

THE ‘HALLOWED CHAMBER’ AND THE SKULDUGGERY OF SLEAZE IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC, 1999 – 2007

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ABSTRACT: In May 1999, the Fourth Republic ushered in a return to democratic dispensation in Nigeria with clear distinction and functions of the various arms of government albeit it roots in the 1979 constitution. Prior to the period, the nation had been confronted and ravaged by a serious malaise – corruption. Thus, on assumption of office, the presidency made the fight against corruption among his top priority.¹ Consequently, the president forwarded anti-corruption bill to the National Assembly – the ‘Hallowed Chamber’. The bill, amidst opposition subsequently led to the establishment of two anti-grafts agencies – ICPC* and EFCC*. However, the ‘Hallowed Chamber’ that debated and passed the bill on anti-corruption was enmeshed, bedevilled and enveloped in shenanigan of sleaze in the Fourth Republic. For instance, the principal leaders of both the Upper (Senate) and Lower (House of Rep.) Houses were removed on the charges of corruption.² Hence, the focus of the historical discourse is on the sleaze that besieged the National Assembly. In its submission, the paper holds the view that corruption could only be curbed if only the National Assembly will uphold integrity, sound standard of ethical and morals values among members. The methodology is thematic, narrative as well as analytical interpretation of data retrieved from the use of primary and secondary sources as well as internet resources.

Keywords: Hallowed Chamber, Skulduggery, Sleaze, Fourth Republic

I. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has been a devastating malaise that has confronted man since time immemorial.³ It is a global challenge with its far-reaching octopus tentacles spreading across the nations’ of the world on a daily occurrence. In Nigeria, the vice has contributed to the underdevelopment and stagnation of the country in all ramifications. Its virulent scourge is felt all over the states in Nigeria. It has become an infectious virus that is hardly resisted by the immune system of those who uphold and cherish moral and ethical values. The malignant nature of corruption in the country is so rampant that its presence is felt in every sector of the nation’s parastatal – the oil sector, the aviation industry, the banking institutions, the educational institutes as well as government ministries. As a result, the situation has brought discredit and disrepute to governance in Nigeria. This is why and within the period of study, the citizenry as well as the international communities and organisations had variously rated the nation as the most corrupt country in the world.⁴

However, the situation was made worse by the developments that enveloped one of the most sacred government institutions and hope of the average Nigerian in the Fourth Republic – the National Assembly otherwise often referred as the Hallowed Chamber or the Legislature in our paper. The ‘Hallowed Chamber’ (the Upper and the Lower Houses) was walloped and submerged by shenanigan of scandalous sleaze. For example, in the final report presented and submitted to the National Assembly by the Probe Panel led by Idris-Kua seven-man committee to investigate the allegations of corruption in the Senate, the committee remarked and reported that there was flagrant abuse of procedures in the award of contract amongst other double-dealings

¹ Tunde Asaju, ‘How He Governs’, *NewsWatch*, Dec.11, 2000, 16.

² Dele Ajekameh, ‘A Senate and the Scandals’, *TELL*, May 7, 2001, 16.; Adegbenro Adebajo, ‘War in the Senate’, *TELL*, November 25, 2002, 40-41; Ray Ekpu, ‘Anyim Pius Anyim’, *NewsWatch*, August 27, 2001, 19.

³ Chuta S.C., *Corruption in Nigeria*, (Nsukka: Afro Orbis Publishing Co. Ltd., 2004), 5-16.

⁴ Samson A.A. & John O.A., ‘Corruption and National Development in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic: A Historical Discourse’, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, Vol.14, No.17, 2012, 82 ; Mohammed Salisu, ‘Corruption in Nigeria’, *Department of Economics, Lancaster University Management School*, Lancaster, U.K. 2000, 2.

and illicit operations which tantamount to incessantly brazen and unabashed corruption in the National Assembly.⁵

The revelation was shocking and disheartening because it opened up the can of worms of corruption in the Legislature. The National Assembly is one of the organs of government that is expected to live above board. Among its constitutional and primary role is to make laws for the sanctity, orderly and transparent *cum* corrupt free society. According to the 1999 constitution as amended, Section 88, subsection 2(b), the National Assembly shall:

