

FROM PHYSICIANS TO PATIENTS: A HISTORICAL MAPPING OF ANTI-CORRUPTION REGIMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Successive regimes in Nigeria have shown various efforts to combat corruption in the country. Yet, in contrast to their anti-corruption passion, they turned out to become obsessed with corruption. This article, which methodologically deployed information derived from extant literature analyzes the seeming paradoxical shift of supposedly anti-corruption regimes from combating corruption (physicians) to being corrupt (patients). A major explanation for this seeming paradoxical character twist of successive anti-corruption regimes is found in the context of the Nigerian State and attitudinal disposition of the political elite and its contagious effect on the civil society.

Keywords: Corruption, Anti-corruption, State-Society relations, power elite

Introduction

Through most of the post-independence era, Nigeria has had a number of anti-corruption regimes. Upon assumption of office, successive regimes in Nigeria have variously promised and outlined anti-corruption reforms aimed at combating the phenomenon of corruption. The regimes acknowledged that corruption is at the heart of the crisis of governance and development in the country and consequently promise to tame the monster. However, each of the anti-corruption regimes within short period after inception falters and becomes enmeshed in corruption. This reflects a paradox of character shift; from physicians to patients. In this context, anti-corruption regimes denote physicians by their indictment of their predecessors of corruption at inception and subsequent proclamation to get rid of it. On the other hand, they incarnate patients when they become mired in corruption, which their successor regimes identified and promised to cure.

Indeed, anti-corruption has become a weapon deployed to outwit the incumbent in power. It has become bait for endearing legitimacy and popular support by power seekers who have corruptive motive. While, the issue of corruption and anti-corruption in Nigeria has generated a lot of concern and debates in the literature, the corruption under supposedly anticorruption regimes, in effect, shift from physicians of corruption to patients of corruption, has not gained sufficient scholarly attention. Granted that studies such as Osoba (1996) are unique exception and have made important contributions towards the appreciation of historical perspective on corruption in Nigeria but they do not cover recent cases of corruption under supposedly anti-corruption regimes. This is the gap this paper attempts to fill by bringing up-to-date recent cases of corruption under anti-corruption regimes using

extant literature. For the purpose of clarity and analytical convenience, the paper is structured into five sections. Following this introduction is the conceptual framework and related literature, then a historical mapping of the anti-corruption regimes, followed by discussion of and explanations for the transformation of anti-corruption regimes from physicians to patients and thereafter conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual and Analytical Notes

In this discourse, anti-corruption regime refers to regime which came to power with declaration or proclamation to defeat corruption and ensure adherence to the principles of accountability, transparency, efficiency, predictability, respect for institutions and laws. Anti-corruption regime initiates measures aimed at preventing and combating corruption. The preventive measures are the efforts aimed at deterring actual occurrence of corruption. It entails enactment of Anti-corruption Acts and launch of various anti-corruption programmes aimed at preventing corrupt practices. On the other hand, the combative measures are steps taken where the preventive measures have failed to deter the occurrence of corruption in large-scale. The combative measures entail the prosecution and punishment of those found guilty of corruption charges. In spite of the combative measures corruption can still occur on a large-scale if individuals and institutions charged with responsibility of prosecuting and punishing those involved in corrupt practices have become compromised or conquered. Instructively, the weakness of the combative measures could have backlash effect on the preventive measures against corruption.

In Nigeria, anti-corruption is a prominent feature of successive regimes. Although anti-corruption struggle has been recurrent feature of successive regimes, yet corruption occurs in a large-scale. Most regimes that have declared firm commitment to tackle corruption have later become corrupt, abusive and unaccountable. They initiate anti-corruption laws and programmes at their inception and later become predatory and commit abuses to retain power and control resource of the state for a few.

