuse of human rights, lack of rule of law, infrastructural decay and unemployment. With the return of democratic rule, the citizens were looking forward to better and efficient service delivery in the areas of education, health, provision of employment and social infrastructure. In 1999, three political parties were registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC): People's Democratic Party (PDP), All Peoples Party (APP) and the Alliance for Democracy (AD). The PDP emerged as the dominant party winning all the presidential elections conducted between 1999 and 2011. The party produced as presidents, Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007–2010) and Goodluck Jonathan (2010–2015). The party also dominated in all other electoral positions contested between 1999 and 2011. For instance, in 2003, the party won 223 seats out of 360 seats in the House of Representatives. In the Senate, out of 105 seats, the party won 76 seats. The party's dominance of the electoral space was partly due to its geographical spread. As at then, the PDP was the only party with a national outlook.

However, the PDP lost its dominance of the national legislative houses to the All Progressive Congress (APC) in 2015. The PDP also lost the 2015 presidential election to APC and, therefore, by 2015, became an opposition party. The APC was formed in February 2013. It was formed through a coalition of three major opposition parties and other factions: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), a faction of PDP, known as the New PDP and a faction of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA). The 2015 election was unique in some ways: for the first time in the history of Nigeria, an incumbent president was defeated in an election. Also, for the first time in the history of the country, there was a peaceful handover of power from one party to the other. The 2015 election was also noted to be the most expensive election ever conducted in Africa. The 2015 presidential election was between former President Goodluck Jonathan, the main opposition presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari and other aspirants from minor parties.

A number of reasons were adduced to have necessitated this unprecedented defeat of an incumbent president. The Jonathan government was noted to be inept and corrupt. Between 2009 and 2014, Nigeria got about 72 trillion naira from sales of crude oil, making Jonathan's government the richest in the history of the country (Naira Metrics, October 6th, 2017). Indeed, Duru (2014) affirms that in Jonathan's five years in office, Nigeria's total crude oil sales totalled \$470 billion. While the governments of former Presidents Yar'Adua, Obasanjo, Abdusalami and Abacha combined made total sales of \$489 billion. The regime, however, engaged in profligacy and could not account for how the money was spent. Even the money that was left in the Excess Crude Oil Account (ECA) by former Presidents Obasanjo and Yar'Adua was also shared between the federal and the state governors, despite the advice from the then Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala to save the money.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan was however quick to justify spending the money. According to him, the ECA was depleted from over \$20 billion to \$2 billion, due to constant pressure from the state governors. The state governors, according to him, always put pressure on him to withdraw money from the ECA and use it to augment the federal allocation

anytime the crude oil sales drop (Udo, 2016). Arguing in the same vein, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, maintains that lack of the political will to save displayed by the former governors affected Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's government ability to save (Nwabufo, 2016). In a rebuttal, the former Governor of Rivers State, Mr. Rotimi Ameachi maintains that the governors pressured Jonathan to share the ECA because every time the governors met with the President, they noticed that the ECA money was depleting and was being mismanaged. They had to urge him to share the money between the Federal Government and the State Governments (Ojoye, 2016).

However, the administration of Goodluck Jonathan received various accusations of wasteful spending (Onyishi & Eme, 2013), Dr. Okonjo-Iweala attests that she acceded to a request from Jonathan to release \$322 million of the funds recovered from the loot stashed away by the late dictator, Sanni Abacha, for arms procurement (Ojoye, 2016). Most of these funds were however received by senior members of PDP. There were allegations of scenarios where oil was lifted from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the proceeds were not remitted to the federation account. There was a case of a contentious contract that involved Jide Omokore, Kola Aluko and the former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs. Diezani Allison-Madueke, where they lifted Nigeria's crude oil but refused to transfer the proceeds into the government account (Ugbede, 2018). In 2014, the price of oil dropped drastically and the country did not have savings to help ameliorate the after-effect of reduction in revenue generated by the country. The federal allocation to the states from the Federal Government reduced drastically and this affected the states' ability to pay workers' salaries. As of May 2015, about 23 states were not able to pay their workers' salaries. For instance, in Abia State, workers at the State Teaching Hospital were owed nine months' salaries and workers at the Hospital Management Board were owed eight months' salaries. Other workers owed include workers at the Universal Basic Education Board, six months, Abia State Polytechnic, five months (Lawal, 2015). In Enugu, parastatals were owed twelve months salaries. In Osun State, workers and pensioners were owed six months' salaries.

