

## **Corruption and Nigeria's External Image in the Fourth Republic**

Journal of Management and  
Social Sciences  
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### **Abstract**

The existence of corruption is not new in the governance of countries. It is both a national and international menace with multidimensional effects thereby evoking national and supra-national efforts towards combating it. In Nigeria, it has led to institutionalisation of the fight against corruption as evidenced in the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). However, due to some factors in the fight against corruption, the effect it has on governance has continued. One area of significance is the effect it has on the country's external image. This underscores the link between domestic politics and external relations. It is against this background that this paper examines the impact of corruption on Nigeria's external image in the Fourth Republic. By focussing on specific cases that have generated international reactions, the paper argues that though the fight against corruption is within the purview of Nigeria's domestic policy, the nature and outcome of such endeavour has implications for how the country in the comity of nations. It, therefore, recommends that domestic policies must not be unmindful of the likely consequences of such policy on a country's external relations.

### **Keywords**

Corruption, image, Nigeria, relations, governance, institution

### **Introduction**

Corruption is both a national and international phenomenon engendering having multidimensional consequences on countries. The effect which it has on countries has inspired countries into taking actions aimed at curbing the scourge. At the global level, there are lots of efforts by governments, governmental, and non-governmental organisations towards combating the menace of corruption. Such multi-stakeholder efforts include those by Transparency International (TI), International Anti-Corruption Conference

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(IACC) and Publish What You Pay (PWYP) among others. In Nigeria, such efforts in recent times have included institutionalisation of the fight against corruption through establishment of agencies such as the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) by the Obasanjo administration. The institutionalisation of this fight against corruption was a fall out of the endemic nature of the menace and the resolve of the new Obasanjo administration to tackle it headlong (Obasanjo, 1999). The performance records of these anti-graft bodies, achievements and their operational challenges are well documented in the literature (Muhammad, 2011; EFCC, 2011; EFCC, 2010; Akanbi, 2007; Gashinbaki, 2004; Ogbonna, 2004; Ribadu, 2003). The determination to combat corruption has also propelled the country to enter into synergy with foreign organisations and bodies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering, and the National Anti-corruption Institutions in West Africa (NACIWA). Despite the institutionalisation of the fight against corruption in Nigeria, the menace and problems it engendered have persisted. This reality has serious socio-economic consequences for Africa's largest economy.

There is a growing scholarly interest on the subject of corruption among scholars and analysts. This is partly reflected in the avalanche of writings on the subject as well as efforts that are geared towards combating it (Belewu, Oyebola & Muhammad, 2017; Catham House, 2017; The Tide, 2017; Oluwa, 2012; Muhammad, 2011; Ogundiya, 2010; Burbakar, 2007; Abbass, 2007; Ribadu, 2006; OECD, 2006). While scholars have engaged the consequences of corruption at the domestic level in Nigeria (Muhammad, 2011; Akanbi, 2004; Sen, 1999), much research has not been done about its effect on the country's external relations. Moreover, students of foreign policy have continually emphasised the link between domestic politics and a country's external relations (Muhammad, 2019; Nurudeen, 2010; Saliu, 2010; Suleiman, 2004; Pehe, 1998). In other words, domestic issues often produce consequences at the supranational level for the country. Thus, given the internationalisation of corruption, it becomes expedient to examine the effects of corruption on Nigeria's external relations. This is more necessary because as stated above, while the fight against corruption may be more internal to a country, studies have indicated that there is a causal relationship between domestic policy and international affairs. In a way, both constitute an influence on each other. Against this background, what are the manifestations and consequences of corruption in Nigeria? What are its implications for Nigeria's external image? How can the problem be addressed? These are issues of concern in this paper.

