



Policing Looted Funds with the Whistle: Newspaper Coverage of the Anti-corruption Crusade in Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examines the Whistle Blowing Policy (WBP) in Nigeria's anti-corruption crusade between 2016 and 2017. It seeks to understand how looters innovate to keep loots, following the implementation of this policy, and the extent to which looting undermines governance and amplifies insecurity. This is vital as the perception of Nigerian corruption globally has been dismal in the last five years. Corruption slackens development and becomes a major security threat in Nigeria, as collective patrimony/public monies are siphoned or diverted into private pockets. Relying on newspaper data on coverage of corruption, this article argues that 'incentivising patriotism' through the WBP has contributed to citizens' participation in the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria and enhanced recoveries of illicitly acquired monies. The policy has forced looters to adopt traditional money-keeping strategies to keep looted monies in private fortes, septic-tanks, stores, and/or to abandon the same in airport and market shops. The article concludes by showing the value of what the recovered looted monies could have done to enhance governance and development, to underscore how illicit monies undermine security and democratic governance in Nigeria.

Résumé

Cet article examine la politique de lancement d'alerte lancée par le Nigéria entre 2016 et 2017 dans le cadre de sa croisade anti-corruption. Il tente de comprendre comment les pilleurs font preuve d'innovation pour conserver des fonds après la mise en œuvre de cette politique et dans quelle mesure le pillage sape la gouvernance et amplifie l'insécurité. Ceci est essentiel car la perception de la corruption nigériane dans le monde a été lamentable au cours

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des cinq dernières années. La corruption ralentit le développement et devient une menace majeure pour la sécurité au Nigeria car le patrimoine collectif (fonds publics) est siphonné ou détourné. En me fondant sur des données médiatiques sur la couverture de la corruption, j'affirme que «l'encouragement au patriotisme» par le biais de la *WBP* a contribué à la participation des citoyens à la lutte anti-corruption au Nigeria et à améliorer la récupération de fonds acquis illicitement. Cette politique a obligé les pillards à adopter des stratégies traditionnelles de conservation de fonds et sauvegarder les sommes pillées dans des locaux privés, des fosses septiques, des magasins et/ou les abandonner dans des aéroports et des magasins. L'article termine en montrant les réalisations faites avec les fonds récupérés pour améliorer la gouvernance et le développement, et mettre en évidence l'impact nuisible des fonds illicites sur la sécurité et la gouvernance démocratique au Nigeria.

Introduction

A major straw that broke the camel's back in the 16-year rule of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) during the 2015 general election in Nigeria was pervasive corruption. Nigerians voiced their frustrations with a vote for the All Progressive Congress (APC) presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, who promised to fight corruption, defeat terrorism and fix the economy. Notwithstanding his ascendancy to the presidency, corruption remains a major setback to the provision of democratic goods for the masses. It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria's ranking on the international Corruption Perceptions Index, conducted by Transparency International, has been gloomy due to the ravaging impact of the phenomenon on governance and development in Africa's largest economy. From 2010 through to 2016, Nigeria's best ranking on the global Corruption Perceptions Index has been 136 out of the 176 countries in the analysis.¹ This 'sleeping giant' has struggled at best to treat public sector corruption cosmetically. While there have been superficial efforts to check the menace, the corruption edifice is yet to crumble.² While former President Olusegun Obasanjo kickstarted some kind of battle against corruption with the creation of anti-corruption agencies (the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the Buhari administration in 2015 would later show a more committed fight against public sector corruption introducing the compulsory Biometric Verification Number (BVN) for all bank account holders, consolidation of accounts of government agencies into one single account (Treasury Single Account (TSA)), capping it in 2016 with the Whistle Blowing Policy (WBP). While the BVN policy paved the way for the WBP, this study analyses the effects of the WBP in the number of recovered funds within five months of

its enforcement. In showing this, this article relies on newspaper reportage of the recovered funds, to understand the strategies for concealment of the loot, the denial of ownership of the discovered funds, and the value of such funds for the provision of public goods.