In Benue, workers were owed five months' salaries and in Oyo State their workers were owed three months' salaries. Ogun State owed pensioners 52 months arrears (Lawal, 2015). This was the pathetic situation that Nigerian workers found themselves in, before May 2015. Unemployment rate was also at an all-time high. Also, in spite of the huge budgetary allocation given to security, the insurgents became more audacious and advanced in their dealings with the citizens. Owen and Usman (2015) rightly observe that from 2012 to 2015, the Jonathan administration allocated \$6 billion dollars to security annually. About 279 students were kidnapped by the insurgents from a government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State in April 2014. The inability of the government to properly handle this case affected the integrity of the administration, and consequently PDP as a political party.

It is within this background, that the All Progressive Congress (APC) emerged. The APC party came with a promise of a change to the appalling situation of things. The citizens needed a radical change and they massively voted for the presidential candidate of APC, Muhammadu Buhari. The APC was therefore voted on a 'change mantra'. The expectations of the people were very high as the 'Government of Change' was inaugurated on May 29th, 2015. At the expiration of this government, were they able to introduce the much-needed change? How far did they go in fulfilling some of their laudable promises as contained in their manifesto? Did they live up to the expectations of the citizens? This paper seeks to answer these questions through evaluation of the major promises made to the citizens by the 'Change Mantra' government. The paper utilised the secondary means of data collection. Data was analysed using content analysis and narrative report.

Conceptual Clarification

Corruption is an anti-social behaviour bestowing undue benefits to persons in contrast to laid down laws and norms, which undermines institutional capacity to safeguard the welfare of all citizens (Osoba, 1996:371). The menace of corruption leads to slow movement of files in offices, police extortion at toll gates and slow traffics on the highways, port congestion, queues at passport offices and gas stations, ghost workers syndrome, election

irregularities, among others (Dike, 2008:1). Okolo and Raymond (2014) submitted that a corrupt act is a deliberate and well planned act by an individual or group of people to appropriate, by illegal channels, the resources of another individual or group of people.

Muhammad (2011:110) sees corruption as a situation whereby two or more individuals in public and/or private organisations interact to undermine integrity or a state of affairs through undue influence, bribery, favouritism, moral depravity or other forms of unfaithful and unholy behaviours that run contrary to the powers, duties and responsibilities of an office and with intent of deriving some gains for themselves individually or collectively. To Ogbuagu, Ubi and Effiom (2014:21), corruption entails the injection of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the normal course of events and altering judgments and positions of trust.

Corruption is a system of organised crime perpetrated by an actor or an organisation which is entrusted with a mandate in order to amass illicit benefit through the abuse of power for one's personal interest (Adeboye & Simon, 2023). Corruption is any act perpetrated in public, private and corporate organisation involving illegal exchange of money, gift items, or any other valuable, including kind and cash, like signing of signature and carnal knowledge of somebody, which negates what is worthwhile, with negative effect on the society for personal or group gain (Chinnah, 2020: 121).

Exploitation of public office directed at private gains is corruption. It involves taking from the government's purse what should enhance collective interest and promote the common good and diverting such into enhancing one's interest and that of one's close allies. Corrupt acts include the following, but are not limited to them: bribery, embezzlement, inflation of the worth of government contracts, contract kickbacks, selling national assets to cronies who lack the wherewithal to successfully run those facilities, awarding contracts to clients who lack what it takes to execute the contracts, using official hours to pursue personal interests, diverting public funds into private coffers, misappropriation of public funds and money laundering (Oladipo and Olaleye, 2019).

Corruption happens by circumventing decisions, public policies and processes for the sole aim of personal gains (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2018:

43). One should shun the assumption that people suddenly become corrupt when they get into public offices, having been groomed and tutored on the act of petty stealing from probably the age of five, Nigerians naturally explode when the opportunity comes to occupy positions of authority at any level either in private or public sector (Okolo & Raymond, 2014).

There exist different types and forms of corruption, as Dike (2008:2) puts it: political, bureaucratic and electoral corruption. Political corruption is related to any act that contravenes formal standard or rule of behaviour laid down by the political system for its public officials (Ogundiya 2009:282). Ogbuagu, Ubi and Effiom (2014:21) pinpoints 'kick back' and 'side deals', 'man know man', giving of 'kola', "runs", use of 'long legs' "language power" and "power point" as bureaucratic corruption. Electoral fraud can be seen as any clandestine effort which seeks to shape or predetermine election results (Lehoucq, 2003). Political corruption is, however, the grand corruption, while bureaucratic corruption is seen as the petty corruption (Dike, 2008:2).

