Review

Nigeria and 2014 corruption perception index report: The way forward

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Accepted 02 April, 2015

Abstract

Global perception of the anti-corruption battle in Nigeria got a modicum of approval, recently, after the global anti-corruption body, Transparency International, TI, moved the country four places up in its yearly ranking of public sector transparency. Nigeria’s 139th ranking was up from the 143rd position the country was ranked in 2011, according to the TI ranking released recently. This came as the Federal Government, swiftly dismissed the rating by TI, saying it was a product of “synopsis of negative media reports.” The relatively better ranking nonetheless, reactions within the country was not cheery as it was the opinion of many that corruption remained deeply rooted in the nation’s body polity. In the release made available on its website, TI put Nigeria in a joint 139 position with Azerbaijan, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan among the 178 nation’s surveyed. Nigeria was effectively ranked as the 35th most corrupt country in the world. In the rankings in 2011, Nigeria got a total score of 2.4 out of a total of 10. The ranking based on public sector corruption, among other indices, followed a total score of 27 out of 100 in the Corruption Perception Index, CPI. The CPI is the degree to which corruption is perceived to permeate among public officials and politicians in a country by the business community and country experts. The scale is based on a rating of 100 for very clean to 0 for very corrupt. For the first time since the beginning of the rankings in 2005, three countries, Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, were joint first in the rankings having obtained an average score of 90 out of 100. Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia, like last year, were tied at the bottom of the rankings which essentially were reflective of the perception of the business community on the transparency and cleanliness of public officials and politicians. The ranking sent mixed signals among the political class and the civil rights community with some lauding the improvement while some faulted the position. It is annoying for the government and its megaphones to issue rebuttals and condemnatory speeches whenever these international reports are released. The objective of this paper is to examine the role the Corruption Perceptions Index report will help Nigeria tackle corruption by learning from those societies that have taken the report in good faith and improve on their rating.

Keywords: Corruption, Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International, Anti-corruption Strategies, Accountability

INTRODUCTION

The general elections are around the corner. Politicians seeking elective positions are crisscrossing the length and breadth of the land. But ahead of the polls, billed for March 28 and April 11, there is one common issue many...
Nigerians want discussed by the hordes of politicians and political parties now mounting the rostrums to canvass for vote. That singular issue is corruption. Not a few would like to know how candidates seeking national executive and legislative positions plans to tame the menace that has become a monster after years of unchecked spread and integration within all the facets of the country’s socio-economic and political existence.

Of course, the serious concern attached to this hydra-headed monster by the electorate cannot be misplaced because corruption, as of today, has become a difficult problem Nigeria has for long been among the most corrupt nations in the world. The 2014 report by the global graft watchdog, Transparency International (TI), has again confirmed this status as it placed Nigeria 39th on the corruption ranking of 175 countries. The country, however, recorded a marginal improvement on the global Corruption Perception Index, moving four points from the previous 35th position in 2012. The latest ranking is a giant leap from that of 2000, when Nigeria was rated the previous 35th position in 2012. The latest ranking is a giant leap from that of 2000, when Nigeria was rated the world’s most corrupt country by Transparency International. Nonetheless, there is little to cheer in the latest report. Rather, it shows that we still need to do a lot to address corruption in a way that can boost confidence in the citizenry and the international community.

According to the report released on December 3, 2014, Nigeria scored 27 out of a maximum 100 marks to clinch 136th position out of the 175 countries surveyed. This means that Nigeria has ‘improved’ by eight points against its 2013 rating as 144th out of 175 countries. A statement issued from the Berlin office of Transparency International shows that more than two-thirds or over 75 percent of the 175 countries surveyed this year scored below 50, on a scale from 0. Countries within the 0-50 range are perceived to be strikingly corrupt (New Telegraph Editorial, 2014).

Put together, a few things stand out in the report regarding corruption in Nigeria. First, the document indicates that the tag of corruption in Nigeria is quite high, while public perception of government’s crusade against graft suggests that it may be nothing more than a façade. This view is reinforced essentially by the perceived kid gloves with which both government and anti-corruption agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent and Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) treat corruption related offences (Daily Vanguard Editorial, 2014).

There are also allegations that these agencies are selective in their prosecution of corruption cases. We do not have many cases of diligent prosecution of corrupt persons. Corruption cases are hardly ever pursued to a logical conclusion. There are so many inconclusive cases, and many instances of corruption that the agencies declined to prosecute. In many of these glaring cases, successive governments in the country have failed to convince anyone that Nigeria is committed to checking
positions plans to tame the menace that has become a monster after years of unchecked spread and integration within all the facets of the country’s socio-economic and political existence.

Of course, the serious concern attached to this hydra-headed monster by the electorate cannot be misplaced because corruption, as of today, has become a difficult problem. Far more than diseases and violent militant groups have done, corruption, analysts claim, is threatening the very survival of Nigeria as a nation. And given that one of the ways to judge a functional democracy is how it treats the issue of corruption, Nigeria’s democratic journey has remained unimpressive; no thanks to a record of soaring corrupt practices within government and non-governmental corridors.

Explaining why the public must put politicians and their political parties to task on the issue of corruption ahead of the March/ April elections, frontline journalist and public commentator, Eze Anaba, posited that corruption has become a recurring decimal. He recalled that in several discussions where reasons behind the Nigeria’s poor showing in the development index crop up, corruption continues to hit the front seat. That is the reason Nigeria is so poorly rated in the anti-corruption index is because successive years of military rule and the civilian administrations that succeeded the military have not been able to tackle the problem (Oluwajuyitan, 2015).

A timely example of the evil of corruption is poverty, inequality, insecurity and under-development in many African states. Everyone is a victim when some officials appropriate the commonwealth for their personal benefits and the chronic under-enforcement of anti-corruption laws in many countries is responsible for this state of affairs (Ogannah, 2015). Political observers said the issue is not only germane but capable of influencing how the people of the country would vote during the elections. They argued that after a long and fruitless wait for an administration that would take the bull by the horns and tackle the problem of corruption head on, the electorate appears determined more than ever before to put the issue on the front burner when deciding who rules them this time around.

The essence of this paper is to examine the role the Corruption Perceptions Index report will help Nigeria tackle corruption by learning from those societies that have taken the report in good faith and improve on their rating. To achieve this objective, the first session of the paper addresses conceptual issues. Following the conceptualization is a check list of selected cases of corruption upon which they ranking was done. The next segment analyses the report and responses from both pro and anti-Transparency International Report. The final section offers recommendations and concludes the paper.

Clarification of concept: corruption perception index

Since 1995, Transparency International (TI) publishes the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) annually ranking countries “by their perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys”(Transparency International, 2011). The CPI generally defines corruption as “the misuse of public power for private benefit” (Corruption Perception Index, 2010).

As at December, 2012, the CPI ranks 176 countries “on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt)” (TI, 2012). Transparency International commissioned Johann Graf Lambsdorf of the University of Passau to produce the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (TI, 2012). The 2012 CPI draws on 13 different surveys and assessments from 12 different institutions (TI, 2011) The institutions are the African Development Bank, the Bertelsmann Foundation, the Economist Intelligence Unit, Freedom House, Global Insight, International Institute for Management Development, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, Political Risk Services, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank and the World Justice Project. Many of these private organizations have strong ties to particular governments or nations, such as the World Bank which is funded by certain countries (TI, 2010).

