



**TUG OF WAR OR ECHO IN THE DARK?
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the Fight
Against Corruption in the Era of Change Mantra in Nigeria**

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTER'S BIODATA

Habu Mohammed was born at Fagge, Fagge Local Government Area on 22nd May 1967. He obtained his M.Sc. and PhD in 1998 and 2007. He was promoted to the rank of Professor in 2011. Mohammed is biased in Politics of Development, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Federalism and National Question, Civil Society and Democratisation in Africa. He is a co-editor of *Readings in Social Science Research* (2006), editor of *Concepts and Issues in Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution* (2006), co-editor of *Poverty in Nigeria, Causes, Manifestations and Alleviation Strategies* (2008), and author of a book titled: *Civil Society Organizations and Democratization in Nigeria: The Politics of Struggles for Human Rights* (2010), and the editor, *Nigeria's Convulsive Federalism: Flash-points of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria* (2012); the editor, *The Patterns and Dynamics of Party Politics in Nigeria's Fourth Republic , 1999- 2015* (2017).

Mohammed served in various Departmental, Faculty and University committees. He has contributed several articles on Nigerian politics and political economy of development in both local and international books and journals. In all, he has more than forty (40) publications thus far; One (1) published book; three (3) edited books on Nigerian Politics; three (3) co-edited books; and more than five (5) technical reports for UNDP, DFID, CODESRIA, CRD, and Mambayya House, among others. He was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Programme of African Studies (PAS), Northwestern University, Illinois, U.S.A. (2003/2004). He is also an Alumnus of Galillee International Management Institute (University Strategic Planning Course, 2015), Tel Aviv, Israel. He was the first Coordinator of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Course of the School of General Studies, Bayero University, Kano and the First Secretary-General of Bayero University, Kano Alumni Association, BUKAA. He also served as the Coordinator, North-west Nigeria Fulbright Alumni Association (2006-2009) and he is the current Chairman, National Political Science Association (NPSA), North-west Chapter.

He participated in local and international conferences, seminars, round-table discussions, and workshops. These include, among several others: Workshop on "The Media and Challenges of Transparency and Accountability in Public Spheres in Africa" in Rwanda, 2012; the 5th International Conference on Federalism in Addis Ababa, 2010); XXXVI International Population Conference in Marrakesh, Morocco, 2009; "The Role of the Individual in a Civil Society" in Houston, Texas, USA, 2004; "Governance and Insecurity in West Africa" at Evanston, Illinois, USA, 2003; and "Youthful Africa in the 21st Century" in Boston Massachusetts, USA, 2003.

Habu Mohammed was Assistant Director in charge of Research and Documentation at Mambayya House, Centre for Democratic Studies, Bayero University, Kano. He served as Visiting Lecturer and pioneer Head of Political Science Department at Umaru Musa Yar'Adua University, Katsina between 2012 and 2014. He was also the Head of Department at Federal University, Dutse during his one-year Sabbatical leave between 2014 and 2015. He has been the Head of Political Science Department at Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria since February 2015. Mohammed is also the Assistant Director in charge of Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Directorate of Academic Planning (DAP), Bayero University, Kano, since November 2015.

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In addition, he was a member of Tetfund Social Science Research Methodology Group (2010), a member of the Political Parties Leadership and Policy Development Centre's (PPLPDC) Curriculum Review Technical Committee of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos (2015),

He worked with various CSOs either as a resource person, researcher, or member of Governing Board or Board of Trustees. He is a member of CRD Advisory Committee; Secretary, Kano Forward Committee (KFC); Member, Board of Trustees: Charity and Vulnerable Support Initiatives (CVSI); Centre for Human Resource Development and Youth Empowerment (CHRDYE), Kano and; Kano Development Project (KDP), Kano; State Patron, Man O' War Nigeria, Kano Command; and Patron, Fagge Local Government Students Association (2008).

In view of his sterling leadership and professionalism, the Governing Council of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua has entrusted an award in his honour for the Best B.Sc. Political Science Graduating Student beginning in 2016/2017 academic session to date, that is, Habu Mohammed Award for Best Student in Political Science.

Professor Habu Mohammed is married to Hafsat Abubakar and Laurat Farouk Aliyu. He is blessed with seven (7) children: Abdulmajeed, Abdulrahman, Attahir, Tajuddeen, Hauwa'u, Umar Farouk and Abdulsamad.

TUG OF WAR OR ECHO IN THE DARK? Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and the Fight Against Corruption in the Era of Change Mantra in Nigeria¹

Preamble

The cardinal objective of the government that took over power in Nigeria following the 2015 general elections revolved around the slogan of ‘change’. The import of the slogan is to ‘change’ the country from its past recklessness expressed largely in the crisis of governance that apparently portrays the nation as a poor country in the midst of plenty of resources. Of particular importance to the clarion call for change is in the area of public accountability. One of the major thrusts of the change mantra is the fight against corruption, a phenomenon which both the government and the society believe is capable of ‘killing’ the country if it is not ‘killed’. Among the significant institutions whose support was and is till sought is the institution of the civil society, including its various associations. Based on the exploration into the politics of war against corruption between, on the one hand, the state and CSOs and, on the other hand, between the latter and corrupt public officials, it can be said that the anti-corruption civic organisations in Nigeria are in tug of war in the era of change mantra. The CSOs framework of the fight, which essentially favours drastic, consistent and bold actions against corrupt officials, is different from that of the government, whose approach is slow, erratic and sometimes affected mainly by politics. At another level, though limited in terms of their ability to push the state to meet the expectations of the society on the fight, CSOs have not been forced to retreat in the war, even when the proposed NGOs bill was used to dissipate their energies and change the tempo of their struggle. In a way, by their nature of being urban-based, or rather FCT-bound, CSOs capacity to provide the much expected all-encompassing fight against corruption leaves much to be desired. In the absence of emboldened coalition with other professional associations, community-based development associations, women, youth and constructive religious organizations, CSOs fight against corruption

¹This Professorial Inaugural Lecture is dedicated to my lecturers, colleagues and students of Political Science Department, Bayero University, Kano, for shaping my thoughts and ideas on political development generally.

represent a scenario analogous with an echo in the dark. Unless they get the representative organisations of all the victims of corruption in the country, the organised CSOs will perpetually remain fighters without inclusive allies, even if this fight is apparently assertive and seemingly yielding positive outcome on some matters of corruption. In the current trend of the fight, CSOs echo can be heard at a distance but only a few stakeholders would identify their location for a broad-based coalition.

Introduction

The act of corruption knows no bounds, as its latitude extends beyond the territorial confines of Africa, Asia and Latin American states to include, though with less frequency but high sophistication, countries of Europe and North America. The phenomenon is prevalent in societies with weak and less institutionalised public and private spheres of activities. In Nigeria, as in some African states, the prevalence of corruption among public officers has caught the attention of scholars. Various analytical perspectives explain why public accountability and transparency receive a back seat in the conduct of public officers, as corrupt practices impair negatively the process of building robust democratic institutions. Regardless of any prejudice to any extrapolation about the causes of corruption, Nigeria in particular has been regarded as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Internationally, the country has for a long time rated by the Transparency International (IT) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) as the second most corrupt country in the world after Bangladesh. Subsequent IT ratings of the country, though slightly better, were not remarkably different. Recently, the immediate past British Prime Minister satirically described the country as “fantastically corrupt” (cited in Paden, 2016:196), a labelling that can be equated with that of Smith (2007: 90-92), who, in his own metaphor, opined that Nigerians were “notoriously corrupt” and also “hopelessness corrupt”. In fact, Matthew Page in a recent research report described Nigeria’s pitiable corrupt profile as “one of the world’s most complex corruption environments – with conditions in other countries” (2018:2). Views such as these about Nigeria and her “people”, as swift as they might be, are no longer news largely because, as Ribadu (2005:14) aptly summed it up this way, “the action of leaders and inaction of followers, corruption seems to have become the Nigerian ‘original sin’, omnipresent, all-encompassing”. This explains why the Nigerian case has become not only a matter of concern among development experts but also a discourse in its own right among scholars.

The impact of corruption on national development can be understood from two closely related paradoxes. First, Nigeria, a resourcefully endowed nation, is sadly the poorest oil-rich country in the world. Therefore, the story of the Nigerian state is an archetypical case of an “incredible paradox” (ASUU, 2018). Second, as Okonjo-Iweala (2018) noted in her recent book, *Fighting Corruption is Dangerous: The Story Behind the Headlines*, corruption causes a bad name for Nigeria, being the most populous country in Africa. Ironically, she argued, the act of corruption is perpetrated by a small percentage of the country’s population, thereby creating a situation in which a few Nigerians create a bad image for the greatest majority of citizens. This situation accounts for the reason why an opinion poll conducted by *The Guardian* in 2017 found out that 70 percent of the respondents indicated corruption as one of the worst challenges that negatively affected the country’s development processes (cited in Ukase and Audu, 2015). Thus, the change of leadership through the democratic process from a ruling political party that was perceived as the archetype of corruption to a party that promised Nigerians a change with a special focus on fighting corruption was regarded as a revolution of some kind that brought a big sigh of relief from the national calamity and international embarrassment that corrupt practices have caused the nation.

Therefore, the outcome of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria, which saw the electoral victory of the opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) over the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), was received with excitement. Two major reasons accounted for the euphoria that greeted the new administration. Firstly, there was a great expectation from the civil society that the return to civilian rule after decades of military authoritarian rule in 1999 would be a new dawn for the country (Ukase and Audu, 2015). It was thought that the new civilian regime would change the architecture of governance and administration, carry the society along, do away with all the vestiges of the authoritarianism and initiate policies that would eventually put to end the cancer of poverty, corruption and deplorable condition of social services, which for many years have stunted the process of development. Contrary to these expectations, the crisis of underdevelopment has created disillusionment and rising expectations among a broad spectrum of the Nigerian society. This was in the face of a continuous increase in the yawning gap between the rich and the poor, which raises a lot of questions about the ability of the civilian government to provide what is regarded as the dividends of democracy after the nauseating years of military authoritarian rule. Secondly, the sixteen years of civilian rule (1999-2015) did not change the culture of public officers. Put differently, as corruption exists in every aspects of personal and private life in the country, it is also endemic among public

officers and politicians. Thus, on the one hand, while elected public officers continue to display the undemocratic attitudes and glaring abuse of the public trust reposed in them through neo-patrimonial networks, on the other hand, the civil society wallowed in poverty and fears that corruption, which has been institutionalised over the years, is likely to undermine the capacity of the Nigerian state to engender national development. It was against this backdrop that the civil society and the enabling civic associations reacted by prodding the state against the ceaseless corrupt practices that permeate the country.

This presentation recognises that the role played by the Nigerian civil society in the fight against corruption differs, depending on the organisational platforms of each of its sectors and the degree of political education or the space it occupies in the country's social cleavages and political economy. In all, the presentation focuses on the instrumental role of the organised civil society in the fight against corruption since the change of government from the ruling PDP to the opposition APC in 2015. The presentation by no means explores personality question in combating or condoning corruption. However, such issues are raised transiently only to illustrate the level of commitment of a particular leadership to fighting corruption and the extent to which the civil society keys into it to complement the state's efforts in that regard. It raises and answers the following questions:

- What are the changes and the extent of continuity in the fight against corruption by the Nigerian state?
- What is the extent of civil society's support to government's fight against corruption in the era of change mantra?
- Is the mode of fighting corruption by the state congruent with that of the civil society?
- What are the challenges that inhibit CSOs in the fight against corruption?
- What are the prospects of CSOs in the fight against corruption in Nigeria?

I argue that the extent of civil society's contribution to the fight is informed by several factors, which are both internal and external. In examining the central thesis of the lecture scientifically, given the fact that the issues raised and analysed are on going, I utilise documentary sources of data with content analysis as the main technique for studying documents and developing replicable and valid inferences. Quantitative data from academic discourses on civil society, corruption and political development were complemented with existing data from magazines, newspapers, reports and press conferences. These were systematically evaluated and content-

analysed after determining the authenticity of their sources through the process of inter-subjectivity. More importantly, the author's interaction with some of the leading members of CSOs on the subject of this lecture has added valuable insights to the analysis made in this presentation.

The presentation is structured into seven sections. Section One is the introduction. Section Two conceptualises corruption and civil society while also developing a theoretical framework that guides the analysis of corruption among public officials and role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in the anti-corruption fight. Section Three examines the nature of the Nigerian state's response to corrupt practices in a historical perspective. This is in order to provide the gateway to understanding the successes or otherwise of policies on corruption within the context of regime type. Section Four highlights the mechanisms used by the Nigerian state in fighting corruption since 2015. Section Five identifies the role of civil society in combating corruption in the era of the change mantra. In Section Six, the presentation examines the strategies, successes, pitfalls and prospects of civil society's reaction to the state in respect to the fight against corruption as the cardinal policy of the regime of change since its assumption of office. Finally, Section Seven concludes the presentation.

Corruption and the Role of Civil Society-Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Though its degrees and forms vary, corruption is a universal phenomenon (Mulinge and Lesetedi, 2002). As a global concept, it has many faces; it is a sociological concept which arises from social interactions in complex societies, but has economic, political and even legal and moral constructs. Therefore, because of its multifaceted nature, corruption is very difficult to define with exactness, as, to use Nye's (1967:419) words, "it covers a wide range of behaviour from venality to ideological erosion". The problem of definition has been further compounded by the fact that, as a behavioural concept, it is regarded as a relative, amorphous and satirically utilised concept by its users to abhor a behaviour tendency system. Definitions and applications of the concept of corruption also change with time (Briggs and Bolanta, 1992). In general terms, corruption is the misuse of a public office of trust for private gain. This is to suggest that some actions that can be regarded as corrupt may not necessarily be considered so in law, even though they may constitute antithetical to normal ethical conventions.

