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Nigerian Conundrum: Democracy and the Hegemony of Corruption in Nigeria (1999-2017)

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Abstract

Official corruption which manifests in the brazen looting and unprecedented hijack of the national resources has not only become epiphenomenal in the Nigerian democratic dispensation but a basic feature of Nigerian nationhood. We contend in this paper that this sordid phenomenon does not only reflect the nature of Nigerian socio-economic formation, but a consequence of the over arching dictatorship of a tiny minority who by virtue of the July 1966 coup have presided over the consumptive pseudo-capitalist Nigerian social formation in the last five decades. We espoused the trajectory of official corruption in the past six decades and empirically shown that it has not only been increasing in dimension and complexities with different governments but has become hegemonic in the last two decades of democratic governance. The hijack of socio-economic and political resources of the Nigerian state and the creation of powerful cult of leadership has made connection to the cult in ways that are often corrupt laden a basis for the acquisition of and/or membership of economic and political ruling class. This has become a major Nigerian conundrum. Consequently, despite measures deployed to fight corruption, the phenomenon has not only subsisted but become hegemonic. The paper concludes that attempts at the mitigation of official corruption must start with the dismantling of the Nigerian conundrum.

Keywords: Conundrum, Democracy, Hegemony, Corruption.

Introduction

"Nigerian politicians are fundamentally disposed to corruption because it happens to be the prevailing order that they know and the universe of expectations in which they operate". (Jeyifor, 2014: 13). The challenge of official corruption in Nigeria is very intriguing as it is exasperating, because corruption constitutes the most formidable obstacle to economic development, social equality and political stability in Nigeria. Corruption has become systemic, endemic, structural and institutionalised as well as a product of matrix complex of relationship within the Nigerian social structure. In Nigeria, bribery in public and private sectors, misapplication and misappropriation of

budgetary allocations, contract inflation and outright looting of public funds are some of the ingenious ways corruption has been perpetrated in the country.

The dawn of democratic dispensation in the last two decades in Nigeria has not in any way mitigated the monstrosity of corruption. The liberal democratic institutions are supposed to act as a bulwark against the bastardisation of societal institutions suffered under the military interregnum; and ensure good governance through the taming of the invidiousness of the inchoate political ruling class. Under the liberal democratic dispensation, Nigeria came under the sordid hegemony of overarching corruption in which politicians became fundamentally disposed to corruption because it happened to be the prevailing order in which they are willy-nilly compelled to operate. The dictatorship of corruption in this dispensation is despite the democratic constitutional and legal provisions that are vicariously aimed at checking corrupt tendencies of the democratic actors.

In Nigeria, the nature of relationship among members of the ruling class; between the ruling class and the civil society; and between the ruling class and the Nigerian state over the years have been overwhelmed by corrupt tendencies. In Sociological analysis, when the configuration of relationship in an area of human endeavour persists for a long time, it becomes institutionalised and structural and therefore hegemonic. (Anikpo, 1994). Corruption has therefore become hegemonic in Nigeria because it defines the context within which the political, economic and social engagement of the Nigerian ruling class take place in the last five decades. In situations where corruption has become hegemonic, major institutions and processes of the state are routinely dominated and used by corrupt individuals and in which most people have no alternative other than to deal with corrupt officials. Deviant conducts are so institutionalised such that no individual can be personally faulted organisationally (not morally) and except for political expediency for involvement in such conducts. (Klitgard, 2006).

The proclivity of the Nigerian political class to unmitigated official corruption is however a reflection of the structure of the society which border on the dynamics of the nature of the economy and the dialectics of a pseudo capitalist state. (Ake, 2008). Again, even though the study is based on the era of democratic dispensation; an appreciation of the nature of corruption in Nigeria will be realised when the hegemony is historically extended beyond the dawn of the fourth republic in 1999. It is at once our methodological premise that the historical and dialectical structure of the society rooted in the substructure best explains the phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria. This is because it is the same ruling class albeit in different connotations that have traversed the entire spectrum of Nigerian socio-political trajectory.

The pathological looting of the Nigerian common wealth by the ruling class under a pseudo-capitalist state has become both compelling and inevitable. The tendency to accumulate by fair or foul means is not only a basic feature of capitalism but corruption is a nature of this tendency. Our point of departure in this paper is that official corruption in Nigeria has become so systemic and structural that effort to extirpate it without fundamentally addressing the nature of the socio-economic formation and the character of the tiny dominant class which constitute the causative factors is both ruling class camouflage and wild goose chase.

Defining Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption has been seen from different dimensions in Nigeria. In the first place, it is seen as the infringement of the constitution including breaching of Federal Character constitutional provisions on the sharing of political and bureaucratic positions by the Nigerian ruling class. Again corruption in Nigeria is likened to an animal kingdom in which the propensity to consume constitutes the primary essence of living. This translates into uncanny schizophrenic tendency to loot and embezzle the common wealth without qualms by the Nigerian ruling class. (Sagay, 2018). Also the magnitude of what is stolen determines to an extent whether the act qualifies for corruption or mere stealing in Nigeria. (Jonathan, 2015). The problem here is the lack of exactitude on the amount of loot that could actually be designated as corruption or stealing. However what indeed constitute corruption in Nigeria has been dynamic and dialectic over the years, which is a reflection of the changing character of the Nigerian ruling class.