### *Corruption in Perspective*

Corruption is not a new phenomenon among countries. Scholars have espoused on the historical trajectory of the menace noting its development, manifestations and underlying causes (Ogbonna, 2004; Usman, 2001; Maathi, 1999; Mbeki, 1999; Annan, 1999; Wilson, 1999). They have come to the conclusion that while it is not new, its effects traverse both the economic, political and social terrain of the society. Equally, corruption has had different manifestations in time and space but more recent manifestations of the scourge of corruption include money laundering, perversion of integrity, moral depravity, influence peddling, cyber-crimes and other forms of economic crimes among others. Thus, corruption may be conceived as an;

‘act whereby two or more parties in public and/or private organizations interact to pervert integrity or a state of affairs through undue influence, bribery, favouritism, moral depravity or other forms of unfaithful and unholy behaviour that runs contrary to the powers, duties and responsibilities of an office and with intent of deriving some gains for themselves individually or collectively’.  
(Muhammad, 2011: 110)

According to Muhammad (2011), the significance of this conceptual perspective is that it recognises that the intent of corrupt acts is to benefit narrow private or group interests and also encapsulates all forms of corruption within the public and private sectors. Equally, it includes activities of persons in their private and official capacities as well as those of organisations or corporate entities. Equally implicit in this definition is that it incorporates the international dimension of corrupt acts. For example, corruption may be initiated in one country and completed or the accomplice in another country.

In terms of causes, Surjadinata (2005) argued that corruption is a common trait of all political systems irrespective of differences in governing philosophy or geography, rich or poor, dictatorships or democracies, and socialist or capitalist. He observed further that both western and non-western countries provide numerous examples of behaviours that can be regarded as corrupt. In his own argument, Maathi (1999) links the phenomenon, especially in Africa, to colonialism. In a paper to the 9th International Anti-Corruption Conference in 1999, Maathi argued that colonialism and corruption were inseparable. She maintained that both the colonialists and even the missionaries that first came to Africa used a form of corruption to get collaborators and converts through giving bribes and kickbacks (disguising in the form of gifts), to persuade the natives to bend their ethics and values. This consequently erased their sense of responsibility and accountability to their community. The situation was sustained after independence because the same crop of elites that benefited from the colonial largesse constituted the ruling class after the demise of colonialism. It is on this basis that Maathi (1999) maintained that modern

African states were products of a colonial system which was based on corruption, nurtured by institutions which violated human rights and thrived because of inequalities and injustices. Although Maathi recognised colonialism as the root-cause of corruption in Africa, other factors in post-colonial Africa have helped in sustaining it. These according to Muhammad (2011) include the phenomenon of authoritarian regimes characterized by abuse of human rights as witnessed under successive military regimes in Nigeria and inability of citizens to hold leaders accountable; inequalities among people –among others. He noted further that Maathi’s postulations tend to have domesticated the phenomenon of corruption as only peculiar to the colonized states with little or no reflection on happenings elsewhere. In reality, however, corruption has never for a time been country-specific as old and new, colonized and colonizing states have been affected by the menace (Muhammad, 2011).

The import of our discussions so far is that it may be pretty difficult to narrow down the cause(s) of corrupt acts to single or few factors. Rather, it is the product of a myriad of factors which vary from country to country and from society to society. Manifestations of corrupt practices in any particular society are thus a reflection of historical, political and economic processes of such a society. This perhaps explains the differences in emphasis by scholars while attempting to capture causes of corruption. It also explains why there are variations in the core elements of corruption as perceived by countries as well as differences in the scope and intensity of strategies devised to curb it. It must, however, be stressed that there is considerable agreement as to the effects which this social vice has on society. In Nigeria, the effects of corruption manifest in both the domestic and external arenas.

### ***Overview of Nigeria’s External Image***

Nigeria’s external image could be traced to the period of the emergence of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Foreign policy scholars (Akinboye, 2013; Akinyemi, 2010) have opined that the country had a robust foreign policy at independence in 1960. Muhammad (2012) has shown that Nigeria’s profile at independence which included a robust economic base especially with the discovery and exploration of oil resources, a disciplined and professional military base and a massive population figure which currently stands at over 200 million from the initial 53 million at independence accorded the country profound respect both at the domestic realm and among the comity of nations. It was thus an era of positive image for Nigeria as it was the toast of many Western nations especially. Essentially, the initial Afrocentric policy posture of Nigeria which later manifested in radical postures especially under the military was a factor in its positive image at this period. However, with downward trend in the country’s economy which started in the early 1980s, discordant tunes began to emerge in its foreign relations. Gradually, the country began to acquire

