

POLITICS OF TAX ADMINISTRATION IN NIGERIA DURING PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI'S GOVERNMENT, 2015- 2023

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Abstract

Taxation is an important part of financial policy as well as obligatory duty of the citizenry to the nation. Globally, government depends on taxes collected from the citizenry to provide social amenities in order to make life meaningful for its citizenry. However, tax administration in Nigeria has been fraught with pockets of politicking and corruption. This article examined the politics of tax administration in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari between 2015 and 2023. The methodology was qualitative and descriptive with data elicited from newspapers, literature and journals. The article found that like other past administrations, the office of the tax collector is not usually about competence but by political expediency, ethnicity and loyalty. Tax administration is always fraught with corrupt practices and it benefits the elite groups more. The article recommends that a holistic approach to tax collection, appointment of tax administrator should be on competence, tax reforms, and employment of technology in the collection process should be emphasized.

Keywords: Taxation, corruption, Colonial State, National development, Politics

Introduction

Taxation, unlike *Isakole*, which was a voluntary donation to the state during pre-colonial times, and which was paid among the Yoruba ethnic groups, was not a novelty that was introduced to Nigeria by the British during their rule in the area that later came to be referred to as Nigeria. It had been clearly formed and applied by the indigenous rulers as a means of generating revenue for the running of their administration before the advent of colonial

rule. African historiography has proved beyond any doubt that there were well-organised state systems in Africa during the pre-colonial era, and the notion of revenue generation for administrative purposes was also involved (Anene & Brown, 1969). Some African and European historians have accepted that even during the pre-colonial era, there were somewhat developed administrative and judicial institutions in Africa. Indeed, the indigenous African administrative system was not less complex than the European system of the same period, and that the rulers were capable of running an efficient and peaceful government based on very solid and sound economic foundations. For instance, payment of taxes in kind rather than cash was prevalent in south-western Nigeria (Ekundare, 1973).

One of the aims of the Nigerian State is to provide adequate security, create wealth and basic amenities for its citizenry. This aim, however, is not a wish as it comes with lots of innovations to generate revenue, create conducive environment and a lot of monies. Following the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates of colonial Nigeria in 1914, the policy of Indirect Rule, which had been largely successful in the Northern Province, was extended to the southern protectorate. In the western province, the pre-existing socio-political structure was similar to what existed in the Northern Province (Afolabi, 2022). This resemblance made the introduction of Indirect Rule system, especially the introduction of the Native Revenue Ordinance to the western province in 1914 quite easy (Colonial Government 1930).

The colonial government was undeterred in its determination to introduce its own form of taxation, which meant the modification of the preexisting form of taxation to the region in spite of the oppositions elsewhere in the British colonies. The government's resolve was hinged on the economic expediency of generating internal revenue for the smooth running and development of the colony. It was also considered convenient for the eastern region to pay direct tax in conformity with the other provinces of colonial Nigeria. In addition to that, direct taxation was introduced against the backdrop of forced labour, which was acceptable as a substitute for taxation that was considered to be anachronistic, wasteful and burdensome by the colonial authorities (Afigbo, 1972, pp. 209-210). In 1943, the Nigerian Inland Revenue Department was carved out of the Inland Revenue Department of British West Africa and renamed the Federal Board of Inland

Revenue under the Income Tax Ordinance No.39 of 1958. Companies and Income Tax Act No. 22 of 1961 established the Federal Board of Inland Revenue, (FBIR).

Generating money and revenues are only achieved through taxation and effective productive ventures of the state. Thus, taxation and tax policies must be properly designed by the tax agency and the political leadership and followership must be up and doing. It is when this is done that the income from taxes will not only improve, but the tax collecting authority will also be effectively accountable to the government. Significantly, the tax collector who is at the helm of affairs of the tax agency is important. While scholars have focused on different areas of taxation such as its collection, history and politics among others (Ogbonna & Appah, 2012; Arowolo & Folarin, 2015), sufficient interest has not been beamed on tax administration in the state particularly under President Muhammadu Buhari. While there is a debate that nepotism or neo-patrimonialism plays very important role in African politics, it is apposite to see if it affects its institution. One of such institutions is the tax agency and its administrator.