A number of interrelated factors combine in a complex and dynamic ways to frustrate anti-corruption regimes and make them become perpetrators of corruption they initially wage war against. The nature of relationship between the state and society is important in the appreciation of the character shift of the principal officers of regimes that declare firm commitment to fight corruption and later become the perpetrators of corruption. In their interrelationship, the society bestows legitimacy on the government officials of the state. Thus, the nature of society is crucial in appreciating the behavior of government officials. On the other hand, the state or government gives meaning to society. At the same time, the government is an agent of society which as the principal is supposed to wield greater influence on government and its principal officials. In Nigeria, although many people in the society would wish or be pleased if corruption is eliminated yet many encourage those in government to pilfer or loot public resources by their disposition to those alleged to be corrupt and their messages and communications to those privileged to control state power and its resources to take advantage of their opportunity (Okecha

2009). The basis of citizens and governing elite relationship and dealing with government is as alien, remote and a 'Whiteman's property. In fact, there is the axiom that government business is nobody's business. Thus, those who preside over the affairs of the state see it as opportunity to appropriate public resources, while members of their communities shelter them from probes as they bring parts of their spoils home to assist communal projects (Ekeh 1975).

On the other hand, character of the state has been crucial in defining notion of the society about the control of state power and its resources by government representatives. In Nigeria, there is high premium on state power. Those who have been privileged to preside over the state personalize its power and resources at the expense of collective interest while being rascally in the conduct of affairs of the state. Indeed, the state has been arguably considered as central to elite formation and all the associated ontological contradictions that this throw up (Jega 2007).

In Nigeria, the state power is irresistibly attractive. It is the source of wealth and influence for elite (Ake 1987). Owing to the high stake associated with state power and the manner in which its resources are used by incumbents, every available means is deployed in order to gain access to state power and its control. Thus, in the face of public grievance, disillusionment, dissatisfaction, discontent and disenchantment with the presiding government officials, nationalistic sentiments tend to assume utmost importance. The incumbents of the state power tend to employ various strategies to manage legitimacy crisis in order to gain public confidence while those excluded tend to leverage on public grievance to make messianic claims or declarations to justify their quest to oust the incumbents. In this way, the state which is projected as a critical factor is setting the tone for anti-corruption, captures those who try to fight against corrupt practices.

Discernibly, in Nigeria, the political elite in the quest for or retention of state power lash in on public grievance to whip up sentiments, make messianic and nationalistic claims as well as brandish change mantras to achieve selfish interest. Notably, genuine anti-corruption struggle in itself and its various forms are laudable. They become mere rhetoric or gimmicks when they romanticize and invented as political baits for managing legitimacy crisis and gain public confidence and support for regime coming into power.

Historiography of Anti-corruption Regimes

Anti-corruption has featured prominently in post-independence Nigeria. The first official attempt to tackle corruption was initiated under the Sir Alhaji Tafawa Balewa regime. Under the regime, the Coker Commission of Inquiry was set up in 1962 to investigate the Western region. The Commission accused Chief Obafemi Awolowo and some other leaders of the Action Group government in the region of corruptly enriching themselves with the public funds. These attempts were aimed at unraveling corruption with reference to key political actors or impact of corruption in the conduct of public affairs in late pre-independence Nigeria. In spite of the anti-corruption measures of the regime, corruption was rife (Osumah and Aghedo 2013). Government officials looted public funds with impunity. It appeared there were no

men of good character and integrity among the government officials. Corruption assumed an alarming rate that the Alhaji Tafawa Balewa regime was characterized as kleptocracy – a form government administered by thieves (Osumah 2012). In fact, widespread corruption was one of the fundamental reasons advanced for the overthrow of the civilian administration in the maiden military coup of January 15, 1966. As one of the masterminds of the coup, Major Kaduna Nzeogwu declared:

Our enemies are the political profiteers, swindlers, the men in high and low places who seek bribes and demand ten percent, those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers and VIPs of waste, the tribalists, the nepotists... (quoted in Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010:17)

Lending credence, the Major General Thomas Ummakwe Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi regime, which came to power through the maiden military coup, acquired some legitimacy because of the unacceptable level of corruption. In an effort to combat the menace of corruption, the Aguiyi-Ironsi regime promulgated the Public Officers (Investigation of Assets) Decree No 5 of 1966 which empowered the head of state to require public officers to declare their assets. In addition to the above decree, tribunals were set up with the power to investigate whether any public official corruptly enriched himself while in office (Ikubaje 2004). The regime's probe exposed corrupt practices in various parastatals such as Electricity Corporation, Nigeria Airways, Nigeria Railway Corporation and Nigerian Ports Authority under Balewa regime (Osaghae 2002, Ogbeidi 2012).