Thus Huttington's (1989: 377) definition of corruption tends to cover the essence of time, culture and cultural peculiarities. To him "corruption is behaviour of public officials which violate accepted norms in order to serve private ends". However Gboyega's conception of corruption as a distortion of democratic process is more apt with the essence of our discussion in this paper. He defines corruption as *"any decision, act, or conduct that subverts the integrity of people in authority or institutions charged with promoting, defending or sustaining the democratisation process, thereby undermining its effectiveness in performing its roles"*.

Much of the definitions of corruption see it as a negation of the moral principles that guide official obligations. The reprehensibility of violation of societal moral density through corruption is not in contention because corruption is of course a morally laden term. Thus views about corruption differ just as there are different views about morality. People disagree about the morality of norms that determine the activity that may be considered corrupt or not in the society. When corruption is considered in these subjective terms, it makes for normative confusion. Corruption should not therefore be seen as a system of processes but rather a reflection of socio-economic structure of the society. When considered in this way, society and its institutions rather than the individual idiosyncrasies should constitute the major explanatory variable for the incidence of corruption in Nigeria. (Pavner and Nasser, 2003).

Unfortunately the view of Nigerian state on corruption has been influenced by the process rather than the structure. This conception of corruption has also influenced the fight against corruption which has to large extent become unarguably ineffective. As argued by Kukah (2016) the fight against corruption in Nigeria has become the fight against assumed corrupt people rather than the fight against corruption itself. In other words action against corruption has been symptomatic rather than causative. Thus to us, corruption in Nigeria is the manipulation of the state by the ruling class within a bastardised capitalist social economy in the uncanny commandeering of the common wealth to the utter chagrin of the hard working Nigerian masses. It is simply the bribery, looting, extortion, graft, nepotism and other forms of impunity perpetrated by the ruling class within the Nigerian state.

Methodological Premise

My methodological premise in this paper and which perhaps is the most appropriate paradigm is the Historical and Dialectical Materialism which is a basic political economy Marxist approach. Official

corruption in Nigeria is a product of Nigerian socio-economic structure. The Nigerian society is basically capitalist with emphasis on primitive capital accumulation which naturally predisposes individuals to corruption. The structure and ethos of capitalism make the tendency to accumulate senselessly whether fraudulently or legally inexorable. As Marx (2006; 98) opined “The law of capitalist accumulation, metamorphosed by economists into pretended law of nature, in reality merely states that the very nature of accumulation excludes every diminution in the degree of exploitation”. The political economy approach roots its interpretation on the fundamental processes of production and distribution from which structural conditions of social, economic and political relations emanate. (Anikpo, 1996).

Political economy approach is also germane in the consideration of capitalist society as a system of both political and economic power. Political power is used by the ruling class, particularly in developing countries to transform into unimaginable economic power. “Capitalism therefore is not simply an economic system; it is also a political system and a mode of exercising power”. (Ritzer and Stepnisky, 2014: 56). Analysis that stem from this view puts official corruption in class terms. The ruling class controls the commanding heights of the economy and the political space with their foreign patrons. It is therefore imperative that the humongous official corruption that can upset the system and arrest development can only be indulged in by the ruling class. The ruling class does not only have access to the common wealth by their position in the political economy; but it also has the where withal to perpetrate such monstrous impudence. As Achebe, (1983: 18), succinctly espoused *“corruption goes with power; and any meaningful discussion of corruption must be located within the ranks of the powerful”*.

Nigeria, the ruling class and hegemony of official corruption.

First republic and incipient corruption tendencies

The history of corruption in Nigerian is almost as old as modern Nigeria. Achebe (2013: 37) has noted that “the years leading to independence, Nigeria has already become a cesspool of corruption, with civil servants helping themselves to the national wealth”. Thus few years to the Nigerian independence in 1960 and between 1960 and 1966, major Nigerian political leaders such as Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Chief Okotie Eboh, Raymond Njoku, Alhaji Ribadu and K. O. Mbadiwe among others have been indicted of corrupt enrichment by different commissions of inquiry. (Okoli, 2010, Folayan, 2014). Before the coup of 1966, corruption has become rife within the civil service, the judiciary, the executive and the legislature. Indeed, official corruption and the impunity of the political class motivated the coup of January, 1966. (Ademoyega, 2004).