Prosecution on the other hand is the institution and conducting of legal proceedings against someone in respect of a criminal charge (European Commission, 2013). Prosecution is also seen as the legal party responsible for presenting the case in a criminal trial against the defendant, an individual accused of breaking the law (Rothbard, 2014). Prosecution, in this context, is the initiation or institution of a legal case in a competent law court against an individual believed to have abused, or that is abusing or attempting to abuse a position held in public trust.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted extractive corruption theory as its framework of analysis. The main assumption of the theory is that the state is the stronger part in the state-society relationship. That is, the corrupt (the state or some state operators) benefits the most from corruption and the corruptor is pretty much an inactive actor. Essentially, the ruling elite is the strongest force in society; this elite class utilises the state contraption as its instrument to extract based on the operation of authoritarian politics in general, and on the experience of the new-patrimonial states specifically. The theory posits that the ruling class uses and abuses the power of the state fundamentally

to safeguard their very own corporate interests, at the inconvenience of the masses. They use brutality, power and persuasions to command respect. They may utilise modern institutional plans like for example presidentialism, overwhelming multi-single-party framework (like the Nigerian ruling party), and the co-option of opponents so as to limit participation and power sharing (Government of National Unity in Nigeria). They may utilise press censorship and electoral cheats, set up unjust laws and disrespect the laws they have made themselves, and utilise human rights violations like political surveillance and terrorising, detainment and torment. In economic terms, corruption, specifically political corruption, is just one of the numerous methods of economic accumulation and private appropriation applied by dictator rulers.

Applying this hypothesis to our investigation, we contend that office-holders use various techniques to maintain power, of which many are amazingly real while others are illegal and corrupt. The corrupt use of political force for power safeguarding and extension show up as buying political help through bias, clientelism, co-option, patronage politics and vote buying. This in a way restricts the circulation of wealth among citizens, restricting it to a privileged few, who use this influence to control the different oversight and control institutions. This implies that some Nigerian politicians might be increasingly excited about having an enemy of corruption campaign that reveals the offences of their harbingers than one which roots out corruption in a current government.

Historical Overview of Prosecution in the Fourth Republic

Suleiman (2023:3) traces the origin of corruption in Nigeria to the onset of public administration in the country, thus birthing the rise to Western education, the process of urbanisation, monetisation of the economy, as well as the beginning of exchanges. Corruption in Nigeria dates back to the precolonial era, but the traditional system can be said to be highly incorruptible and the social system was communalised and due to the fear of the gods who are attributed with terrestrial powers (Adeboye & Simon, 2023). The colonial rulers created the avenue for corruption to thrive in Nigeria through the adoption of the policy of indirect rule and their mode of selecting local leaders to serve and protect their interest (Suleiman, 2023:4). The Nigerian

experience has shown that since the colonial era, public offices have become prime means of illicit accumulation of wealth (Osoba, 1996:371).

Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Corruption in Nigeria's Fourth Republic 1999-2014

S/N	Regime	Year	Name of corruption
1	Olusegun Obasanjo	1999 – 2007	Election rigging, abuse of office, Embezzlement, misappropriation, bribery, inflation of contract, extortion, illegal acquisition of property.
2	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua	2007 – 2010	Embezzlement, misappropriation, bribery, inflation of contract, extortion, embezzlement
3	Goodluck Jonathan	2010 – 2015	Embezzlement, misappropriation, bribery, inflation of contract, extortion

Source: Ojo (2016:10)

The anti-corruption movement during Obasanjo administration was directed at witch-hunting political opponents or party members who posed any threat to his style of governance and his anti-third term bid (Adagbabiri & Okolie, 2018:44). Regrettably, those who portrayed themselves as the appropriate physicians to this ailment all left the seat of power as patients (Ogundiya, 2009:281). Obasanjo's administration, which was the first democratic government after the transition from military rule was fingered in the Transcorp shares scandal that violated ethical codes for public officers, while the president lobbied lawmakers by bribing them to support his bid to alter the constitution to get a Third Term in office (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2018:259).