The focus of this lecture is public corruption, which is an aspect of the general concept of political corruption. As Briggs and Bolanta (1992:568) aptly captured it, on political grounds, “corruption concerns the illegal pursuit or misuse of public office”. This definition is not meant to neglect the other faces of corruption, such as vote-buying, special favours to relatives (nepotism), payoffs in a position of public trust, gifts to public officials or any relationship that involves misappropriating public funds. Rather, while these forms of corruption are important in our understanding of its trends, especially in Nigeria, our focus in this presentation is on corruption by political office holders and bureaucrats, a mode of corruption which has not only stigmatised the image of the country but also creates a psychological condition in which everyone in the country holding public office is suspiciously perceived as corrupt. Thus, one can subscribe to the narrower operational definition of corruption proffered by Nye (1967:419) that “corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against influence”. This definition covers odd behaviours, such as bribery, theft, undue favours to personal acquaintances, nepotism and the embezzlement or misappropriation of public funds.

Arguably, while subscribing to Nye’s definition of corruption and its “costs”, I sharply disagree with him on what he considered its “benefits”. This is because over the years, the act of corruption has further widened the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria, besides its profound impact in truncating the process of national development. Therefore, the notion which says corruption has its own “benefits” in some industrial societies, as Nye (1967) conceived, has no place in our understanding and utilisation of the concept in Nigeria. In the latter, the phenomenon of corruption in the public spheres of interaction can best be identified with a political class represented in the country’s petty and comprador bourgeoisies, who milk the resources of the country at the expense of the majority (Page, 2018, Okonjo-Iweala, 2018). Clearly, a better understanding of corruption cannot be complete without a premise, which sees its perpetrators as predators. Using Barrington Moore’s (1978) famous thesis on “predatory elites”, our understanding of grand conspiracy by political elites who perpetrate executive corruption is amplified. Moore argued that a few parasitic political elites constitute themselves as predators, as they plunder the resources of the society for personal enrichment. In the process of generating prosperity for themselves, they are invariably producing a degree of poverty otherwise unwarranted in that specific society. Contextually, the predator elites in Nigeria are public servants who occupy public positions, but not necessarily in the high echelons in public service. They could be elected or politically appointed and

with their appendages, siphon public resources by virtue of their offices. Such include politicians or military officers who, by their access to the corridors of power or affiliation with those in the government, get involved in unscrupulous acts of graft, either in form of bribery to get contracts or other dubious practices, leading to the misappropriation of public funds for their selfish interests. Included in this definition are opportunists who, despite not directly being in power, receive patronage from those in positions of authority and siphon public wealth. They are accomplices and perpetrators of corrupt practices.

This implies that applying this theory to Nigeria's experience of corrupt practices since independence will suggest that corruption in public service is essentially an elite affair. Instead of addressing the scourge, the administration that came after the return to civilian rule in 1999 "reopened the floodgate of elite corruption" (Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010: 15). Since then, successive civilian regimes have had to grapple with the culture of elite corruption. In fact, it is widely believed that from 1999-2015 corrupt practices by the country's public officials rose exponentially, notwithstanding the existence of anti-graft institutions and laws meant to check the menace.

A privileged class with access to public resources tends to manipulate the state's apparatus to misappropriate public funds and also cover up their corrupt practices. With the rise in oil revenue since the 1970s and deficits in leadership that would engender good democratic governance, corruption derives from and has its existence in the socio-political and economic system that encourages materialism, nepotism and an insatiable quest for enrichment among successive Nigerian public officials. A handful of political class members that knows almost nothing about collective public good has generated collateral damage by earning the country a brand name of corruption. Corruption is said to have permeated the Nigerian society horizontally and vertically because the "predatory elites" have perpetrated it in the society. This explains why the act of corruption, in both military and civilian regimes, is structural and its dialectics gravitates from the centre and extends to the wider society (Diamond, 1991).

Being a structural problem anchored in an ideology of primitive capitalist accumulation, "which promotes and maintains the well-being of a few at the expense of the majority" (Briggs and Bolanta, 1992:586), corruption has its class character. This is evident in that as an organic system, it is a symptomatic of the loss of integrity, moral conscience and patriotism. Similarly, regardless of social, political and economic divides, corrupt public officials are "conscious" of their class interest to the

extent of uniting to safeguard this interest against the decency of the society in which they live. A change in government and leadership does not mean much to “predator elites”. During military regimes, such predator elites came into power through the barrel of a gun. They invoked rampant corruption among public officials as one of the pretexts for overthrowing the same military regime or duly constituted civilian governments, only to become notorious in perpetrating corrupt practices. In cases where general elections give way to new administrations at state and national levels, the change of government is not enough to change the corrupt practices associated with public officers. Usually, such a change of government is the result of the financial support of the predator elites who, either guard their interests jealously to continue with the looting of the state treasury, or make anti-corruption policies of the government difficult to implement. In most cases, their incentive to loot is informed by the character of politics in the country, which, as Diamond (1991:81) pointed out, “offers a low-risk path to easy riches through political corruption”.

The central question to ask is, in a system where the decency of a society is sacrificed at the expense of the comfort of a few parasitic predator elites, what would be the reaction of the very segment of that society that is well informed, organised and possesses formidable platforms of social mobilisation? This question brings us to the role of society in the fight against corruption. This role can be discussed within the context of the on-going democratisation process. It is within the context of the role of this sector of the society that the future of Nigeria’s democracy is assured (Okoye, 2000; Mohammed, 2002). Diamond (1997) provided a far-reaching analysis of the role of civil society in fighting corruption and in the democratisation process in general. He begins his discourse by rejecting the notion held by elite theorists that ‘consensually unified elite’ can provide all the necessary political impetus for democratic consolidation. While agreeing that political elites do provide a profound, if not preeminent, impact on democratisation, he noted that the ‘mass public’ provides a pivotal role for democratisation during and beyond the transition. He, therefore, located the “mass public”, when independently organised for democracy, within a “mobilised public”, as “civil society”. The latter is, for Diamond, the realm of organised social life that is not only open but also voluntary, self-generating, self-regulating and, at least, partially self-supporting. Civil society is, in contradistinction with the realm of private sphere, autonomous from the state but always in interaction with it and essentially bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. Defined as associational life outside the public sphere, which also acts as an intermediary between the state and society, civil society, Keane (1998:6) argued:

Both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organizing, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that ‘frame’, constrict and enable their activities.

From this vantage point, civil society can be distinguished from a “mere society” in the sense that it is not “some mere residual category, synonymous with society or with everything that is not state or formal political system” (Diamond, 1997: 8). Essentially, civil society, Diamond argues, concerns itself with public rather than private ends, relates with the state but does not seek to get position within the state; it is partial and distinct from ‘civic community’. In Sullivan’s view, the success of civil society depends on the mind-set of its individual members to uphold the social trust, which binds the “pluralism of groups”. The maturity or otherwise of civil society is profoundly determined by its richness, or what Sullivan called *social capital* (1999).

In contrast, Haberson (1994) argued that while it is true that civil society is an associational life, not all types of associational life are called ‘civil society’. What makes associational life civil society is the principle of participation embedded in civic associations, which, directly or indirectly, facilitates the working rules of a political process. Thus, Haberson’s recognition of the role of this associational life in “rule setting activities”, as the central feature of civil society (1994:4), is, in our view, what makes a civil society a social factor in political, social, and economic lives of the society. It is within the context of rule setting, otherwise called ‘agenda setting’, that one can understand the context of civil society’s quest for accountable, transparent and corrupt-free society through sustained fight against corruption in Nigeria.

Thus, given the position of some of the existing bodies of knowledge in the area of civil society discourses, it can be said that what constitutes CSOs in Nigeria includes, but is not limited to, a large array of trade unions or labour organisations, professional associations, youth, women, religious and cultural groups, community development associations and other formal and informal associational modes of life that are independent of the state but always relationally congruent with or adversarial to it. In Nigeria, as in other societies, the architecture of organised civil society, generally referred to as CSOs, arises from the historical process of political development, the structure and dynamics of a country’s political economy and local and international factors (Mohammed, 2010a). This explains why the Nigerian society is populated with various CSOs that have different mandates and agenda. Sometimes the boundary between one civil society organisation and the other is blurred, leading to a situation

whereby CSOs with multiple mandates not necessarily on anti-corruption enter into alliance with those that primarily have an anti-corruption mandate.

The focus in this presentation is on CSOs whose mandate is tailored towards fighting corruption, otherwise called anti-corruption CSOs. Because fighting corruption requires a broad-based synergy with special skills and reach-out by their protagonists, organisations and their various coalition platforms that fall into the definition of anti-corruption CSOs in Nigeria are: the Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC), Convention on Business Integrity (CBI), Corruption Anonymous (CA), Transparency International in Nigeria (TIN), Publish What You Pay (PWYP), Enough is Enough Nigeria, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). Others are: the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC). Others are Action Aid Nigeria (AAN), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Communication and Social Impact (CCSI), National Procurement Watch Platform (NPWP), Accountability for Maternal, New born and Child Health in Nigeria (AMHiN), the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), Tax Justice and Governance Platform Nigeria, State of the Union Campaign and the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF).

It is worth noting at the outset that fighting corruption by organised CSOs in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. This role was essentially and effectively discharged by human rights focused CSOs with the sole aim of ending the oppressive military regimes and further drive the cause of democratisation, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s (Mohammed, 2007). What is new in the CSOs fight against corruption since the return to civilian rule in 1999 has been the rise of CSOs with special mandate and their adoption of a constructive engagement strategy, as opposed to adversarial method of prodding the state, in the anti-corruption fight. This approach operates at two levels - the strategic and the practical. The first level deals with advocacy for reform and the latter essentially involves social monitoring. Both functions, as Chalmers and Setiyono (2012) observed, are often resisted by social elites and their patrons.

Two major reasons can be advanced for the change in CSOs strategy. First, is the change in the paradigm of international donor support to NGOs (Smith, 2010). After the end of military rule in Nigeria, donor support tilted towards promoting democracy and development, which has led to the proliferation of CSOs with cross-cutting mandates. The need to strengthen the capacity of state institutions to promote good governance through transparency, accountability, due process and responsive and

responsible leadership necessitates concerted actions against graft (Mohammed, 2009). Thus, CSOs with anti-corruption mandates proliferated, accessed donor support and partnered with the state and non-state actors, locally and internationally, to fight corruption. Second, the activities of such organizations have been reinforced by the need to consolidate democracy and avoid its reversal to authoritarianism. Prewitt (2006) identified four key related areas through which CSOs contribute to consolidating democracy as follows: contribution to policy and decision making; the promotion of transparency and information dissemination; the enhancement of state performance and support to public authority; and, lastly, CSOs role in ensuring social justice, human rights and the flourishing of the rule of law through advocacy and the protection of individual rights.

Therefore, looking at these roles, one can add that the fight against corruption is deeply embedded in CSOs mandate as institutions that nurture democracy (Mohammed and Aluiagba, 2012: 502). Also, giving the nature of the country's corruption and its scale by the "predator elites", the battle can best be strategised and won through coalition building. As we shall see later, under the change mantra of the new government that came in 2015, the CSOs are the first institutions that mainstreamed into the government's anti-corruption campaigns. In the course of this fight, they have been confronted with two major challenges – setting agenda for the government on anti-corruption and the "predator elites" who fight back as corruption is being fought. Most importantly, the strategies adopted by anti-corruption CSOs are manifold, principal among which are: the mobilisation of the public against corruption through whistle-blowing, effective collaboration with anti-corruption agencies, clamouring for the introduction or amendment of Nigeria's legal documents on corruption, research, training and conducting workshops on corruption.

A Telescopic View of the Nigerian State and the Fight against Corruption

The Nigerian state has always claimed to be fighting corruption while at the same time, it consciously or unconsciously provides a fertile ground for corruption to thrive in the country. This is largely because the line dividing the pattern of corruption, including its scale, between military and civilian regimes in the country is not clear-cut, as one would envisage. Also, the institutional and administrative agencies fighting corruption have suffered from lack of policy continuity with changes of government. Where governments maintain such institutions, as has been the case with the existing anti-graft institutions (the EFCC and ICPC), which were established in 2002 and have survived three different changes of leadership, their capacity is weakened by prejudice and politicisation. In any case, except in some isolated cases,

most of the past attempts at combating corruption were unsuccessful; this is partly because the political will is absent and profoundly because of delay in trying corrupt cases. This largely explains why the low conviction rates in high profile corruption cases have been recorded since the inception of the EFCC. Specifically, Nigeria's Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, had a cause to complain that between 2012 and 2015, a period of 13 years, only eight high profile cases were concluded. Of this number, the Supreme Court, on technical grounds, overturned one. This implies that the actual number of convictions secured after trial in the period is seven (cited in *The Nation*, December 9, 2015). Thus, as a result of the combination of political, legal and administrative factors, which inhibits convictions, corruption in Nigeria today has grown, to use Chinua Achebe's words, more "bold and ravenous" (cited in Diamond, 1991:73).

Though the rate, scope and pervasiveness of corruption during the period of Nigeria's experience with a parliamentary system of government were not as horrendous as they are today, the allegation of corruption was purportedly one of the reasons for the first military intervention in Nigeria (Balogun, 1973, Obasanjo, 1987). Regardless of the controversy it generated and contradictions observed in the justification for the overthrow of the first parliamentary government, Nzegwu's broadcast speech, which hinted "political profiteers, swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand ten percent..." underscored the incipient forms of corrupt practices in Nigeria's First Republic. Diamond (1991:73) noted that in whichever way one sees it, the First Republic fell mostly because of ethnic and regional contestations and the "growing public disgust with corruption – and with politicians as a class – also played a role". Similarly, though the coup plotters did not form a government to enable an investigation into the alleged corruption by some regional leaders, the Foster Sutton Tribunal of Inquiry of 1956 and the GBA Coker Commission of Inquiry of 1962 confirmed the saying that there was no smoke without fire.