Military and the Years of Brigandage

The period between 1966 and 1975 was the dawn of oil boom with such stupendous funds that General Gowon the then head of state declared with unabashed confidence that the Nigerian problem was not money but how to spend it. The government officials and the members of the ruling class had a field day with the unimaginable quantum of slush funds in the country. Nigerian foreign exchange was depleted at alarming rate with the importation of relevant and irrelevant relics in the

country. Again, the corruption of the ports, the customs and related government agencies led to the flooding of the ports with imported goods. In the process, a particular government task force flooded the ports with unusable cement that overwhelmed the entire port system in the country. Daboh's revelation of Tarka's corrupt engagement roused interest on how the federal commissioners, permanent secretaries and other government officials were looting the nation blind. (Okeomah, 2010).

General Murtala Mohammed's government effort after his successful coup against Gowon's government in 1975 to stem the abysmally pervasive corruption of the Gowon era achieved minimal result, because the efforts could not engender the requisite deterrent against corruption. (Omotoso, 1988). By the time of second republic under the Shagari government in 1979, Nigeria has become steeped in wanton graft and impunity. Shagari's government continued with the unbridled recklessness and impudence with slush funds which exacerbated the unprecedented looting of the national treasury. Reports showed that only 35% of the oil receipt was reinvested while 24% went into public spending. A whopping 40% was spent on private consumption. Capital flight was massive through contract inflation and over invoicing of imports. Official estimates of capital flight from Nigeria from 1979 and 1983 put the figure at over US 14 billion dollars. (The African Guardian, November, 1993 quoted in Anikpo, 1996). The ports once again became congested with imported expired and contaminated tons of rice under the task force on rice importation headed by the then transport minister Alhaji Umaru Dikko. Import license racketeering was rife and electoral fraud decimated the popular will and mandate of the people. The indulgence of the politicians in ostentatious life and vulgarisation of wealth resulted in the paradox of the introduction of austerity measures in a supposedly wealthy nation in an economic boom. (Ezeani, 2014).

Between 1984 and 1998, Nigeria witnessed another round of military dictatorship under the hegemonic suzerainty of largely Babangida and Abacha regimes. The respite provided by the Buhari administration was so short lived that it could not mitigate what would become the monumental institutionalization of official sleaze and what was generally known as the government of settlement. The political, judicial, social and economic institutions and structures were pervasively corrupted. What guarantees a millionaire status is not hard work and dedication but the capacity to connect to the seat of power. It is instructive to note that the where about of 12million dollars of gulf oil windfall is still a mirage. (Okeomah, 2010). Also, it is estimated that Abacha and his family alone looted between five to ten billion dollars. (Omojale, 2007 and Ribadu, 2009). The loot scattered all over the world by members of Abacha family and his close associates remain hard nuts to crack by the succeeding governments. The result was the collapse of government services such as NEPA, (National Electric Power Authority) NIPOST (Nigerian Postal Services) and NNPC (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) which became bankrupt through fraud, mismanagement, and inordinate intervention by state officials. (The Tell Magazine, April 18, 1994).

Democratization of Corruption

Corruption in the present democratic dispensation instead of abating has been raised to unprecedented heist, despite the avalanche of the legislations, acts, agencies, institutions and bureaus that have been deployed to fight it. The democratic state has had more debilitating than benevolent impact on the Nigerian masses. This cannot be otherwise when over 50% of the fund appropriated for development are frittered away or looted through corruption and other forms of official sleaze. Reports show that over 11trillion of the 20trillion naira appropriated for development in the first four years of Dr Jonathan's administration was looted by government officials. (The Source, August, 2015). Also, according to SERAP (Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project), over 1.4 trillion naira was stolen by just 55 politicians between 2001 and 2010. Indeed, NNPC between 2012 and 2015 remitted only 3.8 trillion naira out of 8.4trillion naira it earned to the Federation account, thereby with holding 42% of the entire earnings. (The Nation, January, 2016).

Between 2000 and 2015, some of the major corruption cases in the country include:

Haliburton, Willbross and Siemens bribery scams that involved many high ranking government officials;

Pension fund looting in which over 38billion naira was involved;

The NDDC scam involving over 183 billion naira;

Ware housing of unspent funds from budgets in which ministers were prosecuted;

Oil subsidy scam involving over 5trillion naira;

The sleaze in NNPC in which about 20 billion dollars among other funds allegedly missing:

Depletion of foreign reserve and excess crude account resulting in the alleged squandering of over 450 billion naira and 22billion dollars respectively;

Power probes that have revealed over 2.9trillion naira investment between 1999 and 2007 on none executed but appropriated budgets;

Over 4.1 trillion naira spent on Nigerian roads without appreciable results;

Estimated 700 million dollars missing from the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF);

Over 2.1 billion dollars arms purchase scheme scam;

Over 1.1 billion dollars Malabo scam involving the fraudulent sale of oil field OPL 145. (Eyisi, et al, 2017).

Again, more than 70% of the governors between 1999 and 2015 have been prosecuted for different levels of corruption charges. (Newswatch, 2014). Below is the list of governors on trial or under investigation by the EFCC.