Like the Balewa regime, the Ironsi regime was overthrown in July 1966 by the General Yakubu Gowon regime partly due to corruption. Extreme ethnic allegiances fueled corruption under the Ironsi regime. The Ironsi regime was accused "Igbo conspiracy" for its failure to try the masterminds of the January 15, 1966 coup as was demanded by the Supreme Military Council. In addition, the regime was accused of tribalism and nepotistic practices such as accelerated promotion of Igbo military officers – it was reported that out of twenty-one officers promoted by the Ironsi regime to the rank of colonel eighteen of them were Igbos, an action which was in contrast to the advice of the Supreme Military Council. Also, it was reported that Ironsi regime "effected postings that placed Igbo officers in charge of strategic command positions" (Osaghae 2002:59). Added to these allegations of conspiracy and tribalism against the Ironsi regime, the Gowon regime also continued to expose various forms of corrupt practices under the Balewa regime. In spite of the Gowon regime's anti-corruption sentiments and efforts, it became notorious for corruption. The various forms of corruption under the Gowon regime include misappropriation of salaries and allowances of the soldiers that were killed in action during the civil war, inflation of contract fees, extra-budgetary spending, fiscal indiscipline and ostentatious lifestyle. In fact, pervasive corruption was a major justification for the ouster of the Gowon regime on July 29, 1975 by the Murtala regime in a palace coup.

The Murtala regime was the first major anti-corruption regime in Nigeria to undertake various measures to get rid of corruption with attendant casualties (Ekanem 2003). It indicted and dismissed from service all the twelve governors save for two, and several other high ranking officers at the state and federal levels under the Gowon regime and confiscated their assets. The exonerated military governors were Brigadiers Mobolaji Johnson of Lagos State and Oluwole Rotimi of Western State (Aghemelo and Osumah 2003). Also, the Murtala regime set up the Belgore Probe Inquiry, which investigated the cement importation scandal under the Gowon regime. The probe inquiry revealed that the Gowon regime had imported metric tons of cement at a cost ₦557million as against only 2.9 million tons of cement at a cost of ₦52 million needed by the Ministry of Defence. The orders were inflated for private profit at great cost to the government. State governments held similar commissions of inquiry. Corrupt officials were dismissed with immediate effect and asked to refund the money they had stolen (Faire 2010).

Furthermore, the Murtala regime enacted the Corrupt Practices Decree of 1975 response to the corruption scandals that reeked of public life under Gowon regime. The regime also established a bureau to try offences under this decree. Although the Murtala regime was credited to have aggressively fought corruption, it was alleged of ambivalence and looting of public treasury in the wake of the aborted military coup masterminded by Dimka that claimed the life of Murtala. There was the report that Murtala owned several of houses in Kano (Nwabuzor 2003). Also, Murtala was accused of enriching his close friend, Chief M.K.O. Abiola through harvest of government contracts including the famous ITT contract (Osoba 1996).

Following the death of Murtala, General Olusegun Obasanjo took over the mantle of power of the regime. Under Obasanjo there was the Jaji declaration of 1977, which condemned corruption, moral decadence, hedonistic pursuit and Naira worship by many of the principal public officials. Yet, there was pervasive looting of public treasury prior to the regime's handover of political power in October 1979 to Alhaji Shehu Shagari (Nkom 1982).

Like the past regimes, the Shagari regime vowed to combat corruption. The regime's desire to fight corruption in high places was essentially within the context of safety mechanisms provided for in the constitution such as the Code of Conduct Bureau and Code of Conduct Tribunal. In addition to the constitutional measures, the Shagari regime initiated the Ethical Revolution. At the launch of Ethical Revolution, President Shagari aptly characterized Nigerians thus:

People want money without work; few Nigerians feel they owe Nigeria enough to want to fight for it (neither) except for pre-agreed reward nor save its name or its national assets and social infrastructure. There is no fellow feeling among citizens as brethren of one nation, everyone is simply rude, angry at everything and abuses it all. Nigerians cannot take their turn in anything but scramble disgracefully (Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010:19).