Against this backdrop, this paper examines the politics of taxation in Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari. It argues that more often than not, the politics of bitterness and ethnicity plays huge roles in African politics and this often reflects in the appointment and dismissal of the tax administrator within 2015 and 2023. The study is descriptive thus sources for the study were gleaned from newspapers and literature.

Taxation in Nigeria: A Literature Review

Afolabi (2010) maintains that the British introduction of her taxation system into Nigeria led to unequal and exploitative colonial taxation policy among the Yoruba of South-west Nigeria, and this also culminated into serious socio-economic and political upheaval among the people. Frankema (2010) claims that colonial fiscal systems did not adhere to a uniform logic that minimalism prevailed in West Africa, whereas extractive features were more pronounced in East Africa, and that Mauritius had already begun to reveal the characteristics of a developmental state before 1940. He further observed that the collection of custom duties was relatively easy, cheap and likely to keep state-society conflicts limited. The extractive features were more prominent in East Africa where the constraints to revenue collection were higher than in West Africa. In Nyasaland, Uganda and Kenya, a large part of the administrative expenditures were financed by regressive direct taxes on the indigenous population. Kenya appeared as the most extractive colony in our study because the small group of European settlers benefitted disproportionately from limited public resources. Cogneau et al (2021) found that very few

countries have achieved significant progress in fiscal capacity from the end of the colonial period till today. The reliance on mineral resource revenues increased on average, and dependence on international commodity prices persisted with few exceptions. They also found that the relative contribution of trade taxes declined after the structural adjustments, and lost trade revenues were not compensated by a sufficient increase in domestic taxes. The trajectory of taxation is important to this study in order to understand how and why taxation was collected, utilized and deployed. What then is the effect of taxation on fiscal policy and national development? Ogbonna and Appah (2012) discuss the imposition of taxes for financing state activities and for the provision of a basis for apportioning the tax burden between members of the society. Ogbonna and Appah (2016) argue that since high revenue generated by the state leads to booming economy, which in turn leads to economic growth, is characterised by increased GDP and increase in disposable income, the state must adopt every possible and legal means to generate high revenue, which is mostly done through sustainable tax laws. They recommended, among other things, that there was the need to create more incentives for taxation, especially the petroleum profit tax and personal income tax, and government should create more awareness as well as train all people involved in the collection and remittance of Value Added Tax (VAT) on the need for prompt payment of this tax. Today, more reforms in the tax administration and collection is needed in order to eliminate, if possible, the areas that can cause revenue leakage as a result of loopholes in tax collection and remittances from the authorities, a situation that is capable of limiting the economic growth of the nation.

According to Ihenyen and Mieseigha (2014), for taxation to be an effective instrument of economic growth in Nigeria, there is the need for additional measures by government to ensure that taxpayers do not avoid and evade tax. With these measures in place, income can be properly redistributed, and the regulatory authorities charged with the sole responsibility of collecting tax should further be strengthened to enforce compliance by taxpayers as well as the utilization of tax proceeds for developmental projects on equal basis across the country. Sarka and Ibrahim (2019) stressed that in spite of the role of tax in sustaining national development, it is common knowledge that oil revenue still remains the highest source of government revenue in Nigeria, and that diversifying sources of government revenue is still better than over-dependence on oil revenue generation. They concluded that while additional tax revenue to Federal Government Non-Oil Revenue sector may have the

tendency to promote national development in Nigeria, a tax reform and the need for government to invest more on human capital was recommended. Trained personnel, they held, would acquire more skills, better invention would lead to more productivity, and people would pay more taxes to government when they secure better jobs. Onuigbo (2021) stated that although tax remains a major source of internally generated revenue to governments in the provision of essential social services around the world, the assessment and collection of various legally-recognized taxes are guided by legal frameworks that try to ensure that such assessments and collections are within the ambit of each level of government's tax jurisdiction. The author, among other considerations, noted that there is need for clarification on the jurisdiction and coverage of tiers of government as this will minimize the cases of multiple taxation and conflicts among revenue generating agencies.