negative image in the comity of nations. It may be reasoned that unfavourable economic climate at home forced its citizens to engage in unwholesome activities such as drug peddling, prostitution, emigration from the country, corrupt enrichment, and other economic crimes abroad thereby acquiring negative perception for the country in the international system. The situation became worse with worsening domestic conditions. Attempts by successive governments to arrest the situation through the encouragement of attitudinal reorientation proved sterile. Even attempts by the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime (1983 – 1985) to compel a change in attitude by Nigerians through jingles and legislations (War Against Indiscipline and Decree no 1 of 1984 that prescribed death penalty for drug pushers, Decree No. 4 of 1984 – protection against false accusations decree which essentially censored press freedom and the state security – detention of persons- Decree of 1984 among others) were counter-productive. For instance, the promulgation of Decree No. 1 of 1984 that prescribed death penalty for drug pushers rather than caused deterrence against drug pushing earned the country the perception of a human rights violator in the comity of nations. The situation was aggravated by failure of the regime to enunciate a definite programme of transition to civil rule coupled with clamp down on those it considered erring journalists. This was the situation until the regime was overthrown in a military coup in August 1985.

The ascension to power of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida in 1985 after overthrowing the Buhari led military regime was greeted with high expectations among Nigerians particularly in terms of respect for fundamental human rights of the citizen. It was believed that draconian laws that were experienced under the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime would be relaxed and this would propel Nigeria into a positive perception by the international community. Although the draconian decrees were relaxed (the decree prescribing death penalty and that which caged the press were revoked), corrupt practices skyrocketed under the regime thus, the hope of negative image turning positive was not achieved. This is because while the regime lived up to its word on initiating a process of transition to civilian rule beginning from the late 1980s, expenditure on the political transition programme was without due regard for accountability (Muhammad, 2009). As Ajayi (2005: 54, quoted in Muhammad, 2009) noted, the nation's image crises deepened greatly under Babangida because the regime:

‘advanced corruption and bribery to a level of state policy, and thereby compounding the moral image of the nation as a very corrupt country. Prospective foreign investors increasingly found it difficult to do business in Nigeria as much was spent on fringe... kickbacks and bribes to bureaucrats’

This conclusion reflects the views of some analysts that Babangida military regime institutionalised corruption in Nigeria (Uwugiaren, 2018; Oparah,

2017; Liman, 2017). Also, steady decline that characterised most of the country's economic indicators continued despite the oil boom and the Gulf oil windfall which increased government's revenue under the Babangida military regime. The table below shows some economic indicators in Nigeria between 1985 and 1993.

**Table 1: Economic Indicators between 1985 and 1993 (Babangida Regime)**

Item	Dec. 1985	Dec. 1992	Dec. 1993
Banks annual Interest rates			
- minimum	8%	25%	31%
- maximum	13%	31%	58%
Naira exchange rate to the US dollar	\$1 = 0.9996	1\$= 19.7597	\$1= 20.9996
Total value of imports for the year (billions)	13.00	124.613	105.50
Federal Government annual revenue (billions)	10.4	63.6	110.60
Federal Government Annual budget deficit (billion)	1.7	44.2	94.00
Public debt of Nigeria			
- Domestic (Billion naira)	27.952	107.93	178.24
- External (Billion dollars)	\$17.5	\$27.6	\$28.84

**Source:** Momoh and Adejumobi, 2002

From the table above, it is glaring that despite the increase in government's revenue from 10.4 billion Naira in 1985 (when Babangida took over) to 110.60 billion Naira in 1993 (when Babangida relinquished power), the economy was getting worse by several other parameters. The economic situation became worse with the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) as an economic revitalisation strategy. The failure of the SAP manifested in the collapse of social facilities and infrastructures, widening inequality in income, acute poverty and declining standard of living. The overall consequence is that many Nigerians became frustrated with domestic economic conditions and subsequently either emigrated from the country in search of better life opportunities elsewhere or engage in unwholesome economic practices resulting in negative image for the country (Muhammad, 2012).