The 13 surveys/assessments are either business people opinion surveys or performance assessments from a group of analysts (Wikipedia, 2012). Early CPIs used public opinion surveys. Countries must be assessed by at least three sources to appear in the CPI (CPI, 2010). The CPI measures perception of corruption due to the difficulty of measuring absolute levels of corruption (TI, 2010).

A study published in 2002 found a "very strong significant correlation" between the Corruption Perceptions Index and two other proxies for corruption; Black Market activity and overabundance of regulation. All three metrics also had a highly significant correlation with real gross domestic product per capital (RGDP/Cap). The Corruption Perceptions Index correlation with RGDP/Cap was the strongest (Wilhelm, 2002). Since the set of sources changes, comparing corruption scores and ranking over time is inappropriate. Furthermore, the methodology of this index changed in 2012.

However, with the new methodology, it will be possible to make year-to-year comparison after 2013 (Financial Express, 2011; Wikipedia, 2012). The Corruption Perceptions Index has drawn increasing criticism in the decade since its launch, leading to calls for the index to be abandoned (Galtung, 2006; Endre, 2002; OCED, 2002). This criticism has been directed at the quality of the index itself, and the lack of actionable insights created from a simple country ranking (The Hindu News cited in Wikipedia, 2012). Since corruption is willfully
hidden, it is impossible to measure directly; instead proxies for corruption are used. The CPI uses an eclectic mix of third-party surveys to sample public perceptions of corruption through a variety of questions, ranging from “Do you trust the government?” to “Is corruption a big problem in your country?” The use of third-party survey data is a source of criticism. The data can vary widely in methodology and completeness from country to country. The methodology of the Index itself changes from year to year, thus making even basic better-or-worse comparisons difficult. Media outlets, meanwhile, frequently use the raw numbers as a yardstick for government performance, without clarifying what the numbers mean. A local Transparency International chapter disowned the index results after a change in methodology caused a country’s scores to increase since the media reported it as an “improvement” (Global Integrity, 2009). Other critics point out that definitional problems with the term “corruption” makes the tool problematic for social sciences (Eme and Ohiaegbu, 2011:23).

The index provides a snapshot of the views of business people and country analysts. In comparison, the questions in the Eurobarometer surveys 64.3 (2005), 68.2 (2007), 72.2 (2009), and the Flash Eurobarometer 236 (2008) established by the European Commission for the 27 European Union members states ask the perceptions and experiences of the general public. In general, the results show a very large divergence between the perception of living in a corrupt country by the general public and the experiences of corruption in everyday life (Wikipedia, 2012).

Aside from precision issues, a more fundamental critique is aimed at the uses of the Index. As a source of quantitative data in a field hungry for international datasets, the CPI can take on a life of its own, appearing in cross-country and year-to-year comparisons that the CPI authors themselves admit are not justified by their methodology. The authors stated that in 2008: “Year-to-year changes in a country’s score can either result from a changed perception of a country’s performance or from a change in the CPI’s sample and methodology. The only reliable way to compare a country’s score over time is to go back to individual survey sources, each of which can reflect a change in assessment“ (TI, 2008).

The CPI produces a single score per country, which as noted above, cannot be compared year-to-year. In the late 2000s, the field has moved towards un packable, action-oriented indices (such as those by the International Budget Partnership or Global Integrity), which typically measure public policies that relate to corruption, rather than try to assess “corruption” as a whole via proxy measures like perceptions (Hindu News, 2007). These alternative measures use original (often locally collected) data and so have the same non-comparability problem as the CPI and are limited in scope to specific policy practices (such as public access to parliamentary budget documents) and so they are only an indicator of visible corruption/policy corruption (Wikipedia, 2012).

For our purpose, corruption perception index refers to the strategies and surveys used by both local and international agencies to gauge the endemic nature of corruption in a polity to enable them improve and for others to learn from their experiences.

**Corrupt practices and transparency international rating: An examination of selected cases.**

Recently, a former United States ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Walter Carrington, viewed corruption as the greatest problem confronting Nigeria, warning of looming dangers unless something is urgently done to address the situation. Carrington said:

**Corruption is the most terrible monster that confronts Nigeria but we must all work hard to tame this monster. In order words, I am certain that virtually all the problems associated with governance would be removed if we can summon the courage to tackle corruption and banish it from our activities (Oluwajuyitan, 2015).**

The envoy added that development does not have a bigger enemy than corruption and the development of Nigeria is hinged on ridding politics from corruption and corrupt practices. He said:

**But I regret to say that I have seen too many good people of high character yield after putting up a good fight, which is why efforts must be redoubled to create an environment in which character and virtues are rewarded and not scorned. The question must now be asked. Why is Africa’s most endowed country, which earns $57 billion a year in oil revenue, not yet able to solve its persistent power and infrastructure problems? (Oluwajuyitan, 2015).**

Challenging stakeholders in the Nigerian project on the need to be united, he said “a cure must be found for the corrosive cancer of corruption” (Oluwajuyitan, 2015). The envoy is not alone in his worries. Kayode Oladele, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), is worried that unless the country rids itself of corruption, poverty, political instability and blanket criminalisation of its citizens is inevitable. According to him,

**First, corruption promotes poverty. A simple example could be made with the corruption in the management of the pension funds in Nigeria. The theft of pension funds means that retired Nigerians would not have access to their pensions as at when due. This means that those that have dependants to care for would be deprived of the needed funds. Some pensioners eventually died because of the rising expectations that often end in frustrations sometimes occasioned by standing for hours in long queues. What happens to the dependants of a pensioner who is deprived of his/her pensions? Will such dependants be able to attend qualitative schools or will...**
they be forced out of schools to fend for themselves? If education remains one of the main routes leading to a good life and national development, without education, what would be the future of these dependants and the country? Another consequence of corruption is that it creates political instability. This is because unrestricted corruption makes the state an unlimited allocator of wealth to individuals and groups. This character of the state makes it possible for the politics of do-or-die to take root, with politicians struggling to out-compete one another sometimes in a most violent manner. Again, corruption aids blanket criminalisation of Nigerians, especially the youths. With its capacity to generate poverty and instability, the youths have been systematically hijacked for selfish ends by unscrupulous politicians and ideologues. Many of those who were not “hijacked” have found interest in advance fee fraud popularly known as Yahoo-yahoo or 419 in local parlance. While corruption cannot, and should not, be the singular cause of this systematic criminalisation, it contributes to it (Odufowokan, 2015).

The Punch newspaper on Sunday May 6, 2010 broke the news that about N5tn in government funds have been stolen through fraud, embezzlement and theft. This kleptocracy reportedly occurs from May 6, 2010 when President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office till date. Surprisingly, no official denial has emanated from the presidency. Perhaps, this is a confirmation of the saying: Silence means consent. The investigation was the consequence of careful up by the President to probe some sectors of the economy, particularly oil and gas and disclosures by some senior government officials. They include the Mallam Nuhu Ribadu-led Petroleum Task Force report, the Minister of Trade and Investment’s report on stolen crude, the House of Representatives fuel subsidy report and investigations into the ecological fund, SIM card registration and frequency band spectrum sale.