Table 1. EX-GOVERNORS BEING PROSECUTED ON CORRUPTION ALLEGATION:

SN	GOVERNOR	STATE	PERIOD IN POWER	CHARGE
1	Abdulahi Adama	Nassarawa	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N15B
2	Abubakar Audu	Kogi	1999-2003	Diversion of N5.7B
3	Achike Udenwa	Imo	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N3.6B
4	Adamu Muazu	Bauchi	1999-2007	Diversion of N7.2B
5	Adebayo Ala-Akalo	Oyo	2004-2008	Embezzlement of N4.3B
6	Akwa Doma	Nassarawa	2003-2007	Diversion of funds
7	Akpabio Godswill	Akwa Ibom	2007-2015	Misappropriation of N108B
8	Attahiru Bafarawa	Sokoto	1999-2007	Diversion of N2.8B
9	Ayo Fayose	Ekiti	2003-2006	Embezzlement of N7.2B
10	Boni Haruna	Adamawa	1999-2007	Diversion of funds
11	C. Nnamani	Enugu	1999-2007	Diversion of N5.2B
12	D.P. Alamesiya	Bayelsa	1999-2003	Laundering of N11B
13	Daniel Susman	Benue	2007-2015	Embezzlement of N9.7B
14	James Ibori	Delta	1999-2007	Laundering of N15b
15	Jolly Nyame	Taraba	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N2.1B
16	Joshua Dariye	Plateau	1999-2007	Laundering of \$13.2
17	Lucky Igbinedion	Edo	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N35B
18	Murtala Nyako	Adamawa	2007-2014	Misappropriation of N9.2B
19	Olusola Saraki	Kwara	2003-2011	Diversion of funds
20	Orji Uzor Kalu	Abia	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N3.2B
21	Peter Odili	Rivers	1999-2007	Misappropriation of N90B
22	Saminu Turaki	Jigawa	1999-2007	Laundering of N90B
23	Sule Lamido	Jigawa	2007-2015	Diversion of fund.
24	Ikedim Ohakim	Imo	2007-2011	Diversion of N3.9B
25	Rashid Ladoja	Oyo	2003-2006	Embezzlement of N4.7B
26	Usman Dakingari	Kebbi	1999-2007	Embezzlement
27	Timipre Sylva	Bayelsa	2007-2012	Laundering of N6.7B
28	Yinusa Uguda	Bauchi	2007-2015	Diversion of N6.18B

Source: Newswatch, August, 2014; Tell, Oct, 24, 2011.

The above table indicates that more than one-third of the governors between 1999 and 2015 in Nigeria are already undergoing prosecution for corruption offences committed while in the office. This is exclusive of the numbers that are undergoing investigation by different anti-corruption and security agencies. (Adurotoye, 2015)).

The corruption in the National Assembly in the present dispensation is not less unprecedented as that among the governors. Between 60% and 70% of the principal officers of the National Assembly have been indicted and/or undergoing prosecution between 1999 and 2015. Below is the table showing corruption charges against some of the principal officers of the National Assembly.

Table 2. NASS OFFICIALS ON CORRUPTION ALLEGATION.

S/N	NAME	RANK	OFFENCE
1	Evans Enwerem	Senate President	Forgery
2	Chuba Okadigbo	Senate President	Contract inflation
3	Anyim Pius	Senate President	Embezzlement
4	Adolphus Wabara	Senate President	Budget padding
5	Olusola Saraki	Senate President	Asset declaration
6	Buhari Salihu	Speaker	Forgery
7	Patricia Ette	Speaker	Contract inflation
8	Dimeji Bankole	Speaker	Embezzlement
9	Yakubu Dogara	Speaker	Budget padding
10	Ike Ekweremadu	Deputy S/Pres.	Forgery
11	Ndidi Elumelu	Committee Head	Bribery
12	Farouk Lawan	Committee Head	Funds diversion
13	Hembe Herman	Committee Head	Funds diversion
14	Azubogu, I.	Deputy Head	Funds diversion
15	Ibrahim Jubrin	Committee Head	Budget padding
17	Ibrahim Mantu	Deputy S/Pres.	Bribery
18	Jonathan Zwingina	Senator 1999-03	Bribery

SOURCE: Compiled by the Researcher.

The corruption in the National Assembly appears far deeper than the above exposition. This is because they have unwittingly increased the cost of governance through their unprecedented personal emolument that is at variance with their constitutional allocation from the Revenue Mobilization and Allocation Committee, (RMAC). (Sagay, 2013).

It is however the corruption in the executive that upset the Nigerian state within this democratic dispensation. The mind boggling corruption cuts across the presidency, the cabinets, personal aids and departments and agencies. Below is the list of ministers and advisers currently undergoing prosecution and/or investigation.