Aside from the issue of corruption and economic downturn that gave Nigeria a negative image under Babangida, a third factor lies in the political transition programme of the regime. As mentioned earlier, the regime lived up to its promise of initiating a transition to civil rule programme. However, the transition programme later turned to be "transition without end" (Diamond, Kirk-Green & Oyediran, 1997) going by the haphazard nature of the transition. This is because, committees were established, structures were put in place,

institutions were formed and some elections were conducted. However, the annulment of the June 12, 1993, Presidential election which was to climax the transition to civil rule programme and widely believed to be won by Chief MKO Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), resulted in serious political impasse which Babangida himself could not resolve before he 'stepped aside' in August 1993 after putting in place an unelected Interim National Government (ING) headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan. Events thereafter are now history and have been documented by scholars (see, Diamond, Kirk-Green & Oyediran, 1997; Osaghae, 1998). But it must be stated that the series of protests by Civil Society groups in the country and aversions expressed by many members of the international community dented Nigeria's external image.

Nigeria's image became further dented during the General Sanni Abacha (1993 – 1998) military regime. This was principally a fall out of corrupt practices and other factors including human rights violation, economic mismanagement, tele guided transition among others. Indeed, for some scholars, Generals Babangida and Abacha's era were the darkest part of Nigeria's socio, political, and economic history since independence (Muhammad, 2009; Abegunrin, 2003). This is evident in the regime's brutality, violation and abuse of fundamental human rights, bad governance resulting in hosts of international sanctions and the emergence of Nigeria as a pariah state within the international community. Amid several allegations, the late General Sanni Abacha was reported by the Swiss Justice Ministry to have stolen close to 500 million dollars from the Nigerian coffers (New York Times, 2004). Indeed, Nigeria had a nearly deflated internal image during the Abacha regime and this was worsened by the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists on the eve of a Commonwealth Summit. The image problem manifested in suspension from some international organisations to which the country belonged, placement of travel bans on some categories of state officials by the US as well as a host of international sanctions on the country. As noted by Muhammad (2009), the death of General Sanni Abacha in June 1998 and the subsequent ascension to power of General Abdulsalami Abubakar placed Nigeria on hold among the comity of nations in terms of battered external image. This is because, with the death of General Sanni Abacha, the international community became greatly interested in what was likely to be the trend of events in the country. But perhaps due to the resilience of Nigerians and concern of the international community, the succeeding General Abdulsalami regime returned Nigeria to constitutional democracy with the swearing-in in of President Olusegun Obasanjo in May 1999. Thus, the emergence of Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

### ***Manifestations of Corruption in Nigeria and the Image Problem in the Fourth Republic***

Nigeria became independent in 1960 is a point that has been overstressed by scholars. However, some assert that corrupt practices in Nigeria can be traced back to the legacy of colonialism (Bayeh, 2015). What is perhaps significant is how corruption has eaten deep into the social, economic and political fabrics of the country. Although Gashinbaki (2005) has noted that it is difficult to pinpoint when and how corruption came to Nigeria, the glaring reality, however, is that the country is negatively affected by it with the country reported to have lost 380 billion dollars from independence to the end of military rule in 1999 (Ogundiya, 2008). More worrisome is that because it is essentially perpetrated mostly by Nigerians, whether within the country or beyond her borders, its effects rub on the country's external relations. In December 2017, Ochuko Sylvester, a Nigerian was extradited to the United States after being arrested in Germany to face trial for a multi-million fraud (United States Department of Justice, 2018). Among the many factors which have been noted by scholars that gave impetus to corruption in Nigeria are historical and political factors such as colonialism, legacies of military dictatorship, obsession with materialism among Nigerians, desire for a short cut to affluence, glorification and approbation of ill-gotten wealth by the general public, low morale and cultural ethics, weak enforcement mechanism, poor reward system for hard work, strong kinship ties among others. Added to this is high survival instinct among the political class (Muhammad, 2011; Gashinbaki, 2004; Atoyebi and Mobolaji, 2004; Ndiulor, 1999).

An initial effort at tackling corruption by the Nigerian state was by the government of General Yakubu Gowon. Although no definite policy was adopted by the regime it preached intolerance to the act, especially in the public service. However, when the regime was overthrown in a military coup in 1975, there arose startling revelations of several corrupt acts that were perpetrated under the regime. In fact, it led to the sacking of over 10, 000 civil servants by the succeeding regime. Unfortunately, subsequent military regimes and even civilian administrations were not immune from the virus of corruption although it may not be pronounced while they were in power. For instance, startling revelations after the exit of General Babangida and after the death of General Sanni Abacha are pointers to this assertion.