Review of related literature

Corruption is a global phenomenon and has been around from time immemorial. Despite its global presence, the dimension of its operation varies across continents, with that of Africa gargantuan. Nigeria, being the most populous country and blessed with rich human and material resources, leads other countries with a corruption-ruined economy. According to Akindele (2005), corruption has become severely endemic to public life in most, if not all, African states through its terminal contamination. It threatens governance and halts economic growth. In Nigeria and many African countries, corruption drains over US\$ 140 billion per year (Ribadu 2007). This shows that corruption is a major problem in developing countries, a problem which diverts scarce resources away from development and eradication of poverty (Odugbemi 2000). This has been largely so because there continues to be a rise of political dinosaurs, tyrants, tropical gangsters and far too few statesmen as leaders (Goldsmith 2000) whose aims of being in governance is for personal aggrandisement. The hydra-headedness of corruption remains extremely problematic for effective and accountable governance in most African societies (Akindele 2005), Nigeria included, where corruption is perpetrated in the form of funds misappropriation, bribery, embezzlement, nepotism and money laundering (illicit money) to mention but a few factors.

Understanding the foregoing, there are certain numbers of explanations of the causes of corruption in African societies. These ranges from cultural relativity, low salary syndrome, imitation, institutional and rent-seeking explanations (Gire 1999; Kallon 2003; UNDP 2004). According to the cultural relativity argument, the covetousness of corruption in developing countries occurs when gift-giving becomes a bribe resulting from new consciousness developed among students, military officials, public office holders and others. The cultural relativity school contends that confusion between bribes and gifts, the process of modernisation, the burden of the extended family system, and the lack or absence of a public domain, are responsible for corruption in African societies (Myrdal 1968; Huntington 1968; 1979).

Corruption in Nigeria and other developing countries has also been explained in terms of low salaries and strong kinship ties. This perspective opines that public officials in developing countries are corrupt because their

salaries are so low that they cannot make ends meet by depending solely on their meagre salaries. Furthermore, strong kinship ties characteristic of these societies place nepotistic pressure on public officials. Accordingly, they resort to corrupt activities to make ends meet and help their relatives (Akerlof and Yellen 1990; Kpundeh 1995). Although this might be plausible for medium and low-level public officials, it does not explain why highly paid public officials partake in corrupt activities. Although low salaries may not be a justification for graft, this perspective offers insight into the wide-spread corruption, cronyism and nepotistic activities in Nigeria.

Another explanation is derived from the theory of imitation, arising from the proclivity of human beings to copy or imitate the lifestyles of other individuals believed to have accomplished important things in the society (Obuah 2010). Using Maslow's concepts of hierarchy of needs and Bandura's observational learning theory, Gire suggested that corruption is prevalent and reproduced in Nigeria because of the imitation of the lifestyle and behaviour of other members of the Nigerian society who are, or have been, in positions of authority (Gire 1999). This conception is true in the context of cases treated in this article, as they concern high profile persons in public office.

Furthermore, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) institutional theory offers an interesting perspective on corruption. According to this perspective, corruption arises when public officials have wide-ranging authority, little accountability and perverse incentives, or when their accountability responds to informal, rather than formal, forms or regulation. For institutional theorists, the causes of corruption result from a failure of state institutions and their lack of capacity to manage society by means of a framework of social, judicial, political and economic checks and balances, or where there is monopoly control of public officials wielding discretionary powers in the absence of accountability systems (UNDP 2004). The institutional explanation is pertinent to understanding the breadth and depth of corruption among governors and chairpersons of states and local government areas in Nigeria since 2000.

Finally, rent-seeking has been used to explain the incidence of corruption in Nigeria. According to this perspective, corruption results from too much government intervention in the economy, which creates rent-seeking opportunities. Rent seeking is a redistributive activity that takes up resources. Corruption therefore results from rent-seeking when someone has a monopoly over goods or services and has discretion to decide who receives what, when it is received, and how much is received (Klitgaard 1988; 1991). Rent-seeking through corruption by public officials can

hurt innovative activities; and since innovation drives economic growth, public rent-seeking can distort and hamper growth, even more severely than production (Shleifer and Vishny 1998). Public rent-seeking includes, but is not limited to, the following: taking bribes for issuance of business licences or permits; taxes on documents; taking bribes to obtain import licences; and taking bribes to influence bids for privatisation of state-owned enterprises or for government contracts. I now turn to review the extant work on whistle-blowing.