Arowolo and Folarin (2015) reiterated the importance of advances in information and communication technology (ICT) in all facets of human endeavours, including tax collection. Nigeria tax authorities have taken certain steps such as unique tax identification number, integrated tax administration system, automated payment system, among others. They, however, suggested that tax administrators must harness information on taxable persons within the context of the demands of data privacy and security obligations to avoid unintended exposure to or unwanted law suits from aggrieved taxable persons.

Politics of Tax Administration in the Fourth Republic

After many years of military interregnum, the country eventually returned to civil rule in 1999. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was the president of Nigeria between 1999 and 2007. During his administration, he appointed Ms Ifueko Omoigui-Okauru as the Executive Chairman, Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) in May 2004 for a term of four years. In 2007, FIRS got financial and administrative autonomy with the passage of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (establishment) Act 2007. With that, the tax agency became more autonomous and its revenue improved significantly. With this development, Ms Omoigui-Okaruru was re-appointed by the late Musa Yar'Adua administration on April 10, 2008 for another term that would terminate on April 9, 2012. The FIRS boss, reputed for providing focused, effective and transparent leadership to the federal tax agency, bowed out gracefully, having brought about unprecedented reforms to Nigeria's tax system, quadrupling the country's non-oil revenues.

President Jonathan who became the substantive Head of Government in 2010 and later re-elected in 2011 continued with Ms Omoigui-Okauru until the expiration of her second tenure. President Jonathan then appointed Kabiru Mashi. It is necessary to understand the politics that brought Alhaji Mashi in as the head of the agency. Mr. Mashi was appointed acting chairman while the process of appointing a substantive chairman started in September, 2012 when the Ministry of Finance published advertorials in national newspapers calling on interested persons to apply (Isine, 2015). The action was however dogged by controversy with some critics querying the propriety of appointing an external consultant, Phillips Consulting, to oversee the selection process. However, on March 3, 2013, selected applicants were interviewed, but Mr. Mashi was not shortlisted and was therefore not invited. When President Jonathan forwarded the name of Mfom Akpan, a chartered accountant and former Head of Audit in United Kingdom's Barclays Bank to the Senate for confirmation, it was outrightly rejected by the senators mainly from the northern part of the country on 29 November 2013 on the basis that such appointment contradicted the federal character principle (Isine, 2015). The Chairman, Senate Committee on Drugs, Narcotics and Financial Crimes, Victor Lar, argued that the northern senators had agreed that Mr. Mashi should be made the acting FIRS Chairman in the spirit of federal character (Isine, 2015).

In March 2015, Alhaji Mashi was sacked and Mr. Samuel Ogungbesan was appointed in acting capacity of the agency. President Muhammadu Buhari dropped former President Goodluck Jonathan's lastminute appointment of Samuel Ogungbesan as Acting Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and appointed Dr. William Babatunde Fowler in acting capacity as the Chairman of the Joint Tax Board (JTB) until the confirmation of his appointment by the Senate in 2015. His appointment may have been instrumental to his linkage with both Mr. Ahmed Tinubu who recommended him while he was governor of Lagos State and Professor Yemi Osinbajo, the vice president who was his close associate.

In 2017, Mr. Fowler made some fundamental changes to the operations of FIRS by introducing the Voluntary Assets and Income Declaration Scheme (VAIDS). VAIDS was created to help many Nigerians whose tax statuses were not up-to-date, doubtful or lagging to standardize their tax positions. The federal government stated that the scheme was a reflection of its desire to bring many more eligible taxpayers into the tax net and encourage, with incentives of confidentiality as well as waiver of the interests and penalties, for those who

had `knowingly or otherwise underdeclared or never declared previously earned incomes and acquired assets.

Fowler noted that although there has been a sustained decrease in global price of oil since the second half of 2014, making the revenue generated from it to stand at ₦2.45 trillion, the agency was still able to collect ₦4 trillion as tax revenue for 2017. He also affirmed that in 2015, 2016 and 2017, the nation's revenue from oil stood at N1.29 trillion, N1.16 trillion and N1.52 respectively (News Agency of Nigeria, 2018).