An institutionalised attempt towards combating corruption both in the public and private sectors came in early 2000 during the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo. These attempts manifested in the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002. Other agencies that were established to complement the work of these anti-corruption bodies include Office of Due

process as well as the Bureau of Public Procurement. The establishment of these agencies, no doubt, brought positive developments to the country in its external relations. These included restoration of diplomatic ties which were severed in the height of corrupt practices by the government of the day especially in the late 1990s; removal of Nigeria from the list of non-cooperative countries and territories (NCCTS) of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering among others. Indeed, the establishment of these agencies reinforced the fight against corruption in Nigeria to the extent that the fear of EFCC was considered by many Nigerians as the beginning of wisdom (Muhammad, 2011). This is not to suggest that the EFCC is the only agency involved in the fight against corruption in Nigeria but, the scope of its power and the fact that its mandate covers the issue of corruption even in the private sector gave it an edge over other agencies in terms of functions. For example, the difference between the ICPC and EFCC lies in the fact that the ICPC focuses on curbing bribery and corruption in the civil/public service and is limited in time to those offences committed from the year 2000 (ICPC Act, 2000) while the EFCC is primarily charged with the responsibility of enforcing laws relating to banking, money laundering, advance fee fraud (419), miscellaneous offences and any other laws or regulations relating to economic and financial crimes, including the criminal code and the penal code. The EFCC does not have any time limitations as to when a crime was committed and the power to prosecute directly without going through the Attorney General's office (EFCC Act, 2002). However, even with the presence of these anti-corruption agencies, Nigeria according to the Human Rights Watch Report of 2007 lost between 4 billion dollars and 8 billion dollars to corruption during both terms of the Obasanjo regime (Human Rights Watch, 2007). In 2013 alone, the EFCC secured the conviction of about 117 individuals ranging from 4 months to 15 years imprisonment (EFCC, 2013). But while all these were happening on a positive note, there are yet other complexities in the fight against corruption which have been generating actions and reactions within and outside the country.

One of such instances was Chief James Ibori's corruption saga. Chief Ibori, who was governor of Delta State, Nigeria between 1999 and 2007, was arrested by operatives of the EFCC in 2008 after a prolonged trailing by the Commission to answer charges of corruption. He was arraigned before a High Court in Nigeria and was subsequently acquitted. This action of the court in Nigeria drew condemnation from members of the public as well as negative international reactions. Barely had that settled when the Nigerian government granted state pardon to the former governor of Bayelsa state, Diepreyhe Alamiseigha. Alamiseigha ruled Bayelsa state from 1999 to 2005 when he was impeached following allegations of money laundering and embezzlement against him. He was initially arrested in London on allegations of money laundering. While investigations were on, he jumped bail and arrived in Nigeria in questionable circumstances. He was neither extradited by the

Nigerian Government nor prosecuted in the country in spite of calls by individuals and groups for such action. It was thus a rude shock for many that he was given state pardon by President Goodluck Jonathan in 2013. In a way, the granting of pardon to Alamisiegha may be seen as a form of solidarity by the President with his former boss. This is because, while Alamisigha was Governor of Bayelsa state, the then President Jonathan was his deputy. Second, both are from the South-South geo-political zone and so ethnic consideration in the pardon may not be ruled out. However, although the episode is a continuation of Nigeria's internal politics, it nonetheless has implications for the country's image in the comity of nations. Another high-profile personality arrested in London on money laundering charges is Nigeria's former Minister of Petroleum, Alison- Madueke in 2015 to face corruption charges. This led to forfeiture of millions of dollars in assets including \$153 million and a \$37.5 million apartment in Lagos. Her name also appeared in the United States' Department of Justice lawsuit seeking to reclaim assets worth \$144 million, including a \$50million luxury apartment in New York and \$80 million yacht (Kazeem, 2018). While in London however, the Nigerian government through the EFCC sought to extradite her back to Nigeria to face trial for these charges in December 2018 because they believed she was not facing trial in the United Kingdom (UK). Her trial is yet to begin in Nigeria till date.