Regardless of the anti-corruption sentiments of the Shagari regime, it was found to be more corrupt than the military regime that it succeeded. Under Shagari regime, ₦16 billion was allegedly lost to corruption (Ogbeidi, 2012). Majority of the principal officers of the Shagari regime were indicted of corrupt practices. Indeed, on December 31, 1983 when General Muhammadu Buhari overthrew the Shagari regime, it branded the Shagari regime as one irreparable chunk of graft, indiscipline and corruption. In advancing reasons for the overthrow of the Shagari regime, one of the coup plotters, General Sani Abacha noted thus, “our leaders revel in squandermania, corruption and indiscipline; and, continue to profligate public appointments in complete disregard of our stark economic realities” (Osoba 1996:380).

Subsequently, the Buhari regime treading the path of past regimes promised to salvage the situation. Indeed, the Buhari regime is perhaps, the second regime after the Murtala regime to initiate various stringent anti-corruption measures with attendant casualties. Some of the stringent measures included introduction of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) policy, change of the color of the Naira, and establishment of Special Military Tribunal. The military tribunal tried and sentenced some erstwhile public officials such as state governors, ministers, presidential advisers and state commissioners found to have corruptly enriched themselves to life imprisonment. In addition, they were made to forfeit illegally acquired assets, while some who fled abroad were hunted. For example, when formal efforts to get Alhaji Umaru Dikko, one of the most corrupt ministers under the Shagari regime who fled to the United Kingdom repatriated failed, the Buhari regime attempted to smuggle him in a crate back to Nigeria to face prosecution (Ojo and Aghedo, 2013).

Despite the strong anti-corruption initiatives, the Buhari regime was allegedly infested by corruption. The regime was allegedly selective in the trial of the principal political actors in the Shagari regime. For example, it was not clear why National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and Northern politicians such as Sani Barkin Zuwo, Garba Nadama and Abubakar Rimi secured less punishment than non-NPN and Southern politicians such as Professor Ambrose Folorunso Alli and Sam Mbakwe (Osaghae, 2002). In addition, in the course of its anti-corruption drive some of the military personnel in the Buhari regime were accused of helping themselves with some of the loots recovered from the erstwhile political officeholders apprehended for corruption. For example, in Kano state, the governor, Sani Barkin Zuwo, who was arrested by the military with large amount of government money found in his official residence, openly held that the amount of money, which the military claimed to have found in the government quarters, was much more than the new government disclosed (Szeftel 2000).

Furthermore, the General Ibrahim Babangida regime, which deposed the Buhari regime on August 27, 1985 in a palace coup justified its action on the need to address “the mismanagement of the economy, lack of public accountability...” (Okoro, 1996:201). The Babangida regime subsequently took various actions to rid the nation of corruption. One of such measures was the setting up of the National Committee on Corruption and Other Economic Crimes under the chairmanship of Justice Kayode Esho to recommend ways to tackle the problem of corruption, and

introduction of the Audit Alarm System at the local government level to serve as internal cure to financial rascality in the local government councils. In addition, anticorruption was a sub-theme of the National Orientation Agency, and Social Justice, Self-reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) of the Babangida regime. These anticorruption efforts did not abate corruption. In fact, before Babangida regime ceded power to the Interim National Government (ING) under Chief Ernest Shonekan, corruption assumed an unprecedented dimension and became a means of shoring political support. According to Osoba (1996:382):

corruption in the Babangida regime was pervasive culture of impunity: any of his acolytes, however high or low in status, could loot the treasury to their heart's content with impunity, provided they remained absolutely loyal and committed to the leader... broaden and deepening the scope of corruption in Nigeria's public life almost to limitless extent, and without fear of detection or punishment.