The first Commissions of Inquiry found the misappropriation of the Eastern region government's funds by key public officials in the region through African Continental Bank (ACB), while an investigation into six Western Nigerian public corporations established the misappropriation of funds by leading Western region politicians, who also syphoned funds of the Cocoa Marketing Board (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007; Mikail, 2016). Similarly, General Murtala Mohammed's cardinal focus of leadership was to rid the Nigerian public service of the monumental corruption that bedevilled the sector during the Gowon administration. His approach was to purge the public service, an action which was predicated on the government's conviction that the centre circle

of corruption was the public institutions. They were enmeshed in all kinds of corruption with the connivance of public officers, mostly permanent secretaries and chairmen of boards of government companies, commissions and corporations.

In its 15th Independence anniversary broadcast to the nation, the regime announced that it would establish institutions or adopt actions as follows:

- (1) Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and Special Tribunal to handle corruption;
- (2) Public Complaint Commission (Ombudsman);
- (3) Public Officers would forfeit assets owned over and above legitimate earnings;
- (4) The Federal Government was geared towards the modernisation of the nation's economy; and
- (5) Malicious complaints bordering on spurious character assassination would be penalised severely (Ojiako, 1979: 102-103).

Not only were those found guilty of corruption among the public servants faced the wrath of the law, but also military and police officers who served under the General Gowon administration (1966-1965) and found guilty of enriching themselves with public funds were appropriately penalised. Their illegally acquired property was confiscated and they were later dismissed from the service at both state and federal levels. In the words of Briggs and Bolanta (1992:584):

This exercise, better known as "Operation Deadwood", developed into a purge of over 10,000 persons. It became abundantly evident that there was a "new-broom administration" with a "no-nonsense" style. Clearly, Nigeria had been given the new lease of life promised by General Muhammed upon his assumption of office.

General Murtala Mohammed was assassinated in a bloody but unsuccessful coup attempt on February 13, 1976. This was a serious blow to the then on going vigorous measures imposed to curb corruption. Though General Olusegun Obasanjo, who succeeded General Murtala, vowed to continue with the latter's policy, his regime was more preoccupied with its transition to civil rule programme, which was also a policy of his predecessor, rather than essentially targeting corruption, which by then was profoundly decimated. Furthermore, without the practical demonstration of leadership commitment to fighting corruption and in the face of massive investments on federal projects as a result of the increase in oil revenue, particularly the injection of colossal amounts of money into the agricultural sector of the economy without the much needed accountability, opportunities for neo-patrimonial networks were opened. One year into the demonstration, Obasanjo administration got engaged in borrowing

to finance public expenditure at the time when the country was realising excess crude oil revenue of 2 million barrels per day with a huge rise in petro-dollar revenue of more than \$20 billion per annum (Mikail, 2016). One of the unintended consequences of the expansion of the public sector during his tenure was the resurfacing of corruption, because “too much money became available, and too much was spent, thereby creating opportunities for people to become corrupt” (Briggs and Bolanta, 1992:585). The result of this free spending raised allegations of corruption by the regime, which was accused of failure to account for the N2.8 billion oil money accrued to the country (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007; Mikail, 2007; Mikail).

Undoubtedly, the civilian regime to which the military government handed power in 1979 returned the country to business-as-usual, of a full-cycle reign of corruption, which attained a higher level (Briggs and Bolanta, 1992). Worse still, without any clear policy on corruption and as a result of lack of an enabling legal framework other than the constitutional provision in the 1979 Constitution, which called for the abolishing of “all corrupt practices and abuse of power”, Nigerians were taken for a ride on the issue of corruption in the Second Republic. Corruption remained unchecked in the civil service, the police and the customs as well as among prominent political figures, including members of the State and National Assemblies. The government’s introduction of the so-called Ethical Revolution, which was meant to create general awareness for decency and cause change in the attitude of Nigerians, did not make any headway in tackling the rising tide of corruption during the Shagari administration. The President “was either reportedly not paying attention or was unable to do anything about the corruption, bribery, nepotism and the many ills that were bedevilling the country”(Davieson, 2015:61). Shehu Shagari’s civilian government exhibited one of the crudest forms of primitive capitalist accumulation through the discriminate issuance of import licensing to party stalwarts, award of contracts and massive fraud. The situation in the then 19 states of the federation was not much different from what was obtainable at the federal level, as state governors used security votes as a conduit-pipe through which they siphoned money meant for the security of their states. Davieson (2015:55) captured the scenario under Shagari administration in the following words:

Though oil was booming and the country’s currency, Naira, was strong, the downtrodden was still in beggary condition and in abject poverty. Civil servants went months, unpaid or owed arrears of wages and salaries. Politicians were said to have banks accounts in Swiss banks and elsewhere in the world, helping to develop such countries’ economies at the expense of Nigeria’s dwindling economy. It was clear many Nigerians were not

reaping the benefits of the oil wealth. Special interests were reaping the benefits. The country was still poor by world standard, even though a growing number of Nigerians were getting richer, and among the world wealthiest.

Thus, against the backdrop of the dwindling fortunes of the Nigerian economy as a result of creeping indebtedness, a huge capital outflow and the massive repatriation of foreign exchange and a decline in external reserves, rising unemployment and teachers strike for the non-payment of salaries, the Second Republic was responsible for its abrupt end. The government was overthrown through a bloodless coup on December 30, 1983. Some of the reasons put forward by the coupists for their action were economic mismanagement; corrupt leadership and general insecurity (Alkassim Abba, et al. 1985; Briggs and Bolanta, 1992).

The new military regime under the leadership of General Muhammadu Buhari, like that of General Murtala Muhammed, was hard-nosed on corruption. It introduced draconian laws and corrupt politicians were investigated and those found guilty sentenced and imprisoned for many years. A social rejuvenation programme called War Against Indiscipline (WAI) was introduced and vigorously implemented. Though programmes like WAI were laudable because they were introduced to instil morality, public accountability and discipline in the psyche of Nigerians, their implementation lacked a human face. Also, the failure of some government functionaries to demonstrate leadership by example in a regime that approached the issue of corruption with a zero-tolerance response rendered its posture on the matter questionable (Davieson, 2015). Despite the odds associated with the fight against corruption under the Buhari's military regime, it achieved modest results (Ribadu, 2005) and was generally regarded as second to the one led by General Murtala Muhammed in that regard.

Paradoxically, the subsequent military regimes that came into power institutionalised corruption and expanded the frontiers of neo-patrimonial networks that served as the breeding ground for corrupt practices in the public sector. Throughout the reign of General Ibrahim Babangida, who took over from General Muhammadu Buhari in 1984, to General Sani Abacha, who took over from the Interim National Government of Ernest Shonekan in 1993, and, finally, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who succeeded Abacha and returned the country to civilian rule in 1999, the story was the same. High profile corruption and its institutionalisation into the Nigerian society were some of the nauseating experiences the country passed through. The trajectory of the economic reform measures and the prolonged period of transition to civil rule

coupled with what Ibeanu and Egwu (2007:186) described as the “extreme personalisation of power” were some of the experiences that profoundly induced the tidal waves of corruption under the three successive military regimes. Excess crude oil revenue realised following the 1989 Gulf war to the tune of about N71 billion was squandered. That was not all as when General Sani Abacha died in 1998 it was estimated that, during his five years in office, he looted between US\$2 billion to US \$5 billion (Adetunla, 2008). To cap it all, as at 1999 when the prolonged period of military rule ended, a Western pressure group, “The Jubilee”, had it that a few Nigerians had appropriated up to US\$55 billion of Nigeria’s money derived from the sale of crude oil (cited in Mohammed, 2010a: 56). In retrospect, Ojukwu and Shopeju (2010:17) pointed out that elite corruption led to the loss of billions of dollars by Nigeria since independence with the livelihoods of millions of people in the country short-changed. Worse still, corrupt leaders expatriated monies stolen to foreign havens, leading to a situation in which the country lost close to \$400 billion between 1960 and 1999 to corruption. The irony of the money stolen in the country in those years is the fact that it was kept in different foreign banks.

Against the backdrop of the monumental crisis of corruption faced by the country and the bad name it created locally and internationally, the new civilian regime under President Olusegun Obasanjo promised to face the challenge head on. Emboldened by section 15 (5) of Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999), which states that “the State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power”, the support of local and international stakeholders, such as CSOs, state and non-state actors across the world, the civilian regime started on a sound footing by setting up anti-corruption agencies. It is no wonder that the first Bill sent to the National Assembly by the Obasanjo government was for the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). Later, another anti-graft agency, the Economic, Financial and Crime Commission (EFCC), was established. Together, the ICPC and EFCC were to complement the activities of the existing legal framework on corruption, which has been embedded in the Constitution, that is, the Code of Conduct Bureau (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007). Other administrative measures were also adopted side-by-side with the relevant institutional mechanisms meant to combat corruption in the country. In this regard, mention needs be made of the auxiliary units like the Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR) and Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP). There is also the role of due process mechanism, which is meant to enhance public accountability in public procurement and ensure prudence in the management of public institutions through the establishment of Budget Monitoring and Price

Intelligence Unit (BMPIU) and open and competitive tender for government contracts, among other policies. These measures not only raised high hopes and expectations that the country was soon going to see light at the end of the dark tunnel but also provided a general feeling that at last a messiah had assumed the leadership of the country.

The initial stand of the regime left no one in doubt that Obasanjo had no sacred cows policy on corruption. This was attested to by the initial actions of the government which yielded apparent results, with over \$400 billion of stolen money recovered by the EFCC and how celebrated corruption cases involving the former Inspector General of Police, state governors, ministers and presidents of the Senate were exposed and the accused charged to court (Ibeanu and Egwu, 2007:188-189). However, the good image created by the new civilian regime at the beginning was lost as a result of its contradictory actions and the politicisation of the anti-graft agencies. Much more discerning was the fact that the regime promoted corruption in the National Assembly and through celebrated projects in which colossal amounts of money were injected and siphoned without benefiting the end users.

Consequently, Nigerians increasingly lost faith in Obasanjo's stand against corruption because of his apparent insatiable quest for power, as manifested by his attempt of violating the Constitution through seeking a third term. This singular motive forced him to lose focus on the war against corruption and soft-pedalled the work of the EFCC, which he used as a political tool of government to track down political opponents or public officers. Many cases of political corruption were not investigated. Therefore, in the later days of the regime, the government lost its bearing on the fight against corruption, with many best known allegations of bribery scandals, like the alleged squandered and unaccounted \$16 billion invested on the national power project between 2006 and 2007. It was reported that Nigeria lost at least \$4 to \$8 billion per year to corruption during the eight years of Obasanjo administration (Human Rights Watch 2007, cited in Mikail, 2017:81).

Indeed, the Umaru Musa Yar'adua/Goodluck Jonathan government that came after the 2017 general elections was hatched by the very political corruption steered within the ruling party by Obasanjo. It all started when the National Assembly foiled Obasanjo's bid for a third term in office. Therefore, with no plan to leave the corridors of power, coupled with his unconcealed bid to sabotage the Vice President, Atiku Abubakar's, political ambition (who later picked the presidential ticket of the Action Congress, AC), Obasanjo midwived, against all hues and cries within the

ruling PDP, the Yar'Adua government (Adeniyi, 2011). The election that brought the latter to power was marred by electoral irregularities and manipulation. Upon ascending to power and in his attempt to raise the confidence of Nigerians and guarantee public trust, Yar'Adua admitted flaws in the election that brought him to power. He set up a 22-member Electoral Reform Committee to investigate all issues militating against transparent elections and reform the country's electoral laws. This singular action, coupled with "his personal disposition and the direction in which he decided to lead his administration"(Adeniyi, 2011: xxiv), which focused on the rule of law as its guiding principle, earned him early goodwill from Nigerians.

Bold initiatives were made by the government to block the drainages that served as the conduit pipes through which unscrupulous public officers siphoned the country's money through dubious and, sadly, unhindered methods. First, the government instituted the policy of e-payment in public sector financial management. The policy required that the settlements of all federal government obligations be made through bank electronic payments and not in cash, which hitherto provided channels for resource misappropriation or opportunities for bribery and corruption. Second, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) enjoyed the support of the Yar'Adua administration in reforming commercial banks in the country, a policy that saw the trial of some chief executives of some banks, regardless of their connection with those in the corridors of power or any interests. Third, an executive memo was brought to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for the introduction of a non-conviction-based asset forfeiture system in Nigeria. The target of the policy was the recovery of assets that were proceeds of corruption and also to mount pressure on countries where stolen assets were kept to return them back to the country. Fourth, a corollary to the policy on asset forfeiture was the establishment of a regulatory framework for the control and management of such assets both before and after confiscation. Fifth, the government's directives to ministries to return unspent funds to the Federal Account in the month of December each year mopped out huge sums of money, which used to serve as a goldmine for the enrichment of chief executives, who dubiously cornered such funds through various illegal outlets.

The initial commitment to upholding the rule of law and fight against corruption during the Yar'Adua administration hit the rocks from the start; "with time, the implementation of the war against corruption became sometimes dysfunctional and at other times very diabolical" (Adeniyi, 2011:xxvi). As earlier noted, the Yar'Adua administration was the brainchild of political corruption, as within the ruling PDP and the top functionaries in his cabinet were mainly staffed with those who out rightly

sponsored his political campaign. They were notoriously corrupt politicians of the time. The Attorney General of the Federation Mr. Macheal Aondokaa's apparent attempt at the falsification of information on James Ibori, who was being investigated by the EFCC and the London Metropolitan Police for alleged money laundering worth USD \$250 million, is a case in point. The "political cabal" in Yar'Adua's cabinet destroyed his personal integrity and the reputation of his government. The case also reinforced the view of Rose-Ackerman (1999) that a politically dependant can easily and effectively facilitate high-level corruption, thereby making corrupt officials immune from facing the wrath of the law. Similarly, reinforced by his illness and the inability of the members of his cabinet to identify with him on the anti-graft measures introduced by him, Yar'Adua's death in 2010 undermined the series of successes his government achieved on tackling the menace.