Before the Ibori corruption allegations, there have been series of cases in the past and these included corruption allegations against former Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun; the bribe for the budget scandal involving members of the National Assembly (NASS), as well as members of the executive arm in 2005; allegations of financial impropriety at different times against the leadership of NASS and a host of others. Although there are laws that prescribed penalties for convicted offenders, they are not strictly enforced by relevant governmental agencies. But it must be reiterated that while all these are internal affairs of the country, they hold serious implications for how the country is perceived in the international community. Even with the campaign promises of President Muhammadu Buhari to stop corruption which he considered as the primary reason for the country's social and economic challenges (Buhari, 2015), the United States Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour in its Country's Reports on Human Rights Practices in 2018 maintained that Nigeria has been struggling to make meaningful progress in trying to limit corruption. Also, the corruption index in the President's second term in office published in January 2020 by Transparency International saw Nigeria's position dropped to 146 of 180 countries surveyed. This can be adjudged to be that the efforts of the anti-corruption agencies are being frustrated by unnecessary multiple adjournments and lack of judges which has left many cases still pending in court. For example, the EFCC had 66 corruption cases which were pending in court, but only secured 13 convictions (ThisDay Live, 2019). However, this is not to say

that Nigeria is not waging war on its corrupt practices, as seen in the recovery of 53 million dollars alongside hundreds of millions of naira by the EFCC through its Whistle Blowing Policy (ThisDay Live, 2019), it is either slow or not yielding the desired results probably because of its pervasiveness. Recent judgements by the courts arising from prosecution by the EFCC indicates high profile convictions. For example, the EFCC secured 4 high profile convictions of former governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye; former governor of Taraba State, Jolly Nyame and; former governor of Abia state, Orji Uzor Kalu; and former national publicity secretary of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) Olisah Metuh.

### ***Implications for Nigeria's External Image***

There is no doubt that Nigeria is making gradual progress in its fight against corruption. But emerging issues and how the country is going about it constitute a dent on its image globally. First, Nigeria has given the world the impression that it has a zero-tolerance for corruption, yet contradictory verdicts by its courts are placing a question mark on sincerity of the government. Although this may be blamed on the slow process of justice which gives room for lawyers to seek injunction and counter injunction thereby obscuring the course of justice, it is, however, sending a wrong signal to the international community about the sincerity of the government in fighting corruption. It is ridiculous to note that James Ibori who was freed by a Nigerian court was convicted in London for the same offence while former Governor Depriye Alamisiegha, who jumped bail in London, could be granted state pardon in Nigeria. Also, startling revelations of high-profile cases of corruption by government officials - judges, lawmakers, ministers and some politically exposed persons - is an indication that all is not right about the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Perhaps this informed the comment by British Prime Minister that Nigeria is 'fantastically corrupt'.

Second, the pervasiveness of Advance free fraud has greatly affected the international image of Nigeria. It destroyed the trust that the international community had in Nigeria as well as the credibility of both government and individuals. It discouraged genuine investors from coming to the country despite the abundant opportunities abound. On knowing the corrupt nature of Nigeria, foreign companies have also exploited it to get desired results. This is evident in the contract scandal by Eni and Shell, the Anglo-Dutch and Italian oil giants which saw them pay 1.1 billion dollars so they could acquire rights to develop OPL 245, a region that contains 9 billion barrels of oil. The scandal involved a former president of Nigeria, former oil minister Dan Etete, and current and former senior executives. After a thorough investigation by Global Witness, Eni and Shell were alleged to have paid this sum knowing it would be used as bribes, a form of lobbying to be awarded the contract. As of 2018, the case had been filed in a Milan court (BBC, 2018). Recent developments on the case have witnessed repatriation by the Nigerian Government, of former

Attorney-General of the federation, Muhammed Adoke and the arrest of Dan Etete. In addition, Nigerians have remained suspects and targets of corrupt allegation by several countries. The case of Nigerians implicated in the massive cyber fraud and money laundering allegations by the US authorities in August of 2019 and the experience of Nigerians in the hands of Immigration officials across countries of the world who perceive persons bearing Nigerian travel passports as criminal suspects attest to this.