Table 3. MEMBERS OF FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ON CORRUPTION ALLEGATION

S/N	NAME	MINISTRY	PERIOD SERVED	OFFENCE
1	Ibrahim Adamu	Works	2003-2007	Embezzlement
2	Prof. Grange A.	Health	2007-2009	Unspent fund
3	Adiukwu, M.	Health	2007-2009	Unspent fund
4	Deziani, M	Petroleum	2011-2015	Embezzlement
5	Basher, Y.	Fianace	2011-2015	Embezzlement
6	Aminu W.	Foreign	2011-2013	Embezzlement
7	Nurudeen, M	Foreign	2011-2013	Embezzlement
8	Bala, M.	FCT	2011-2015	Embezzlement
9	Abba moro interior	Interior	2011-2015	Embezzlement
10	Prof. Oyewole	Aviation	1999-2003	Contract inflation
11	Seyi Ogunlewe	Work	2003-2005	Contract inflation
12	Fani Kayode	Aviation	2003-2007	Embezzlement
13	Stella Oduah	Aviation	2011-2014	Contract inflation
14	Viola Onwuliri	Foreign	2013-2015	Embezzlement
15	Mohammed, A.	Justice	2007-2009	Embezzlement
15	Joel Delema	Labour	2007-2010	Asset declaration
16	Godfrey, Olubebe	Niger Delta	2011-2015	Embezzlement
17	Laureta Mararaba	Environment	2011-2015	Embezzlement
18	Sunday Afolabi	Interior	1999-2001	Embezzlement
19	Obanikoro	Defence	2014-2015	Embezzlement
20	Dudafa, W.	Adviser(Domestic)	2011-2015	Embezzlement
21	Hassan Tukur	Principal Sec.	2011-2015	Embezzlement
22	Reuben Abati	Adviser (Media)	2012-2015	Embezzlement
23	Doyin Okukpe	Adviser (Media)	2014-2015	Embezzlement
24	Sunny Kuku	Amnesty N/Delta	2012-2015	Embezzlement
25	Ojebene, E.	ADC	2011-2015	Embezzlement

SOURCE: Compilation by the researcher, December, 2016.

It is imperative to note that between 1999 and 2003, there was massive fraud in the PTDF involving President Obasanjo and Vice president Atiku. Indeed the two top political figures openly accused themselves of shady deals in the unprecedented PTDF and other ignoble corrupt acts. (Newswatch, September 18, 2006). In the same vein the president's wife between 2011 and 2015 is under investigations for diversion and embezzlement of 70million US dollars. Indeed some of her alleged accomplices had already been convicted of the said fraud. (The Nation, September, 11, 2016). There have also been investigations and prosecutions of top officials of government agencies and departments bordering on corruption. Some of the agencies include; National Insurance Health Scheme (NIHS), National Action Against Aids (NACA), Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), National Pensions Board, National Identity Card Scheme. (Newswatch, August, 2014).

Corruption in the judiciary is not less insidious as in other institutions in the country. Indeed, high profile officers of the temple of justice both from the bar and bench are undergoing investigation and prosecution for high level bribery, extortion, fraud and embezzlement of public funds. They include: Ricky Tarfar (SAN), Daniel Obla (SAN), Damian Dodo (SAN), Justice Sylvester Ngwuta (Justice of Supreme Court), Justice John Okoro (Justice of the Supreme Court), Justice Adeniyi Ademola (Judge of Federal High Court), Justice Rita Ofili Ajumogobia (Judge of the Federal High Court), Justice Dimdga

Igwe (Judge of the Federal High Court), Justice Pindiga Muazu (Judge of Gombe state High Court), Justice I. A Umezuruike (Former Enugu state Chief Judge), Justice Kabir Auta (Judge of Kano state High Court), Justice Liman (Judge of the Federal High Court P/H), Justice Anwuli Chikere (Judge of Federal High Court) and Justice Mohammed Tsamiya (Judge of Federal Ilorin Court of Appeal Ilorin). (Sahara Reporters, October, 16, 2016). In recent times Nigerian courts across all levels have been replete with bizarre judgements; some of which manifests glaring evidences of miscarriage of justice. This has also reflected in the many cases of contradictory judgements from courts of coordinate jurisdiction. (Obi Nwakanma, 2016).

The Military High Command in Nigeria has demeaned the ethos of military profession by becoming steeped in Nigerian ruling class corruption conundrum. This has not only compromised its prime responsibility but has undermined the national security. (Orebe Femi, 2016). This situation has worsened in the last few years. Much of the highest echelon of the Nigerian military are currently being investigated or prosecuted by the EFCC for mind boggling corrupt practices involving unimaginable humongous amount of money. The former minister of state for defence Mislieu Obanikoro is undergoing prosecution for diverting and embezzling over N3 billion from the ministry of defence funds. The former National Security Adviser (NSA) between 2013-2015 Col Sambo Dasuki is being prosecuted for laundering over \$2.3billion of security votes. Former Chief of Defence Staff between 2013 and 2015 Commodore Badeh is undergoing prosecution for embezzling N3billion of the defence funds. The Chief of Air Staff Air Commodore Amosu and Chief of Naval Staff Commodore Jubrin Ayinla are facing prosecution by the EFCC for fraud of various amounts of defence funds totalling of Defence N2.9billion and N3.2 billion respectively. Reports by the Presidential Committee on Audit Equipment Procurement (CADEP) has also indicted the two past Chiefs of Army Staff rtd Generals Azubuike Ihejirika and Kenneth Minimah for mismanaging over N7.5 billion arms fund. (The Nation, August 14, 2016).