Prosecuted Cases of Political Corruption Between 1999-2015

S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount	Court Verdict
1.	Saminu Turaki	Arrested on 32 state counts	Former Governor of Jigawa State	36 billion Naira	Granted bail by court in 2007
2.	Bode George	Misappropriation and Embezzlement	Former Chairman Nigerian Port Authority (NPA)	85 billion Naira	Sentenced to 30 months jail
3.	Orji Uzor Kalu	Arrested on 107 state counts	Former Governor of Anambra	5 billion Naira	Granted bail in 2008
4.	James Ibori	Arrested on 170 state counts	Former Governor of Delta State	9.2 billion Naira	Granted bail in 2008
5.	Ayo Fayose	51 state counts	Former Governor of Ekiti State	N1.2 billion	Granted bail by Court Since 2007
6.	Joshua Dariye	Arrested on 14 state counts	Former Governor Plateau State	700 million Naira	Granted bail by Court since 2007
7.	Tafa Balogun	Money laundering	Former Inspector-General of Police	US\$130 million	Convicted to 5 years jail
8.	Chimaroke Nnamani	Arrested on 105 state counts	Former Governor of Enugu State	5.3 billion Naira	Granted bail by Court in 2007
9.	Gabriel Aduku	Arrested on 56 state counts	Former Minister of Health	300 million Naira	Case determined in 2008

S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount	Court Verdict
10.	Nyeson Wike	Arraigned on state count charge	Former Minister for State Education, and Chief of Staff to the Governor of Rivers State. He is also the immediate past Governor of River State.	4.670 billion Naira	Granted bail in 2008
11.	Mallam Nasir El-Rufai	Abuse of office	Former Minister of Federal Capital Territory. Also the immediate past Governor of Kaduna State	Nil	Granted bail by Court in 2009
12.	Adamu Abdullahi	Arraigned on 149 count charge	Former Governor of Nasarawa State, Former Senator, Former Secretary, Board of Trustees (BOT) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Also, the Immediate past Chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC).	5 billion Naira	Granted bail by Court
13.	Rasheed Ladoja	Arraigned on 33 count charge	Former Governor of Oyo State	6 billion Naira	Granted bail by Court in 2008

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S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount	Court Verdict
14.	Ndudi Elumelu	Arraigned on 158 state counts	Member of House of Representative	5.2 billion Naira	Remanded in Prison Custody and later granted bail by the court in 2009
15.	Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello	Arraigned on 56 state counts	Former Senator and former Ogun State Commissioner for Health	10 million naira	Granted bail in 2008
16.	Prof. Babalola Borishade	Arraigned on 11 count charge	Former Minister of Aviation	5.6 billion Naira	Granted bail in 2008
17.	Boni Haruna	Arraigned on 47 state counts	Former Governor, Adamawa State	250 million Naira	Granted bail in 2008
18.	Lucky Igbinedion	Arraigned on 191 count charge	Former Governor, Edo State	4.3 billion Naira	Granted bail by Court in 2008
19.	Dr Ransome Owan, Mr. Abdulrahman Ado, Mr. Adulrasak Alimi, Mr. Onwuamaeze	Arraigned on 196 state counts	They include chairman and 6 Commissioners of Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission.	1.5 billion Naira	Granted bail in 2009

S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount	Court Verdict
	Iloeje, Mrs Grace Eyoma, Mr. Mohammed Bunu, Mr. Abimbola Odubiyi				
20.	Professor Innocent Chuka Okonkwo, Uchechi	Arraigned on 14 state counts	The first person is a former Vice Chancellor of Imo state University	145 million	Remanded in Kuje Prison and later granted bail by court in 2009
21.	Dr Aliyu Abdullahi	Arraigned on 158 state counts	Former Federal Permanent Secretary	5.2 billion Naira	Remanded in Prison Custody and later granted bail by the court in 2009
22.	Hamman Bello Hammed	Arraigned on 46 state counts	Former Comptroller General of Nigerian Customs	2.5 billion Naira	Remanded in Kirikiri and Ikoyi Prisons, but later granted bail
23.	Dr Albert Ikomi	Arraigned on 4 state counts	Retired permanent Secretary	43 million Naira	Remanded in Ikoyi Prison and later Granted bail by court in 2009

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S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount	Court Verdict
24.	Kenny Martins	Arrested on 28 count charge	Police Equipment Fund	7,740 billion Naira	Granted bail by Court in 2008
25.	Hon. T. Faniyi, Albert Soje & others	Arrested on 30 count charge	The first is former Kogi State Commissioner for Local Government while the other one served as commissioner for agriculture	3 billion Naira	Suspects arrested on April 1, 2010. Remanded in prison custody and later granted bail by the court.