Whistle-blowing

Corruption seems to be on the rise, considering the rate at which it has been perpetrated in recent times and greatly perpetrated by employees, management of organisations and people in governance. To curb this menace, many anti-corruption policies have been established all over the world and in Nigeria, with several techniques to get them implemented. Despite several key developments the Nigerian government has put in place, the same indications of corruption such as financial recklessness, unethical practices and weak governance are still on the increase. This is part of the reason why the present Nigerian government puts up several other anti-corruption crusades where whistle-blowing is a key source of information in the crusade. Near and Miceli (1985) gave a common description of whistle-blowing as when organisation members (former or current) disclosed illegal, illicit, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of employers, to persons or organisations that may be able to effect action. Whistle blowing is all-pervasive and is pertinent to all organisations and envelopes all the employees – the ones who indulge in fraudulent or illegal activities (Drew 2010). For any whistle to be blown, there must be a genuine concern about a crime, criminal offence, miscarriage of justice, danger to health and safety or environment or concern about the cover up of any of these (Onakoya and Moses 2016). They assert further that whistle-blowing should not be mistaken for complaint, because every organisation has customer services or other relevant departments which handle complaints.

Fasua and Osifo-Osagie (2017), gave the following as major characteristics of whistle-blowing:

- disclosure of wrongdoings connected to the workplace;
- a public interest dimension such as reporting of illicit offences, unethical practices among others rather than personal grievance;
- exposure of wrongdoings via designated channels and/or to designated authorities.

From these characteristics, the following can be deduced as types of information expected to be disclosed by a whistle-blower in the Nigerian context: violation of the government's financial regulations e.g. failure to comply with the Financial Regulations Act, Public Procurement Act and other extant laws; mismanagement or misappropriation of public funds and assets (e.g. properties and vehicles); information on stolen public funds; information on concealed public funds; financial malpractice or fraud; theft; collecting/soliciting bribes; corruption; diversion of revenues; underreporting of revenues; conversion of funds for personal use; fraudulent and unapproved payments; splitting of contracts; procurement fraud (kickbacks and over-invoicing etc.); and violation of public procurement procedures, among others.

Two types of whistle-blowers that could exist in any organisation were identified by Read and Rama (2003). These are internal and external whistle-blower. Internal whistle-blowers are habitually more aware of unethical acts within the organisation they belong to but may be under threat of the consequences of blowing the whistle, such as losing their job or being ostracised within the organisation. External whistle-blowers, on the other hand, are those outside the organisation in question who may be less threatened from the consequences of whistle-blowing but may not have as much knowledge of unethical acts in the particular organisation, or may not be aware of the extent of the unethical acts.

Whistle-blowers are meant to have a sense of moral standards, which passionately drives them over and above other considerations, in making a decision on whether to blow the whistle or not (Jos, Tompkins and Hays 1989). Despite their intent to protect the public good, whistle-blowers are at times viewed negatively and seen as disloyal or disgruntled employees (Onakoya and Moses 2016).

Having understood what whistle-blowing is and its characteristics, the next thing to think about is the effectiveness of whistle-blowing. How effective can whistle-blowing be? There have been several mechanisms proposed by several authors and researchers. According to the National Audit Office of the banking sector, whose duty it is to examine the systems, structures and behaviours in place to enable effective whistle-blowing arrangements, for whistle-blowing arrangement to work, the culture of an entity needs to support and permit the systems, structures and behaviours through which it can work effectively (National Audit Office 2014). This is in line with ICAN (2014 cited in Fasua and Osifo-Osagie 2017) which states that firms should state their policy on whistle-blowing arrangements within the framework of their code of conduct. This is done by instructing every worker to make

known their concerns about illicit or unethical activities/behaviour in the organisation, and to ask questions if there are doubts. It further adds that the firm will not tolerate any action taken by an employee in the firm against a worker who has whistle-blown in good faith his/her concerns about unethical or illegal behaviour, while disciplinary action would be taken against any worker who knowingly makes a fallacious report. For this to work, the firm must pay attention to the importance of whistle-blowing awareness throughout the firm; embedding whistle-blowing arrangement awareness in the culture, systems and procedures; and the role of audit committees to ensure the allegation is true ICAN (2014).