*expose corruption, inefficiency or waste in the execution or administration of laws within its legislative competence...*⁶

This view is in tandem with Mojeed and Joseph that;

*the legislature as the accredited representative of the people has the duty of protecting public fund and other resources. ... It occupies a vantage position in the making and unmaking of laws, including those pertaining to the eradication/reduction of corrupt practices in public and private lives.*⁷

In the Fourth Republic National Assembly, the 'Hallowed Chamber' became compromised in its legislations as it was walloped in series of sleazy scandals. Making laws entail integrity, honesty, transparency and upholding of moral and ethical values of the society. These were lacking in most of the so-called Honourable members who legislated for the Nigerians/Nigeria during the Fourth Republic. Within the period under consideration, the body was enmeshed and smeared with violations of the laws, moral and ethical standard of conduct. Hence, the 'Hallowed Chamber' lost the sagacity, credibility and integrity in the eyes of the citizenry and the international communities.⁸ It is for this reason among others that the paper examines the untold activities of the Legislature in the Fourth Republic and to emphasise that corrupt-free society could only be achieved where the legislators uphold moral standard for national development. The paper is divided into five sections, comprised the introduction, clarification of conceptual framework, analysis and interpretation of corruption in the 'Hallowed Chamber', the effect on national development and conclusion.

Clarification of Conceptual Framework

Scholars⁹ and some international agencies¹⁰ over the years have attempted a definition of corruption. Therefore, we shall not attempt to reiterate what have been said in order to avoid verbosity. Nevertheless, those attempts have not fully attained and satisfied the yearning quest for the definition of the concept due to the complex, dynamic and hydra-headed nature of the concept. With each passing moments, corruption assumes a new face. As man modernises technology and as quest in search of knowledge wears a new dimension, corruption undergoes a dynamic twist. The nature of corruption is comparable to a biological term – amoeba – a shapeless organic matter lacking a fix form. Hence, due to the complexities in definition and in consonance with the nature of this discourse, we shall adopt the definition proffered on corruption in the *Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*. It is expressed as, 'the perversion or abandonment of standard'¹¹ An act of perversion in the words of Chuta is the alteration or change in an established normative standard of doing things acceptable to the society which in public or private life is not only abnormal and aberrant behaviour but also injurious and damaging to the social system.¹² In every business or profession, institution, social system or government parastatal, there are rules or agreed and acceptable code of conduct which members are meant to adhere to for the healthy and smooth running of the system. These guiding principles are constructed around such absolute, universal and eternal values such as honesty, uprightness, decency, modesty and integrity.¹³ During the Fourth Republic, the

⁵ Tobs Agbaegbu, 'A Can of Worms', *Newswatch*, August 7, 2000, 16; Olu Ojewale, 'And it Stinks', *Newswatch*, August 14, 2000, 24.

⁶ *1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Amended with Fundamental Rights*, 2011, 88-89

⁷ Mojeed O.A.A. & Joseph Y.F., 'The Legislative and Anti-Corruption Crusade under the Fourth Republic of Nigeria: Constitutional Imperatives and Practical Realities', *Int'l Journal of Politics & Good Governance*, Vol.1, No.1, Quarter II, 2010, 2

⁸ Olu Ojewale, 'And it Stinks', ..., 22-24.

⁹ Nye, J.S., 'Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis', *American Political Science Review*, 61, 1967, 419; Akanbi, M., 'Corruption, Accountability and Good Governance' in Saliu, H.A.,(ed), *Nigeria under Democratic Rule, 1999 – 2003*, Vol.1, (Ibadan: University Press PLC.,2004),153.

¹⁰ The International Monetary Fund (IMF); *Economic Issues: Improving Governance and Fighting Corruption in the Baltic and CIS Countries*, July 2000, 3.

¹¹ Adam Kuper & Jersica Kuper, (eds.), *The Social Sciences Encyclopaedia*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 163-165.