Following the introduction of the VAIDS, Mr. Fowler wanted most powerful people and companies who would not want to pay their taxes by way of either evading or avoiding paying their taxes to take advantage of the VAIDS to pay up their taxes. Realising that many of these individuals and companies would not want to pay by instigating litigations against the VAIDS, the FIRS boss advised them to desist from such impression (Ojoye, 2018).

As at the beginning of 2019 up to the re-election of Muhammadu Buhari in 2019, there were growing tensions between Mr. Bola Tinubu and President Muhammadu Buhari. To be sure, the wife of Mr. Tinubu, Senator Oluremi Tinubu during the preparation for the 2019 election noted that her husband was sidelined immediately President Buhari won the 2015 election. As she puts it:

He was campaigning, I did too. We were running three campaigns in my house. And for him to be trashed like that? But I saw somebody who has love for this country. I hate to speak because when I stand in the front of God, I don't want, because of this man, go to hell. Occasionally, I would chip in and I would say, _You're still helping out? Why are you helping out?_ He would say, _This country matters to me more.... And Buhari, how many years has he been there? I am not campaigning for him. I am not; because I have looked at the dynamics; the poor still trust him. I will tell you: when it comes to integrity, Buhari has it. I don't know about now (Baiyewu, 2018). But even with the politics within the presidency and erstwhile appointees recommended by Mr. Tinubu, Mr. Fowler continued to do his job. In May 2019, at a seminar organised by Big Four Accounting and Advisory firm, KPMG for tax experts across Nigeria, the Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Babatunde Fowler, indicated that the agency was making efforts to eradicate multiple taxation scenarios (Fowler, 2019; <https://youtu.be/yOS1wY2HNBA>).

The former Chief of Staff to the President, Abba Kyari, had on August 8, 2019 queried Mr. Fowler for what the presidency called dwindling tax revenue since

2015 when the Buhari's administration took charge of governance in Nigeria. Kyari ordered Fowler to explain why in 2015, FIRS set N4.7 trillion target but was only able to make N3.7 trillion in the actual collection. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, the target collections were N4.2 trillion, N4.8 trillion and N6.7 trillion but the actual collections were N3.3 trillion, N4.0 trillion and N5.3 trillion respectively (State House, 2019).

In his response, Mr. Fowler wrote that the dwindled revenues were as a result of the international oil prices and the country's recession. In the analysis, he stated that the price of crude oil fell from an average of \$113.72, \$110.98 and \$100.40 per barrel in 2012, 2013 and 2014 to \$52.65, \$43.80 and \$54.08 per barrel in 2015, 2016 and 2017. He further noted that on assumption of the leadership at the FIRS in August 2015, the target for the two major non-oil taxes – VAT and CIT – was increased by 52 per cent and 42 per cent respectively. The Nigerian economy also went into recession in the second quarter of 2016, which slowed down general economic activities.

He also noted that —tax revenue collection (CIT and VAT), being a function of economic activities, was negatively affected, but actual collection of CIT and VAT was still higher in 2016 to 2018 than in 2012 to 2014 (Ojoye, 2019).

A month later, Mr. Fowler thinking that his response to the query was sufficient to earn him a second tenure put up a bid to the presidency for consideration for second term. In the letter he wrote:

I wish to present myself for re-appointment for a second term. This is consistent with provisions of the FIRS Establishment Act 2007 and would grant me the opportunity to consolidate and build on the achievements we have recorded in the past four years. Please find attached the highlight of my achievements during my first tenure in office. I would like to put on record my gratitude to Mr. President for the opportunity to serve the nation. I am also thankful for your support in the course of the discharge of my duties (Adaramola, 2019)

