

The pitfalls of nation building: Corruption, and the tragedy of Nigeria's Political-Economy

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Abstract

The focus of the paper is to examine the implications of corruption, and everyday stealing on Nigeria nation-building process. Given the emphasis on nation-building - a continuous process that requires the utilisation of human and material resources towards collective use and public good, the chapter examines how corruption has hindered such process. Since 1960, corruption has continued to inflict severe damages on the socio-political and economic sphere of Nigeria character. Despite being considered a key continental and regional power in African and West Africa respectively, corruption remains the bane of growth and development. Corruption and corrupt practices have translated into poor governance, limited infrastructure, and poor states welfarism. Anchored on this thesis, the chapter historicise corrupt practices under successive governments in Nigeria since 1960 by citing corruption cases to illustrate how corruption has become the bane of Nigeria's development. The paper also interrogates the strength and weakness of Nigeria anti-corruption war across decades and lastly the implications of corruption and everyday stealing on Nigeria political-economy and nation-building process. Using historical methodology, the paper concludes that the concept of nation-building is informed by the conscious and focused application of collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the socio-economic and political affairs. However, corruption and everyday stealing have not only defeated such notion but the process to attain goals of nation-building.

Keywords: Nation Building, Corruption, Politics, Economy, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is often perceived as the "giant of Africa" by most Africans, perhaps, because of its remarkable achievements in the continent in the past three decades. Today, the same country is looked upon by the rest of the world as a "crippled" giant, a veritable modern moral wasteland, a nation where corruption is extolled as a national culture, tradition; as a



nation of business scams and fraudulent investment and contractual opportunities.¹

Corruption is not a unique characteristic of African or developing economies of the world.² The Transparency International Global Corruption Report observes that corruption “affects all sectors of the society from construction (France), education (Uganda), police (Malaysia), to parliament (Japan), judiciary (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Israel, and Nepal) and even the church (Greece)”.³ Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. However, despite the global perspective on corruption in developed and developing countries, the intensity and government commitment, to address the roots of these challenges has been different so as its implications.

Nigeria, just like any other nation-state in Africa, is a colonial creation and a key power on the African continent. The high hopes and expectations that attended her political independence and popular perception about her growth, development, and leadership identity in Africa and globally have more or less turned into disillusionment. Despite the huge resources that are available in terms of human and natural resources, a combination of domestic and external forces has rendered these best intentions hopeless. In the case of domestic forces, it becomes more problematic when x-rayed with the state of the nation-building process in Nigeria. Hence, of particular concern has been the place of corruption and corrupt practices in Nigeria's nation-building effort since independence. As Heidenheimer has rightly observed, the implications of corruption for national development are undoubtedly negative and disastrous.⁴ As a result of the persistent nature of corruption in Nigeria's public and private spaces, the country was ranked the world's second most corrupt nation in the world in 2000, 2001 and 2002.⁵ In 2005, it moved to the sixth position, showing “improvement” but still among the most corrupt nations of the world. In the 2017 Global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by Transparency International, Nigeria was ranked as the 36th most corrupt country in the world. Nigeria placed 148th of the 180 countries assessed, scoring 27 percent.⁶ Hence, the subtext of this article is informed and influenced by the challenge emanating from corruption and corrupt practices which is best described in Daniel John's book title, ‘A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and

¹ Ojukwu, C.C., and Shopeju, J. O., ‘Elite corruption and the culture of primitive accumulation in 21st-century Nigeria’, *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 1(2), (2010): p.12.

² For insightful discussions on Africa and corruption, see, Keba, S., *Defining Corruption in the Cultural Context of Sub-Saharan Africa* in Mudacumura, G.M., and Morçöl, G., (eds.), ‘Challenges to Democratic Governance in Developing Countries, Public Administration, Governance and Globalization, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p.11.

³ Transparency International, *Global corruption report 2006*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006), p.119.