The Nigerian Federal Government between 2015 and 2017 is under the same ruling class whose interest is staked in the sordid accumulative and consumptive capitalist system that has become Nigerian conundrum over the past five decades. The change agenda was therefore a ruse *ab initio*. Also the fact that the fight against corruption was a major plank of this administration has not changed the character of the Nigerian ruling class. Thus, despite the usual anti-corruption propaganda and new anti-corruption measures such as the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Whistle Blowing policy and forfeiture of corruption proceeds policy; it is evident that two years of this administration has recorded more unprecedented official corruption than the corresponding periods in the past three administrations under the present Nigerian democratic experience.

However, it is in the area of constitutional breach and abuse of due process that this government has surpassed its predecessors in the flagrant corruption of extant democratic governance processes. Some of the glaring incidences of these abuses include:

- i. Nepotism, cronyism and favouritism that have characterised major appointments of this government. This is a breach of the Federal Character Commission Act of 1955 and enshrined in 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigerian;
- ii. Reinstatement of Mohammed Maina and Usman Yusuf to their post in the Federal Civil Service and National Insurance Health Scheme (NHIS) respectively without recourse to their supervising

ministers and Heads of departments. These officers have been sacked by their employers, the Presidency in 2015 and Ministry of Health in 2017 for financial corruption involving billions of naira; iii. Appointment of unqualified person as the Director-General of National Intelligent Agency and removal of the incumbent who though on acting capacity was qualified by virtue of being the most senior officer in agency. Reports show that the removed chairman in a testimony to the House of Representative committee on National Security resisted the pressure from higher quarters to part with over 400 million dollars looted funds from the agency. (Omokiri, 2017).

iv. The continued retention of the acting chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) even when the appointment has repeatedly lost the approval of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thus the retention of the EFCC chairman in acting capacity is a breach of the Nigerian constitution.

v. Spending money from the Federation Account by the presidency without parliamentary approval which breaches section 162(1) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The recent payment of 348 million dollars for fighter helicopter from USA manifests this situation.

vi. Assumption of duties by some heads of departments and agencies of government without parliamentary approval.

vii. Disobedience to court orders in cases that border on fundamental human rights under the guise of fighting corruption and terrorism.

The oil industry just like the previous regimes has not only made Nigeria a rent economy; but has witnessed unprecedented corruption even with the president as the supervising minister. The following cases of corruption have been witnessed in the industry in the past two years:

i. The payment of over 1.4 trillion naira worth of oil subsidy to imaginary importers of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) against assurances of the extirpation of the subsidy regime. This is also in view of the hike in fuel price from eighty-seven naira to one hundred and forty-five naira. Even at that, the payment of six billion naira subsidy in six years by the previous regime was considered outrageous and outlandishly corrupt.

ii. Awarding of contract worth over twenty-five billion dollars by the Group Managing Director of NNPC. Legally, the limit of NNPC contract award by the provisions of Public Procurement Act of 2007 and NNPC Tenders Board is twenty million beyond which approval must be sought from the Board or the supervising minister. This allegation was raised by no less a person than the minister of state for petroleum and chairman of the NNPC Board who by virtue of his position ought to give such approval.

iii. Non-remittance of oil proceeds to the Federation account as required by sections 1(3) and 162 (18 and 10) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This has recorded fundamental problems in the monthly allocation of revenues to the federating units in the federation. This has also disrupted FAAC (comprising of minister of state for finance and 36 states commissioners of finance) meetings where the allocation are made.

iv. Continuing importation of fuel against the provision of rehabilitation of the four local refineries and construction of modular refineries for local refining of fuel.

Again in the last two years, major officers of the administration have been implicated in corrupt practices. Some have been sanctioned by the presidency while others have not been sanctioned. None has however been prosecuted for corruption by relevant anti-corruption agencies.