Source: Ojo (2016: 10-13)

In the case of Jonathan’s administration, corruption was allegedly a normal activity with cases of embezzlement of government funds by governors and ministers as well as their family members to the tune of billions of dollars (Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2018:259). A wave of discoveries of stolen funds hidden in various parts of Nigeria emerged in 2017. This was most prevalent between February and April 2014. This further heightened the perception of the Nigerian populace and foreign observers towards corruption in Nigeria. The concern of citizens who are inhabitants of the modern state about inhumane attitudes of leaders and the entire citizenry in Nigeria is a serious cause for concern (Eluozo, 2019: 10).

Unprosecuted Cases of Political Corruption Between 1999-2014

S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount
1.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Unconstitutional withdrawal of funds from federation account	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	2.1 billion Naira
2.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Misappropriation of money meant for nationwide power project	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	\$16 billion
3.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Bribery to elongate his tenure (The National Assembly members were bribed to pass a law for extension of his political tenure popularly known as Third Term Agenda)	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	23.45 billion Naira
4.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Illegal acquisition of shares	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	200 Million Naira
5.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Raising of funds while in office for personal accumulation (construction of private library)	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	8.5 billion Naira
6	Olusegun Obasanjo	2007 Election rigging	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	————
7	Sunday Afolabi	Embezzlement (The Minister was alleged to have defrauded the government in collaboration with SAGEM. The fund	Former Interior Minister	81.4 billion Naira —————

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S/N Name	Allegation	Position	Amount
	meant for National Identity Card was syphoned by the Minister and the company mentioned above)		
8. Salisu Buhari	Certificate forgery	Former Speaker of Federal House of Representative	_____
9. Andy Uba	Money laundering	An aide to former President Olusegun Obasanjo	Undisclosed
10. Adolphus Wabara	Bribery		\$400,000
11. Late Chuka Okadigbo	Personal enrichment, abuse and misuse of power	Former Senate President Former Senate President	_____
12. Late Evans Enwerem	Misappropriation	Former Senate President	_____
13. Stella Oduah	Misappropriation and abuse of office	Former Minister of Aviation	643 million Naira
14. Goodluck Jonathan	Arms scandal between Nigeria and South Africa	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	US\$15 million
15 Goodluck Jonathan	Diversion and illegal withdrawal of petroleum funds (Exposed by Lamido Sanusi, the former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria)	Former President of Federal Republic of Nigeria	\$US20 billion

S/N	Name	Allegation	Position	Amount
16.	Farouk Lawan	Bribery	Member of House of Representative	\$US620,000
17.	Katsina-Alu	Abuse of office and Judicial corruption	Former Chief judge of Supreme Court	—————
18.	Diezani K. Alison-Madueke	Misappropriation and embezzlement	Former Minister of Petroleum	£13 billion

Source: Ojo (2016:13)

The ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) won the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections on the change mantra, hinged on the promise that it will tackle corruption head-on, with the then candidate, Muhammadu Buhari repeatedly echoing that ‘if Nigerians don’t kill corruption, corruption will kill Nigeria’ (Abu & Staniewski, 2019: 3053).

Prosecution under the Buhari Administration

President Muhammadu Buhari took drastic measures towards the actualisation of the anti-corruption war in the country. This could be seen from various high-profile cases witnessed from 2015 to 2023. Edeh (2022), posited that one of the celebrated cases under former President Buhari is the arrest and prosecution of some politically exposed personalities such as former governors of Plateau and Taraba States (Joshua Dariye and Jolly Nyame). Others include Orji Uzor Kalu (Abia State) and Jonah Jang (Plateau State) even though they were cleared following a presidential pardon a few months to the 2023 general elections. This action calls to question the Buhari administration's anti-corruption policies (Edeh 2022).

Premium Times newspaper of 2nd April, 2021 reported that the EFCC had already seized land and real estate worth 44 Million US dollars from the former Petroleum Minister, allegedly bought with the proceeds of corruption. Similarly, On November 26, 2021, a Lagos Division of the Appeal Court affirmed the final forfeiture of Diezani's US \$40 million jewellery seized from the former minister's premises at No. 10 Fredrick Chiluba Close, Asokoro, Abuja. Others whose properties were seized by the anti-graft agency include: Haruna Momoh, former Managing Director of Pipelines and Products Marketing Company Limited PPMC, a subsidiary of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); Ibrahim Shema (former Governor of Katsina State), Patience Jonathan, former Nigerian First lady, Ayodele Fayose, Former Governor of Ekiti State, among others.