¹² Chuta, S.C., *Corruption in Nigeria*,... 3

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2

'Hallowed Chamber' was bereft of these values for a sacred institution of democracy and good governance. The moral and ethical quotient¹⁴ of members of the National Assembly was below average.

To discuss our paper, we shall adopt and clarify one or two forms of our conceptual framework on corruption as identified by John Waterbury. According to him, there are basically three forms of corruption comprised of *endemic, planned and developmental* corruption.¹⁵ These vicious cycles of corruption were prevalent in the country with particular reference to the Legislative Houses. In our discourse, we shall limit ourselves to *planned* and *developmental* corruption as they concern our subject matter – the 'Hallowed Chamber'.

We begin with *planned* corruption. In the words of Waterbury, planned corruption is an instrument of control by politicians to retain or subvert power at all cost. Under this system, the dispenser of public wealth (the executive) collaborated with members of the Legislative House to carry out devastating act of corruption against the nation.¹⁶ For instance, the executive in the past has succeeded in silencing the legislators through *planned* corruption. The situation had been a feature of the Fourth Republic in the National Assembly. For instance, the former Senate president, late Chuba Okadigbo lamented that he lost the Senate President post to Evan(s) Enwerem in June 2, 1999 because on the night before the election, the executive moved against him with what is known in the legislative circles as *GMG* or *Ghana Must Go* bags - a euphemism for jute bags used in bribing people (members) with cash.¹⁷ A similar incidence repeated itself in the House of Representatives in November 2000, when huge quantity of naira notes totalled ₦4 million (circa USD33,000) was brought by eight members of the House as an exhibit of funds being distributed by the presidency to force members to remove the Speaker.¹⁸ By these means the loot from public funds were shared among the legislators for self-centred and auto centric motives and to the detriment of national development, good governance and the essence of democracy as well as legislations.

Another conceptual framework on corruption adopted in this discourse is *developmental* corruption. It is associated with the administrative systems that handle numerous developmental projects without the participation and full involvement of private enterprises and corporate affairs commission. This form of corruption centres on the award of contracts for building ports, airports, dams, schools, hospitals, infrastructural facilities amongst others.¹⁹ This form of corruption is identified by Olatunde as *Grand Corruption*.²⁰ In his words, this is when influential politicians (Senators, Honourable Members, Ministers etc) or government officials are paid huge, irresistible funds by business magnates to obtain favours and circumvent normative standard.²¹ In the course of this paper, we shall see the combined efforts of the Legislative Houses and the Executive collaborated in the award of contracts, amidst over-invoicing, conversion of public properties, kick-backs paid to monitoring officers, distribution of public resources to cronies et cetera.

Dimensions of Sleaze in the 'Hallowed Chamber', 1999 – 2007

The section focuses on the twist, dimensions and perpetration as well as structural operations in the execution of corruption in the 'Hallowed Chamber' within the period under review. The intricate and systematic method through which corruption was carried out in the National Assembly not only enveloped the principal officers but also the ordinary 'hi' or 'nay' members of the legislative arm. In addition, the various probe panels set up to investigate the sleazy practices in the National Assembly and among members were not exempted from the claws and vicious strings of corruption. Hence, the entire 'Hallowed Chamber' – the Senate and the House of Representatives were overtaken by uncontrollable shenanigan of sleaze. This view had been stressed by the former president and other members of the legislators.²² Thus, Nigeria was rated during the period by Transparency International and others as the most corrupt country in the world.²³ It is in this light that the section examines the dimensional nature of corruption under the following sub-heading; forged certificates, over-invoicing or contract inflations, duplication of request, welfare package and 'kick-backs' paid to probe

¹⁴ For details, see Acha Felix Ndubisi, *Nigeria, What Hope?* (Enugu: Cecta {Nig.} Limited), 19-33.

¹⁵ John Waterbury, 'Corruption, Political Stability and Development: Comparative Evidence from Egypt and Morocco', *Government Opposition*, Vol.11, August 1976, 426-445.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷ Tunse Asaju, 'A Fighter and A Runner', *NewsWatch*, April 30, 2001, 29

¹⁸ Maureen Chigbo, 'Corruption', *NewsWatch*, July 30, 2001, 51; Jossy Nkwocha, 'Ghali Umar Na'Abba: Sullied Mr. Clean', *NewsWatch*, January 8, 2001, 23.