The findings of these committees were too sordid to believe. Were the nation to be blessed with principled leaders, this president ought to be history by now for would have taken the path of honour. Tender his letter of resignation for failing to lead the country on the right path. The parliament can even commence impeachment proceedings against him. Mr. President’s current path of graft is an embarrassment to the black race.

Let us have an adumbration of his litany of financial transgressions: The House of Representatives raised the alarm that the N2.6tn the Federal Government paid for oil subsidy in 2011 could not be properly accounted for. A subsequent report by the President Committee on Verification and Reconciliation of Fuel Subsidy Payments, led by Mr. Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede later revealed that in 2011, 197 subsidy transactions worth N232bn were illegitimate. In July, the House of Representatives Committee on environment discovered a tree seedling fraud worth N26bn awarded by the Ecological Fund office. A beam of searchlight equally shows that a 450MHz frequency that was valued at over $50m was allegedly sold for less than $6m (a difference of $44m or N6.9bn) by the Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC). The investigation reportedly followed the delay in completing he exercise and the request by NCC for additional N1bn for the project in its 2012 budget. The commission should come out to affirm or deny this grievous allegation. In the same telecoms sector, the House of Representatives, earlier this year, commenced investigations into the N6.1bn SIM card registration project embarked upon by the NCC in 2011. The avoidable project which amounted to a duplication of the jobs of the mobile telecoms providers was discovered to be another conduit pipe for stealing billions of naira from the public (Godday, 2012).

In October 2012, Minister of Trade and Investment, Dr Olusegun Aganga, in a letter to the President, revealed that 24 million barrels of oil worth $1.6bn (N252bn) was stolen between July and September this year. According to Aganga, his signature was forged on the Export Clearance Permit that was used to export the crude oil from Nigeria. Mr. President has not done anything about this criminality, even when he has absolute powers over such issues. His government is bereft of direction and bemoans over matters that ordinarly could be averted. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, the Minister of Finance and coordinator of the economy sometimes in May made an statement that government lost a fifth of its oil revenues to theft in April. This is despite the appointment of miscreants/sea pirates by same government that are a bane to daily activities of its citizens.

The Ribadu report on the oil and gas sector put daily crude oil theft at an unbelievably high 250,000 barrels daily at a cost of $6.3bn (N1.2tn): It also discovered among others that ministers of Petroleum Resources between 2008 and 2011 handed out seven discretionary signature bonuses via these shady deals, that three of the oil licenses were allegedly awarded under the current petroleum minister, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke. What more as a renowned international audit and financial advisory firm, KPMG, recently stated that Nigeria accounted for the highest number of fraud cases in Africa in the first half of 2012. All these stupendous grafts were perpetrated under a president that once told us he had no shoes. Could it be that he and his men are now venting their spleen of poverty antecedent on the nation’s till or how come that the president has been so inept in arresting the unlimited lootocracy going on under his nose (Azikien and Agande, 2012).

To make the situation more frightening for the populace, some local and international observers have alleged that the current administration lacks the required political will to tackle corruption. This, many analysts posit, may influence the electorate to vote for change.
The former Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Justice Mustapha Akanbi, was unsparing when he said the President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration has not demonstrated enough serious in the fight against corruption. Akanbi, who is a former President of the Court of Appeal, said corruption, kidnapping and other societal ills have been on the rise and that government institutions and the judiciary remain helpless in rising to their statutory responsibilities. The retired judge said:

Honestly, I do not see what is being done about corruption now. I ask myself these questions: Does it mean that all the governors are corruption-free? Does it mean all the legislators are corruption-free? Does it mean the judiciary is corruption-free? We know that it is happening but people are not being arrested, no action is being taken and the end result is that people accept bribe with impunity now. At least, if they had taken few people to court, we would have known that something is being done. There is a general lull and the fight against corruption has gone down completely. Now, when you look at many people wanting to be governors, is it because they want to serve their people or that they want to go and chop? It is apparent that many of them want to enrich themselves because they know that when you go there you make money and become wealthy, ditto going to the legislature. Yet people are suffering; there is no development. Corruption, kidnapping and other ills of the society have gone on the ascendancy. We know about Oduahgate and the billions of naira that Sanusi alleged was missing. The terrible thing is that the judiciary is not helping. The indices are that the moments are dark, the clouds have thickened, corruption is escalating (Oganna, 2015).

Constitutional lawyer, Mallam Yusuf Ali, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), also accused Jonathan's administration of not doing anything at all to stamp out corruption. He urged Nigerians to know that corruption makes all the citizens poorer in the short and long run. His words:

I have said this long time ago, there is no drive against corruption by the current government and that is quite obvious because the President believes that there is no corruption in Nigeria. He believes that what is going on is petty stealing. So, if he doesn’t believe there is corruption, you can’t hold him for not driving any anti-corruption war. If somebody doesn’t believe there is a problem then he would not be obliged to look for solution (Odufowokan, 2015).

In what looked like a confirmation of what his critics have been saying that the Federal Government has achieved little or nothing in the monumental fight against corruption, President Jonathan recently said though politicians are thieves, they are not corrupt. He said:

What many Nigerians refer to as corruption is actually stealing. Stealing is not the same thing as corruption, the President had said, sending many Nigerians into fits of rage that lasted for weeks. Just few days back, Jonathan confirmed his unwillingness to confront the monster called corruption just yet when, during his campaign rally in Lagos, he announced that he is not eager to jail anybody for corruption. They said they will start fighting corruption after they have crossed the bridge. And only two days ago, somebody stood in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and said he would catch people that steal and throw them in Kirikiri (Prisons). I agree that we must stop corruption but I will not do so by catching people and putting them in crates and jailing or killing them. We can’t stop corruption that way (Odufowokan, 2015).

Analysis of transparency international criteria for rating corrupt nations

Except President Jonathan who remains unconvinced, many concerned Nigerians and friends of Nigeria have identified corruption as the bane of our society. The immediate past president of Nigerian Bar Association, Okey Wali not too long ago announced to the hearing of the president that "corruption is the number one problem of the country, whether by embezzlement of public funds, appointments in public and private sector or by selective justice". Sanusi Lamido, the former CBN governor in a BBC programme long before he was finally sacked over his allegation of missing $20 billion from the NNPC account, had accused the government of President Jonathan of lacking the political will to fight corruption claiming that “of the 164 fraud cases arising from his own war against banking sector frauds, only one was successfully prosecuted (Oluwajuoyitan, 2015).

Walter Carrington, the American former ambassador to Nigeria also recently reminded us that "corruption is the most terrible monster that confronts Nigeria, and that “virtually all the problems associated with governance would be removed if we can summon the courage to tackle corruption and banish it from our activities” (Oluwajuoyitan, 2015). To add currency to this theses, (Oluwajuoyitan, 2015) posited that the current mindless stealing and sharing of our national patrimony started at the onset of the Fourth Republic. Cash-strapped PDP elected politicians who publicly admitted selling personal properties to fight the 1999 election and their fronts created artificial scarcity in the supply chain of fuel. This led to long queues at filling stations. The new Obasanjo administration responded by awarding contracts for the refurbishments of our four refineries to PDP members as against those who built the refineries. The PDP beneficiaries bungled the exercise after collecting payments. Obasanjo, a captive of those who had sponsored his election could not sanction those involved in the rip-off. He then went on set up the Petroleum Products Pricing Committee (PPPRA) with a mandate to “liberalise the downstream sector of the petroleum industry, privatise the refineries, deregulate and liberalise...
the imports of petroleum products and, generally, make the products available at reasonable prices”. The Bill for the establishment of PPPRA was debated and signed into law without delay because PDP members had vested interest.