Goodluck Jonathan's administration, which succeeded Yar'Adua, thrived on a corruption platform, even though it purportedly claimed to be fighting it. President Jonathan's indifference to corruption or his lack of political will to halt it arose from his desire to contest for the 2011 presidential election and remain in power in the face of the internal friction generated on the issue of a zoning formula. The zoning principle, which was allegedly devised by the ruling party, zoned the office of the president to the north, but it was opportunistically abandoned to provide a leeway for Jonathan to contest the election. Therefore, President Jonathan's frantic moves to clamour for legitimacy and support from aggrieved party members and other political interests in the country invariably preoccupied his mind instead of fighting corruption, which was left unhindered largely because of political expediency. Apart from the Wikileaks Report which indicted him on corruption charges as the Governor of Bayelsa State, Jonathan's refusal to declare his assets after assuming power in 2011 sent a lot of signals about what would likely be his posture towards the nagging stories of corruption during his administration. This led to a terrible situation of becoming, to use Segun Adeniyi's words, "a case of one day, one scandal" (2017:83).

Oil revenue has been the goldmine of corruption in Nigeria. When the oil market rises, it provides a veritable climate for systematic primitive accumulation. This is not surprising because, as earlier noted, part of the problem that compounds any attempt to curb corruption in Nigeria is associated with the stakes of politics, which often manifest mostly in the form of what Richard Joseph (1987) called prebendal politics. In this pattern of politics, clientelism necessitates high competition for access to state resources. This is responsible for the perpetuation of primitive accumulation, as Diamond (1991:78) aptly noted:

Plainly, the stakes of politics are too high. The welfare of too many communities and fortunes of too many families and groups depend almost on control of the state. Office holding in Nigeria has come to mean the opportunity for phenomenal illicit gain. Since the flood of oil wealth that began in 1973-74 washed away virtually all pretence of discretion and restraint, the scramble for irregular personal and group enrichment has become the bane of every Nigerian government, civilian and military alike. Yet the scale of the dishonesty seems to increase with each successive regime.

It was reported that under Jonathan, Nigeria earned N51 trillion from oil revenue out of the N96.212 trillion the country earned in 58 years of crude oil sales (*Vanguard*, August 14, 2016). Hence, at the heart of corruption during his administration was what can be described as the grand coalition of public servants and government functionaries, who mismanaged the oil revenue and fuel subsidy funds. The Senate Committee that investigated the fuel subsidy scam discovered how the sum of N240 billion provided for the subsidy in the 2011 budget was overspent by over N1.1 trillion and the outcome of its assignment came up with astonishing revelations. Contradictory figures were mentioned by different institutions connected with the administration of the funds and, at the end of the hearing and upon submission of the House Report, it was clear that top government officials were indicted, topmost of which was the Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs. Diezani Alison Madueke, who in a different account was later said to have stolen at least US\$ 90 billion from the state treasury.

As part of the on-going probe, the EFCC also traced US\$ 1.5 billion believed to be proceeds of crime to a Swiss account. It was also against the backdrop of the Minister's horrendous looting of the country's oil money that the Federal High Court sitting in Lagos ordered the forfeiture of 56 properties allegedly bought by Diezani between 2011 and 2013. In faraway London, not only was the former Minister's properties valued at £10 million, which were frozen by the UK's National Crime Agency, but also Italian prosecutors in Milan alleged that Nigeria's former President, Goodluck Jonathan, and his oil Minister received kickbacks as part of a \$1.3 billion deal involving oil giants ENI and Shell (*Punch*, January 9, 2017).

Not only was the oil money used as a conduit pipe through which a colossal amount of money was siphoned, but also leakages, bribery, contract scams and arm deals were the pivot of corruption in the country (Page, 2018). This experience serves to reinforce what Chazan and Daloz (1992:22) called "the vertical, infra-institutional

and patrimonial networks”, which also clearly manifested in the grand corruption that took a centre stage during the Jonathan administration. Even the “men of God” were not left out at the dining table of corruption. Pastor Oritsejafor, a close confidant of the President whose private jet was caught in Johannesburg with \$9.3 million by South African officials in 2014, is an illustration of such vertical links in the Nigeria’s pattern of neo-patrimonial relationship.

At the peak of the corruption scandals in Nigeria, particularly as the general election drew nearer was the money earmarked for the purchase of arms for the Nigerian intelligence services (*Vanguard*, September 30, 2014). Thus, clerics from religious divides, companies and individuals who matter most politically were directly or indirectly enticed. The funds were also recklessly utilised for political campaigns and other scandalous and highly disturbing purposes. The Jonathan administration ordered for the transfer of US \$300 million and £5.5 million of the recovered Abacha loot to the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA). The custodian of the funds for military procurement, the former National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, became synonymous with the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) for the ruling party’s campaign finance when he supervised the looting of \$2.1 billion from Nigeria’s coffers. Dasuki was arrested by the Department of State Services (DSS) in 2015 and handed over to the EFCC.

The sad situation in Nigeria’s corruption profile cases during the Jonathan administration is that not only was the money which was supposed to be used for the prosecution of the war on terror squandered by unscrupulous public officials, the government was insensitive to the rising spate of corrupt cases among public officials. This state of affairs exposed the susceptibility of the country’s petro-state economy to plunder. Being an economy highly dependent on oil royalties, which come directly through the central government, the Nigerian state presides over the looting of the national resources (Paden, 2016: 140). In this economic system, public servants close to the draining fountain of wealth, even if they are unproductive, are the few people who benefit from the commonwealth of the state. Everyone seeks for an opportunity to serve at the centre from where the honey comes. Similarly, those who masquerade as patriots are often exposed by an act of omission or commission. Their sudden wealth and lifestyles or the inherent contradictions associated with avarice, ego and personal enrichment expose their craving for materialism. Such was the case when a committee chairman of the National Assembly investigating the alleged misappropriation of the country’s oil revenue, Faruq Lawan, was found guilty of collecting a bribe of \$620, 000 (N80 million) from a businessman and the Managing

Director of one of the oil companies being investigated, Femi Otedola. Other embarrassing corrupt cases associated with the government of the day included, but not limited to, over N5 trillion of public funds stolen through dubious and counter-productive activities; corruption cases over the registration of N6.1 billion SIM Cards in the National Communication Commission (NCC); fraud in ecological funds; the misappropriation of N850, 000 for food per day by the then Director-General and Chief Executive Officer of the Security and Exchange Commission; the N480 billion Subsidy Reinvestment Empowerment Programme Funds (SURE-P); and the CBN claim of the controversial missing of the Excess Crude Oil Account to the tune of N8 trillion from the Federation Account (FA) (Mikail, 2016 :101-102).

The forgoing reflection on the trajectories of corruption in Nigeria shows that the trend in various regimes differs. Despite the difference in the trend over the years, the phenomenon reflects a vicious circle, leading to a situation whereby graft among public officers has been on the rise since the 1970s, regardless of the type of regime, military or civilian. Put differently, leadership problem in the face of massive oil revenue for the Nigerian state has sown the seeds of corruption, which germinate to the scale of plunder and pillory. Jega (2005:83), agreeing with Chinua Achebe (1983) that the trouble with Nigeria is leadership which begets corruption, succinctly concluded that:

The problem with Nigeria is the problem of leadership. What is very clear is that we have corruption as a problem precisely because we have poverty of leadership in this country. Our leaders or those who present themselves as leaders but who, in reality are nothing but rulers, basically nature, perpetuate and institutionalise corrupt practices and corrupt tendencies in this country.

Overall, seven major underlying deductions can be made from the forgoing exploration. Firstly, corruption in Nigeria has passed through various perennial trends, some of which are of high and low intensity, depending on policies introduced by a particular administration. Secondly, in most cases the Nigerian state condones corruption through various channels of neo-patrimonial networks. Thirdly, ironically successive Nigerian leaders have pledged to fight corruption but often, with a few exceptions, ended up tolerating and expanding its frontiers for political expediency. Fourthly, the enabling anti-graft laws established to fight corruption serve as tools in the hands of the government to target, suppress and oppress opposition individuals and protect friendly public officials facing the wrath of the law. Fifthly, and much more intriguing is the fact that corruption has today been institutionalised in the

country. Sixthly, the enabling punitive measures in place are not very effective as deterrents. Lastly, part of the tragedy of corruption in Nigeria is that though only a negligible fraction of the population perpetrates it, the menace earns the country a bad image globally.

In all the years Nigeria passed through since 1960, the country experienced different trajectories of leadership and governance. It is within the context of these differences that one can understand the nature of CSOs' role in the anti-corruption fight, historically and methodically. As pointed out earlier, the fight against corruption is not a new undertaking by CSOs. What has informed the nature of civil society's response to poor leadership and governance during the periods of civilian and military rule is also the key to the understanding of their role in the fight against corruption since independence. In the First Republic, the media, labour and students had been at the forefront in questioning the incipient forms of corrupt practices by public officers. Though corruption existed among politicians, it was not visible to engender a general public outcry in the First Republic. With the virtual absence of organised CSOs, only the educated elites, including opposition parties and trade unions raised their voices on corruption. Apart from the experience of the committee of enquires that investigated the allegations of corruption in the Eastern and Western regional governments, the act of corruption was instantaneously exposed by Major Nzegwu in his broadcast speech to the nation announcing the overthrow of the first parliamentary system of government.

Although popular artists like Fela Anikulapo-Kuti exposed corrupt military regimes in various albums of his songs, there was no dividing line between fighting corruption and the struggles for the exit of military from the corridors of power. This was made obvious following the persistent draconian laws introduced by the successive military rulers that suppressed freedom of speech and association in the face of economic crisis and adjustment policies of the Nigerian state. This gave birth to the rise of organised CSOs with cross-cutting mandates as represented in the activities of the organisations, such as the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Constitutional Rights Projects (CRP), and Human Rights Monitor (HRM), Constitutional Rights Projects, Network for Justice (NJ), and pro-democracy groups, such as Alliance for Democracy (AD), International Human Rights Law Group (HURILAW), National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADL), Democratic Alternative (DA), among other groups. Following the return to civilian rule, particularly during the first term period of the civilian administration, most of the CSOs that fought for the return to civilian rule entered

their lowest ebb in the struggle for transparency and accountability. Until much later when it became evident that the change in leadership from military to civilian rule did not signify a change in various aspects of governance, including the conduct of public officials, notwithstanding the government's efforts towards fighting corruption, among other salient vices (Mohammed, 2007).

Thus, with the emergence of new CSOs with special mandates on fighting corruption working side-by-side with those that survived the return to civilian rule in 1999, despite the obvious shift of the focus of donor support, resurgence of fighting corruption gathered momentum during the sixteen years of civilian rule. In all these years, CSOs succeeded in championing the passage of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) law and Freedom of Information Bill (IFOB) and Fiscal Responsibility law, among others. However, in view of the bizarre looting of the country's resources and the public outcry over corrupt practices in the country, the change of government from the party that ruled the country for sixteen years to the opposition party that promised steadfastness in the fight against corruption has offered the CSOs a veritable climate for the sustenance of the fight. It was thought that the new administration would capitalise on the existing state and non-state anti-corruption agencies to fight the scourge, particularly against the backdrop of what can be described as haemorrhage in the Nigerian economy during the immediate government that the new APC government took over from in 2015.

The Change Mantra and Mainstreaming Change in the Fight against Corruption Since 2015

The rise to power of President Muhammadu Buhari was hinged on two assurances – a promise of change and a direct mandate to fight corruption head-on. The fight against corruption is globally a herculean task. This is particularly so in a society where the cankerworm has gone deep into the fabric of society for a long time, as is the experience in Nigeria. This fight requires the political-will of leaders and the unalloyed support of all stakeholders, within and outside the corridors of power, as well as the cooperation of local and international partners. This is to suggest that a genuine fight against graft knows no sacred cows or tinkers by any form of idiosyncrasies or political considerations. The change of government and the personality of the person, who assumed leadership on 29th May 2015, left no one in doubt about the readiness of the government to nip corruption in the bud, at least in the spheres of the public sector where it has become a pervasive social phenomenon. For President Muhammad Buhari, a broad spectrum of the Nigerian society heaved a big sigh of relief because of his passion and track record in dealing with corrupt politicians when he led the

country as a military Head of State. His public service experience, which has been adjudged by the people as corrupt-free, added flavour to his credentials and brought hopes in the minds of many Nigerians that the country's experience of political corruption would soon be a thing of the past. He was also seen as a man of integrity, honesty and probity. In particular, these attributes of leadership were also exhibited when Buhari served as Chairman of the Petroleum Trust Fund set up by Abacha in 1994, which he handled "effectively, honestly, and without fuss" (Paden, 2016: 43).

In order to demonstrate his commitment to the fight against corruption, Buhari declared his assets publicly and encouraged other public officers to do the same. In what can be regarded as a message to Nigerians that he would address the problems of the country with vigour, particularly the monstrous corruption that has bedevilled the country for ages, President Buhari's inaugural speech provided hints on what approach his administration would take to deal with the country's maladies. In particular, he put the message straight to Nigerians that, "I belong to everybody and belong to nobody". Soon after his swearing-in as president, he started investigating alleged cases of corruption. Top on the list of those cases were public sector leakages and the arms procurement funds superintended by ONSA. Therefore, he not only based much of his campaign on fighting corruption in the country's public sector, Buhari also made the fight a priority agenda of his administration. In his keynote address at the Anti-Corruption Summit held in London on May 12, 2016, President Buhari put his government's priority agenda as follows:

Our starting point as an administration was to amply demonstrate zero tolerance for corrupt practices, as this vice is largely responsible for the social and economic problems our country faces today. The endemic and systematic nature of corruption in our country demanded our strong resolve to fight it. We are demonstrating our commitment to this effort by bringing integrity to governance and showing leadership by example.... (Quoted in Paden, 2016:196).