¹⁹ Acha Felix Ndubisi, *Nigeria, What Hope?* ... 51

²⁰ Olatunde, S.O., 'Tackling Corruption and Corrupt Tendencies through Application of Due Process: The CBN Experience', *Transparency International*, 2007, 23

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Olu Ojewale, 'And it Stinks', *NewsWatch*, August 14, 2000, 20.

²³ Samson A. & John O.A., 'Corruption and National Development ...', 82.

panels members. It should be noted that attempts is not made to discuss all the corrupt practices but to give instances. An attempt to do so is like searching for a pin in a bag of wheat – it is simply a herculean task.

Forged Certificates/ Documents

With reference to our adopted definition, the perversion of normative standard in the National Assembly began when it was revealed that the Senate President, Evan(s) Enwerem used forged certificates for electoral documentation.²⁴ After much investigation, it was discovered that the Senate president had perverted the normative standard of ethical code of conduct necessary for a legislator. The incidence eventually led to his removal. Hardly had Nigerians recovered from the Evan(s) Enwerem saga than another foray of forged certificate 'palaver' was raised in the House of Representatives.²⁵ Again, it was associated with the esteemed office and the leadership of the House – *the Speaker*, 'Honourable' Salihu Buhari. The Speaker had claimed to have attended Toronto University in Canada. However, it was discovered that his claim was untrue. Consequently, he was forced to resign. At another instance, the Senate President, Senator Anyim Pius Anyim had exposed that Senator Arthur Nzeribe perpetrated a ₦22 million (USD 185,000) scam using forged documents.²⁶ These incidences among legislators of the 'Hallowed Chamber' were a breach of normative standard. To have made use of fake certificate of any sort undermine the intent of being member of the National Assembly. And as such, every illicit means would be undertaken to sustain it. Hence, attempts were made to cover up the fraudulence. Thus, the corrupt leadership of the National Assembly subsequently affected the entire 'Hallowed Chamber' in the years that followed.

Over-Invoicing and Inflation of Contract Awards

On November 8, 1999, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo became the second Senate President in the Fourth Republic following the removal of Evan(s) Enwerem on the charges of corruption.²⁷ However, barely one year in office, in about August, 2000, the skulduggery of sleaze was again exposed in the 'Hallowed Chamber'. The corruption scandal was again centred on the *Oval Office* of Senate president. The Senate president was said to have enmeshed himself in a series of controversial contract awards inflation and over-invoicing. In a revelation presented by the committee set up to investigate the scandals in the National Assembly led by senator Idris Kuta, members unanimously reported that the leadership of the Senate with the support of some other Senators played dishonourable roles in the award of contracts.²⁸ The Senate leadership under Dr. Chuba Okadigbo, awarded contracts totalled ₦654 million (USD 5.5 million) in an unscrupulous manner.²⁹ The Senate President was reported to have furnished his residence with over ₦37 million (USD 308,000) above the senate approved amount of ₦25 million (USD 208, 000). In the same vein over ₦173 million (USD 1.4 million) was said to have been spent on street lighting as well as over inflated price of ₦15 million (USD 125,000) for the installation and commissioning of 100KVA generator.³⁰ Other Senators who engaged in these dirty acts included the Chief Whip, Senator Rowland Owie who equally inflated the price of 100KVA to the sum of ₦6 million when the actual price was ₦3 million.³¹ Another Senator was the Deputy Chief Whip, Senator Gbenga Aluko. He was said to have awarded the sale of computer contract to *Tritech Computers Ltd* for ₦66 million (USD 550,000) at inflated prices.³² Ibrahim Salim, Clerk of the National Assembly told the probe panel that the contracts were awarded in contravention of laid down procedures.³³ Furthermore, Ibrahim explained that the contractors who handled the contracts were not duly registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission.³⁴ For example, over ₦17 million (USD 143,000) was spent on gardening and over ₦2.44 million was paid for fumigation. In addition, and according to Suleiman Kabir, Director for Planning, Research and Statistics (DPRS) about ₦200 million (\$1.7 million) budgeted for the press centre, television and computer was diverted. He maintained that the diversion was the machinations of the council of Principal Officers of the National Assembly.³⁵

²⁴ Tunde Asadu, 'A Fighter And a Runner', *Newswatch*, April 30, 2001, 31.