As against making our refineries work, PPPRA became fixated with importation of refined petroleum products. In place of existing NNPC storage facilities, PPPRA opted for the use of storage facilities of members of Depot Petroleum Products Marketers Association (DAPPMA). With the coming of President Jonathan who does not believe stealing is corruption, it was done with impunity. With Ahmadu Aliu, former PDP chairman as PPPRA chairman and Diezani Alison-Madueke as minister for petroleum, a reckless decision to increase the number of approved importers from about a dozen to over 128 as a form of party patronage was taken. A subsequent House probe of the fuel subsidy regime revealed a theft of about N1.7 trillion. The probe also led to the pruning down of the number of fuel importers from unwieldy 128 in 2011, to 39 in 2012 and reduction from 60.25 million litres which PPPRA fraudulently claimed Nigerians consumed daily in 2011 to 39.66million litres in 2012. Some of those indicted by the probe are not only walking around freely, they move around with police escorts while others openly mobilize for the president’s re-election.

No less scandalous was PDP’s handling of the power sector. The Obasanjo administration inherited about 2800MW in 1999. By 2002, Olusegun Agagu the then minister for power claimed the government had achieved a peak of 4200MW. The projection as at the time Obasanjo left in 2007 was 20,000MW by 2015. Again cash-strapped PDP men after the 2007 election frustrated the Obasanjo scheme. It was not until two years later, following the sharing of the N5.2 billion rural electrification contract by leading members of the Lower House that Jonathan was able to return to the derailed Obasanjo’s plan. To date close to $50 billion has been sunk into the power sector.

But recently, Chinedu Nebo, the minister for power who had back in 2013 lamented that “the situation where only 25 percent of Nigerians have access to electricity is a nightmare caused by human beings used by evil forces”, disclosed during a Channels Television programme that with the completion of Mambila and Zungeru projects and the employment of over 1000 engineers, the sector hit 4500MW in December 2014 which unfortunately could not be sustained because of what he attributed to gas line attack.

Rice importation has been another source of drain on our foreign reserve by PDP. With the emergence of PDP government in 1999, government officials fronting for politicians in collusion with foreign importers turned Nigeria to world biggest importer of rice spending according to the minister of agriculture, “N1billion naira a day or N366 billion a year”. The President assured Nigerians his transformation agenda would put an end to rice importation by 2015. During the recent AgriFest 2015 Celebration of Nigeria Agriculture held at Eagles Square Abuja, he sold to Nigerians his minister of agriculture’s propaganda when he said “High quality Nigerian rice is now competing favourably with imported rice in the markets. I eat Nigerian rice and I can tell you, it is better than imported rice”. The truth is that like the cassava bread, the president and his men are probably the only people who have access to the Nigerian rice. A government that talks of self-sufficiency in 2015 also approved waivers to favoured importers like Dangote, Vaseline, Stallion, some churches as well as some churches and hotels. Dikko Abdulahi, Comptroller General of Customs claimed that in the first eight months of 2013, of the N603 billion lost to waivers, rice accounted for N105 billion (Oluwajuyitan, 2015).

For him, PDP has failed the nation. PPPRA, with staff strength of 249, and an unwieldy 22-man strong board, earning scandalously whopping salaries and allowances of N57.9 billion per annum cannot manage our refineries. It cannot import fuel. It cannot manage storage facilities. We remain the only OPEC member that imports fuel for domestic consumption. After 16 years of PDP, we depend on rice from India and Thailand to feed ourselves. On the inherited national patrimony such as properties in highbrow areas of Ikoyi, Victoria Island, Port Harcourt and Abuja which belong to our children, PDP and the government it runs in their wisdom decided to share them among themselves in the name of monetization. How can a transient government monetize what does not belong to it? (Oluwajuyitan, 2015).

Of the 176 countries sampled, Nigeria placed 35th from the bottom. It is a slight improved from the 143th position it ranked last year but still among the ten most corrupt countries in Africa. Somalia, North Korea and Afghanistan, with a score of eight each, were listed as the most corrupt countries according to the report, while Denmark, Finland and New Zealand were the least corrupt with a score of 90 each.

The 2012 index ranks 176 countries/territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption. The index draws on 13 surveys, covering expert assessments and surveys of business people. The Corruption Perception Index is the leading indicator of public sector corruption, offering a yearly snapshot of the relative degree of corruption by ranking countries from all over the globe. TI described the 2012 report as an indication that “corruption is a major threat facing humanity. Corruption destroys lives and communities, and undermines countries and institutions. It generates popular anger that threatens to further destabilize societies and exacerbate violent conflicts” (TI, 2012). The Organisation added, “Corruption translates into human suffering, with poor families being extorted for bribes to see doctors or to get access to clean drinking water. It leads to failure in the delivery of basic services, like education or health care. It derails the building of essential infrastructure, as corrupt.
leaders skim funds” (TI, 2012).

It, however, encouraged governments to integrate anti-corruption actions into all aspects of decision-making. It advised that governments must prioritise better rules on lobbying and political financing, make public spending and contracting more transparent, and make public bodies more accountable.

The presidency reacted to the 2012 corruption rating of Nigeria by TI, saying government was working hard to curb graft in the country. Presidential aide Doyin Okupe, in a statement said:

Transparency International rating is a perception index and no matter how hard you try to put in efforts, sometimes it is difficult for perceptions to change. Last year we were rated 143 and this year we have been rated 139th; what this means is that there is a four percent improvement to confirm that there has been concerted efforts by the Jonathan administration to battle corruption. We do not wish to join issues with Transparency International, but the reality is that, as posted by Transparency International, the country is making headway in the battle against corruption (The Sun Editorial, 2012).

In the same vein, the federal government also said that the latest report was a product of negative media reports. Former Information minister, Labaran Maku, who made these comments while briefing State House correspondents after a nine-hour extraordinary Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting, urged the media and Nigerians as a whole to project the country in good light to the world. The minister said that apart from the TI rating of the country as the 37th most corrupt in the world, a recent Gallup Poll which also indicated that Nigeria was among corrupt nations in the world was also a product of interactions with Nigerians and negative media reports.

According to him, the anti-graft groups drew their conclusions from perceptions of both Nigerians and negative media reports because they (Nigerians and the media) have refused to appreciate that the Jonathan administration was taking steps to deal with corruption through systematic and institutional approaches that are yielding results gradually.

Citing instances of efforts made by government in tackling graft, Maku listed the prosecution of those implicated in the fuel subsidy fraud, investigation into the pension fund scandal, the geometric auditing of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and the curbing of graft in the supply of fertiliser and seeds to farmers. He noted that when the president attempted to curtail patronage in the oil and gas sector by introducing deregulation of the sector, Nigerians staged a wild protest which crippled activities in the country.