Furthermore, Ponemon (1994) in Fasua and Osifo-Osagie (2017) suggests that the first ethical responsibility of the auditor or audit committee, acting as recipients of whistle-blowing reports, is to establish if the accusation is true or false. Determining the reliability of whistle-blowing reports is important because frivolous and unwarranted reports could have dysfunctional results. The responsibility for determining and operating effective whistle-blowing arrangements lies with the audit committee and the executive, reporting to the board. However, looking at possible conflicts of interest, the executive will need to delegate the routine operations to a body that is considered to be independent (Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors 2014). Whistle blowing promotes public good and a safer society. Nigeria as a country, for instance, stands to benefit from whistle-blowing as an anti-corruption tool through efficient allocation of resources, preservation of national wealth and improved well-being of the citizenry. These benefits lead to positive perception, improved ratings in global indices, and ultimately the attraction of foreign investors (Onakoya and Moses 2016).

However, just as there are benefits of whistle-blowing, so also there are obstacles and issues that surround whistle-blowing. In most places of employment, employees are the ones who will be the first to stumble through the misconduct of other employees, but they may be reluctant to expose these employees due to fear of retaliation or loss of the friendship of colleagues. Employees in this predicament have the following options: to remain silent, to raise their concern through an internal procedure, to raise the concern through an external body such as a regulator, or to make a disclosure to the media (Rachagan and Kuppusamy 2013).

There are at least four important obstacles to whistle-blowing. First, regulators can be understaffed and not have the resources needed to adequately process whistle-blowing cases. Second, lower level staff regulators who process whistle-blowing cases can be inexperienced and not understand the importance of a whistle-blowing case. Third, regulators may be under

pressure from the politicians who appointed them or other ‘powers that be’ to ignore whistle-blowing cases. Fourth, there are high risks to the whistle-blower for blowing the whistle to regulators (Nielsen, Balachandra and Nielsen 2013).

Methods

For data sourcing, newspaper reportage on recovered looted funds as a result of the WBP was used. In doing this, I focused attention on recoveries between December 2016 and June 2017. This is because this was a period of devoted reportage on recoveries due to the WBP. The newspapers utilised were *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspapers. Both are national newspapers who devoted enough attention to reporting recoveries arising from the WBP. In the two papers, we isolated reportage focused on whistle-blowing and other recoveries, consequent upon the anti-corruption crusade of the Buhari administration. We analysed 55 news items comprising headlines, articles and editorials. Issues covered were strategies of keeping looted monies, strategies of recoveries, the original purpose the monies was allocated to serve before diversion to private pockets, and the social welfare worth of the recovered loot. We complemented this with government circulars on the policies for a nuanced discussion. These were methodically examined, using content analysis.

Discussion of findings: policing corruption the tipster way

With a dedicated online portal for citizens with valuable information that may lead to the recovery of looted funds and an incentive, which ranges between 2.5 to 5 per cent of the recovered funds, the governance of corruption in Nigeria under the Buhari administration is different. The WBP was designed to achieve increased exposure of financial or financial-related crimes; support the fight against financial crimes and corruption; improve the level of public confidence in public entities; enhance transparency and accountability in the management of public funds; improve Nigeria’s Open Government Ranking and Ease of Doing Business Indicators; and aid the recovery of public funds that can be deployed to finance Nigeria’s infrastructure deficit.