²⁵ Tunji Olawunni & Kehinde Aakintola, 'How Sleaze, Scandals rock the National Assembly', *BusinessDay*, May 27, 2009 (Retrieved online: www.businessdayonline.com)

²⁶ Shola Oshunkeye, 'Brothers at War', *TELL*, November 11, 2002, 32.

²⁷ Tunde Asadu, 'A Fighter ...', 29.

²⁸ Tobs Agbaegbu, 'A Can of Worms', *Newswatch*, August 7, 2000, 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ 'Caught in the Act', *Newswatch*, August 14, 2000, 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12

³² *Ibid.*, 13

³³ *Ibid.*, 17

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Tobs Agbaegbu, 'A Can of Worms' ..., 23

In the award of contracts, the Senate President was said not to have followed laid down procedures. The award of contracts per se is not disapproved by the writer however, the manner in the inflation of contracts and over-invoicing were ominous to the integrity of the National Assembly. More so, the panel concluded that 'despite the highly inflated prices, contracts were badly executed and in some cases not executed at all'.³⁶ The senate president with his wealth of experience in the political arena is aware of the rules of engagement in the National Assembly. However, he permitted the perversion of normative standard under his leadership to the detriment and integrity of the 'Hallowed Chamber'

The scenario of corruption was not only peculiar to the Upper House. The removal of Salihu Buhari as the Speaker ushered in 'Honourable' Ghali Umar Na'Abba as the new Speaker. He was a popular figure in the Fourth Republic in his campaign of 'resign or be impeached' to the ex-president (Olusegun Obasanjo). Following a series of political tussle and manoeuvring, it was revealed on August 12, 2002 by Honourable Obande Samuel of the Speaker's 'unjust enrichment, official corruption and illegal withdrawal of public fund'.³⁷ The Speaker had been charged to have carried out his sleazy activities through one member of his staff. For example, one Balarabe M.A. was mostly used. He was said to have collected in April 2002 ₦28.5 million (USD 240,000) as impress for stationery, vehicle maintenance, hospitality and entertainment and contingency. Besides, he collected another ₦27.5 million (USD 230,000) as impress for the Speaker's upkeep in February 2002. In January 2002, the same man collected ₦21.8 million (USD 183,000) for the Speaker's office. At another occasion, he collected ₦11.2 million (\$94,000) for the Speaker to keep his office in top shape for the serious business of lawmaking. The list could go on and on. As if all these were not enough, the Speaker took a loan of ₦9.5 million (USD 79,000) and blew it on estacodes and another ₦8.2 million (USD 68,000) on air ticket for a trip to Tripoli, Libya on International Spring Festival for Freedom and Peace.³⁸

Amidst all of these, the Speaker had been charged of contract inflation. For instance, he was indicted for participating in a scandalous street lighting contract inflated from ₦57 million (USD 480,000) to ₦175 million (USD 1.5 million). Again, he was alleged to have inflated ₦4 million to ₦11 million on a contract for the construction of the National Assembly. He equally spent ₦180 million (USD1.5 million) globe-trotting as well as approved welfare packages of ₦22.9 million and ₦16 million for himself and his Deputy respectively.³⁹ At every occasion, attempts had been made to remove the Speaker because of his corrupt practices however, this had remained impossible. This is because many of his colleagues had supported him through thick and thin. This had been largely associated to his *Chop-I-Chop* tactics – a Nigerian parlance for bribery cutting across the nation.⁴⁰ The situation showed the rottenness in Na'Abba's House of Representatives. The case of Patricia Etteh,⁴¹ former Speaker, Senator Adolphous Wabara⁴² as well as Senator, Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello⁴³ had been told in many quarters and would not need repetition here. The multifarious operations of corruption did not only manifest in the misappropriation of votes for salaries and allowances for members and legislative aides but also in irregular disbursement of estacodes, contract awards, management of standing and ad hoc committee, some of which had become tools of blackmail.⁴⁴ Hence, the House was described as 'a band of political acophytes inspired by sheer opportunism to work in their own interest rather than that of the public'.⁴⁵ The sleazy nature of the National Assembly during the Fourth Republic is indeed ignominious and despicable for members of such esteemed, exalted and noble institution of democracy.