The ING recognized the unprecedented dimension corruption had assumed. Like previous regimes, the ING also shown interest in combating the social vice in the three months it lasted before its collapse on November 17, 1993 in military coup masterminded by the General Sanni Abacha. The Abacha regime constituted the Pius Okigbo Committee to probe the dedicated accounts set up by Babangida regime in 1988 for saving proceeds from sales of oil during the Gulf War. The Committee in its report revealed that between September 1988 and June 30, 1994 US\$12.4 billion was recorded. Out the amount US\$12.2 billion was liquidated in less than six years (Ezeamalu, 2013). Similarly, the General Emmanuel Abisoye Committee, which investigated alleged acts of impropriety in the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) found that the transfer of the sum of US\$775 million in 1993 from the NNPC to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) for unspecified projects. Also, Arthur Anderson, a reputable accounting firm in March 1993 unearthed irregularities involved in alleged disappearance of US\$1 billion from the sales of a part of NNPC's equity and its joint venture operations (Osumah 2012).

In addition, the General Sanni Abacha regime inaugurated War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAI-C), which was intended to cleanse the society of indiscipline and enthrone probity, accountability and efficiency. It constituted several panels to investigate acts of corruption in the various departments and agencies such as the National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), CBN, Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL), Nigeria Airport Authority (NAA), NNPC, and the judiciary. The reports of the probe panels resulted in the massive purge and restructuring undertaken in the agencies. Also, at the state level, probe panels were constituted to investigate principal public functionaries in the executive and legislative councils suspected to have looted public funds and assets. Huge amount of money, vehicles and other valuable assets were recovered from the principal officers (Osaghae 2002).

Also, the Abacha regime instituted the Failed Bank Tribunal, which tried and convicted top bankers and businessmen for various corrupt practices that resulted in the liquidation of banks and loss of deposits by customers. The former Sultan of Sokoto was tried for ₦775 million unpaid loans from companies such as Nigercafe and Foods (West Africa) as director. These bold efforts to prosecute high profile corruption cases were discredited as political baits better still symbolic ideological smokescreen designed to deceive the people. In fact, Wole Soyinka asserted that the Abacha regime' launch of WAI-C was "a huge joke" (Faire 2010). According to Ekanem (2003:70) his WAI-C was "a symbolic ideological smokescreen designed to conjure up the animated spirits of the glorious days of Idiagbon and Buhari a romanticization with pseudo nostalgia which fooled a few"

Indeed, the General Abdulsalami Abubakar regime, which succeeded the Abacha regime, after Abacha's death on June 8, 1998 discovered that Abacha was not saintly enough to rid the society of corruption, which he embodied. There were evidences that Abacha and his collaborators perpetrated outrageous fraudulent practices. At death, Abacha's illegal overseas asset was put at US\$4-6 billion (Enweremadu 2010). The Abubakar regime, recovered from Abacha US\$625,263,187.19, £75,306886.93, and ₦100,000,000 together with 30% share of the West African Refinery in Sierra Leone worth US\$420,000. The Abubakar regime also recovered looted funds and assets from choice locations from some of Abacha's family members and collaborators (Aghemelo and Osumah 2003).

Like previous regimes, the Abubakar regime was accused of not being able to account for the recovered loots from Abacha's family. The principal actors of the Abubakar regime like those who served under the Abacha regime were alleged to have helped themselves with public funds and resources before handing over power to the civilian regime in May 1999. The US\$9.3 billion left in the foreign reserves by the Abacha regime was reduced to US\$3 billion with no tangible projected to show for it. In addition, when the civil rule was restored under President Olusegun Obasanjo it was revealed that the Abubakar regime in the weeks leading to its exit from power hurriedly and dubiously awarded contracts and allocated oil blocs to its officials. Reportedly, several billions of dollar were squandered and purloined (Bakare 2011).

Indeed, civilian regime under President Obasanjo acknowledged evidence of unprecedented grand corruption under the last phase of the military rule particularly from the Babangida and Abacha regimes (1985-1998) and vowed zero tolerance for it. In his words:

The impact is so rampant and has earned Nigeria a very bad image ... besides, it has distorted and retrogressed development. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everybody to see ... there will be no sacred cow; notably,

no matter who and where, will be allowed to get away with the breach of the law or the perpetration of corruption (Ikubaje 2004:49-50).