The former Director General, National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Ayodele Oke, was ousted for his inability to explain why the sum of \$43.4, £27.800 and ₦23.2 M were found in his Osborne Tower Apartment in Ikoyi, Lagos State. He was immediately sacked by the Former President Buhari. Another person was the former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Babachir David Lawal, whom President Buhari sacked following his involvement in the Internally Displaced Persons Camp's Grass-Cutting' shoddy deals. Similarly, President Buhari did not trivialise the charges brought against the former Chairman of the Special Investigation Panel for the Recovery of Public Property (SIRPP), Obolo-Obla, who was accused of administrative misconduct, as well as using forged

ordinary level certificate (WAEC) to gain admission into University of Jos to study Law and many other corrupt practices allegation levelled against him, against which he was unable to defend himself. He was immediately relieved of his appointment by the President (www.premiumtimesng.com).

The Punch (2015:3) gave a clear description on how President Buhari, upon assumption of office in 2015, took a swift action to knowing how the money released to the office of the former National Security Adviser (NSA) to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki, was spent. Evidence at his disposal indicated that the money was diverted into private purses. President Buhari frowned at the frivolous manner with which the \$2.1 billion meant for arms purchase to intensify the war against the Boko Haram insurgents was diverted by few. To fulfil his anti-corruption campaign promises, all accomplices to the crime were probed by the anti-graft agency, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). Consequently, Col. Sambo Dasuki (rtd), was on December 1st, 2015, arrested and incarcerated without trial for over four (4) years before he was finally released following a court order in 2019 (*Vanguard*, 2019).

On Friday December 13, 2020, the former governor of Abia State and a serving senator representing Abia North Senatorial Zone, Orji Uzor Kalu was jailed for ₦7.65 billion fraud case. According to an online report (www.efccnigeria.org), Kalu, who was prosecuted on a 27 counts charge by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), was finally jailed by a Federal High Court sitting in Lagos and presided over by Justice Muhammad Idriss. He was sentenced to twelve (12) years imprisonment.. Also convicted and jailed are two other accomplices- his firm, Slok Nigeria Limited, and Ude Udeogu, who was Director of Finance and Accounts at the Abia State Government house during his tenure as governor. The judge also ordered that Slok Nigeria Limited and its assets be forfeited to the Federal Government. Although Kalu has been released following a court order which exonerated him of all the allegations levelled against him, the President has shown capacity.

Similarly, the former Taraba State Governor, Rev. Jolly Nyame was on 7th February, 2020 jailed for 12 years by the Supreme Court. According to an *Premium Times* (www.premiumtimesng.com), the former governor was on November, 2018 ordered to pay a fine of Four Hundred and Ninety Five (495) million naira for the alleged misappropriation of funds while he was the governor of Taraba State from 1999-2007.

In the same vein, the former Head of Civil Service Commission, Winifred Oyo-Ita was on Monday 23rd of March, 2020 arraigned with eight other suspects for fraud bordering on estacodes, conference fees, and other allowances paid by the Federal Government into their coffers. Moreso, on the 20th of May, 2020 the President terminated the appointment of Mr. Charles Uwakwe as the Registrar and Chief Executive of the National Examination Council (NECO). Uwakwe was sacked, along with four members of the NECO management, for various offences bordering on financial impropriety. The other affected officials include the Acting Director (Finance and Accounts), Bamidele Olure, Head of Procurement Division, Shina Adetona, Deputy Director, Tayo Odukoya, and Head of Legal/Board Matters, Babatunde Aina. The dismissal of the officials was announced by the NECO spokesperson, Azeez Sani. (*Premium Times Newspapers*, 20th May, 2020:2).

In addition, former President Buhari did not trivialise the charges brought against the former Chairman of the Special Investigation Panel for the Recovery of Public Property (SIRPP), Obolo-Obla, who was accused of administrative misconduct, as well as using forged ordinary level certificate (WAEC) to gain admission into University of Jos to study Law and many other corrupt practices allegation levelled against him, against which he was unable to defend himself. He was immediately relieved of his appointment by Former President Buhari (www.premiumtimesng.com).