In October 2019, Babatunde Fowler, stated that about 45 million Nigerians will be captured as taxpayers before December 2019 at the flag-off of the new Tax Identification Number (TIN) registration system and consolidated National Taxpayers' Database for North Central zone in Ilorin, Kwara State (NAN, 2019). He also noted that the tax base was expanded from 10 million to 20 million taxpayers, an expansion that resulted in an exponential increment in generated revenue by 46.11 per cent from ₦800.02 billion in 2016 to ₦1.16 trillion in 2018. He also said FIRS tax collections grew by 53.9 per cent from ₦3.3 trillion in 2016 to ₦5.32 trillion being the highest collection ever in the

history of FIRS. He added that ₦2.85 trillion was collected as Non- Oil Revenue, which accounted for 54 per cent of total revenue collection (News Agency of Nigeria, 2019). A pundit and economists writing on the contributions of Mr. Fowler's initiatives wrote: Indeed, overall, at no time in our history has the drive for tax revenue been this aggressive to the extent that —unconventionall steps are being taken to bring the rich and the powerful into the tax net. Nigeria is undoubtedly one of the few countries with several billionaires who engage in conspicuous consumption and yet are unwilling to pay tax. They throw big parties, dwell in wondrous mansions and show off high-end automobiles or private jets, but suddenly become shy when asked to show evidence of paying tax (Sanusi, 2019).

It was reported by December 2019 that Babatunde Fowler had misappropriated about N40b, which was purportedly used for 'political campaign funding' for 2019 general elections. The issue was what were the funds used for or which party were the funds used to finance? Of course, it was the ruling class but it must have been unequally shared between the national party and the interests he represents, which was, allegedly, the man who anointed his candidature.

On 9 December 2019, rather than for Buhari to renew Mr. Fowler's tenure after its expiration, as Mr. Fowler had requested in a leaked memo written to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, this never happened, and so, Fowler handed over to Mr. Abiodun Aina. It was reported that Mr. Fowler's tenure was not renewed by the presidency because he, Fowler, failed to meet set targets and generate enough revenue for the country. On the handover day, while Fowler acknowledged that he must have stepped on toes, he explained that it was a result of the exigency of the work. Aina, however, praised Fowler for his contribution to the agency. In his words:

Within the intervening period that I will be holding forte, I promise you to steady the ship, by the grace of God. You have done a lot within the space of four years. You have transformed FIRS. You have modernised it. There have been a lot of innovations. And under you, we have achieved great heights. When we look back in 2015, the section was about N3. 3 trillion. At the end of 2018, with your leadership, we were able to move to N5. 32 Trillion. That was the highest collection ever, in the annals FIRS. You brought dynamism to FIRS (*Channels Television*, 2019).

Mr. Aina also affirmed that Mr. Fowler's innovative programmes and reforms transformed the tax net of the State. The launching of the Joint Tax Board

(JTB), as well as the Tax Identification Number (TIN) so that States might have access to data for tax purposes, deepened FIRS' embrace of technology for tax purposes and many more (*Channels, Television*, 2019). However, at an emergency meeting that held the following day at the Association of Civil Servants' secretariat in Abuja, the Workers of the Federal Inland Revenue Service rejected all of Fowler's achievement claims. Further, the workers accused Fowler of not handing over to the most senior person in the agency but to his crony who was not even qualified (Onuba, 2019). There was no doubt that Fowler must have handed over to Aina in trust hoping to be returned by President Buhari. While the protests were being held, the president appointed Mr. Muhammad M. Nami as the new chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service and also approved the composition of the board of FIRS.

By the end of December, 2019, the newly appointed Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) launched a veiled criticism of his predecessor, Babatunde Fowler, accusing his management of superintending a steady decline in revenue collection by the Service since the inception of his tenure in 2015. Reviewing the performance and workforce of the service between 2011 and 2019, Mr. Nami threw a jab at Mr. Fowler, noting that —despite the rise in the service workforce, the engagement of consultants, the rise in inflation and the exchange rates, the tax revenue collection (of the FIRS) continues to dwindle.¶ He also noted that 2012 was the best year for the FIRS in terms of tax collection and also commended the FIRS staffers for displaying the spirit of steadfastness, resilience, perseverance and deftness in the discharge of their assigned responsibilities (Udo, 2019), but surprisingly, nine senior officials of the agency were detained by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) over alleged multi-billion-naira fraud in 2019. The EFCC arrested a former Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Babatunde Fowler, over an alleged ₦5bn fraud perpetrated under his watch.