Duplication of Request

The styles of corruption and praxis of siphoning tax payers and public funds from the Federation account took various methods and pattern. One of such was the duplication of request by members of the principals' officers of the National Assembly. A glaring case was the sum of ₦400,000 (USD 3,300) cash advance approved for one Tony Eze to enable him purchase fuel for the month of February for the use of the

³⁶ Olu Ojewale, 'And it Stinks' ..., 24

³⁷ Shola Oshunkeye, 'The Caging of the Speaker', *TELL*, November 11, 2002, 29'

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 – 31.

³⁹ Jossy Nwocha, 'Ghali Umar Na'Abba, Sullied Mr. Clean', *Newswatch*, January 8, 2001, 22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 23

⁴¹ Anza Philips, 'Etteh's Imminent Fall', *Newswatch*, October 29, 2007, 26 – 29; Tobs Agbaegbu, Kazeem & Modupe, 'Untold Story of Patricia Etteh', *Newswatch*, September 17, 2007, 16- 28; Mojeed & Joseph, 'The Legislative and Anti-corruption Crusade', 12.

⁴² Shola Oshunkeye, 'How Wabara Crushed Himself', *TELL*, April 4, 2005, 24 -30; Obong Akpaekong, Chuks Ehirim & Anza Philips, 'Shady Deals', *Newswatch*, June 16, 2003, 20 – 31; Samson & John, 'Corruption and National Development in Nigeria's ...', 89.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Shola Oshunkeye & Idowu Bakare, 'A House that Stinks', *TELL*, May 13, 2002, 24 – 31.

⁴⁵ Godwin Onyeacholam, 'A Crawling House', *TELL*, May 13, 2002, 28

Senate President. In the same February (26th), the sum of ₦1 million (USD8,400) was approved and collected as cash advance on behalf of the Senate President and his entourage for fuelling. The money was collected by one Laraba Tarfa, the chief of protocol in the Senate President's office. The uncanny and eerie repetition and duplication of request was prevalent in the Fourth Republic 'Hallowed Chamber' For example, on February 9, 2001, the deputy Senate President collected ₦16 million (USD134,400) for duty tour allowance (D.T.A.) to Calabar on excursion for 107 senators. The same money had already been collected by individual senators for their respective DTA before leaving Calabar. Another ₦25 million (USD210,000) was given to Senator Bola Adamu, the Chairman of the Senate on Special Services Committee on behalf of the Senators for the same retreat or excursion to Calabar.⁴⁶ The unwholesome perpetration of corruption in the 'Hallowed Chamber' during the period is unimaginable and inexplicable. How such body under the Fourth Republic could consider it necessary to make meaningful laws for the innocent Nigerians on the street? The body was indeed paradox of legislature.