Former President Buhari also mid-wifed the unconditional resignation of the former Minister of Finance in his cabinet, Kemi Adeosun, when she was accused of using forged National Youth Service Corps' (NYSC) certificate without partaking in the compulsory one year National Service.

The judicial arm was not left out too, as notable Supreme Court Judges like Justice Sylvester Nwali Ngwuta, Justice Daramola Ademola and others were investigated for corruption charges brought against them by the anti-corruption agency, EFCC. Those found innocent were discharged and acquitted while those found culpable were summarily shown the way out. President Buhari also exhibited rare courage in handling the case involving the former Chief Judge of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Walter Onnoghen, for failure to declare his assets immediately after taking oath of office as required by law, which is contrary to Section 15(1) of the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act. The then CJN admitted that he forgot to do so. As a result, Onnoghen was sacked by the Tribunal. He was also banned from holding any public office for ten (10) years and ordered a forfeiture of any assets he could not account for to the state (www.premiumtimesng.com).

Ekpo *et. al.* (2016) argued that the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) which was to safeguard the public treasury has received a lot of criticisms from the people of Nigeria. He maintains that the agency has continued to bow to the whims and caprices of politicians, piloted towards promoting public looting in Nigeria. In fact, the release of the two former governors that were jailed for 10 and 12 years each for being guilty of financial mismanagement when they served their respective state as governors between 1999 and 2007 shocked every average Nigerians.

Corruption in the anti-corruption policy implementation body has stalled the adequate prosecution of corrupt officials over the years, especially the political class. The EFCC has been facing various challenges that centred on lack of independence, poor legislation, and politicisation (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Therefore, the Nigerian anti-corruption crusades are regarded as a feeble illusion in persecuting corrupt politicians and public officials because of compromised sincerity of the officials of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (BBC, 2011). Recall that, between 2003 and 2011 the EFCC claimed to have prosecuted 35 high level political figures for corruption. But, executive interference, a weak, complacent and overburdened anti-graft commission,

confronted with lack of resources and capacity led to a very small number of convictions (Human Rights Watch, 2012).

Findings

The influence or pressure of communalistic living of Africans and the extended family system, and pressure to meet extended family obligations, is one of the causal factors of corruption among elected officials (Dike, 2003). Similarly, the Nigerian extended family places enormous pressure on the civil servant, forcing him to engage in corrupt practices and nepotism (Arowolo, 2010). Likewise, it is a common practice to see Nigerians come out to defend or show solidarity with a kinsman who is undergoing prosecution or accused of corrupt practices as ethnicity is often widely identified as the motivating factor for such acts (Ololajulo, 2016: 165).

The principle of rotation of power with its patron-client network and identity politics is an enabler which enhances corruption through nepotism, patronage, and other acts of favouritism which can be tantamount to an abuse of power (Ololajulo, 2016: 164). The impunity that perpetrators of corruption enjoy in Nigeria speaks to the nature of power relation in the country (Adeleke, 2012: 58).

Contradictory verdicts by the courts are placing a question mark on sincerity of the government (Muhammad & Salawu, 2020: 794). The judicial arm of government which in any clime is the last hope of the common man has been bastardised by the undue interference of the executives. Corruption is so rampant in this sector to the extent that even government has lost confidence in the judiciary system as matters of crucial importance are channelled abroad for justice [See the case of Alamesiagha versus Federal Government, Ibori versus Federal Government and Henry Orkar versus Federal Government (Eluozo, 2019: 16)].

Pervasiveness of advance fee fraud without consequences has greatly impacted the international image of Nigeria in a negative way. It has destroyed the trust that the international community has in Nigeria as well as the credibility of both government and individuals. This is a source of discouragement to genuine investors from coming to the country despite the abundant opportunities that are available (Muhammad & Salawu, 2020: 794).

Plea bargain constitutes a huge hindrance to the successful eradication of corruption in Nigeria, as Adeleke (2012: 63) puts it, EFCC never consulted the people of Bayelsa, Edo States on the cases of Alamesigha and Igbinedion respectively before negotiating plea bargain on their behalf, because the money looted belongs to the people of the respective states where the crimes were committed. Whereas, plea bargain is illegal in the Nigerian adjudicatory system. With the exception of Lagos State, none of the states of the Federation has expressly recognised plea bargaining in its criminal process. This is why a former Chief Justice of Nigeria, Dahiru Musdahaer held that plea bargain is illegal, fraudulent and not part of the Nigerian criminal process (Osipitan & Odusoye, 2014:78).