According to him, “Government has continued to take decisive measures against defaulters in the fuel subsidy scam. There are so many issues involved in dealing with corruption. When you are systematic and deliberate, reform goes deeper” (Olaleye et al., 2012). The information minister further remarked that combating corruption was not a job for the president alone. He went on to posit that “The president does not sit in court to imprison people. There are institutions set up to do that”, (Olaleye et al., 2012), even as he urged journalists to follow up on institutional proceedings to get to the root of matters, thereby unearthing unwholesome omissions and commissions so that government will be able to track and act on such. He added that “If there are areas where things are not being done right, journalists should follow up. The federal government will continue to support all efforts to fight abuses” (Olaleye et al., 2012).

Admitting that the country has been bogged down by corruption for many years, Maku stated that the cankerworm cannot just be eradicated with the wave of the hand. The Federal Government’s fight against corruption is paying-off in the global arena as a survey by Transparency International (TI) shows Nigeria’s corruption perception has improved. The survey on global corruption perceptions for 2011 versus 2001 showed that the third best improvement in the world was in Nigeria, with its score improving by 1.5 points. In the scoring, Nigeria follows the United States of America, which scored 2 points, while Bangladesh scored the highest by 2.3 points.

Also in the survey, the corruption perception score showed that Nigeria displaced Zambia, Mauritius, Uganda, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Botswana, Senegal, Cote d’Ivore, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Egypt, Namibia, and Tunisia.

 Barely two years ago, the Co-ordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, had vowed to tackle corruption in the country, saying the move would help the ministry to effectively deliver on its mandate. Okonjo-Iweala was appointed in 2011 by President Goodluck Jonathan to restore some order to Nigeria’s public finance. A former World Bank managing director, she is battling to reform one of the world’s most corrupt nations, without support from the shadowy “godfathers” who wield power from behind the scenes.

Also, when contacted, the resident consultant, media and publicity of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Mr. Folu Olamiti said that the anti corruption war was a work-in-progress. He said that the commission had not studied the report and therefore could not compare the corruption ranking with other countries. “We have not studied the report, but we hope that the next ranking will be better. ICPC is under a new leadership with a different approach to tackling corruption; we should not be vilifying our country, Nigerians should hope for the better” (Aziken and Agande, 2012).

When contacted, the spokesman of EFCC, Wilson Uwujaren, told THISDAY that the commission did not want to be distracted from the challenge of tackling corruption and economic crimes in the country (Olaleye...
et al., 2012).

However, the Chairman, House Committee on Drugs, Narcotics and Financial Crimes, Hon. Adams Jagaba described the ranking of Nigeria as the 35th most corrupt country in the world as disastrous but doubtful. Jagaba said that he was not surprised that Nigeria still ranked among the most corrupt countries but said that the situation might be worse than TI reported. According to him:

I have not read the report but I am surprised because I thought our situation was worse. In my personal opinion, if they rated us as the 35th most corrupt nation, then they did not even do their job well. If they did their job well, we cannot go beyond the first five countries on the list of corrupt countries. There are some indices they should have considered. One of them is the political will of the government to fight corruption. If the political will is not there, then there is no way we cannot remain one of the worst countries in terms of corruption. As far as I am concerned, there is even some politics being played in this report because corruption has reached a climax in Nigeria. If you go by our ranking last year, Nigeria is actually getting worse not better. This is a wake up call for the government and the various anti-corruption agencies to sit up in the fight against corruption. But like I always say, you cannot fight corruption successfully without exemplary leadership. If you have leaders that refuse to declare their assets and if you have leaders that protect corruption, definitely corruption cannot go away. In every administration, people read the body language of their leaders and take a cue from there. The day the war against corruption will start is the day our leaders will change their body language. We have a long way to go (Olaleye et al., 2012).

He concluded by positing that corruption had thrived in Nigeria because the anti-corruption agencies, EFCC and ICPC, have been arm-twisted and could not take independent decisions. Mr. Oronto Douglas, a Special Adviser to the President on Research, Documentation and Strategy, defended his boss at a lecture in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital. The President’s Senior Special Assistant on Public Affairs, Dr. Doyin Okupe also filed his defense from Aso Villa, seat of the Federal Government.

They described the approach of their boss as the best in tackling corruption. Douglas said the President has put in place strong instructions to fight the menace. Okupe told reporters in Abuja that the president’s holistic approach meets the global strategy benchmark. He said the Presidency, since Dr. Jonathan assumed office, has worked assiduously to enhance the image and prestige of the country abroad. He also noted that a lot has been achieved in the intervening period with the transformation agenda of the administration. He, however, lamented the efforts have not been appreciated by his critics, who he accused of making unfounded and baseless allegations against the administration.

Nigeria scored higher than countries like Poland, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Belgium, Romania, Latvia, Bolivia, Estonia, Slovenia, Germany, Turkey, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, India, Norway, Azerbaijan, Ecuador, Australia, France, Sweden, Costa Rica, Slovakia, Vietnam, and Kenya. Other countries Nigeria scored higher than are Taiwan, Ukraine, Thailand, Pakistan, Russia, China, Croatia, Nicaragua, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Austria, Singapore, Lithuania, Denmark, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Luxembourg, Portugal, Moldova, Brazil, Canada, the Philippines, Chile, Columbia, Jordan, Panama, Finland, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, Bulgaria, Malaysia, Peru, Mexico, Hungary, Spain, Greece, Venezuela, Iceland, Uzbekistan, Italy, Israel, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The survey further showed that nine Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries have seen improving scores against five SSA countries that saw a decline (Namibia and South Africa) from high scores previously. Two North African countries saw a big decline and that may have contributed to the regime change which saw autocrats deposed in those countries. “The middle class in Tunisia was particularly incensed by the corruption in their country” (The Sun Editorial, 2012) said Charlie Robertson, Managing Director, Global Chief Economist, Renaissance Capital.

This came as the Federal Government, dismissed the rating by TI, saying it was a product of “synopsis of negative media reports” (Aziken and Agande, 2012).

The relatively better ranking nonetheless, reactions within the country was not cheery as it was the opinion of many that corruption remained deeply rooted in the nation’s body polity.

In the release made available on its website, TI put Nigeria in a joint 139 position with Azerbaijan, Kenya, Nepal and Pakistan among the 178 nation’s surveyed. Nigeria was effectively ranked as the 35th most corrupt country in the world. In the rankings last year, Nigeria got a total score of 2.4 out of a total of 10.

The ranking based on public sector corruption, among other indices, followed a total score of 27 out of 100 in the Corruption Perception Index, CPI. The CPI is the degree to which corruption is perceived to permeate among public officials and politicians in a country by the business community and country experts. The scale is based on a rating of 100 for very clean to 0 for very corrupt. For the first time since the beginning of the rankings in 2005, three countries, Denmark, Finland and New Zealand, were joint first in the rankings having obtained an average score of 90 out of 100.

Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia, like last year, were tied at the bottom of the rankings which essentially were reflective of the perception of the business community on the transparency and cleanliness of public officials and politicians. The ranking sent mixed signals among the political class and the civil rights community.
with some lauding the improvement while some faulted
the position. The first African nation on the TI index is
Botswana which is 30th on the global ranking. Nigeria’s
139th position and total score of 27 is reflective of the
country’s score of 32 out of 100 in the African
Development Bank’s Governance rating.