The anti-corruption crusade which started with compulsory registration of all bank account holders in Nigeria to have a single BVN made it difficult for corrupt public office holders to keep their looted monies in formal financial houses under the radar of government. The BVN provided an easy way for government to use individual BVNs to track the funds in

the accounts of those being probed, and verify if they are clean or have a 'skeleton in their cupboard'. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in April 2017 sent a circular to Other Financial Institutions (OFIs) to ensure that all customers are enrolled on the BVN linked to their accounts without which they would not be allowed to make withdrawals (CBN Circular, 21 April 2017). The Bank had envisaged that the policy would minimise fraud, check for money laundering and boost financial inclusion. It became compulsory that unconsolidated accounts were barred from being operated by the CBN which provided regulatory frameworks for the banks. In doing this, the noose was tightened against anyone who was desirous of running his monies within the formal financial institutions. Simultaneously, the Federal Government ordered Federal Government agencies to consolidate all their accounts into one TSA. Through this, it was easier to monitor injections and leakages in government spending. Once the government perfected all its plans on these two vital components, the WBP was announced to encourage citizens' active participation in fighting corruption by volunteering information and reaping the benefits, which I call here 'incentivising patriotism'.

Data indicated that almost immediately the WBP came into existence with the announcement of the incentives, people started coming forth with information. The anonymity provided by the Federal Ministry of Finance on the WBP also encouraged many who had 'seen' but could not 'say' to begin to 'see' and 'say'. This is a rational action, considering the cost and benefit accruable to such an effort. The response rate was phenomenal with 2,351 tips. These came within the first three months of the programme. The *Nation* newspaper, in its editorial (26 March 2017, p. 8), quoted the Minister of Finance as saying that:

We receive 282 tips through calls, 412 through SMS, 95 through website, 194 through e-mails and 51 through others; however, only 154 of the tips are actionable. Some of the tips include contract inflation and conversion of Government Assets to Personal Use, ghost workers, payment of unapproved funds, embezzlement of salaries of terminated personnel and improper reduction of financial penalties. The tipsters also informed the government of non-remittance of pension and NHIS deductions, failure to implement projects for which funds have been provided, embezzlement of funds received from donor agencies, embezzlement of funds meant for payment of enrolments and violation of TSA regulations by keeping funds in commercial banks. The ministry also got tips on violation of FIRS (VAT) regulations by adjusting Value Added Tax payment, non-procurement of equipment required for aviation safety, money laundering and diversion of funds meant for approved projects. Others are illegal sale of government assets, diversion of Revenue (IGR), financial misappropriations

(embezzlement), and concealed bailout funds, mismanagement of Micro finance banks, illegal recruitment and violation of procurement Act. (Nduka Chiejina, *The Nation*, 26 March 2017, p. 8).

The significance of the information supplied is justified by the fact that the executing team of the WBP could take action on 154 tips. Consequent upon this action, some monies were recovered, which led 'dubious' public servants to innovate ways of keeping such stashed funds away from the prying eyes of whistle-blowers. In what follows, I discuss strategies deployed by corrupt public officers to keep their illegally acquired monies and properties in anticipation of being tracked down by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Strategies of keeping looted funds

The Punch and *The Nation* newspapers framed corrupt persons as 'looters' who later scheme to hide their loot away from the public by keeping it in an unusual place. Data showed that looted funds were taken away from the formal banking industry to informal settings. In informal settings, the ingenuity of looters was put to work as they kept the monies soaked away in cemeteries, abandoned properties, airports, and trading but isolated shops, among other places. Two factors may be responsible for moving money out of the formal banking sector: (i) the low value of the Nigerian naira made those with huge cash pull their monies outside formal banking to trade in dollars and facilitate their easy movement; government had also limited the available dollars issued in the market; (ii) knowing that with the BVN an account number can easily be traced, fraudulent government state officials (looters) withdrew their monies from deposit banks to safe havens within and outside their houses. This is another way of seeing looters as highly connected individuals who already have insiders who also supply them with information about the policy direction of government. Not all hid their looted monies outside their houses, others have forte rooms within their households where such monies were kept, with the house owner having exclusive access to it. Security agencies isolated such rooms in the house of serving judges during one of their raids, following a whistle-blower tip off. What this implies is that whistle-blowers are also insiders to those exposed. In this light, whistle-blowers could be family members, co-workers, domestic servants/staff, neighbours, to mention but a few. In a security raid at the house of the Justice of Federal High Court, Justice Ademola Adeniyi, the Department of State Security Services (DSS) agent narrated how they got to the money. Narrating the incident, a DSS representative, Mr Ihuoha opined that:

When we entered, we saw justice Ademola in the master's bedroom upstairs in his night wears. As we continued our search on the ground floor, we

encountered a locked bedroom. We requested the keys, but we were not given. We then had no option but to force open the door. Inside the bedroom, we saw a locked wardrobe which we also forced open when the keys were not made available to us. Inside the wardrobe we found a Ghana-must-go bag containing various N1,000 denomination notes to the tune of N39.5 million after counting it on the spot. We also found another locked room with a total sum of N8.5m in N1,000 denomination. In the Masters bedroom, in an open wardrobe we found the sum of N6m, 121,179 US dollars, 4,400 euros, 80 pounds, 1,010 Indian rupees (*The Punch*, 18 January 2017, p. 11).

Another reported recovery in *The Nation* (11 February 2017, p. 8) was that of a former Group Managing Director of NNPC:

A special operation conducted by operatives of the EFCC on a building belonging to a former Group Managing Director of the NNPC, Dr. Andrew Yakubu, in Kaduna yielded the recovery of a staggering sum of \$9,772,800 and another £74,000. The huge cash was hidden in a fire-proof safe. He admitted the ownership of the money which he described as a gift.

The two cases reported above are those concerning individuals in positions of trust but who failed to uphold the best ethical mien expected of persons occupying such positions. They also chose the best way to ensure protection of 'their looted monies' by keeping it in fire-proof and in locked but secured rooms with the house.

Another strategy used by looters was the creation of fictitious accounts anonymous enough not to be linked to them. Doing this would guarantee the safety of their monies. This however becomes impossible without the active connivance of banking staff. Unfortunately, this whistle-blower is from within that industry. The whistle-blower alerted the Federal Ministry of Finance and action was taken:

The office of the Attorney-General of the Federation was alerted to about \$131,676,600.51 in a fictitious account in the bank. When the government moved in, the bearer of the fake account could not explain the source of the cash. There was the case of another person who had \$15 million and N7 billion in his account. These funds were suspected to be proceeds of crime. Again, some whistle blowers who knew about these huge deposits alerted the government. The third person could not explain how he came about N1 billion. Interestingly, all the suspects willingly gave up these slush funds.

Other looters abandoned ownership of huge sums of money when it was tracked down where the monies were hidden. For instance, 49 million naira was abandoned at a Nigeria airport by an unknown passenger. *The Punch* (15 March 2017, p. 12) quoted the spokesperson of the EFCC Wilson Uwujaren as saying:

During a routine baggage screening, five sacks were unattended to and without tags; they contained fresh bulk items suspected to be money. Upon examination, the bags were found to contain crispy naira notes of N200 denomination in 20 bundles, totalling N40 million and N50 denomination in 180 bundles, totalling N9 million with seals purportedly emanating from the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Plc. seen on the packs.

While the last case shows signs of desperation to move money away from the country or to another location as law enforcement agencies close in on looters, what the former cases imply is that looters had a feeling of insecurity with their loots and were thereby looking for safer havens away from formal institutions, such as banks, and the prying eyes of the law. Having unusual money requires unusual safety options. This perhaps explains the choice of locations where the recovered monies were kept and later found, following whistle-blower sell-out.

To what extent do looted funds undermine democratic governance?

Looters in this study comprise those who have served the country and those still in service. Looted or diverted funds undermine security and democratic governance in Nigeria, leading to reduced life chances of the majority. This will be appreciated when we consider the individuals involved in the recovered monies, the position they hold in a democratic setting and the services they were/are required to render. It is instructive to note that unjustified monies were recovered from the houses of serving judges, former military officers, former ministers, a Special Adviser to former President Goodluck Jonathan on security, and some staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission who received money to influence the electoral outcome in Rivers State in 2016.

Election is critical to the enthronement of democracy. Once the process leading to the emergence of the winner is tinkered with corruption, the eventual occupier cannot deliver the goods in the interest of the majority. The reason is that they did not elect him. For instance, in the build-up to 2015 elections, US\$ 115,010,000 was distributed by the former Minister of Petroleum Resources to individuals and election officials (*The Punch*, 24 March 2017, p. 9). These were monies which could have been used for national development, improved service delivery or provision of public infrastructure.