Notably, the new civilian regime more than any other has undertaken more of measures in terms of policy, institutional reforms and establishment of agencies to combat corruption in Nigeria. Some of the anti-corruption measures included the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Crimes (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Corruption and Crimes (EFCC), and Money Laundering Act in 2004, and the Price Intelligence and Due Process.

In spite of these anti-corruption measures, the Obasanjo civilian regime was enmeshed in corruption. For example, the British government in 2002 identified the presidency as one of the most corrupt bodies in the country. According to a report by the British Government 55% of corruption in Nigeria originated from the presidency (Aghemelo and Osumah 2003). Specifically, the Senate ad-hoc Review Committee indicted President Obasanjo and his deputy, Atiku Abubakar for corruption and diversion of Petroleum Technology Development Funds (PTDF) totaling about US\$145 (Obi 2007, Arogunade 2007). Similarly, the National Assembly indicted President Obasanjo in alleged 17 constitutional breaches including corruption and bribery. He was alleged to have secretly moved to influence the conduct and passage of the Electoral Bill of 2002 in the National Assembly through purported inducement of 15 senators with ₦ 100 million (Osumah and Ikelegbe 2009). Similarly, the Obasanjo Presidency was alleged to have bribed members of the National Assembly at different times to install or change its leadership (to install Senator Evans Enwerem as Senate President in 1999, to install Senator Anyim Pius Anyim as the Senate President, and remove Senator Chuba Okadigbo as President of the Senate). In addition, it was reported that President Obasanjo used public fund to establish and run personal projects or institutions such as Bell University and Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library in Ota, Ogun State (Uwugiaren 2002).

The election of Yar'Adua as president at the end of Obasanjo presidency in May 1999 inspired a renewed hope in the anti-corruption crusade. President Yar'Adua promised to run a clean government with zero tolerance for corruption within the context of the rule of law. In his words: ... "as it stands, I assure you that the federal government has zero tolerance for corruption. But also in the process, the rule of law and due process must be followed" (Enweremadu 2010:13). Also, the Yar'Adua's regime, while welcoming the visiting World Bank Vice President for Africa, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, reassured the world that his regime will not subvert anti-corruption crusade. In his words: "I have given all institutions a free hand. I have told them I won't interfere, because I am strongly in support of the fight against corruption. No hurdle has been put on their paths. The only thing I have made clear is that they must follow the rule of law and due process" (Enweremadu 2010:14).

In contrast to these promises and reassurances, the Yar'Adua regime became mired in corruption. By 2008, there were several high profiles cases of corruption including two former ministers Professor Babalola Borishade and Femi Fani-Kayode

who were arrested and charged to court for their handling of ₦19.5 billion aviation intervention fund (Enweremadu 2010). Also, the daughter of former president, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, former minister of Health Adenike Grange and some other senior officials of the Ministry of Health docked for over allegations of sharing ₦300 million belonging to the Ministry of Health (Osumah 2012).

Before the death of Yar'Adua in 2010, several federal government departments, ministries, commissions, boards and agencies in his regime yielded to corruption. The federal ministries of Power, Defence, Finance, Housing, Internal Affairs, Justice, Aviation, Labour and Productivity, Youth and Sports, Agriculture and Water Resources, Niger Delta Development Commissions, Millennium Development Goals (MDG) office among others all yielded to corruption (Osumah 2012).

When Yar'Adua's successor, President Goodluck Ebelle Jonathan assumed office in May 2010 like previous regimes he cited anti-corruption as one of the priorities of his regime. The anti-corruption sentiment of the Jonathan regime exists in the regime's Transformation Agenda policy package and its public service reforms. However, these sentiments according to critics have not been followed with adequate vigour. In fact, the tipping point in the president's profile, concerning the fight against corruption and reluctance in promoting transparency, came when, in televised media chat in June 2012, he scoffed at a question on why he had not publicly declared his asset. He snapped "I don't give a damn!" (Abdulrahman 2012).