Remarkably, two thirds of the 176 countries ranked in
the 2012 index score below 50, on a scale from 0
(perceived to be highly corrupt) to 100 (perceived to be
very clean), showing that public institutions need to be
more transparent, and powerful officials more
accountable. Governments need to integrate anti-
corruption actions into all public decision-making.
Priorities include better rules on lobbying and pol
itical financing, making public spending and contracting more
transparent and making public bodies more accountable
to people, (Aziken and Agande, 2012) Ms Huguette
Labelle, the Canadian Chairperson of Transparency
International commented recently. According to her, after
a year of focus on corruption, we expect governments to
take a tougher stance against the abuse of power. The
Corruption Perceptions Index 2012 results demonstrate
that societies continue to pay the high cost of corruption
(Olaleye et al., 2012). Former Minister of Information, Mr
Labaran Maku, who reacted to the rating, said the agency
did not take cognisance of the achievements recorded by
this administration in its fight against corruption.
According to him,

the TI report and a recent Gallup Poll that also showed
that Nigeria was among corrupt nations globally were
products of perceptions of both the people and the media
practitioners which fail to appreciate that the incumbent
administration was taking steps to deal with corruption by
employing systematic and institutional approaches that
are gradual in yielding results (The Sun Editorial, 2012).

Citing the instance of the prosecution of alleged
fraudsters implicated in the fuel subsidy scam,
investigation into the pension fund scandal, the geometric
auditing of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs)
and curbing of graft in the supply of fertiliser and seeds to
farmers, the minister said these were concrete efforts that
should be commended.

Asobie (2012a) correcting the erroneous impression
created by the TI report posited that:

Transparency International (TI) has been issuing
annually, an indirect measurement of corruption in
different countries of the world. The measurement is
known as Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Going by
many reactions from various quarters across the world,
including governments, it seems that the Index is often
misunderstood or misinterpreted, not just in Nigeria, but
in other countries as well. In Nigeria, the Federal
Government has, from time to time, taken issues with the
Index in a manner that often reflects inadequate
comprehension of the nature, purpose and methodology
of the Index. As a former President of Transparency In
Nigeria (2004-2007) and a long-standing researcher on

transparency and the fight against corruption (1991-
today), I feel obliged to throw some light on what the CPI
is, how it is compiled and how it can be used to combat
corruption at the national level.

The CPI according to him is an indirect measurement
of corruption in different nations of the world. It is an
indicator of how corrupt a country is perceived to be. It is
the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide.
The CPI is not perfect; and it is not the only report or
index produced by TI. However, so far, no mechanism or
tool has been invented for measuring absolute levels of
corruption directly, on the basis of concrete empirical
data. This is due to the fact that corrupt practice is
generally an illegal act, which by its very nature, is
perpetrated clandestinely. The perpetrators of corruption
seldom come out boldly to declare publicly that they have
indulged in corrupt practice. Corrupt practice only comes
to light in the course of investigations or prosecution or
when, on rare occasions, scandals of corrupt practices
break out. Therefore, any attempt to assess the level of
corruption in a country on the basis of number of cases
reported, ascertained, investigated or prosecuted will give
a very partial and incomplete picture. It is for this reason
that the CPI, which is based on the opinions of
businessmen, observers and experts, foreign and
national, remains the most reliable method of comparing
relative (perceived) corruption levels across countries.

To say that the CPI is based on perception does not
mean that the data it generates are not based on reality.
Or that they are mere fictions. Quite the contrary: for
perception, according to the Dictionary is “the recognition
of things by using your senses, especially your sense of
sight” (BBC English Dictionary, 1992). More to the point,
perception is an opinion that you have about someone or
something” (BBC English Dictionary, 1992). Perception or
opinion may be wrong or right; but once strongly held, it
does affect the behaviour of the perceiver towards the
perceived. Thus, it is foolhardy to dismiss it as either
irrelevant or inconsequential (Asobie, 2012b).

So, whose opinions does the CPI convey? This takes
us to the methodology of the CPI, that is, how the data
are sourced and compiled. The CPI uses a composite set
of third party surveys to determine public perception of
the level of corruption in the public sector. It is based on
expert assessments and data from many surveys
conducted by several institutions. The surveys cover
such issues as access to information; bribery of public
officials; kick-backs in public procurements; and
enforcement of anti-corruption laws. Questionnaires are
used in the surveys; and the questions asked range from:
‘Do you trust government?’ to ‘Is corruption a big problem
in your country?’ (Asobie, 2012a).

In compiling the 2012 Index, however, an update was
effected in the methodology. Before 2012, the CPI had
not proved to be a particularly appropriate tool for
comparing trends or changes in perception of levels of
corruption, for countries, over time. But Transparency
International is now using, in its methods, a simpler approach that is easier to understand. More important, the new method is capable of better capturing changes in perception of corruption in a given country over time. This is achieved by increasing the number and improving the quality of data sources and ensuring that they capture perceptions of corruption across multiple countries (Asobie, 2012a).

More specifically, prior to 2012, the old method drew on a country’s rank in the data sources, and then tried to capture perceptions of corruption, as compared with other countries. The new (2012) method uses the raw score, contained in the original survey data and converts the raw scores to fit the CPI scale. Also, a change has been effected in the CPI scale itself to reflect the alteration made to the method used to rescale the data. The scale on which the CPI is presented has been modified: ii is no longer 0-10; it is now 0-100. With this modification, it will now be possible, in future, to determine and publish changes in perception of levels of corruption, over time, at the country level (Asobie, 2012a).

The impression is sometimes created, usually by not-well-informed public officials, some of who even claim to be speaking for government, that the Federal Government of Nigeria does not care about the CPI or that it regards the CPI as irrelevant. Nigerians should not be deceived: the truth is different. The Policy or Development Planning documents of the Federal Government of Nigeria treat the CPI as a reliable measure of corruption; sometimes, according it greater credibility than even the TI itself does. For instance, Nigerian Vision 20:2020 document, on page 20 of its abridged version declares: Nigeria is currently one of the most corrupt nations of the world with a ranking of 121 out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). NV 20: 2020 aims to stamp out corruption and improve Nigeria’s ranking on the CPI to 60 by 2015 and 40 by 2020. The Vision aims to minimize corruption by creating wealth and employment opportunities; reducing poverty and ensuring the social security of Nigerians. In fighting corruption, there will be political and financial freedom for anti-corruption agencies, severe punishment for corrupt officials, and promotion of transparency and accountability in the management of public finances. (Nigerian Vision 20:2020-Abridged Version, December 12, 2010).

Well, to what extent has the Federal Government of Nigeria kept faith with this solemn declaration? That really is the point.

Nigeria has not been making any significant progress on the CPI scale since the statement in Vision 20:2020 was made. To start with, the figure cited in Vision 20:2020 was not for 2010; it was for 2008. And it represented the best performance that Nigeria had ever recorded on the CPI (Asobie, 2012d).