This is not limited to the executive arm. The security is not saintly. A former Chief of Air Staff, Alex Badeh, who is facing trial of alleged money laundering was tracked down to his house where huge recoveries were made in dollars. As reported by *The Nation*, the ransacking of the house followed a tip-off:

We received intelligence report on another property located at No 6 Ogun River Street Maitama, which is a property owned by Badeh. When we got to the biggest room in the house, we saw a wardrobe, on opening it, we saw a bag and on opening it contained foreign currency. We saw 16 bundles of 50 U.S dollars notes and two sealed bundles containing 100,000 U.S dollars. Counting the money in our office, we discovered that it was exactly one million dollars.

Owing to his former position and involvement in the fight against Boko Haram terrorism, one could submit that such funds could have been diverted instead of being used for security purposes. This selfish cause led to loss of thousands of lives, both military and civilian.

Similar to the above is the recovery of US\$ 37.5 million from a Lagos mansion of the former Minister of Petroleum Resources, Alison Madukwe. The money was recovered by the EFCC during a raid. On 10 February 2017 the Chairman of the EFCC, Ibrahim Magu told journalists that his agency recovered US\$ 9.72m and £750,000, respectively within two weeks from the houses of public servants in Nigeria. The insatiable penchant to live above one's means may have accounted for this acquisition.

Data further showed that if the money recovered had been channelled to the services it was originally intended for, life chances of many Nigerians could have been improved. The EFCC (*The Nation*, 13 April 2017, p. 7) also reported a major recovery in Lagos. The total amount recovered is the equivalent of the monthly allocation of four States in the southwestern part of Nigeria. The EFCC spokesperson stated that this was another whistle blowing tip-off:

We acted on intelligence report that huge cash in an apartment in Osborne Towers, Ikoyi Lagos. A whistle blower who had inside knowledge of how the funds were kept in some locked up rooms in the house alerted the EFCC. As at last count, we recovered about \$43.4 million (N13.237 billion at N305 per dollar) N23 million and £27,000. The figures could be higher than what we have counted. The whistle blowing policy has added value to the anti-graft war. Some of those who looted public funds have been avoiding the banks. They kept the cash at home and we are on their trail. Imagine what over N11 billion can do in the life of this nation, while the amount traced to private accounts sums up to N4 billion.

The above narrative shows that the WBP is a major factor in the policing of looted funds in Nigeria, making it difficult for people to put money in formal banks who also run the risk of forfeiture and prosecution should a whistle-blower give a tip-off on the existence of such illicitly acquired money. Forfeiture of monies and properties illicitly acquired is in line with

the provisions of the EFCC Act. The EFCC has obtained court orders for the forfeiture of money which it suspected to be proceeds of crime. Data shows that since the introduction of the WBP in December 2016, some recovered monies have been permanently forfeited; and others temporarily because the cases are still ongoing in the law courts. Some of the forfeited funds were those discovered through the WBP. The acting Chairman Ibrahim Magu opined that 17 billion naira has been recovered through the policy alone. In obtaining the forfeiture orders, the EFCC relied on Section 17(1) of the Advance Fee Fraud and Other Related Offences Act:

Where any property has come into the possession of any officer of the commission as unclaimed property or any unclaimed property is found by any officer of the commission to be in the possession of any other person, body, cooperate or financial institution, or any property in the possession of any person, body, corporate or financial institution is reasonably suspected to be proceeds of some unlawful activity under this Act, the Money Laundering Act of 2004, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Act of 2004 or any other law enforceable under the EFCC Act of 2004, the High Court shall upon application made by the commission, its officers, or any other person authorized by it, and upon being reasonably satisfied that such property is an unclaimed property or proceeds of unlawful activity under the Acts stated in this subsection, make an order that the property or the proceeds from the sale of such property be forfeited to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Sections 29 and 30 of the EFCC Act 2004 also give the Commission powers on forfeiture:

Where the assets or properties of any person arrested for an offence under this Act has been seized or any assets or property has been seized by the commission under this Act, the commission shall cause an ex-parte application to be made to the court for an interim order forfeiting the property concerned to the Federal Government and the court shall, if satisfied that there is prima facie evidence that the property concerned is liable to forfeiture, make an interim order forfeiting the property to the Federal Government. Where a person is convicted of an offence under this Act, the commission or any authorized officer shall apply to the court for the order of confiscation and forfeiture of the convicted person's assets and properties acquired or obtained as a result of the crime.