The fight against corruption is a fight against a few oligarchies with immense resources at their disposal to fight back (Osipitan & Odusoye, 2014: 75), this is what is regarded as corruption fighting back when being fought. In 2020 after the suspension of the then Chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu, the President, Buhari, sets up Ayo Salami Panel, to investigate the allegations of corruption levelled against him. It was however later alleged that the suspension was politically motivated because of palace power play with the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, fingered to have orchestrated the suspension (Akpan, 2020). Through their constitutional powers of Presidential pardon to convicted persons most especially corrupt politicians, various Presidents in Nigeria have continued to constitute stumbling blocks to the successful fight against corruption as they continue to carry the moral burden of abusing their exalted office and aiding wanton corruption in the country (Yunusa, 2024). Most of the alleged corrupt politicians during the President Buhari's administration decamped to the ruling party and this attested to why some of the former President's associates, including his wife, Aisha Buhari, and party faithful reiterated that the anti-corruption war is politicised and the administration hijacked by some cabals (Thompson, Afolabi, Raheem & Onifade; 2020).

The poor reward system is another serious factor (Dike, 2003), with absence of dignity for labour, public office holders are further given more reason to abuse their offices. Nigeria's reward system is, perhaps, among the poorest worldwide as national priorities are misplaced, meritocracy is

discouraged while mediocrity is promoted (Arowolo, 2010). Factors must be put in place to incentivise dutiful service and jettison sharp practices. This will serve as a motivation to civil servants not just to stay away from public funds, since they can have access to meet their needs while in service or in the future. It will equally make them stop the act of being accessories and accomplices to corrupt politicians. As Igbokwe, Anyanwu and Osakede (2021) put it, motivation is generally linked to rewards, and it is widely recognised that reward management is central to effective service delivery.

Conclusion

The paper submitted that the issue of corruption has been a major ailment that poses challenges to the advancement of the Nigerian state and all the supposed physicians that have put themselves forward have left office eventually as patients themselves. Although the Buhari's administration recorded some high profile prosecutions, not many convictions and recoveries were made, as is expected of a government that came to power through an anti-corruption campaign. This is not to mention corrupt acts that were perpetuated by government officials during the tenure of the administration. For instance, the Central Bank Governor is currently facing trial for acts of corruption while in office during the Buhari administration.

Corruption continued in other areas in the administration- despite the removal of a serving Chief Judge of the Federation over failure to declare assets, the removal of a serving Secretary to the Government of the Federation on allegation of grass cutting scam, arraignment of a sitting Senate President and prosecutions of several former governors. These feats received little or no accolades because there was no tangible conviction or recovery from these cases. This did not go down well with Nigerians who believe that the Buhari's administration will repeat something similar to the war against indiscipline and corruption which was obtainable during his tenure as Head of State between 1983-1985.

Conclusively, the Buhari's administration's fight against corruption although had Nigerians filled with hopes from inception, could not achieve much in the end with the anti-corruption Caesar (Ibrahim Magu) unceremoniously removed in what appears as a power play, this has justified popular saying, when you fight, corruption fights back.

Recommendations

Having dissected the issues confronting the fight against corruption in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Putting in place institutional mechanisms to prevent corruption as it is easier to prevent stealing than spending time and fortunes on investigations and prosecutions.
2. The reward system for public office holders should be reviewed and reworked in a way that it confers reward and dignity on labour.
3. Government at all levels must work in collaboration with financial institutions to create a working credit system where people do not need to own the entire resources before having access to houses, cars and other amenities of life.
4. Government should ensure that good governance is felt by the greatest number of people, the present predicament in Nigeria can be likened to a situation where the masses suffer while the few privileged to be in public offices grab the opportunity to liberate themselves.
5. Poverty, through people friendly alleviation programmes, must be fought head on.
6. The National Assembly should revisit the sanctions and jail term ascribed to certain offences in a way to ensure stiffer punishments for corrupt officers.
7. The practice of plea bargaining should be abolished in the prosecution of public officers.
8. In prosecution cases, civil/public servants who are accomplices and accessories to the criminality should not be spared in order to discourage permanent workers (civil/public servants) from assisting and collaborating with temporary jobbers (politicians) in looting government funds.
9. Whistleblowers should be compensated and encouraged. Civil/public servants should become assured of being compensated if they foil corruption, rather than collaborate and face the deterrence for corruption.

10. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Police should be given proper training and encouraged to work in synergy in the fight against corruption.

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