Welfare Packages

The 'Hallowed Chamber' during the Fourth Republic exhibited corruption in all ramifications. The leadership of the Senate was said to have spent over ₦29.9 million (USD251,200) in one Xmas celebration (December, 1999) and at the same time approved over ₦3.2 million (USD26, 800) for his Deputy in the Eid-El-Kabir celebrations.⁴⁷ The welfare packages approved by the Senate leadership benefitted some members of the Senate worth over ₦6 million.⁴⁸ Even in the absence of fiscal cash, members of the Senate received overdraft of ₦70 million (USD588, 2000) from banks to make foreign trips for the Senators and the overdraft for the House of Representatives amounted to over ₦370 million (USD3.1 million).⁴⁹ Equally, in December 2001, the Speaker spent about ₦34.6 million (USD 285,000) for Ramadan gifts, feeding, cars' maintenance and guest home⁵⁰. The removal of the former Senate President, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo on the allegation of corrupt scandal by his colleagues ushered in a new hope for the National Assembly. Thus, on August 21, 2000, and with forty-two votes, Senator Anyim Pius Anyim emerged as the third Senate President between 1999 and 2000.⁵¹ The seeming legislative reform offered new hope for the nation. For the average Nigerian and to some international observers, it appeared that the National Assembly has set out to reform and eradicate corruption in the country. On assumption of office, Senator Anyim promised to work in order to redeem the image of the party on the floor of the Senate and to ensure harmony between the executive and legislature. He assured Nigerians that his leadership would depart from the leadership of his predecessors on sleazy activities.⁵² However, the Senate President never kept to his word as he was charged with various corrupt acts. Among these was the instances of the ostentatious lifestyle and welfare package of the Senator as was petitioned and forwarded to the Independence Corrupt And Practice Commission by Senator Arthur Nzeribe alleging that the body should investigate the sum of over ₦800 million ((USD6.6 million) home country of the Senate President, Pius Anyim Pius as well as the ₦150 million (USD1.2 million) and over ₦600 million (\$5 million) spent on his mother's burial ceremony and his two-room office law office in Wuse District into a gigantic office complex.⁵³ The accusations and counter-accusations among Senators in the Fourth Republic depicted sense of shamelessness. The manner in which charges of corrupt practices trailed the National Assembly showed that the legislators were not there to make laws for a transparent society but for self interest and political aggrandisement. No wonder why no meaningful bills were ever passed in the first-three years of legislation.

Legislative Negligence and the Effect of Corruption

The primary and constitutional role of the legislature is to make laws and wage a relentless war against corrupt practices in any given country. This is enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution in Section 4, sub-section 2 thus, *the National Assembly shall have power to make laws for the peace, order and good governance of the Federation or any part thereof...*⁵⁴

The essence of the above reference is to show clearly the power and function as well as the fundamental duties of the National Assembly which is essential in engendering good governance and democratic growth. To stress and reiterate the remark of Mojeed and Joseph on the intrinsic nature and

⁴⁶ Dele Agekameh, A Senate and its Scandals, TELL, May 7, 2001, 19.

⁴⁷ Tobs Agbaegbu, A Can of Worms ... 22

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Shola Oshunkeye, The Caging of the Speaker ... 30 - 31

⁵¹ Olu Ojewale, How His Plot Failed, Newswatch, August 21, 2000, 12

⁵² Ibid., 12 - 13

⁵³ Shola Oshunkeye, Brothers at War, TELL, November 11, 2002, 32

⁵⁴ 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Amended with Fundamental Rights, 2011, 88-89

objectives of the 'Hallowed Chamber', 'the Legislature is the main institutional anchorage provided for in the constitution for the fight against corruption'.⁵⁵ However, the National Assembly in the Fourth Republic is bereft of innate features of being referred to as 'Hallowed Chamber' The shenanigan activities of members negate what Transparency International considered as sine qua non for legislation, ...that parliamentarian should maintain a high moral standard in their professional and private lives. They expect parliamentarians to serve out of conviction and commitment to public good rather than for aspirations of personal power and the pursuit of private profit.⁵⁶

One wonders why no meaningful legislation was achieved during the first-three year of return to democratic rule in 1999 – the passage of bills was at snail speed except one that involved money. For instance, of the two hundred (200) bills presented to the 'House' from June 1999 to July 2001, only fourteen (14) made up mostly of 'Executive Bills' were passed amidst opposition from the National Assembly.⁵⁷ The bills on Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Bill took over six months before it was passed. All other Bills, majority of them sponsored by members remained at the various stages of passage. For example, The National Commission for Handicapped Persons Bill by Chibudom Nwuche lasted over two years while awaiting second reading. The same goes for Freedom of Information Bill sponsored by Jerry Ugokwe lingered for over a year and half before it sailed through the Committee Stage.⁵⁸