- i. Babacha Lawal, former Secretary to the Federal Government implicated in fund diversion by his company. The diverted fund was for the upkeep of Internally Displaced Persons from the Boko Haram terrorism. He has been sacked but yet to be prosecuted.
- ii. Lawal Oke, former Director-General of National Intelligence Agency for stacking millions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling and hundreds of millions of naira at an Ikoyi apartment Lagos. He has been sacked but yet to be prosecuted.
- iii. Abba Kyari, Chief of Staff to the president. He was alleged to be involved in bribe scandal involving MTN penalty as well as part of the senior officer of the government accused of mounting pressure on the former Director-General of NIA for the sharing of over 400 million dollar. He has not been sanctioned. (Premium Times, 2017).
- iv. Abubakar Malami, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Federation. He was implicated in the double dealing payment of six billion naira to Nigerian lawyers for the negotiation of Abacha loot from the Banks in Switzerland even as the main agent has completed the negotiation that led to the release of the funds. He has not been sanctioned.
- v. Mohammed Shitu, Minister of communication accused of corruptly enriching himself through some illegal deals by his former aid to the tune of over two billion naira. He has not been sanctioned. (Omokiri, 2017)
- vi. Ibrahim Maku, the chairman of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) accused of not remitting a substantial part of recovered loot from politicians into the Federation Accounts. He has not been sanctioned.

It is believed that more revelations of corruption will be made among the officials of the government at the end of the tenure of this administration. Also the intra-class struggle evident in the Nigerian social formation among the ruling class explains the reason why the faction in control of government has shielded corrupt members of APC in and out of government from investigation and possible prosecution while hounding, prosecuting and sometime persecuting the opposition and even those eloquently and publicly opposed to their policies from the ruling party.

However the last two years of this administration has witnessed other forms of stupendous heist such as foreign exchange racketeering, as well loan of over eleven trillion naira as against six trillion borrowed in six years by the previous administration. Within this period, over four hundred and twenty billion naira was given as bribe in the public service in 2016. (NBS, 2017).

Nigeria and international perception of corruption.

Nigeria is recognised internationally as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. As at 2013, Nigeria has been “classified as one of the seven most corrupt countries of the world with a 1.9 Corruption Perception Index”. (Emefiena, 2014). The table below shows the position of Nigeria in the World Corruption Perception Index:

Table 4. NIGERIA CORRUPTION INDEX (2000-2015).

YEAR	CPI	POSITION	NO. OF COUNTRIES SURVEYED
2000	1.3	90	90
2001	1.0	91	91
2002	1.6	101	102
2003	1.5	132	132
2004	1.6	144	146
2005	1.9	152	158
2006	2.0	142	163
2007	2.2	147	180
2008	2.5	121	180
2009	2.5	130	180
2010	2.4	134	178
2011	2.4	139	183
2012	2.7	139	176
2013	2.5	144	177
2014	2.7	137	174
2015	2.5	148	168

Source: Transparency International, 2016, <https://www.goggle.com>

In essence, Nigeria has fared worse in the perception of other international groups and agencies and organisation in terms of her corruption index. The World Bank for instance in its 2013 report showed that over \$400 billion dollars have been lost to corruption in Nigeria between 1960 and 2010. (The Source, July 27, 2014). Also the 2012, Global Integrity report showed that over 129.1 billion dollars was exported from Nigeria between 2001 and 2010, while in 2010 alone, 19.66 billion dollars was exported making it an average of 12.9 billion dollars yearly. (The Guardian, 18th March, 2013).

Indeed, the Human Rights Watch report of 2008 showed that Nigeria lost \$38 billion to official corruption between 1999 and 2007. Also the African Fraud Barometer report by KPMG Africa showed that the cost of fraud in Nigeria between January and July 2013 put at 1.5 billion dollars was committed by holders of public office and senior executive officers through bribes, misappropriations and contract inflations. (The Guardian, November, 22, 2012). In a recent report by Mbeki's panel on illicit financial flow (IFF), Nigeria was shown to top the list of Illicit Financial Flow among the developing countries by state officials. The report shows that Nigeria was losing` 2.7 trillion naira yearly as a result of illicit financial flow. (The Vanguard, July, 17, 2015).

With all these infractions, Nigerian dwindling fortunes in the international corruption ratings of 2015 and 2017 was not surprising. This is against the backdrop of corruption being one the major essence of president's international engagements in the last two years. Firstly, the Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Unit suspended Nigeria because of the incapacity of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission to implement the necessary international guidelines on the National Financial Intelligence Unit as a major intelligence gathering data on international money laundering and terrorism financing; secondly the Nigerian Police was ranked lowest in Africa and 127th in the world in 2016 under the world Internal Security and Police Index by the International Police Science Association (IPSA) and Institute for Economic and Peace (IEP) on account of corruption; thirdly, the United States Department in its 2017 country reports on Human Rights cited impunity as being widespread at all levels of government and lack of transparency. The report noted that massive corruption by government officials and security agencies is on the rise with most perpetrators shielded from trial. The report, states that although the Nigerian law provides for criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively as officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Massive, widespread and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government and security services; and fourthly, in the annual corruption perception index by Transparency International, Nigeria moved twelve places backward from 136 to 148 between 2015 and 2017.

The Nigerian sordid and uncanny narrative shows a society steeped in unbridled corruption trajectory that grows worse with each passing epoch in spite of efforts deployed to address the carnage. This is because of a socio-economic conundrum that has become deep rooted and institutionalised.

