

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024038430465 It is no longer a secret that Senator Bukola Saraki has emerged as a powerful symbol of the rotten sweetness of democratized corruption in Nigeria. As you read this, the thugs in the pocket of Senator Saraki masquerading as Nigerian senators are tightening the rope of strangulation on President Buhari's lackluster anti-corruption war. They have vowed that Magu's head must be cut off or everything in Nigeria will be grounded to a halt. This National Assembly under the leadership of Bukola Saraki is the most dangerously corrupt Assembly in Nigerian history. Consider this scenario: a sick President was recuperating in London; the cabal that caged Mr. President allowed Senator Bukola Saraki to pay him a rare visit (a special privilege you will think); Mr. President comes back and went into a closed door meeting with Saraki and less than 48 hours, the Senate soundly rejected the confirmation of Magu as EFCC chair for the second time (facilitated by Saraki's thugs and DSS director appointed by Mr. President). Troubling? On the surface, you will be tempted to believe that our democracy is finally working – checks and balances and independent DSS. Illusions! The reality is that we are witnessing the smooth operation of one of the smartest and "pathologically corrupt" political operatives in modern Nigeria in Bukola Saraki (I have not forgotten the gibberish of "innocent" until proven guilty). To say that Senator Saraki is the most powerful political operative in the Nigeria is not an overstatement. Even before he rose to power, he was highly connected by virtue of his father Dr. Olusola Saraki – the strong man of Kwara politics. To understand how powerful the Sarakis are, look at the history of their dynasty in Kwara State dating back to the late 1970s. Unlike other dynasties in Nigeria, the reign of the Sarakis has not been challenged for over 35 years. To demonstrate that he is "untouchable," Senator Saraki, who is already involved in a series of corruption trials (false declaration of assets, embezzlement of state fund), is not shying away from adding to his collection of corruption-stained-feathers. The newest scandal is the disappearance of about N3.5 billion refund of Paris Club loan. Fingering in this scandal are Aliko Dangote, the Nigeria Governors Forum and the Central Bank of Nigeria. This has once more rekindled the debate about how to tackle democratized corruption in Nigeria. The primary reason why corruption has thrived in Nigeria is because perpetrators at all levels have been clever enough to ensure that all relevant parties are "settled." High and Supreme Court judges, law enforcers and political whistleblowers are, most times, silenced by receiving a cut from the loot or forced by unseen hands wielding more power than the government to succumb to intimidation and blackmail. Dasukigate and Diezanigate are two good examples. To underscore the seriousness of democratized corruption, Godwin Elumelu, who led an investigation into the misappropriation of billions of Naira in the power sector under Obasanjo's administration, confessed that the "fight against corruption poses grave and unpredictable risks to those who dare to challenge this gargantuan monster." He added, "the greater part of the Nigerian problem is the ruling elite; selfish, greedy, unpatriotic and often lawless." Apparently, Senator Saraki is not only a smooth operator, but so powerful and lawless that it was rumored last week that he threatened to unleash hell on Buhari's administration if they push him too hard. This threat came after the EFCC had submitted a damning report on Senator Saraki's involvement in siphoning N3.5 billion from the Paris Club loan refund - a gargantuan scandal. In a shocking response, Mr. President ordered an additional release of the Paris Club loan refund even in the face of these allegations. This singular act by President Buhari is an indication that he has been caught by the charm of the rotten sweetness of democratized corruption. Is President Buhari complicit in encouraging the democratization of corruption in Nigerian institutions? Will Buhari sanction the plot by the DSS and the thugs called senators to redeploy Magu? Is he completely caged now? Is it a "major, general mistake" (thanks Sowore) for President Buhari to be romancing corrupt institutions and individuals while pretending to be fighting corruption? I see the ongoing caricature as simply a case of democratization of corruption; a case of the more you look the more you see, literally. Recently this administration demonstrated what looks like rare courage by going after the untouchables in our judiciary. The question, though, is: was the show of power against the judiciary selective and cosmetic? Is there any real intent to punish corrupt government officials? Or like the administrations before this, is the story of anti-corruption in Nigeria an illusion? The clampdown, or what the Presidency called a "surgical" operation, on corruption in the Nigerian judiciary, though a welcome development, is not enough. If indeed there is a real attempt to fight institutionalized corruption in Nigeria, why limit the "surgical" operation to the judiciary? What of the Nigeria Police Force and Nigeria Customs Service – the two powerhouses of institutionalized corruption in Nigeria? What of NNPC – the

goose that is laying the golden eggs? What of the Nigerian National Assembly - the cog in the wheel? Gone are the days when corrupt practices led to the demise of the leadership of the Nigerian National Assembly. Where the likes of Okadigbo, Wabara, Evan(s) Enwerem, Etteh and Bankole failed, Bokola Saraki is thriving. You know why? He has simply perfected the act of institutionalized corruption in Nigeria. As a matter of fact, he took on the persona of a mini god, terrifying and controlling the Presidency and the National Assembly. Senator Bukola Saraki is a smooth political operator that financed the election of President Buhari. He is an APC member on paper, but was elected Senate President by the opposing PDP members after outsmarting his party. Initially haunted by Buhari's Presidency, Saraki is now being courted by the cabals behind Buhari for fear of giving Atiku or Tinubu an edge in the repositioning for the 2019 presidential election. The President is currently limiting the anti-corruption "fight" on the tilapias like Dasuki, Badeh, Metu, etc. But until the cabals around him can summon the courage to point a real "surgical" anti-corruption knife on the crocodiles at the National Assembly, Saraki, who has not been convicted of any corrupt act, will go scot-free under the present state of democratized corruption in Nigeria. Forget about the ongoing drama at the CCB meant to deceive the general public. Senator Bukola Saraki is a friendly, well-spoken, handsome guy and above all, a smooth political operator. There's little question that he is a political hottie now, but whether his charms will stand the test of time remains to be seen.