Government's fight against corruption revolves around a mixture of a series of administrative and institutional reforms and policies. Side-by-side with these frameworks of action is the use of shuttle diplomacy to seek the support of the international community to recover stolen funds kept by Nigerians in foreign banks. Broadly, the main thrust of the fight initiated by Buhari's civilian regime has been the adoption of the existing anti-graft institutions and the introduction of new policies. Closely related to these measures are policy initiatives to deter corrupt officials from making moves to steal from government coffers.

Among other measures, there are five major pillars of the government's anti-graft measures. First, is the implementation of Treasury Single Account (TSA), hitherto introduced by the Jonathan administration in 2012; the administration has maintained and vigorously implemented the policy. Second, the court trial of those accused of corruption has continued with high level cases tried and prosecuted, even though the number of those affected is abysmally low compared to the number of cases before the judiciary. Third, is introduction of whistle-blowing policy, which encourages public officers and individuals in the society to expose any alleged wealth acquired by public officers from fraud in return for monetary reward of between the minimum of 2.5% to the maximum 5.0% of the total amount recovered. The fourth measure is that of the introduction of the national orientation campaign for attitudinal change, which is christened "Change Begins With Me" launched on September 8, 2016. The fifth measure is the setting up of a Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) to advise the President on matters of graft. Next is the conduct of shuttle diplomacy to Western societies to cooperate with the Federal Government for the return of monies looted in the country. This is to say that, while recognising the importance of stakeholders' role in confronting the daunting task before his administration on its anti-corruption drive, the government also emphasised the need to work on the same page in that direction with the international institutions whose major drive is ensuring justice and facilitating the establishment of a free society. This explains why when Donald Cameron mocked Nigeria with his "fantastically corrupt" label, Muhammadu Buhari reacted by calling on his host to help to return the money stolen by corrupt Nigerians and kept in the United Kingdom. This plea resonated later during President Buhari's address to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Netherlands, where he demanded for the ICC's action on corruption cases in the developing Africa (*Daily Trust*, Wednesday July 18, 2018). Lastly, is the signing of the Executive Order No.6 of 2018 to prevent the owners of assets under investigation from conducting any transactions on those assets. It focuses on Nigeria's public officials who served between 1999 and 2015 and are under investigation for corruption by the country's anti-graft agencies.

The administration's successful admission into the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in 2016 is a major landmark, which the CSOs appreciated and considered as a mark of the commitment of the Nigerian state to the fight against corruption. In order to be an eligible member of the OGP, governments must demonstrate a minimum level of commitment to open government principles in four key areas: (Fiscal Transparency, Access to Information, Asset Disclosure, and Citizen Engagement).

The country's membership into the OGP gives the CSOs a veritable opportunity to synergise with Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) for the accountable and transparent implementation of budgets and policies.

Halfway into the implementation of the anti-corruption policies introduced by the government, it became clear that the task before the Nigerian state was gargantuan, as it required the support of all and sundry. For the government, the societal value system has over the years been systematically and bastardly eroded as a result of the cankerworm of corruption. During the launching of the "Change Begins With Me" campaign, President Buhari called for attitudinal change in both private and public life thus:

I am therefore appealing to all Nigerians to be part of this campaign. Our citizens must realize that the change they want to see begins with them, and that personal and social reforms are not theoretical exercise. If you have not seen the change in you, you cannot see it in others or even the larger society. In other words, before you ask, 'where is the change they promised us', you must first ask how far I changed my ways? 'What have I done to be part of the change for the greater good of society' (Quoted in *Punch* September 9, 2016).

The Buhari administration is close to its four-year tenure before another general election in 2019. His government's implementation of the anti-graft measures has been reacted to differently. The variation depends on one's position in the country's political economy and his stakes in corruption or readiness to embrace the change mantra to arrest the situation. This is not surprising because resistance to reform, especially the one that is intended to threaten class interest, would generate some forms of backlash with those who are interested in maintaining a status quo (Gilley et al, 2009). Even the President himself has acknowledged the enormous task ahead of his administration's anti-corruption fight, which has also been encapsulated in the change mantra, when he expressed at the London Anti-Corruption Summit that "tackling the menace of corruption is not an easy task, but it is possible even if many feathers have to be ruffled" (Paden, 2016:196).

Therefore, one of the dismal faces of the government's reform policies on corruption arises from resistance by, first, those that the change mantra intended to change and, second, some of the serving members of the administration. This state of affairs brings us to the issue of corruption fighting back, as it is being fought on two fronts – from within and outside the office of public trust. It also tangentially depicts the

contours of the character of the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie who perceive the action of the government as perilous to their interests. Besides, the act of corruption has its grand coalition within and outside public service largely because it is a syndicate of some sort. From within the government circle, public officials, including serving Senators and Members of the House of Representatives on the floor of the National Assembly (NASS), represent cogs in the wheel of progress to the fight against corruption. The legislators fight back clandestinely, and sometimes by demanding bribes to facilitate the passage of the national budget or that of a sector. In order to safeguard their means of enrichment and neo-patrimonial networks, as Page (2018:8) observes:

Nigeria's National Assembly and thirty-six state legislators are supposed to be a first line of defence against executive branch corruption.... Instead of functioning as anti-corruption watchdog, however, legislators often monetize their constitutional roles, enriching themselves and building up their campaign war chests

This is clearly expressed when executive bills are channelled to the Honourable Members of the Assembly for assent. In this case, the scenario is analogous to a business deal, something akin to “money in bags and approval on the spot”. Any contrary approach would result in non-signing of a bill or frustrating government’s policies. This is often what is associated with the frustration of government’s policy initiatives and intermittent mischief orchestrated to derail the provision of public good.

The refusal of the 8th National Assembly to assent some bills passed to it by the Executive on some bold initiatives to address the challenge of corruption since the inception of the Buhari administration can be situated within this framework. Anti-corruption policies such as the assets forfeiture law and the rejection of a presidential nominee for the chairmanship of the EFCC, are instances that easily come to mind on this issue. This explains why even the Executive Order No. 6 of 2018 passed in July 2018 was swiftly rejected by the NASS as undemocratic. In fact, the Order was passed a few days after the Supreme Court acquitted the Senate president, Bukola Saraki, over allegation of false assets declaration and other corruption charges. Other illustrated cases of the syndicate against the executive on matters of corruption was the shenanigans between the Director-General of Customs, Hamid Ali, and the NASS over the refusal of the former to appear before the latter when he was summoned for hearing as part of the institution’s oversight functions. The debacle between the NASS and the Director-General was informed by the members’ desire to cajole the

officer, who had earlier on made allegations of customs duty avoidance in the purchase of expensive cars imported into the country by the Senate President and some members of the House.

Outside the governmental sphere of political interaction, corruption fights back through syndicates of contractors and oil companies. This class fights the fighters of public corruption quietly from a distance or with the aid of some public servants sympathetic to the ousted government who serve the role of invisible cohorts. This is especially the case with individuals who are negatively affected by either the introduction of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) tight foreign exchange policy, the TSA, or those who developed hysteria over the whistle-blowing policy of the government.

Civil Society's Reaction to Government's Change Mantra and its Professed War against Corruption

The fight against corruption in Nigeria since 2015 has really been tortuous because the fighters are fought back with all the weapons in their arsenal as unscrupulous individuals whose lives depend on graft. The war is being fought on different fronts but only social groups that are structurally organised and have the independent platforms to key into the change mantra can provide a consistent support to the government's anti-corruption crusade. It is within this context that one can understand the role of CSOs in the fight against corruption, not only with the change of government in 2015, but way back to the trajectories of military rule during its three decades of holding power and following the return to civilian rule in 1999 (Mohammed, 2002). While it is axiomatic that CSOs fought on the side of anti-corruption policies using strategies, such as lobbying, political mobilisation, coalition building, partnership with other stakeholders, including the government, campaigns, workshops and conferences, they also monitored the progress of implementing government's policies and anti-corruption agencies.

In cases where the government slacks action on the fight against corruption or it negates the very principles of the fight, it is the role of CSOs to constructively wage sustained campaigns and call for caution and impartiality. To a large extent, during the military rule when human rights NGOs in the country constituted themselves as oppositional in the quest for democratisation, their standpoint in the fight against corruption was to ensure the end of military rule, which they considered highly corrupt and generally antithetical to democracy (Mohammed, 2010a; Yusif, 2010). It is in the context of such struggles that one understands the role played by CSOs in the

military authoritarian years. Civic organisations, including, but not limited to, the United Action for Democracy (UAD), Campaign for Democracy (CD), Civil Liberties Organisations, (CLO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) and Human Rights League (CHRL), formed various coalitions to achieve their onerous goal of ensuring the end of corrupt military rule.

Since the return to civilian rule, the strategies of CSOs have changed to reflect the democratic process and new channels of political participation through constructive engagement, with the state (Mohammed, 2009; Mohammed, 2010b), leading to what Kane (2001) called interactive civil society. This form of struggle is seen more in terms of democracy and development and the right of the electorate to contribute to policymaking. Constructive engagement allows citizens to accept or reject government's actions or those of its chief principal agents as well as to evaluate the performance of institutions of horizontal accountability on matters of good governance. Through this process, both the existing and new organizations with mandates on corruption are brought under various platforms of coalition to fight corruption.

Therefore, to welcome the government's idea of facing corruption head-on, CSOs under the aegis of Zero Coalition (ZCC) started setting the agenda for the government on corruption. The coalition which consisted of "Say No Campaign", National Procurement Watch Platform (NPWP), Accountability for Maternal, New-born and Child Health in Nigeria (AMHiN), Tax Justice and Governance Platform Nigeria, State of the Union Campaign and the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF), congratulated the president-elect on his victory at the poll. It constructively challenged the incoming administration to, first and foremost, live up to its campaign promise of ridding the country of corruption. Second, the coalition tasked the President to appoint people of impeccable character to serve his administration and, thirdly, it called on the government to stop the lingering leakages of tax revenue in the Nigeria's oil and gas industry (*The Guardian*, May 18, 2015).

Given the notoriety of the oil sector as the beehive of corrupt practices, the group emphatically called for the government to address leakages in tax collection and the arbitrary use of tax incentives and all sorts of illicit financial outflows. In its attempt to mainstream their activities to the focus of the change mantra, "Say No Campaign" rolled out plans to establish a database of corruption cases across the country to enhance investigation. The import of this initiative was predicated on the group's conviction that the anti-corruption battle is the citizens' fight and that Nigerians

would be able to identify with the government's anti-corruption campaign and eventually intensify it, so that there can be no sacred cows. To this end, the coalition organised a rally in Abuja on December 8, 2017 with the theme "Anti-corruption March". The rally was the first CSOs open campaign to mobilise Nigerians against corruption since the assumption of office by the new government. In July 2018, a similar rally was held in Lagos by another coalition of CSOs comprising the Action Aid Nigeria (AAN), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), and Centre for Communication and Social Impact (CCSI). The aim of the campaign, tagged: "Upright for Nigeria – Stand Against Corruption", was to raise further awareness on the need to instil behavioural change to challenge the belief that makes corruption acceptable through instilling positive values (*Vanguard*, July 3, 2018).

However, complacency on the part of the government and the evidence of corruption from public officials is what led CSOs to raise crucial questions about the mantra of change. In a press release, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) cogently pointed out that the evidence available to it revealed that the claims by successive administrations in the last two decades or so, including the efforts of the current administration, with its cardinal objective, which focused on anti-graft 'war', were elusive. Despite the change mantra and the "positive achievements of EFCC, ICPC and the Presidential Committee on corruption notwithstanding", corrupt practices are alarming. These have even gone to the extent of "wearing new garbs at every twist or turn" (ASUU, 2018:9). This standpoint speaks the minds of many Nigerians, including the anti-corruption CSOs. Undoubtedly, the initial commendation of the government's stance on corruption gradually faded out and turned into questioning the very change mantra that was promised to Nigerians, which, by all practical purposes, is evidently associated with some challenges.

It was against this backdrop that the CSOs observed some blemishes in government's pet project "Change Begins with Me", arguing that its anti-corruption war was failing (*Punch*, May 10, 2018). This came following the alleged diversion of about N12 billion Northeast humanitarian intervention fund by the serving Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr Babachir Lawan, and the re-engagement of the former Chairman of the Presidential Pension Reform Task Team, Abdurashheed Maina, who was disengaged from service by the previous administration over a N2.7 billion pension fraud. Other corrupt charges put up by the CSOs are the effort by the Babagana Kingibe-led Review Panel to siphon \$44million intervention fund belonging to the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the alleged case of corruption involving a former Department of State Services boss, Ita Ekpenyong, amounting to

\$9million of the \$30million operation fund from the former ONSA and the alleged diversion of over \$21 million into his private pocket by the Director General of the DSS, Lawan Daura. Dismayed by the resurgence of corruption akin to the ones that caused embarrassment to the nation during the previous administrations and the unresolved cases of high profile corruption, the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), in partnership with Electoral Reform Network (ERN), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Zero Corruption Coalition (ZCC) and 14 other CSOs argued that:

While we are aware of the various commitments including the 2016 Anti-corruption Summit in London, Open Government Partnership, and campaign promise by the present administration to combat corruption in all ramifications without fear or favour, we find it disturbing that official corruption is deeply embedded and fast becoming a permanent feature whose subculture melts into the public office holders' daily life (quoted in *Punch* May 2018).