The pervasiveness of corruption is also having its toll on foreign investment in the country. There appear to be declining confidence in the international community about investing in Nigeria. This is because, a large chunk of money ended up as being paid as bribes and kick-backs thus, raising the cost of investment and scaring away investors. A look at the flow of FDI to Nigeria reveals that there is a decline in the flow of FDI. This cannot be divorced from its current image crisis engendered by corruption. For example, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its Global Investment Trend Monitor of January 2015 noted that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Nigeria fell 27 percent from \$4.7 billion recorded in 2014 to an estimated \$3.4 billion in 2015 ([http:// www.financialnigeria.com/news.html](http://www.financialnigeria.com/news.html)).

As an aftermath of the endemic corruption in the country, there appears to be declining confidence of the international community in Nigeria's ability to manage aid resources especially the ones involving management of large resources. The back and forth attitude of those who wish to partner the country in the fight against insurgency in the North East is a reflection of this declining confidence. For instance, after promising to aid the country in its fight against insurgents in the North-East, the American government later declined. This change of direction cannot be divorced from the negative image given the country by the pervasiveness of corruption. This is because according to the American government, funds meant for the welfare of troops while in the combat zone is allegedly cheated from the top. In addition, this is further compounded by the series of embezzled funds including the 2 billion dollars by the former National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, 3.9 billion naira by former Chief of Air Staff, Alex Badeh, and an alleged 10 billion naira by top army personnel in order to prolong the fight against the insurgency (Premium Times, 2018).

Persistent corruption undermines the effectiveness of governance because it results in inadequate expenditure on infrastructure and smaller tax base for the government. As such, there is lower human capital, many of whom are unable to access healthcare and education thereby needing the country to rely on foreign aid. Aid flows which may take the form of official development assistance (ODA) complement domestic financing in all sectors of the society. However, where there exist doubts as to the effective utilisation of such aid as noted for example, in the American experience above, there is a tendency for

such assistance to decline. Although Nigeria has been one of the highest recipients of ODA in recent times, recent evidence shows that this has been on the decrease. For instance, from 2,516 USD in 2013, it declined to 2, 479 in 2014 and further to 2,432 in 2015 (OECD, 2017). Thus, corruption unleashes negative impact on development aid.

In addition, the bane of corruption has led to the emigration of great professionals to seek greener pastures in almost all fields of endeavour including health, sports, technology among others, leading to brain drain. For example, 2000 doctors leave Nigeria yearly, with 4,765 of them heading to in the UK (Owoseye, 2018). In addition to poor working services and inadequate facilities, corruption is also a factor for this vast emigration (Owoseye, 2018). As such, first world countries see Nigeria as a primary producer, attracting its finest breeds who are being hindered to their full potential due to her corrupt practices. However, little glimmer of hope is seen in the Transparency International Reports of 2018 and 2020 which recognized some positive political developments towards combating corruption in the country. Although Nigeria still maintains her self-acclaimed title as the 'Giant of Africa' and as such She is expected to lead the way towards the fight against corruption on the Continent. Ironically, this is not the case as Nigeria herself is found wanting in this regard.

## **Conclusion**

This article has examined the impact of pervasive corruption on Nigeria's external relations. It observes that corruption has been pervasive in Nigeria and in many cases perpetrated by those in control of the state. This is evidenced in the Nigerian state's recognition of alleged corrupt offenders as in the case of former Governor Alamisiegha and the perversion of the justice system by some of its institutions. This has led to serious implications for the country in the comity of nations. For instance, it has a negative impact on the country's external image creating the perception of a country not too serious with tackling corruption. This becomes more worrisome given the fact that perception has the tendency to make or mar a policy. Second, state anti-corruption efforts so far have been characterised more by probes and investigation rather than concrete efforts at prosecuting and punishing offenders. Also, there is declining confidence in the investment environment. This is evidenced in declining FDI inflow into the country as the analysis above revealed. Equally, arising from the negative perception of the country due to the pervasiveness of corruption, there is declining confidence of donors in the ability of the country to effectively manage aid. The implication of all the above is a declining influence and prestige within the comity of nations. In other to reverse this ugly trend, there is a need for attitudinal change on the part of political and bureaucratic elites while the citizens and civil society groups need to keep oversight on political leadership. Equally, credible institutional

reforms, as well as the strong political will to enforce sanctions are also crucial for attitudinal and institutional change.

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