Within the circles of Transparency International, what is regarded as a notable year-on-year change on the CPI is an addition of at least 0.3 points on a scale of 0-10. In 2008, Nigeria moved up the scale from 2.2 over 10 in 2007 to 2.7 in that year. That was an improvement of 0.5 points on a scale of 0-10. Thereafter, Nigeria’s performance deteriorated, to 2.5 in 2009 (a drop of 0.2) and then to 2.4 in 2010 and 2011 (a drop of 0.3 on the 2008 score). In 2012, Nigeria has moved up from its score in 2011, but only back to the equivalent of the score she recorded in 2008 (for 2012 Nigeria’s score is 27/100, an equivalent of a score of 2.7/10 in 2008). Certainly, this is not real progress; nevertheless, the score of 27/100 in 2012 is an improvement on the score of 2.4/10 in 2011 and 2010 or 2.5/10 in 2009 (Asobie, 2012a).

Nigerians have asked the Federal Government to be firm in its anti corruption effort. To some, the government was not doing enough to tackle corruption. Others called for an improved and sustained effort against the menace. They spoke in reaction to the recently released 2012 report by the International Organization, Transparency International (TI), which rated the country 35 in its global corruption index.

Senior Advocates of Nigeria, Felix Fagbohunbe and Joseph Nwobike contended that the nation’s upward movement on the annual corruption was an acknowledgement that something was being done. They urged the government to sustain its anti corruption efforts. Another senior advocate, Adeniyi Akintola, the President, Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Nasir Fagge, rights activists, Fred Agbaje, Bamidele Aturu and Festus Keyamo faulted government’s claim that the government was taking steps to curb corrupt practices in the country. Fagbohunbe said: In the real sense of it, we could be said who compiled the report? The mere fact that we have been rated to have moved up the ladder is an indication that the effort by those in government is yielding good result. We only need to improve on our effort? Nwobike argued that the report has shown that Nigeria has made an improvement in its effort towards combating corruption. This evident in the TI report, it shows that the current administration has started to pursue an agenda intended to tackle the issue of corruption.

According to him, that does not mean we have done enough. It means we have started doing something and if we maintain it, Nigeria can be seen and referred to as a country fighting corruption. I must say that this administration as indicated by the various charges filed against prominent personalities by the EFCC and the office of the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), we can say that a platform for fighting corruption has been established (Aziken and Agande, 2012).

Akintola on the other hand argued that leaders have not been serious about fighting corruption. He argued that the fact that President Goodluck Jonathan has refused, despite calls from all quarters that he publicly
declare his assets, is enough evidence that this administration is not interested in being transparent. What is he (President Jonathan) hiding? He went on to posit that:

We know his background as a former deputy governor and vice president. I believe he is afraid that people could easily raise questions. Until we place the onus on public officers to justify their wealth, we will not get there. We should emulate the Asian countries where corruption attracts death penalty. The fight against corruption has to be taken seriously. It is the inability of our leaders to implement the law that is the problem. Those who are stealing us blind are not more than 5000. If Ghana could sacrifice 13 lives, we can afford to sacrifice them too for the rest of us to have peace. God even sacrificed his son to redeem the world (Olaleye et al., 2012).

Fagge, in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) advised the government to adopt the right approach to win the against corruption war. He said that conviction of culprits was the best approach to winning the war against corruption, rather than adopting the window dressing approach. He said “It is not about fighting corruption, but adopting the right approach. Yes, culprits have been caught and punished appropriately. Government officials and public office holders will continue to indulge in corruption because they believe they will not be punished.

The truth is that, we will not be able to address the issue of corruption until, and unless the culprits that are caught are punished appropriately to serve as deterrent to others. Government catch people for corruption today and tomorrow you see them on the streets walking as free men and even being given higher responsibilities. What the Federal Government is doing is like window dressing he said. According to Agbaje:

The report by TI did not show any improvement. In fact it confirmed our position that corruption in the country has worsened. He argued that the present government has become prodigal, spending money as if money is going out of vogue. There is nothing about human and institutional development to sustain such huge spending. The leaving standard of Nigerians today is even worse than what it was before this government came on board. In a society where the government is not concerned about the plight of the people, but of the only few in power, what do you expect? The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is not doing enough and the government is not bothered about that. The level for profligacy is higher now the oil sector is enough for TI to damn us (The Sun Editorial, 2012).

Aturu adds: I think that there is a problem with the TI rating and the parameters adopted. We can see that there is high level of looting going on in the country and that corruption is on the increase. For the report to have rated Nigeria 35th in the global corruption index could be because the report was based on faulty parameters or that other countries of the world are doing better in corruption than us. Certainly, there is nothing on ground to show that we are doing anything to fight corruption (The Sun Editorial, 2012:7).

Keyamo said: There is too much cover up. What happened to the Comptroller of Customs, who forged his academic certificates? They should answer that question first before any other thing. Still, we can place a more positive interpretation on the data provided by TI and analyzed by Asobie (2012).

Nigeria’s performance in reducing the perceived level of corruption, as measured by the CPI, has been much better under civilian rule than it was under military rule. For sixteen years, 1984-1999, Nigeria was under military rule. In 1999, Nigeria’s score on the CPI was 1.6/10; her rank was 98 out of 99 countries surveyed. Nigeria was, then, perceived as the second most corrupt country in the world. In 2000, when the law establishing the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) was enacted by the Olusegun Obasanjo administration to strengthen the fight against corruption, Nigeria was perceived as the most corrupt country in the world: it scored 1.2/10, and ranked 90th out of 90 surveyed countries, on the CPI. By 2006, the dismal performance had started to improve: Nigeria scored 2.2/10 and ranked 142 out of 163 countries. In 2012, Nigeria scored 27/100 and ranked 139 out of 176 countries surveyed. Her score on the CPI since the establishment of the ICPC, in the year 2000, has improved by 1.5 points, that is, five times, by TI test of significant improvement. Nevertheless, Nigeria can do much better than that.

Putting all the analyzes in its proper perspective, overall TI context, any improved performance according to (Asobie,2012a& 2012b) that keeps Nigeria’s annual score below 3.0 points, on a 0-10 scale or 30 on a 0-100 scale, is not really meaningful progress. Indeed, generally, countries that score below 5 points on a scale of 0-10 or 50 on a scale of 0-100 are considered “significantly corrupt”. On the 2012 CPI, the African countries that crossed the line of corruption to the zone of cleanliness are five in number: Botswana-65 (30th); Cape Verde-60 (39th); Mauritius-57 (43rd); Rwanda-53 (50th) and Seychelles-52 (51st). Three of these African countries have already achieved what Nigeria is aspiring to achieve by 2015, while two have attained the ranking she hopes to attain by 2020. Several other African countries are also ahead of Nigeria in the race. They include Namibia-48 (58th); Ghana-45 (64th); Lesotho-44 (66th); South Africa-43 (69th); Sao Tome and Principe-42 (72nd); Liberia-41 (75th); and Tunisia-41 (75th).

Asobie (2012) has articulated ways by which the CPI can be used to improve Nigeria’s fight against corruption.

According to him,

by carefully studying the CPI, we can deduce not only that the fight against corruption in Nigeria is not as effective as it should be, but also why this is so. More important, the CPI enables us to identify those nations...
that have, in comparative terms, succeeded more in fighting corruption or in drastically reducing its level and then to learn from their experiences. Over a period of (the last) four years, 2008-2011, the five countries (except Finland in one year, 2009) have scored each year, on the CPI, above 9 points, on a scale of 0-10. It is instructive to note how they did it. He adds, let us illustrate with the last two countries on the list; Sweden and Singapore.