By April 2020, Mr. Nami who assumed office as chairman in December, 2019 noted that he had to —build the entire structure of the service again from scratch,¶ thus disparaging all the exaltations from Mr. Aina about Mr. Fowler (Adegboyega, 2020). The EFCC was also on the trail of Mr. Fowler over an alleged N100 billion tax evasion allegation leveled against a tax firm, Alpha Beta Consulting while he was the head of the Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS). It was alleged that Alpha Beta had become an avenue for official corruption by government officials, a conduit pipe for massive money-laundering scheme, tax evasion, among other vices (Ogune, 2020).

The tax collection performance of FIRS between 2019 and 2021 is given in fig.1.

Figure 1: Tax Collection Performance, 2019-2021



Source: FIRS (2021: 41)

A report by the United State-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) shows that not less than 800 Nigerians, including Babatunde Fowler, Tukur Buratai, the immediate past Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Mbu Joseph Mbu, a retired Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG), and Ahmed Ibrahim Dasuki, the late Sultan of Sokoto who died in 2016, were identified as owners of properties in Dubai, United Arab Emirate (UAE) worth N146 billion (Adanikin, 2021). While one cannot deny the fact that Babatunde Fowler was buoyant before taking the FIRS job at the national level, there was no doubt that he must have also corruptly acquired certain properties from state coffers and perhaps tax payers' monies (Adanikin, 2021).

Meanwhile, Mr. Muhammad Nami did not mince words when he noted that the country lost over \$178 billion (about N5.4 trillion) through tax evasion by multinationals doing business in the country between 2007 and 2017. He affirmed that —rich multinational corporations do not pay the right taxes due from them, let alone pay their taxes voluntarily (Emejo, 2021). According to him, the significantly huge loss of revenue was as a result of the evasion by multinational companies. This statement is, no doubt, similar to the justification which Mr. Fowler had provided earlier, but again, rather than

being queried, Mr. Nami was advised on how to block these holes and ensure that the multinational companies and other rich companies do not evade taxes. In November 2021, Mr. Nami was elected by the 47 member countries of the Commonwealth Tax Administrators Forum (CATA) as its 15th President for a three-year tenure (Oluwatosin, 2021). In October 2022, President Muhammad Buhari conferred the Excellence in Public Service Award to the Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Muhammad Nami, as well as 43 others. It was reported that within his three years in office, Muhammad Nami transformed and repositioned the apex revenue body to ensure efficiency in revenue collection leading to the collection of an unprecedented sum of N6.4 Trillion by the FIRS in 2021. It was then the highest ever generated by the Service. This is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Tax Collection Performance, 2019-2021

Tax Category	2021				2020				2019			
	Budgeted	Actual	Variance		Budgeted	Actual	Variance	%	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	
	Collection	Collection			Collection	Collection			Collection	Collection		
	(N'b)	(N'b)	(N'b)		(N'b)	(N'b)	(N'b)		(N'b)	(N'b)	(N'b)	
Petroleum Profits Tax	1,636.83	1,310.44	(326.39)	-20%	284.00	1,516.99	1,232.99	434%	4,301.18	2,114.27	(2,186.92)	-51%
Company Income Tax	1,476.87	1,896.44	419.57	28%	1,767.89	1,275.38	(492.51)	-28%	1,708.51	1,604.70	(103.81)	-6%
Gas Income	511.68	697.90	186.22	36%	426.61	134.06	(292.55)	-69%	685.64	21.93	(663.71)	-97%
Capital Gains Tax	7.26	17.50	10.24	141%	13.54	3.52	(10.02)	-74%	6.28	5.98	(0.30)	-5%
Stamp Duty	12.40	25.49	13.10	106%	17.19	120.16	102.96	599%	17.64	18.19	0.55	3%
NCS-Import VAT	0.00	0.00	-	0%	547.65	347.72	(199.93)	-37%	425.97	244.52	(181.46)	-43%
Non-Import VAT	1,838.35	2,072.85	234.50	13%	1,642.96	1,183.45	(459.52)	-28%	1,277.92	945.46	(332.46)	-26%
EDT	323.29	189.54	(133.75)	-41%	277.02	259.56	(17.46)	-6%	275.40	221.06	(54.34)	-20%
Consolidated Taxes (PAYE, PIT, Pol)	76.44	61.20	(15.24)	-20%	83.83	93.36	9.53	11%	83.83	70.63	(13.20)	-16%
NITDEF	18.84	19.31	0.47	2%	16.14	18.01	1.87	12%	20.01	15.18	(4.83)	-24%
EMTL	500.00	114.05	(385.95)	-77%			-					
TOTAL	6,401.95	6,404.71	2.76	0%	5,076.85	4,952.22	(124.63)	-2%	8,802.39	5,261.92	(3,540.47)	-40%
	100%				98%				60%			