Indeed, under his regime massive corruption has been revealed in the fuel subsidy management, pension administration and a number of ministries. There have been several cases of visitors to the Presidential Villa being offered huge sums of money after their visits. The Save Nigeria Group was offered US\$30 thousand, and the Northern elders ₦20 million; both groups rejected the cash gifts offered them by the presidency. In addition, a number of corruption cases involving favourite appointees, and political allies of the Jonathan regime have been lingering for years while perpetrators roam free. By, 2012, over ₦5 trillion in government funds have been reportedly stolen through fraud, embezzlement and theft under President Jonathan. This amount is a summation of Nuhu Ribadu-led Petroleum Task Force report; the Minister of Trade and Investment's report on stolen crude; the House of Representatives fuel subsidy report and investigations into the ecological fund, SIM card registration and frequency band spectrum sale (Adeyemo 2012).

Discussion of the Physician and Patient Incarnates of the Anti-Corruption Regimes

Based on the historical mapping of successive anti-corruption regimes in post-independence Nigeria, it is clear that at inception each of the regimes professed to have remedy for corruption. Yet, after a short time, each of these regimes became mired in corruption. The grounds for this assertion are evident in the sensational public charges and behaviour of the regimes as well as the material condition of their principal officers. Fundamental evidence in support of the claim that successive anti-corruption regimes profess to be physicians with therapy for corruption is that they

demonize their predecessor as corrupt. For example, part of the reasons advanced for the January 1966, July 1975 and December 1983 military interventions in politics was the unacceptable level of corruption in the regimes they deposed.

Further evidence in support of the argument that successive regimes arrogate to themselves the job of physicians is their combative efforts to deal with the problem. Many of the regimes set up probe panels and commissions to investigate corruption in the previous regimes. For example, the Murtala regime set up probe panel to investigate the principal officers of the Gowon regimes and confiscated assets of those found to have corruptly enriched themselves. Similarly, the Buhari regime tried, sentenced and jailed the principal officers of the Shagari regime believed to have perpetrated different forms of corruption. The Abacha regime set up the failed bank tribunal (Osaghae 2002).

Besides, many of the regimes launched various programmes intended to prevent corrupt practices. For example, under the Obasanjo military regime, there was the Jaji declaration. Similarly, the Shagari regime launched the Ethical Revolution. The Babangida regime had anti-corruption as sub-themes of MAMSER. The Abacha regime had WAI-C. Anti-corruption is a critical factor in the Yar'Adua regime's Seven Point Agenda and the Jonathan regime's Transformation Agenda and public service reforms.

Additional evidence in support of the physician role of many of the successive anti-corruption regimes is a diagnosis of corruption as the problem of the country and a promise to broadly tackle the disease. Such promise is evidential in the inaugural address of president Obasanjo in May 1999, wherein he acknowledged that corruption was virtually permissive in the country and thus vowed zero tolerance for it. Indeed, corruption is recognized as major bane of development in Nigeria (Bello-Imam 2005).

Regardless of the foregoing, there are contentions that successive anti-corruption regime which had professed anti-corruption suddenly became mired in corruption. First, there is the evidence that the principal officers of many of the successive anti-corruption regimes indulged in primitive wealth accumulation and ostentatious lifestyle. For example, the principal officers and friends of the generals Gowon, Murtala, Babangida, Abacha and Abubakar regimes were beneficiaries of maximum pursuits of private accumulation. As Nwabuzor (2003:246) observed "no less a personality than the late Moshood Abiola, by his own admission, enriched by his friendship with no less a personality than our often idolized General Murtala Mohammed who was then Minister of Communication and later Head of State". Similarly, many Nigerians questioned the moral rights of General Buhari to castigate corrupt politicians under the Shagari regime when under him US\$2.8 billion was missing in the Ministry of Petroleum before he later became the Head of State (Osaghae 2014).