Thus, worried by “continued unwillingness to exert appropriate sanctions against high profile erring officials among others”, the CSOs bowed to continue to prod the state to change its approach. Specifically, their reservations are informed by other related developments in the fight against corruption. First, the CSOs are worried that, despite the country’s commitment on transparency and accountability in assets recovery, which was reaffirmed at the Anti-corruption Summit in London, two years after the global summit, the passage of the Proceeds of Crime Bill that would ensure the transparent management of returned assets has not seen the light of the day. Second, the CSOs have also frowned at the low conviction rate in corruption cases. Third, they are dismayed by a situation in which little information is available on how recovered assets are utilised to benefit the common people. According to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Yakubu Dogara, the total value of these assets since 1999 was estimated at \$2 trillion dollars (cited in *Daily Trust*, July 19, 2018:3). The fourth, another issue of serious concern to CSOs is the absence of clear guidelines on how those assets are utilised. Also, the CSOs complained about the existing condition in which the Federal Executive Council (FEC) arrogates the powers of the approval of contracts bestowed on the National Procurement Council (NPC) as required by law. The FEC illegally continues to preside over the issuance of contracts, while also not paying attention to constituting the NPC to take over its rightful mandate on procurement. By and large, the CSOs dismay with the government over these issues has been attested to by the continuous allegations of corrupt practices among public

officials, which, according to one report, in 2016 alone, Nigerian officials collected an estimated N82.3 million bribes totalling \$4.6 billion (Page, 2018).

In what can be described as a cat and mouse relationship, the CSOs accused the government of not keeping faith with its change mantra, particularly on the anti-corruption drive, the government in turn criticised CSOs for not doing well in mainstreaming into its fight against corruption. This was made clear on the occasion of the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room Dialogue held in Abuja where the Vice President averred that the CSOs were not doing enough to support the government's anti-corruption drive, arguing that "there is not enough outrage from civil society on the anti-corruption war, they (CSOs) are not speaking up. This is an existential problem to Nigeria" (Quoted in *Punch*, October 5, 2017). Undoubtedly, for the CSOs, action should speak louder than words in the fight. Instead of promoting consistency in the fight against corruption, the Nigerian state has turned its face the other side as some serving public officials engage in corrupt practices. The crux of the matter is that, while it is true that most of those accused or those found guilty of corrupt practices are members of the opposition party who served during the previous administrations, some of the politicians who equally served under the platform of the same opposition party but eventually defected to the ruling party have found their defection a safe haven to retain their loot and safeguard their interests, regardless of any contradiction. It is this group of politicians and public servants that the CSOs vehemently oppose. They have been pressing harder on the anti-corruption agencies to investigate the affected politicians, but without much success. This situation, in addition to creating a serious hollow in the government's anti-corruption drive, has also generated mixed reactions in the society over the capacity of the government to change the country from its past experience of executive corruption with impunity.

It is important to note that despite the CSOs' disagreement with the government over the implementation of policies on corruption, they have continued to support it on a better way to overcome the innumerable challenges associated with the fight against corrupt practices. This is to suggest that through constructive engagements with the state and public enlightenment directed at mobilising the society to key into the change mantra, the CSOs have come to play a big role in the fight against corruption during the Buhari administration. Going beyond the strictly limited capacity of the Nigerian state in the fight, the CSOs have agreed with the government that corruption is fighting back. This was informed by the experience of losing cases of corruption in court by the federal government on account of the failure of the relevant institutions of horizontal accountability to key into the change mantra. This is particularly the

case with the judiciary, which is part of the corrupt system in Nigeria. Therefore, SERAP, in particular has called on President Buhari to adopt a revolutionary approach to his government's fight against corruption by referring high profile official corruption cases to the International Criminal Court for investigation and possible prosecution.

In cases where the federal government introduced a policy but failed to implement it due to unexpected lapses, the CSOs moved into action and demanded for laws that could make the policy more effective and acceptable to democratic norms. One of such policy frameworks is whistle-blowing, which received commendation by the society, including the organised CSOs. The policy is one of the institutional reforms designed to encourage citizens with information to expose looted funds wherever they are hidden and also expose any violation, misconduct or improper activity that negatively affects the credibility of the Nigerian people and government. The policy is very effective in assisting the government to recover illegal properties taken from the public treasury. Within the first four months of signing of the whistle-blowing policy in 2016, the federal government was able to recover N73 billion (*Vanguard*, April 16, 2017). Stories of how millions of local and international currencies were stashed in banks and kept at unusual places found by the operatives of the EFCC have made obvious the awful dimension of corruption in Nigeria.

As the activities of the Special Presidential Investigation Panel (SPIP) for the recovery of public property gathered momentum, millions of dollars, pound sterling and naira allegedly looted and kept in banks and other unanticipated places have been recovered. One of such celebrated cases was the discovery of a staggering sum of \$9,772,800 and other cash of the sum of 74,000-pound sterling hidden in a building located in the slums of Sabon Tasha in Kaduna State belonging to the former Director of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Mr. Andrew Yakubu. Others were the N400 million discovered in a Lagos Plaza Shop stashed in bags known in local parlance as "Ghana Must Go"; the N250 million (\$818.062) found inside the popular Balogun Market in Lagos, the N55.8 billion stashed in banks; the N49 million (\$160,0340) discovered at Kaduna Airport and the \$43.4, 27,800 pound sterling and N23.2 million in Ikoyi, Lagos. By April 2017, a source close to the government had it that, following the effectiveness of the whistle-blowing policy, huge amounts of money were found at cemeteries and deep in the forest buried by looters for 'safety' (*Daily post*, April 16, 2017).

However, a serious issue of common interest to civil society is the government ignoring the incessant calls by the CSOs to make public the identity of those who owned the discovered money as a result of the cooperation of successful whistle blowers. Questions over who owned what money, how and when are still begging for answers while rumours have been going round that some serving public officials are enmeshed in the allegedly discovered illegal monies. Another serious grey area observed by CSOs in the implementation of the whistle-blowing policy is that it does not cover the protection of the whistle blowers who are left to face the wrath of corrupt persons. Their job security and safety is also at stake. For example, a staff of the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN), Mr. Murtala Ibrahim, was sacked for uncovering a scam at the Bank. The same happened to Mr. Ntai Thompson, an Assistant Director with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who exposed the looting of cash worth \$229,000 and N800, 000 meant for crucial projects, and the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Niger Delta, Ms. Fatima Bamidele, whose life was put under threat for the heroic action of exposing corruption and the mismanagement of N300 million meant for the Poverty Alleviation Programme.

Therefore, an issue of serious concern to CSOs is the growing state of ambivalence about corruption due to lack of adequate legal protection for whistle blowers. This fear has set in motion a series of advocacy conveyed via various media outlets and social media platforms as well as the NASS for the expeditious passage of the whistle-blowing bill. Considering what one may call the twist of fate that has befallen whistle blowers and its likely impact of discouraging others to expose corruption, the CSOs seek for the speedy passage of a Whistle Blower Protection Bill by the National Assembly. Through consistent and relentless advocacy and campaigns, CSOs have succeeded in getting the Senate to pass the bill into law in 2017. This is what is known as “An Act to Protect Persons Making Disclosures for the Public Interest and others from Reprisals, to Provide for Matters Disclosed to be Properly Investigated and Dealt with and for other Purposes Related Therein”. Both chambers of the National Assembly are to harmonise the bill and send it to President for assent.

Meanwhile, while expecting the passage of the bill, CSOs have not only organised a stakeholder’s summit with prominent law makers of the Federal House of Representatives in attendance to discuss and lobby for the signing of the bill, but have also went ahead to launch the Whistle blower Support Project tagged “Corruption Anonymous” (CORA). This was a project of the African Centre for Media and Information Literacy (AFRICMIL) with the support of the US-based MacArthur Foundation. Another initiative with a similar objective is the “Say No Campaign”

launching of an anti-corruption mobile app, *Doro Corruption* in March 2018. The application is a purposely-built software that informs Nigerians about the latest trends in the anti-corruption sphere. It also gives members of the public and private sectors an avenue to report cases of corruption. These interventions have yielded fruitful results in the sense that through sustained campaigns and lobbying, sacked whistle blowers like Thompson were recalled to their job and citizens have become freer to expose corruption as their privacy is guarded. Similarly, CSOs pressure on the government to fulfil its promise of payments to whistle blowers recorded some successes following intense outcry for justice and fair play at different forums and on different media outlets, leading to the payments of N375.8 million to 20 whistle blowers in June 2017 (*Premium Times*, October 12, 2017).

Through monitoring the processes of governance and policy implementation on corruption, CSOs serve as a watchdog of public accountability, transparency and anti-corruption policies. Though throwing their weight on government's anti-corruption campaign, CSOs have, in principle, consistently spoken their minds against the lapses identified with the reforms regardless of any interests. On the issue of recovered looted funds from abroad, while the CSOs support President Buhari's campaign on corruption they emphasise the need to step up the crusade before Nigerians lose confidence in it (Rafsanjani, interview with *Thisday*, July 22, 2018). This plea came at the time when it became apparent that the whistle-blowing policy of the government had been lopsided and, consciously or unconsciously, selectively pursued. Nobody from the ruling party was named. This snag has further deepened the growing suspicion that the change mantra campaign has not squarely covered all public officials, a situation which can jeopardise the sincerity of the campaign in totality.

More assertively, while CSOs in Nigeria have been supporting government's campaign for the return of looted funds in Europe and North America, they put a strong caveat before the Federal Government to their commitment on this matter. The caveat given to the government is that the recovered money and assets should not be re-looted by any means. As at April 2018, Switzerland returned \$322 million in addition to the first tranche of \$700 million already confirmed as fully repatriated by December 2012 (*Daily Trust*, April 24, 2018). The amount was kept in a Special Account with the Central Bank of Nigeria, the country's apex bank, on December 8, 2017. The Federal Government's proposed the sharing of the \$322 million recovered loot was considered by CSOs as an ill-advised decision. The CSOs position is informed by lack of available official statistics about the poor people in the country, a

situation that could serve as another gateway for the re-looting of the recovered money. Their apprehension was informed by the experience of the immediate past regime when Swiss and other European banks returned millions of the loot to the tune of over \$5 billion. However, how the money was spent is still unknown.

Therefore, instead of sharing the money, as proposed by the Buhari administration, CSOs advised the government to establish an Integrity Trust Fund for transparency and for the prudential management of the recovered money and assets (Rafsanjani, interview with *Thisday*, July 22, 2018). This will enable the Federal Government to spend the money on education, healthcare and provide social amenities, especially water (SERAP, in *Punch*, July 2, 2018). Thus, the anti-corruption CSOs want to ensure that right mechanisms are put in place to guarantee the transparent management of the recovered funds and make it impossible for public officials to continue to loot and keep the money outside the country.

In fact, the watchdog role of the CSOs on the public management of resources in the era of change mantra is very encouraging. They serve as the voice of the voiceless and the epitome of restoring public trust through accountability and transparency in the way resources are managed in the country, especially for special projects like the prosecution of general elections. This was precisely the case when President Muhammadu Buhari submitted a budget of N242 billion for the execution of the 2019 general elections to the Senate in July 2018. CSOs were very critical about the budget, which they considered high and, therefore, called for the intensive scrutiny of the proposal. CSOs raised eyebrows on the proposed budget because what the country's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), actually budgeted was N194 billion. However, security agencies in the country, including the office of National Security Adviser (NASA), the National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), the Nigerian Police (NP) and the Department of State Security (DSS), are factored into the budget to share the remaining amount (*Daily Trust*, Wednesday July 18, 2018:5). Ostensibly, the security sector in the country has been notorious in serving as the conduit-pipe through which huge amounts of money were misappropriated in the past (Page, 2018).

In particular, SERAP and the Policy and Advocacy Centre (PLAC), are worried over the high amount required for the election, as proposed by the government, and challenged that Nigerians need to know how the money will be expended, if at all the Senate eventually endorsed the budget. This trepidation was informed by the country's experience of past elections, particularly the latest one held in 2015. In its

recent Report entitled “*Camouflaged Cash – How ‘Security Votes’ Fuel Corruption in Nigeria*” (2018), Transparency International (TI) has also identified security votes as a political tool in the hands of politicians seeking re-election or officials who intend to run for political office to misappropriate public funds. The fact that it is “fungible, unaudited, and transacted entirely in cash” suggests that the security vote is one of the most durable forms of corruption (Transparency International, 2018:4). Some of the clear case of security votes as a conduit-pipe of corruption in Nigeria is the alleged diversion of the Nigeria Air Force (NAF) funds for personal enrichment and the acquisition of property in choice areas of Abuja by the former Chief of Defence Staff, Alex Badeh, and the former ONSA’s diversion of money meant to fight Boko Haram for national prayers and other awful scandalous expense. The opaque security budget proposed for the conduct of the 2019 elections in the country is said to be more than the annual budget of the Nigerian Navy and Air Force put together (Transparency International, 2018:8). In view of the need to ensure prudent expenditure on the proposed budget, CSOs initiated a somewhat early bird whistle-blowing alarm for Nigerians. This is made evident in the words of the Executive Director of SERAP, Adetokunbo Mumini:

Whatever that is appropriated must be fully accounted for and must be transparently spent. That is important in a democracy. In a democracy, there can be no hide or seek. Every little cash must be made open on the table so that a government that is fighting corruption must be seen to be preventing corruption (Quoted in *Leadership*, July 22, 2018).

The above position is not only words of caution extended to the government but also a “riot act” spelt out by CSOs in case of any possible unrestrained use of the 2019 election budget.

It is important to ask this question; why the gradual erosion of public trust in a government that has thus far shown its determination to fight corruption? The answer to this question is not far-fetched. A situation where a change in government has not brought with it a change in the attitude of public servants despite the mantra of change poses a serious question on the nagging character of corruption among the “predator elites”. This concern has further inspired CSOs to search for answers and the possible remedy to the situation. In a study carried out in six geo-political zones by the CCSI, it was found out that the triple factors of “greed, god-fatherism and gratification” are the motivators that sustain corruption in the country (*Vanguard*, July 3, 2018).