Conclusion and Recommendation

We have shown in this paper that the hegemony of corruptions has been one of the uncanny manifestations of Nigerian conundrum-a conundrum that has indisputably dominated the Nigerian state for the past five decades. Since July 1966, Nigeria has been under the dictatorship of a tiny minority with majorly military background. They have assumed different names; Kaduna mafia, cabal, king makers, power elite. Astute and legendary at political manoeuvring and malfeasance but very low on development oriented intellectualism; this tiny minority has surreptitiously directly or vicariously installed all governments in Nigeria in the last fifty-two years. Most often they assume sovereignty without the peoples' mandate and are not accountable to anyone but to themselves. While the power elite in America according to C. Wright Mills pander to their interests, they still maintained a strong productive economy and an independent state; the power elite in Nigeria uses its over arching political dominance to commandeer the main resources basically the oil industry as their personal fiefs with their international collaborators. Under them, Nigeria is an economy where rent is being collected by the group that is both professionally and geographically not connected to the resource base. It is the political manipulation of the Nigerian insidious state that guarantees this group the impunity of aggrandisement.

This dominance was achieved through the centralization of the county's governance. Thus, Nigeria while being camouflaged as a federation is overwhelmingly unitary. Using the excuse of the military unified hierarchical command, the group cleverly destroyed the well functioning Nigerian federal structure by concentrating powers of the federating units to themselves. According to Adeniyi (2011),

they seized what belonged to the regions and gave to the centre; universities, media houses, natural resources, regional business concerns, security apparatus, research institutes as well as international partnerships of the regions. They also restructured the federating units into tiny entities that can hardly become self reliant. Thus in the Nigerian distorted federal system, the centre constitutionally dispenses commandeered resources on their own terms to the federating units, rather than the units contributing to the center.

Having gained total control of the resources of the entire Nigerian state, this group has not only become ardently narcissistic, they have created a cult of leadership that only accommodates those who are ready to corrupt the system and unashamedly heed their entrenched interests. Bereft of any modicum of ideology, philosophy and principle, different segments of Nigerian elites from different regions must engage in tendencies that are politically, economically and socially corrupt in order to earn positions and become part of the Nigerian ruling class albeit in fringe status. These processes have not only institutionalised official corruption in Nigeria but have patently entrenched it in systemic and structural ways. This is why measures geared towards checking corruption in the country, in spite of pretensions to its seriousness have become efforts in futility and unfortunately will remain so. As put by Pavner and Nasser (2003), corruption is systematic, a continuous cycle of deliberate initiative, erected by those in authority and beneficial to politically structured groups.

In view of the foregoing, it means attempts to extirpate corruption in Nigeria requires thinking out of the box. Different results cannot be achieved when things are done the same way over time. The stereotyped way of fighting corruption in Nigeria has not worked and will not work. In the interim however, it is expedient that the following measures should be put in place; the budgeting system should be overhauled to remove all semblances of reckless manipulations; the so called security votes in the system should not be left at whims of the President or the Governor but should be fully brought under the scrutiny of the Parliament like any funds in the federated accounts; the Freedom of Information Act must be made to become effective to make for transparency, openness and accountability in governance; the onus of proof on the corrupt engagement should be on the accused to explain alleged corrupt enrichment and not on the prosecution. This will make for deterrence to corruption by increasing the consciousness of conviction on the intended culprit; and the need to strengthen the anti-corruption agencies and the judiciary to become more effective in the prosecution and dispensation of corrupt cases so that those who seem to be corrupt should not be seen to be freely enjoying the proceeds of corruption.

Fundamentally however, the successful fight against corruption must centre on ways of dealing with the Nigerian conundrum. To begin with, Nigeria must be restructured along geographical and economic lines. Concentration of the socio-economic powers on the centre at the detriment of the federating units must give way to a true federal structure. A true Federal structure will engender healthy economic rivalry among the federating units rather than corrupt tendencies to connect to the centre of resources by politically exposed persons from parts of the federating units. Healthy competition among federating units will enhance national development and cohesion. The national economy also ought to be restructured to reduce the unprecedented hiatus between the haves and have nots in the society. An economy in which less than five percentage of the population controls over ninety percent of the national resources will create room for abject poverty among majority of the population. Socio-economic marginalization breeds socio-economic insecurity which in turn

breeds corruption as a bulwark against vagaries of unstable economy. The National economy must therefore be restructured such that the hitherto marginalised people will occupy the centre stage of economic activities. This will significantly reduce poverty, stimulate employment and enhance standard of living.

Perhaps significant corruption mitigation cannot be achieved if the present ruling class continue to be the managers of the state. The replacement of the present ruling minority by a government driven by accountability to the civil society has become an indisputable reality. The harbinger of corruption must be decimated for the society to be saved from the hegemony of corruption. While revolution may be a distant possibility; it is the considered opinion in this paper that adherence to strong democratic process may be the elixir required by society to deal with the multi-faceted problems of official corruption.

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