Also, the sensational media reports on the looted funds by Abacha and his kitchen cronies as well as the revelation of the Pius Okigbo panel of how the Babangida regime wasted US\$12.4 billion proceeds realized from oil windfall during the Gulf War are evidential. The broadcast of each of the coup spoke-soldier to

Nigerians, as it were that the looting of national treasury motivated them to strike is in support of the private accumulation by the ruling elites. Further evidence in support of the involvement of many of the successive anti-corruption regimes in corruption is represented by the selective investigation and punishment of corrupt individuals. For example, the Buhari regime was accused of ethnic bias in the punishment of the principal officers of the Shagari regime believed to be corrupt (Osaghae 2002).

This paradoxical character shift from physicians to patients by successive anti-corruption regimes in Nigeria can be linked to the nature of post-colonial Nigerian state as a major source of wealth of the political elite. The Nigerian state permits the power elite easy and quick access to sensational and primitive wealth accumulation. This character of the Nigerian state permits elite self-reproduction. At independence, the colonial lords engineered power into the hands of conservative elite. Since then, the conservative elements have recycled or reproduced themselves. This accounts for the invariable tendency of character shift from physicians to patients by anti-corruption regimes. The anti-corruption promise or initiative is rather a strategy of the indigenous elite for their haggling over their avaricious pies. As conservative elements, they have largely been interested in sustaining and extending the status quo on ostentatious lifestyle, reckless spending, mindboggling corruption and scandalous patronage.

Another factor central to the tendency of character swap of anti-corruption regimes to become consumed by the corruption they promised to exterminate is societal expectation from those who preside over public office and resources. In Nigeria, there is a huge expectation from most Nigerians especially the proximate constituencies of the power elite to use their privileged positions to amass personal wealth. Those who have fulfilled these expectations are honoured and rewarded in their communities while those who chose toe the line of accountability without significant wealth to show are stigmatized and treated with disdain (Osumah 2010). This societal attitude partly contributes to the character shift of successive anti-corruption regimes from physicians to patients.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has attempted to historicize the anti-corruption regimes in post-independence Nigeria and sought to establish how they jettisoned their claims and missions to get rid of corruption and become mired in corruption. It reveals that at inception successive anti-corruption regimes make initial efforts to stem corruption by exposing the corrupt engagements of their predecessors, and subsequently vowed zero tolerance for corruption. However, their promises are often short-lived as the same regimes become mired in corruption. Although leaders of the various regimes may have been driven by altruist interest yet they lack the political will required to combat corruption. Thus, there is the need to take more serious steps to change the legacy of supposedly anti-corruption regimes being eclipsed and consumed by burgeoning corruption, which they had promised to cure.

One critical step is to re-invent the Nigerian State. The re-invention of the Nigerian State requires building solidarity and consensus among the existing sub-

nationalities on the structural deformities of the state. This can be achieved through negotiated consensus, which will connect the ordinary people with the central polity and create room for a common stand against corruption.

Apart from the re-invention of the Nigerian state, there should be effort to rescue the state from the ruling and predatory class. By this, the people should be united in the demand for accountability and political morality from the ruling class. The people should no longer accord their own who looted the state treasury warm reception because they have contributed part of the filthy lucre to communal development projects.

In addition, there is the need to bring about significant change in the attitudes and values of the political elite with a view to curbing their hedonist and self-serving disposition. The swift regime turnover in the past engendered a sense of alienation of the citizens from the state. This compelled the elite to develop a mentality of primitive wealth accumulation, crass predation and hedonism given any slight opportunity of appointment or ascension to public office.

Furthermore, there is the need for awaken public consciousness about the implication of brazen elite corruption. This includes recognition of public resources or state treasury as belonging to everybody rather than nobody. This means the public should not be complacent and docile in the face of brazen acts of corruption charges. The general public should castigate notorious looters of public treasury.

Finally, this author is conscious that all these therapeutic options cannot rid Nigeria of corruption in a short-term. For example, how can the elite who benefit from looting of the state treasury be expected to change their attitudes and values and consequently be relied upon to clinically cure themselves and change their old ways of doing things? This indeed would mean calling on the elite to commit class suicide, condemn and renounce their membership in the bourgeoisie family. Thus, this author admits that it would not be easy but the situation is not totally bleak. All that is required is for all stakeholders to make more serious, sustained and harmonious efforts to make anti-corruption efforts succeed.

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