

In April 2019 when the programme of activities for the Quarter just ended in MacArthur Foundation supported and CITAD administered engagement with corruption was drawn up, the Diary of Nigeria's Corruption Conundrum was inserted. The activity was designed and inserted in anticipation of how dramatic June 2019 promised to be, given the multiple electioneering campaign assurances of how all the big stories of corruption in Nigeria will become court cases immediately the elections were over.



The notion of a Diary, however, rests on the logic that the corruption debate in Nigeria is a battlespace, with a dynamism in which heroes can quickly become villains and villains can quickly transform into heroes. This sort of activity is not based on contact with voices from below and how majestically such voices could rise against the corrupt mighty but on the equally important question of the indeterminacy, hybridity and uncertainty that those protesting corruption must take note of as far as the battlespace goes. The diary turns out to be lovelier than imagined and it goes as follows:

The Arrest That Never Was:

Nigerians woke up on May 30th, 2019 to read social media narratives of the arrest of the immediate past governor of Imo State, Rochas Okorocha and his wife. The action was attributed to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC). But just before anybody concluded that the EFCC might have been stung into a new frenzy like never before, the news came to say the EFCC had done no such thing. It turned out to be a taste of fake news in the corruption conundrum in Nigeria, a problem in its own right. Didn't the fake news achieve the very opposite of what it might have set out to achieve? The former governor who was initially turned back from being sworn-in as a Senator is now a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.



Presidents Buhari & Kagame, EFCC Chairman, APC National leader and other visiting dignitaries at the June 11th, 2019 summit on corruption in Abuja, Nigeria

When Power Decides Truth

This too involves a Senator, Danjuma Goje. By advancing to be recognised as a contestant for the Senate Presidency, this two term governor of Gombe State was putting into question the APC's listing for power. According to usually very reliable sources, a serving governor came up with the idea of taking the former governor to the Coordinator – in – Chief of Nigeria's anti-corruption war. That is President Buhari. That was where the issue and the actors were reframed and the decision informed the practice as the Office of the Attorney-General of the Federation acted accordingly. This time, it was not the fake news dimension of fighting corruption but how definitive power relations is to the whole idea of who or what is corruption in one context and how that may change in a different context.

***The Nation's* Unfathomable Story**

Usually interrogative Nigeria could not do so with this mind-boggling story as carried in *The Nation*, (June 18th, 2019). How a newspaper owned or connected to a man known as 'national leader' of the ruling party probably explains the difficulty of interrogating the story. Was the story the newspaper's own way of exposing corruption, journalistically or a way of getting the 'national leader' to intercede for the law makers, majority of whom are members of the ruling party which is fighting corruption? Is the EFCC coming round to this story or the story might everyone have agreed it was just muck-racking?

Obasanjo's 'Nepotism is Corruption' Theory

Former president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo remains singularly central to Nigerian politics. He is Nigeria's archetype of JK Randle's 'the man without whom news is no news' today. At the 2019 version of the yearly meeting of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) held in Moscow, Russia, the former president not only argued that President Muhammadu Buhari is biased in fighting corruption, he also held up the government to be lacking in fiscal discipline. For him, nepotism has become such an obstruction in the fight against corruption. Being a gathering of investors, the former president appeared to be on target in terms of the audience. That brings in another dimension of power into the equation: the question of who is framing what, where and at what time in the corruption conundrum in Nigeria.



President Kagame



Ibrahim Magu, EFCC Acting Chairman

When Rwandan President, Kagame, Came Talking Corruption

The corruption spectacle in Nigeria proved not to be an exclusive affair of Nigerians. There was a voice from Rwanda who came with his own experience of fighting and containing corruption. It is difficult for General Paul Kagame to speak anywhere in the world without his critics throwing mud at him. A former guerrilla leader can hardly escape those charges but a country such as Nigeria cannot adopt such a wholesale approach to Kagame's key takes on corruption in the lengthy intervention he made on June 11th, 2019 in Abuja, Nigeria when he spoke at the National Democracy Day Anti-Corruption Summit on the theme, "Curbing Electoral Spending: A Panacea to Public Corruption", the event put together by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

In summary, he insisted on a broader context of the war against corruption; on the possibility of dealing with corruption; the complicity of the leader wherever corruption is pervasive; the unAfrican-ness of corruption; how institutions do not in themselves eradicate corruption; how it doesn't take a century to deal deadly blows on corruption; the imperative of dealing with corruption in an elevated rather than a pedestrian manner; the inter-subjective dialogue rather than a monologist approach to anti-corruption war; how risky fighting corruption can be as the victims can run away and label you an authoritarian leader and how helpful the 'authoritarian' approach can be.