Moreover, if the experience of the last three years of the change mantra regime is anything to go by, the CSOs, while concurring with the Federal Government, argue that even the judiciary is not helping matters in the fight against graft. It is also haunted by the research-established triple heritage that virtually affects every institution in the country. The problem has been compounded by the absence of a holistic framework to fight corruption. The Federal Government is challenged for losing a number of corruption cases on the grounds of improper investigation and poor prosecution, but such experience could be seen as partly a result of a corrupt judicial system. Through the technicalities of law rather than the thorough investigation of cases, some corrupt persons were tried but eventually acquitted. In most cases, the accused persons put together teams of paid and experienced lawyers better than those of the government.

Though the civil society commended the Nigerian state for the setting up of a National Prosecution Agency (NPA) to prosecute cases of corruption, the institution does not yield any fruitful result in actual prosecution cases. In fact, the NPA has not yet seen the light of the day largely because no funds have been allocated to it. It is rendered lifeless at birth, since it is not assigned any corrupt case to try (Falana, 2017). These are some of the reasons why a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) as well as human rights lawyer, Femi Falana, disagreed with CSOs position that the loss of prosecution cases has been the result of corruption fighting back. Instead, the lawyer attributed the situation to what he called “official negligence”, lack of inter-agency collaboration and coordination and lack of proper investigation and prosecution of corruption cases by the Federal Government.

In view of their conviction that the courts have their hand in obstructing the prosecution of corrupt cases, CSOs called for a more proactive and vibrant judicial system to try and prosecute prominent politicians accused of corrupt charges. At another level, lawyers with a strong passion for anti-corruption have become more active and serious over the role of the judiciary in handling corruption. This has prompted the launching of a CSO among lawyers called Lawyers Network Against Corruption (LNAC) in March 2018. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) too plays a crucial role in this regard. For many years before now, the Association has been conducting discussion series on corruption, otherwise known as the NBA Anti-corruption Master Class in which lawyers discuss their role in the anti-corruption fight with a view to train and sensitize members to participate in the fight in their discharge of professional activities. Other CSO forums and platforms include, the Action Aid’s “Trending Corruption Issues in Nigeria”.

In a situation where advocacy tends to yield little success in their call for change within the professional domain of lawyers, CSOs have resorted to open protests at the National Assembly. Such was the case in 2016 when a coalition of CSOs under the aegis of the National Support for Good Governance (NSUGG) went to the Assembly demanding for the prosecution of seven judges who were arrested by the DSS over the allegation of corruption. The group said it was wrong for the NASS to summon or question the arrested judges, needless to ask them to appear before its committee on judiciary. Their message to NASS was aptly captured in one of the placards carried by the protestors, which said: “The judiciary is not under attack; it is the corrupt judges that are under attack and should be jailed if found guilty”.

The Achievements, Challenges and Prospects of CSOs in the Fight Against Corruption

Achievements

Measuring the success of CSOs in the fight against corruption is a difficult task because the key variable to be used in the assessment of “success” is the reduction of corruption (Setiyono and McLeod, 2010:348). Measuring its reduction in Nigeria is rather a function of many factors, including the administrative, the institutional, the systemic behavioural and the economic. However, at the level of CSOs engagement with the state, its institutional and legal framework vis-à-vis the corrupt practices among public officers, it can be argued that measuring the successes of anti-corruption civic organisations must focus on their degree of involvement in their struggles, their level of organisational platforms to wage the fight and the extent or frontiers of their coalition against the act as well as their robustness in the sustenance of their campaigns and the outcome of the feedback they receive from the state and society. Assessing the extent of the satisfaction of the latter with the activities of CSOs on anti-corruption can only be achieved through empirical survey research. Nevertheless, using the content analysis adopted in this presentation, one can make extrapolations and measure the performance of CSOs and the extent to which they key into the change mantra since 2015.

Through demand for an update on corruption and anti-corruption agencies, mainstreaming the citizens to support the anti-graft reforms of the government using various sensitisation platforms, whistle-blowing, monitoring and reporting corruption, the CSOs have been able to hold government accountable on the issues of corruption.

Leveraging on the opening created since the return to civilian rule, they have exposed high level corruption in the country. For example, on the one hand, while the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) single-handedly obtained a court order to compel the Federal Government to disclose the amount of looted wealth and assets recovered since 1999, on the other hand, the Legal Defence Assistance Project (LEDAP) was able to obtain a court order to force the National Assembly to disclose the salaries and allowances of all federal legislators. This feat has also been achieved by a few other CSOs that secured court orders leading to the disclosure of information on contract sums for some projects (Falana.2017).

The CISLAC which, alongside other CSOs, had championed the passage of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative law, Fiscal Responsibility law and Freedom of Information bill, also spearheaded the advocacy that led to the passage of the Tobacco bill, the National Health Act and Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and Witness Protection bills by the 8th Senate in 2017. The bill to establish Special Anti-Corruption Amendment Courts has been sent to the Constitution Amendment Committee of the Senate, while the Proceeds of Crime Bill was sent to the Senate Joint Committee on Anti-Corruption and Judiciary.

Also, through synergy, partnership and networking with national and international sister anti-corruption organisations and agencies, CSOs have been able to extend the frontiers of the nation to other parts of Africa, Europe and America. In 2016, 157 African CSOs, with representation of those from Nigeria, wrote an open letter to African leaders demanding for an end to corruption, with a hash tag #End Corruption Now. Therefore, it is no wonder that in October 2015, a few months after the formal swearing-in of the new president, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) submitted a petition to the office of the Special Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court alleging the commission of crime against humanity by military officers, and other security officers who diverted \$15 billion earmarked for the procurement of arms and ammunition to fight the Boko Haram during the Jonathan administration.

Similarly, in recognition of the important role of anti-corruption CSOs, as stakeholders in fighting corruption, the first Global Asset Recovery Forum (GFAR) held in Washington, DC in December, 2017 had in attendance over 30 CSOs from the four focus countries: Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Ukraine. The following local CSOs participated at the summit: the African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), Human and Environmental Development Agency

(HEDA), the Nigerian Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD), the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), the Nigerian Network on Stolen Assets (NWSA), CISLAC, Nigeria Transparency International (NTI) and the Nigeria Policy Alert.

It is important to note that the audacity to fight corruption by CSOs has always been boosted with the support of international agencies that have mandates or projects on anti-corruption. As indicated earlier, the return to civilian rule in 1999 coincides with a shift of focus on areas of intervention by international donor agencies in third wave democracies. In the past, emphasis was on ending military rule but following the return to civilian rule in most of these countries, the paradigm of development assistance shifted to strengthening the capacity of democratic institutions. Fighting corruption is one area identified by the development agencies for support. Thus, CSOs working on corruption have a field day, particularly with the installation of a government that put anti-corruption agenda a top priority.

In July 2017 alone, Mac Arthur Foundation injected \$9 million in strengthening anti-corruption and pro-accountability activities in Nigeria. Another sum of \$6.5 million (over N2billion) was spent for the same purposes, with the Washington DC-based Accountability Research Centre, in partnership with the CDD and CITAD in Kano, serving as the implementer of the grant. Other beneficiaries of the projects are the Legal Defence Assistance Project, the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, the Shehu Musa Yar'adua Foundation and Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA). The funding was meant to support efforts by CSOs to provide platforms and forums for social discourse around accountability and anti-corruption in advance of the 2019 elections. The grant also covered the support to Chatham House in London, which would undertake research on the efficiency of behavioural change strategies to reduce corruption and promote accountability in Nigeria (*Intervention*, June 21, 2018). Similarly, as part of an on-going project called Integrity, Mobilisation, Participation, Accountability, Anti-corruption and Transparency in Nigeria (IMPACT Nigeria), in collaboration with the TI-International Secretariat, Berlin and with support from Global Affairs Canada, CISLAC is setting up Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre desks in three (3) geo-political zones of the country. This is to extend the scope of the coverage of reporting of corrupt practices to six geo-political zones in the country for citizens who wish to do so. The programme was launched in Lagos with the training of six focal staff of Arise Nigerian Woman Foundation (ANWF), the partner organisation hosting the Advocacy and Legal

Advice Centre (ALAC) in the state were trained in July 2018. In the last two years, CISLAC has organised Corruption Risk Assessment Training for partner organisations across three geo-political zones (south-south, south-west and north-west).

Challenges

Despite the increasing role of CSOs in the fight against corruption under Muhammadu Buhari's stewardship of the change mantra, they are still grappling with challenges. In some cases, these challenges constrain their capacity to impact most profoundly on fighting corruption. To say the least, as they fight corruption, the CSOs are taking the risk of backlash with corruption perpetrators either underground or in the open. However, it is also important to argue that challenges usually faced by anti-corruption CSOs are mainly internal and external to the organisations. One of the internally induced challenges is the paucity of anti-corruption CSOs. There are hundreds of thousands of civic associations in Nigeria with diverse mandates, scopes of operation and organisational ability but the domain of anti-corruption is an exclusive preserve of professionals, mainly lawyers and social scientists with high commitment to active struggles for transparency and accountability or those who acquire such skills through a long process of on-the-job training. Such resource persons with high level capacity to establish robust CSOs are not easily obtainable. This explains why most of the anti-corruption CSOs enter into broad coalitions to fight corruption.

The Nigerian case also shows that the mandates of CSOs fighting corruption overlap to the extent that they incorporate anti-corruption CSOs and others that specialise in human rights, women empowerment, communication, policy issues, legislative mandates, poverty, governance, etc. Most of the coalitions are only alive when an anti-corruption issue is raised or circumstances determine the intervention of such CSOs. This is a serious challenge because consistent and year-round advocacy are required in a situation where corruption has become an albatross to national development. Worst still, most of the specialised anti-corruption CSOs are urban-based and urban bound. Their headquarters are mainly located in Abuja, with some others housed in Lagos, Rivers, Kano and Kaduna. In most cases, CSOs do not keep in touch with the people they are supposed to serve, as most of them are professionals living in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. As they seem to be lacking any visible forge with the society they claim to be serving, CSOs can hardly facilitate the development of a broad-based coalition like the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG). Unlike the TMG, a coalition of CSOs that monitors election in Nigeria with

membership from over 400 across the country, the anti-corruption NGOs are relatively few and have no direct links with grassroots CSOs. To date, none of the CSOs anti-corruption coalition can boast of membership of twenty organisations across the country. Although CSOs like CISLAC has its office in Abuja and branches in Kano and Lagos, SERAP's operational base is Abuja and Lagos. There are many NGOs that have only their headquarters in Lagos, Abuja or Enugu or Port Harcourt but none outside their main head offices. This is a great challenge.

There is the problem of lack of availability of substantive information about the profile of corrupt cases or even cogent data to serve as a searchlight to undertake efficient and effective whistle-blowing functions. Despite the signing of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill, reliable data and statistics about who stole what, how much and when are scanty before CSOs. This is not to suggest that CSOs fighting corruption do not have independent sources of information. Rather, much of their information is from on-going investigations of corrupt cases by the existing anti-graft agencies in the country. This has resulted into a situation in which CSOs are, to use Ukase and Audu's (2015:189) words, typically "reactive rather than pro-active" on matters of fighting corruption. As a result, they are in most cases completely ignored by the authority and sadly by the very society they are struggling to rescue from the corrupt public officials. Aside from the fact that they rely on official information, the CSOs also generate the little evidence that comes to their ears from international exposures on corrupt cases. This is, particularly, the case with money laundering cases of state governors and other public officials. This challenge partly explains why the EFCC and the ICPC have lost the prosecution of corrupt cases and the CSOs' vulnerability to pursue such cases to their logical conclusions (Mohammed and Aluiagba, 2012). Thus, the efforts of the CSOs to develop a database on corruption will go a long way in securing independent sources of information to rely on in fighting corruption.

In addition, the resources available to anti-corruption CSOs are mainly sourced from international donor agencies, particularly the United States Agency for Information and Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID), Oxfam, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Mac Arthur and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), among other leading donors in Nigeria. Independent, self-conceived and initiated projects by anti-corruption CSOs are very rare unless funds are made available from outside the country. This is a serious challenge not only to the fight against corruption but also the security implications of such donor support can hardly be comprehended. In most cases,

corruption is perpetrated by most of the countries that have purportedly been supporting its fight in Nigeria. Okafor and Olugbuo (2012) pointed out that foreign companies and fraudulent individuals are culprits in aiding and abetting cases of corruption. Although cases such as these ones are isolated, to a greater extent, the fight against corruption requires organisations with resources to sustain the fight and consistently make it at the front burner of the country's national question. CSOs without adequate capacity to generate funds independently for them to pursue the fight must have to wait until such funds are made available to execute donor-tailored projects, usually slated for a few months or at best for a year intervention.

At another level, reinforced by their desire to remain vibrant in the NGO sector and always be relevant as key actors, competition among the CSOs ensued. One of the fallouts of this pattern of relationship is the development of a "Cold war" among the country's leading anti-corruption coalitions. This is to say that despite portraying a common stand and speaking in one voice in the fight against corruption, as usual, CSOs in Nigeria are not a monolithic entity; they have their weak points, which are often obscured by their relative tolerance and social cohesion. A deep insight into their organisational capacity gives a telescopic view of silent rivalry that indicates lack of unity. The rivalry is informed by existential motive and competition over which organisation can have what and when from donors. On the one hand, the CISLAC and its close partner CSOs under the aegis of Zero Corruption Coalition, have been taking the lead in the anti-corruption campaign, while, on the other, there exists another group, the Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room, led by PLAC and its visible ally, SERAP, which constitutes a corresponding platform in the fight. The two blocs are not divided by any ideological standpoint but their scramble for access to donor projects and partnership with international development agencies. The cleavages created as a result of these contending platforms are quite apparent. Rafsanjani, who is the Executive Director of the CISLAC, is also the Chairman of the Amnesty International and Country Director of Transparency International in which none of the other group is a member. In contrast, the PLAC, whose Executive Director is Clement Nwanko, with its key associate, SERAP, undertake projects with the support of the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Both camps access funds from the MacArthur Foundation.