First, let us look at Sweden. According to Bo Rothstein, an expert on Sweden, up until the 19th Century, Sweden was pervasively corrupt. As he put it: the “Swedish State was clientilistic and, to quite an extent, corrupt” (Asobie, 2012b). Even though the level of corruption was probably not as high as it is in certain African and Balkan States today, the situation then was pretty bad. The transformation of the Swedish State occurred between 1855 and 1875, a period of roughly twenty years. Significantly, the strategy used to transform the state was “non-incremental and dramatic”. The approach was integral, holistic and revolutionary. Rothstein describes it as the “Big Bang” strategy. He explains: “almost all major political, social and economic institutions” (Asobie, 2012) were transformed at a relatively short period of time.

The transformation of Singapore was equally dramatic. When Singapore attained full internal self-government in 1959, it was an underdeveloped nation. Today, it is described as a “small, stable, highly developed country”. What sets Singapore apart from many other countries that attained self-government at the same time is the extreme seriousness with which issues of rule of law, obedience to laws, and enforcement of laws are treated.

In Singapore, criminal penalties are strict and law enforcement is rigorous. Indeed, in Singapore, you can be arrested and punished for such offences as jaywalking (crossing the road carelessly), littering or spitting. To cite another example, Singapore has a mandatory caning sentence for acts of vandalism; it has mandatory death penalty for many narcotics offences; and if one is caught in Singapore for committing a crime with arms, one could receive a verdict that would result in a maximum penalty of life sentence, with caning added thereto. In that country, the law is no respecter of persons. Consequently, the crime rate in Singapore is generally low.

However, the key to the remarkable development of Singapore was good and strong political leadership. From the start, Singapore was led by democratically-elected politicians who put the nation above self and national interest above personal wealth. Complementing this was the fact that Singapore had in place a properly functioning legal system, which ensured that no political leader or civil servant was above the law. Besides, in Singapore, the government was strong in the sense that it had enough popular support to take difficult but rational decisions. The flip side of this situation was that the people themselves had sufficient trust and faith in the government to believe that whatever it decided and did was in the national interest and for the public good, and not out of the personal and selfish interests of individuals. By their actions, successive governments earned the trust and support of the people; and the people, in turn, were loyal and obedient to their government and their nation-state largely because of the people-oriented policies and actions of their political leaders. That was the secret. The fight against corruption in Nigeria according to Asobie, (2012b) has not been very effective so far for five main reasons:

First, contrary to Section 15.5 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the fight against corruption in Nigeria is, largely, a federal (Anti-Corruption Agencies) affair and not a national endeavour. Second, the fight lacks political leadership: it is not led from the top of the Nigerian political mainstream. Third, it is not energized, at all levels, by the force of personal example, which is the hallmark of transformational leadership. Fourth, the constitutional provisions for the fight against corruption are not faithfully enforced; in fact, many of them are breached, often brazenly. Fifth, the approach adopted in the fight is not holistic, reflecting the integral perspective: not surprisingly, there is no approved national strategic plan to combat corruption in Nigeria.

Nigeria today is at a critical stage since independence. The country faces a severe crisis in its economic, social and political development that is not unconnected to the problem of pandemic corruption. The manifestations of the crises are clear, the remedies much less so. Therefore, for a country awakening to democracy after long years of military authoritarianism, endemic corruption and stupendous wastage pose greater challenges. Since 1999 when the country returned to civil rule, there is no doubt that corruption has been the bane of democratic stability and survival. News about corruption is no longer stunning. This vindicates consistent rating of Nigeria by Transparency International (TI), the global watchdog on corruption, as one of the most corrupt nations in the world. All anticorruption strategies by the various successive governments have had trifling impacts. The pathological effects of corruption-democratic instability, low level of governmental legitimacy, voracious poverty, infrastructural decay, electoral crisis, contract killing, political assassinations, insecurity and generally, developmental problems- have been very devastating. Regrettably, those who claim to be the right physicians, as the previous and current revelations have shown, have come out as patients. The question is how to address the problems and challenges posed by corruption. The next section of the paper discusses these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government should not beat its chest that it is winning
the war against graft as many of its key institutions and parastatals are still deep in the practice, just as the National Assembly was once described by the global anti-graft watchdog as “the world’s filthiest arena of politics”. Although the description may have been exaggerated, the fact remains that no country that is steeped in corruption can survive for long. In addition, there is a growing fear that if corruption in Nigeria is not tamed, the country risks losing its membership of the powerful Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global anti-graft monitor. This could also affect the flow of foreign investments and the cost of doing business in the country.

While we strongly believe that the crusade against graft requires the support of all Nigerians, government should take the lead by ensuring that public officials are above board and those found to be corrupt are severely punished. Nobody should be treated as a sacred cow. The Federal Government should demonstrate the political will to check corruption. Our laws, especially those relating to economic and financial crimes, must be effectively enforced. Some of these laws have, however, become outdated. They should be updated in line with present realities. It is on this score that we urge the National Assembly to, as a matter of urgency, amend or expunge from our statute books those corruption laws that have become irrelevant, outmoded, ambiguous or tacitly encouraging official corruption.

All over the world, governments seriously desire of tackling the menace of corruption usually adopt a holistic strategy which encompass some or all of the under listed benchmark. Enacting enabling laws which clearly define what corruption is and spell out punitive measures establishing an executive agency, which is transparent in its operations and is subject to the rule of law. Creating by law the enabling environment for whistle blowing (FOI), Enhancing the judicial process such that existing laws processes and procedures do not hamper the dispensation of justice, plugging all socio-economic loopholes within the system by eliminating bottlenecks and increasing access to social goods and services.

Gradually reducing incentives for corruption prevailing in society through institutional reforms, combating poverty developing manpower and empowering citizens. Putting up efficient and effective well co-ordinate polices and programmes to combat poverty, create wealth, develop manpower and empower the youth through job creation. Going through the benchmarks enumerated above, it is clear to all that the first two measures were already in place by the time the Jonathan administration came into being and the steps being taken by President Jonathan confirm that he is systematically addressing the remaining ones by strengthen the EFCC, ICPC operational framework.

CONCLUSION

The greatest challenge facing Nigeria as a country is the problem of underdevelopment and poverty. The long years of bad leadership and dictatorial governance has left the country badly damaged. At the heart of this unfortunate scenario is the problem of endemic corruption which has further pauperized the Nigerian people. The current effort to fight corruption is quite timely. The promotion of rule of law which this administration has committed to/the economic development of Nigeria can only survive in an environment devoid of corruption.

The present framework which is in place for anti-corruption crusade is defective in structure and in substance. As such there is a need to reform the anti-corruption framework in Nigeria. The role of the Federal government this process cannot be overemphasized especially as regards the importance of enabling legal framework to give teeth to the anti-corruption process.

Also, the crusade has to be led from the top by the Nigerian political leadership, through the force of personal examples, as happened in Singapore in the 20th Century. But the Nigerian people have to be practically and massively involved in the fight as well. We have had enough of rhetoric and effusion of hot air especially from the top.

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