Source: FIRS (2021, p. 53)

The Service achieved a 100% collection performance in 2021, 98% in 2020 as against 60% in 2019. When the impact of tax incentives (non-cash collection) are quantified, the Total Tax revenue would have increased by =N=550.3 billion, making the actual Revenue performance to be 108% in 2021.

In November 2022 parley in Kano State, the representative of Mr. Nami stated that the FIRS collected N7.5 trillion which is a significant improvement on the total collection of N6.4 trillion for the entire 2021 between January and September 2022. He further noted that Non-oil taxes accounted for N4.3 trillion while petroleum profits tax accounted for N3.1 trillion. He also assured the people that the FIRS would continue to ensure that no revenue gap was left uncovered in his quest to improve tax administration with particular emphasis on full deployment of technology across service lines and internal operations (Bello, 2022). Even while the FIRS was believed to be gaining so much popularity for its achievements, the House of Representatives Ad Hoc Committee investigated the Structure and Accountability of the Joint Venture Businesses and Production Sharing Contracts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation from 1990 to 2022. The Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, Muhammad Nami, was summoned on 29 November 2022 to appear before it within seven days (Baiyewu, 2022). Summoning Nami did not mean that he had corruption case against his person; rather, he was just required to explain the shortfalls. Nevertheless, The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) disclosed in January 2023 that it generated N10.1 trillion as revenue for the

2022 fiscal year, which was considered the highest revenue from any government owned enterprise (GOE) in history.

The questions are: Why did Mr. Nami allow some of these companies to evade being taxed? Was it incompetence, deliberate or inefficiency from the tax body and tax collector? And did the revenue under Nami exceed that of Mr. Fowler? The answer to these questions show that while Fowler did not do too badly against the media trial, the achievements of Nami was also as a result of the foundation laid by Mr. Fowler, especially when one considers that Mr. Fowler had even noted that he had to start from the scratch. There is no doubt that both tax collectors were competent for the job, but while Fowler's successor was playing to the gallery by saying that Mr. Fowler did nothing, both men were, apparently, very loyal to their pay masters. They both did the best they could under the prevailing circumstances.

Conclusion

The study found that as it was under past administrations, the office of the tax collector is not usually about competence but by political expediency, ethnicity and loyalty through the instrumentality of the federal character principle. Without doubt, the office is always fraught with corrupt practices that benefit

the elite. Apparently, the appointment of Mr. Fowler was as a result of his closeness to some associates of President Buhari, but situation took a wrong turn with the fallout between the camp of Bola Tinubu and the President, along with the cabal in the presidency. There is no doubt that Mr. Folwer was just a scapegoat who happened to be in the right place at the wrong time. Although renewing his tenure was not a must, the politics of the period played its part in the appointment of the new gaffer. However, rather than acknowledge his predecessor, this new supervisor keyed into the politics of that period, and had no charitable comment to make concerning the achievement of his predecessor. While it is not out of place to be involved in politics, doing so at the detriment of competence was bad for fiscal discipline and reforms. This article, therefore, recommends that a holistic approach should be deployed to tackle the loopholes in the tax collection process, while government and its agencies should utilise these taxes for the betterment of the citizenry. By doing this, the citizenry would be encouraged to pay their taxes. To this end, taxation and its administration should not be politicized to achieve optimal results.

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