Conclusion

This study has examined the governance of corruption in Nigeria 2015–17 since President Mohammadu Buhari occupied Aso Rock. Using *The Nation* and *The Punch* newspaper reportage on the anti-corruption crusade, the

article shows how the WBP has catalysed the anti-corruption war through 'incentivising patriotism'. This becomes important because prior to the implementation of the policy, very few people joined the anti-corruption crusade. Active citizen participation in the governance of the corruption battle could therefore be seen not only in terms of civic responsibility but also in terms of the inherent benefit accruable to the whistle-blower.

Following the policy introduction in December 2016, looters resorted to informal money keeping strategies. These included keeping monies in homes and unusual places like wardrobes, isolated shops, soak-away, fire-proof safes, forests and market shops. They also abandoned their loots at airports and distanced themselves from them. This is to avoid shame and prosecution. Of importance to this study is the characterisation of looters who were individuals (insiders) who occupied or occupy strategic positions in security, state government, the petroleum ministry and the judiciary. The implication of their involvement in the diversion of public funds for personal aggrandisement is security threat and infrastructural underdevelopment. They also undermined democracy through the diversion of public funds to bribe electoral umpires in the build-up to the 2015 elections. This means that where economic goals are elevated above other institutional means, corruption ensues and creates anomie in other social institutions, while stifling governance and development. Illicit acquisition of monies belonging to the collective patrimony for personal gains is a security risk, as it prevents provision of quality education, health, employment and public utilities. This explains the high unemployment and crime rates in Nigeria.

The WBP could therefore be said to be working, owing to the amount of dollars recovered into the state coffers by the EFCC. It has also engaged the citizenship in monetary policing and prevention of illicit acquisition among public office holders. Through permanent and temporary forfeitures already secured, the anti-corruption crusade is on such a pedestal that only modification of strategies will make it successful. This is because, as discovered in analysis of coverage of the WBP in the selected papers, much was achieved in the first four months of its introduction. While this is not an implication that illicit acquisition has stopped or that people are no longer blowing the whistle, it underscores the adaptation on the part of looters, through innovative strategies, to beat the current WBP. Beyond recoveries and forfeiture, prosecution of looters must follow to award punishment commensurate with the crimes committed. Such messages of deterrence can hinder future offenders, as they weigh the cost and benefit of treasury looting.

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Notes

1. For details see https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016.
2. About 55 top officials and their businessmen collaborators diverted a total 1.3 trillion naira from the government coffers between 2006 and 2013, a study has uncovered. According to the Chairman of the Presidential Advisory Committee against Corruption, Prof. Itse Sagay, between 2006 and 2013, 55 top government officials and private businessmen illicitly diverted a total of 1.3 trillion naira, roughly at that time US\$ 7.5 million dollars, at the expense of ordinary Nigerian citizens. These include trillions squandered in a fuel subsidy scam, the billion Dansukigate scam, hundreds of millions of dollars taken from the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC) by the former minister to bribe election officials in 2015; the list goes on. A third of the stolen money could have been devoted to several relevant projects in the country. Because of the looting, Nigeria is the highest country in the world with abandoned projects. One-third of the stolen funds could have provided 600.18 kilometres of roads, 36 ultra-modern hospitals per state, education for children from primary to tertiary level at the rate of 5.34 billion naira per child, and 20,062 two-bedroom house-units. The amount stolen could have done all this. As I was putting my thoughts to paper on Thursday 1 June 2017, a newspaper headline kept screaming at me: 'N423 billion Niger Delta projects misappropriated by the Ministry of Niger Delta'. So you can see that the corruption onslaught is devastating and unrelenting thus driving us further and further from our sustainable development goals (*The Nation*, 6 June 2017, p. 12) <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/196981-55-nigerians-stole-over-n1-34-trillion-in-8-years-lai-mohammed.html>.

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