The lackadaisical attitude displayed by members towards their primary function of lawmaking had adverse effect on the nation's political, economic, industrial educational cum infrastructural facilities. The act of spending money in the National Assembly among principal officers and ordinary members of the floor is disdainful and a shame to the country's Legislature. This was a time when many Nigerians could hardly boast of three square meal a day or \$1; it was a time when our institutions and academic staff were languishing in penury while many of our universities were shut down because they were far below international standard; it was a time when many of the federal roads were death traps for commuters while our legislators flew aircraft; it was a time when our national security was gradually oblivion of modern techniques to combat crime and terrorism. Consequently, legislative negligence consciously or otherwise contributed to high rate of income inequality, leading to high prevalence of poverty as a result of dearth of infrastructures which widened unemployment with the emanated problems of youth restiveness, insurgencies as well as prevalence of criminality.

Concluding Remarks

Our efforts in this paper have been to historically examine the skulduggery of sleaze in the 'Hallowed Chamber'. The attempt is founded on the devastating effects of corruption in the nation which have obviously manifested in lopsided distribution of wealth, malfunctioned and decayed of infrastructural facilities as well as degrading living conditions among many Nigerian. More so, it spurred by contemptuous sleaze among members of such noble and esteemed institution as the National Assembly. Many scholars have attributed the unparalleled height of corruption in the country to years of military rule. Nonetheless, the emergence of the Fourth Republic in May 1999 ushered new hope for Nigeria. This is largely occasioned on the role the Legislature was expected to play in curbing corruption in the country.

The Legislature as already stated is the only constitutionally empowered arm of government established to combat the condemnable crime of corruption. And to achieve this, members should uphold unwavering ethical moral standard and should be persons of proven integrity with unflinching support for good governance, democracy and development of the country. It would be absurd and preposterous for corrupt legislators to make law for any nation that desire transparent government. Therefore, potential members of the Legislature should possess good character, eschewing the temptation of falling into such issues which contravene the ethics and integrity of the 'Hallowed Chamber' and the corporate entity of Nigeria. To end this paper, we urge that prosperous members of the Legislator should borrow a leave from Senator Kenekwue Ugwu Nnamani, former Senate President who replaced Adolphus Wabara on charges of corruption of ₦55 million bribe-for-budget scandals.⁵⁹ Senator Kenekwue Ugwu Nnamani⁶⁰ was resolute and firm in spite of all odds and the glittering lures of the Executive *developmental* corruption to uphold the ethics of truth, integrity, honesty and the promotion of good legislations in his two years of piloting the affairs of the senate. So, for a true

⁵⁵ Mojeed O.A.A. & Joseph Y.F., The Legislative and Anti-Corruption Crusade under the Fourth Republic of Nigeria: Constitutional Imperatives and Practical Realities, Int'l Journal of Politics & Good Governance, Vol.1, No.1, Quarter II, 2010, 3.

⁵⁶ Transparency International 2005, Parliamentary Ethics and Accountability. Retrieved from: www.transparency.org/global-priority/corruption-politics/parliamentary-ethics.

⁵⁷ Godwin Onyeacholam, ACrawling House, TELL, May 13, 2002, 28

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Shola Oshunkeye, 'How Wabara Crushed Himself', TELL, April 4, 2005, 24 - 30

⁶⁰ Tobs Agbaebgu, 'The Plot Against Nnamani', Newswatch, June 4 2007, 14 - 26

sustenance of democracy in Nigeria and to curb the unwholesome skulduggery of sleaze in all ramifications and all government parastatal in the years ahead, the 'Hallowed Chamber' should live up to expectation in order to earn the appellation 'Hallowed'.

ABBREVIATIONS

- [1]. ICPC – Independent Corrupt Practice Commission
- [2]. EFCC – Economic and Financial Crime Commission
- [3]. ₦ - Naira, Nigerian Currency
- [4]. USD - The United States' Dollar
- [5]. It should be noted that the Naira-Dollar adopted in the text was the exchange rate of the period given in the reference.