Another salient challenge that is often overlooked is the contradiction or irony of the fight against corruption while it thrives from within civil society itself. Though it is difficult to determine empirically, its smoke can be inhaled even from a distance. First, while the government and the CSOs are conducting anti-corruption campaigns,

the latter has been described as part of the problem. Once corrupt people are arrested, human rights CSOs are in most cases the first to speak under the guise of human rights to cry foul and accuse anti-corruption agencies of violating the rights of the accused persons on the presumption of innocence. Thus, as the convener of the “Say No Campaign”, Ezenwa Nwagwu once expressed that: “CSOs need to run away from the narrative of the corrupt. We are part of the problem; we help the corrupt to build the narrative. Somebody is arrested for corruption; it is civil society who will be saying that the government is selective...”(Quoted in *Today*, December 9, 2017). This is to confirm Mohammed’s (2018) and Smith’s (2007) view that CSOs in Nigeria are not immune from the exigencies of the very political society in which they operate.

Second, CSOs are also not insulated from the very monster they are fighting. Beyond the implied perception that anti-corruption CSOs are considered decent and highly principled in their fight against corruption, there are still some CSOs in Nigeria that are sham, corrupt and highly opportunistic in their search for the goldmine of donor funds. This point has been documented (Smith, 2007, 2010 and 2018; Page, 2018) and needs not to detain us except to add that there are phonies among CSOs. This has been aptly observed by the President of the Godsent Foundation, Dion Osagie, when he averred that about 70 percent of NGOs in Nigeria are fraudsters, noting that over \$200 million donated to NGOs in the country yearly end up in the private accounts of the owners of such organisations (see *Guardian*, May 10, 2017). Really, this is a serious snag in the CSOs’ quest for social justice, human rights and accountability. The problem of corruption has negatively affected their image, as it undermines public confidence in forging vertical and horizontal synergies in the fight against corruption. If one arm of the civil society is rotten, it ultimately affects the functions of the other. The fight against corruption is a collective responsibility, as the collateral damage of corrupt officials impinges on the capacity of a society to achieve meaningful development.

In any case, this issue brings us to one of the external challenges of the CSOs in the fight against corruption. This has to do with the introduction of the proposed new legal framework for CSOs and the likely threat it will pose to the anti-corruption fight. Though Nigeria is placed among countries that have their legal framework evolving (not sustained) in the USAID’s African CSOs Sustainability Index (2016), the threat by the NASS to introduce its proposed bill for the establishment of Non-governmental Organisation Regulatory Commission will serve as a game changer in that regard. As it were, the proposed bill will allow for the setting up of an NGO Regulatory Commission, with far reaching powers of oversight over the affairs of

CSOs operating in the country. Two issues stand clear on the proposed bill. First, the insistence of the NASS, despite the call for caution by professionals from different walks of life, to introduce the bill has its political economy. The activities of CSOs will be decimated because the erroneous impression given by the promoters of the bill is that NGOs operate outside the scope of the law and government regulatory agencies. And, for this reason, NGOs have to be tamed. Indirectly, taming CSOs under a democratic setting means gagging them and taking their attention away from consistently fighting the predator elites. Needless to say that in Nigeria, NGOs are registered by the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and need no further regulation that will make their registration subjected to tight provisions.

Thus, considering the pressure mounted on the 8th NASS by the anti-corruption NGOs on different issues bordering on graft, the proposed bill is indirectly one way of fighting back the fighters of corruption, especially corrupt cases that affect some of the so-called 'honourable' members. Second, if NGOs were to register as incorporated trustees under the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) as the bill proposes, it means CSOs are required to file annual returns every year on their activities, comply with local or tax laws and, where necessary, the government will take over their properties (NGO Regulatory Bill, 2016). Clearly, the bill is a major threat to anti-corruption CSOs whose main source of funds is through the support of international donors. It will create unnecessary procrastination in the implementation of projects that require swift action. For example, clauses 25 (c) and 29 (1) of the bill require that funds pledged by donors must be disclosed before the commencement of the project (Policy and Legal Advocacy *Factsheet*, July 2017:4). The politics of this bill is really to torpedo the activities of CSOs. This is evident because a report indicates that countries with the least protection of NGOs tend to have the worst rates of corruption (TI, Corruption Perception Index, 2017). The best that could be done is to make a distinction between fake NGOs and genuine and transparent ones, so that not every NGO is put on the same pedestal, if at all the introduction of the law is necessary.

There is also the problem of weak and less institutionalised political party opposition that is capable of promoting a forward linkage between CSOs and political parties in the fight against corruption. Ideally, political parties, specifically the opposition, though not part of CSOs, would have been the vanguard of fighting anti-corruption. Sadly, their slumber is attributable to the fact that public officials who served the PDP government for sixteen years happened to be the biggest looters of the Nigerian economy since the return to civilian rule in 1999. Therefore, the leading opposition

party in the country has virtually nothing to offer in order to complement the CSOs in their fight against corruption. After all, Mohammed (2018:187) notes that:

Essentially, CSOs and political parties rarely find it easy going in the democratization process; even when at one time both institutions share common ideals, such a point of convergence could turn out to be a temporary one. At other time, as it is usually the case mostly in developing democracies, their ideals are diametrically opposed to each other largely because CSOs are expected to serve as an interface between the public and the private spheres of societies...

In the particular case of fighting corruption, the interest of the opposition political parties is diametrically opposed to those of CSOs because those accused of corruption are mainly public officials, who served under the then ruling party. The opposition has been rendered vulnerable and weak to provide any meaningful fight against corruption, particularly in the face of further disclosures of their long years of looting. It is even worse for one to expect other weaker opposition political parties that are mainly the satellites of the dominant political parties in the country to contribute to the fight. Thus, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to expect the opposition to provide a rational alliance with the CSOs in the fight against corruption under the Buhari administration.

Prospects

Despite the shortcomings observed above, CSOs have a great prospect in advancing the cause of anti-corruption crusade of the federal government. This is because regardless of the odds in the environment since 2015, the country is presently having a brighter opportunity to fight corruption cases. This is especially so because the fight against graft is not the sole responsibility of the government, but it requires the support and cooperation of other stakeholders. CSOs are the well-informed sector of the society that can expose corrupt officials, as they owe it a duty to mobilise and sensitise the society to take the fight to the next level. There are community-based NGOs that can equally join the anti-corruption drive of the government but for their lack of organisational and adequate skills to expose corruption. In some cases, local CSOs hardly make a distinction between corruption and riches, leading them to conclude that being in public trust and accumulating riches overnight is a divine blessing. They need to be adequately educated about the meaning, nature and scope of corruption and its impact in stultifying the process of national development.

Organised, well informed and urban-based CSOs need to shoulder the responsibility of empowering community-based organisations (CBOs) in local government areas (LGAs), rural communities, towns and villages, particularly in northern Nigeria where such organisations are largely underdeveloped with a small number of human rights and civil liberties NGOs compared to the Southwest or South-south (Walker, 1999). Olken and Pande (2012) observed that a good approach to monitor public officials to prevent corruption is to empower citizens. Their relative inexperience in developing societies to monitor politicians has been identified as the weakest chain in the fight against corruption in developing societies (Chalmers and Setiyono, 2012). In such societies, where civil society has a limited capacity to undertake the required monitoring role, particularly in a situation whereby the state is weak or unable to play its expected role of combating corruption, CSOs are the ones to bridge this gap. In fact, their capacity to build linkages gives them the distinctive characteristic of having the audacity to fight corruption and enhance their effectiveness in this regard. CSOs assume the ambassadorial status for the society in fighting corruption.

To the stakeholders that are generally apathetic to the anti-corruption reform agenda, CSOs represent independent dogged fighters of the evils of collective insensitivity or national amnesia about the past, present and future horrendous nature of corrupt practices. As presently, fighting corruption by professional anti-corruption CSOs is limited to the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja where the stakes of amassing wealth through neo-patrimonial relationships and holding public office are very high. These stakes are much higher in states and LGAs where all eyes are on public officials to offer largesse to a large number of political associates and deplorable persons who know virtually nothing about the ills of corruption. In such communities, the empowerment of citizens requires the robustness of CSOs to sustain the fight against corruption, which at present is virtually absent. Vertical and horizontal links to educate civic associations, raise their level of awareness about the dangers of corruption and how to instantaneously fight it are urgently needed.

Thus, a holistic pursuit of and approach to a common enemy of national development like corruption requires a strong root in the society. Communities at various levels need to internalise the spirit to fight it and sustain this practice regardless of any political, regional, tribal or socio-cultural affiliations. Such communities must desist from giving any shield to the promoters of the evil. Eradicating such forms of proclivities in a plural society where the class interest of the corrupt public officers has widened the scope of cleavages in addition to raising the social elasticity of tension and conflict, disempowerment and poverty has to be gradual. However, the

moment of take-off by the anti-corruption CSOs is due. This is to avoid the possible return of the country to full circle corruption as usual. It is within the context of the collective responsibility of the society not to create any fertile climate that will descend on the country and revert it to the awful years of crass opportunism, clientelism and primitive capitalist accumulation on a large scale that CSOs are required to be more proactive. They are expected to be strategically conscious of the need to generate their resources and mobilize the society in the fight against corruption. Therefore, while the anti-corruption CSOs have to play this role, other professional CSOs in their own rights have to follow suit and extend the process of sensitization, mobilisation and campaign against corruption from within their midst. In this regard, the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Women organisations, Student Union bodies, religious organisations, cultural associations, etc have to unite and in principle continue to fight corruption as part of the human struggle to secure better life for the development for the country. CSOs would have found forging an alliance with professional associations as they did during the pro-democracy rallies and campaigns against military authoritarian rule in the 1980s and 1990s.

The prospects of CSOs to carry out this role lie in partnership with the government's anti-corruption agencies and other stakeholders to sustain the fight and to ensure that corrupt officials are prosecuted and whistle blowers protected. The clamour for the amendment of Nigeria's legal documents and precepts on corruption to conform with the best practices to ensure speedy actions is also essential. The recognition of anti-corruption CSOs by international stakeholders is an excellent experience and a fertile ground for a further drive into many fronts of anti-corruption struggles, including that of the African continent at large. For the Nigerian CSOs to leverage on this glaring opportunity, they need to consolidate their activities by exhibiting transparency, accountability and social justice as well as strategise much more assertively to win the hearts of other formal and semi-formal CSOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs), religious and tribal groups, women associations, academics and students to mainstream into the government's clarion call for change. Change really begins with each individual to get a broad-based change in the attitude and behaviour of a society. It is different individuals who make up the society and government is the product of the latter and is operated by the very people who sprout from the society. Put differently, if a society is corrupt, the causative agent of corruption lies in the very society that produces corrupt public servants.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of corruption in Nigeria traverses various institutions but its roots can be traced to the leadership question and bad governance that has kept trailing the country before and after independence. The trajectory of military and civilian rule in a society that was exposed to the petro-dollar in the face of weak institutional mechanisms and the political will to fight graft have engendered a cyclical process and spiralling increase in corrupt practices among the public officials entrusted with public resources. The return to democracy since 1999 has, paradoxically, made the Nigerian case a precarious one, as looters looted the public treasury on a permanent basis until the drift reached an alarming rate to the extent that countrymen saw a scenario whereby if the country did not kill corruption the monster would kill it. Thus, if anything, the change mantra of the opposition party and its campaign promise, which revolves around fighting corruption head-on, had given a serious blow to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and provided the gateway for the new ruling party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), the opportunity to wrest power. CSOs found it more comfortable to mainstream into the change mantra campaign and bowed to support the government in changing the business-as-usual mode of unrestrained corruption. They are the real partners who doggedly expose corruption and the weaknesses of the Nigerian state, regardless of any political divide or idiosyncrasies. Though they have achieved a great deal in that struggle, their efforts are retarded by the very sluggishness of the government in the fight and by the mischief of predators determined to sabotage the anti-corruption crusade.

By and large, in a country where some clerics from different religious persuasions, alias the ‘men of God’, are also the beneficiaries of the unscrupulous trickle-down of state resources, and the youth becoming politically and economically disempowered to the extent of eulogising corrupt politicians and public servants, fighting corruption is an uphill task before any stakeholder. It requires the concerted efforts of truly organised, principled and committed organisations with high level doggedness to conscientize the general public about the dangers of corruption and the need for attitudinal change. Surely, the government has got it right when it rolled out the change mantra and the “Change Begins with Me” as its major plank of campaign for change in attitude, but the timing is a little too late and the approach used has not succeeded in making change possible. The approach is rather not comprehensive and total to cover all the nooks and crannies of the country with critical institutions playing a significant role in mobilising the Nigerian society. For example, the ICPC has flagged off National Anti-corruption Volunteer Corps (NAVC) to take sensitisation against corruption to the grassroots level, but the impact of the project

leaves much to be desired. Part of the problems of the initiative is that the project's sensitisation activities are limited to specific towns and cities. Above all, the Corps' activities are erratic and casual. As a result of this apparent gap, it is difficult for existing state anti-corruption agencies to carry out a successful drive against corruption without the support of other stakeholders. Worse still, there is the paucity of the coalition of anti-corruption CSOs to provide the required vertical and horizontal synergies with community-based and constructive religious organisations, trade unions and other relevant stakeholders to embrace the import of the change mantra drive, which the society perceives as essentially a government's project or at best its ideological smokescreen.

Therefore, to sustain the fight against corruption, CSOs need to partner with the state and other stakeholders, including the media, academics, students, community development associations, labour unions and other professional associations, to make Nigeria realize its noble goal of bemoaning a corrupt-free society. CSOs can reach out to the grassroots effectively when they are visible in communities and cities. Their prospects in the anti-corruption fight, therefore, depend on forming a formidable synergy with all stakeholders, who are sincerely bold to make the difference between the country's past and the nauseating experience of corruption and the opportunities created by the renewed government's efforts in fighting the menace today.

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