⁴ Heidenheimer, A., *Political Corruption: Concepts and Context*, (London: Transaction, 1977).

⁵ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception 2005*, Available at: www.transparency.org/cpi/2005/cpi2005_infocus.html, 2005. (Accessed 24 April, 2021)

⁶ Transparency International, *Corruption Perception 2013*.

Popular Discontent in Nigeria.⁷ Corruption discourse in Nigeria, from all available evidence from news, government efforts and everyday discussion among the citizens has shown attempt to curb the menace has not yielded impressive results. The situation has worsened progressively over decades rather than improving. Even with the emergence of democratic governance since 1999, it has remained extremely difficult to ascertain the level at which successive government anti-corruption crusades and measures have contributed if measured against the state of nation-building in Nigeria.

It is within this premise that this article examines the relationship between corruption, anti-corruption crusade, and nation-building process in Nigeria. The researcher began the study by doing extensive research for secondary sources of data which were examined to expand his horizon and state of discussion on the above subject matter. The article is divided into four sub-sections apart from the introduction and conclusion. The next section provides a conceptual perspective on important keywords. The next sub-section sets the context of the study by examining the Nigerian state vis-à-vis corrupt practices and everyday stealing. A historical approach is adopted in this process to affirm that corruption should not be considered new but an evolving socio-economic and political problem with a history dating back to the early independence years.

Another sub-section examines the anti-corruption crusade in Nigeria and lastly, corruption implication for nation-building is examined through the phrase 'everyone is doing it' to illustrate the position that corruption has transformed from being a problem to a culture in Nigeria. Given the importance of methodology in the development of a logical structure and procedure for scientific enquiry, the article adopts a historical methodology and relies on the use of secondary sources of data drawn from books, peer-reviewed journals, and newspaper publication. The data are subjected to intense review and analysis.

Conceptual Clarification: Corruption

To accurately examine the above subject matter, it is important to understand the concept and the functional relationship that make it up. Without a doubt, concept formation helps us to understand abstract phenomena in terms of their observable or empirical manifestation. Two concepts that need to be clarified and put in proper contextual perspective as used here are the concept of corruption, nation-building. Broadly speaking, corruption is a term used to describe acts such as fraud, graft, bribery, stealing, perjury, lying, dishonesty, indiscipline, and debased acts like sexual immorality or perversion and economic and financial crimes, nepotism, favouritism or discrimination, and partiality in decision-making or allocation of values. Transparency International defines corruption as "the abuse of power for private gains."⁸

⁷ Daniel, J., *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*, (Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁸ Transparency International, *Anti-corruption in plain language*, (Transparency International, Berlin, 2009).

Corruption permeates nations' political, economic, or administrative affairs.⁹ In terms of an administrative form of corruption, it involves a process 'Illicit payments required from users by civil servants in the (often distorted and arbitrary) implementation of existing regulations, policies and laws.'¹⁰ Similarly, in the political dimension, it 'often conflated with grand or high-level corruption: the misuse of entrusted power by political leaders. The more specific meaning is corruption within the political or electoral process.'¹¹ Other forms of corruption include petty corruption, graft corrupt practices, influencing, political patronage (clientelism and nepotism, High-level corruption and state-captured forms of corruption.'¹²

The United Nations guideline in its "Manual on Anti-Corruption Policy III", conceptualized corruption from two main perspectives namely: grand and petty corruption. By 'grand corruption, it represents such anti-state acts as looting, 419 scams, money laundering, and operation of illegal foreign bank vaults by public officers and private individuals. The 'petty corruption' connotes other acts as immorality, dishonesty, and perjury, though related to grand corruption.'¹³ In other words, grand corruption features largely in the public sphere which petty is related to the private sphere. Heidenheimer also conceptualises corruption based on the interest it serves. One, 'public office-centred' (when a public office holder misappropriates official privilege for non-material benefits); two, 'public interest-centred' (when the incumbent official indulges in corrupt practices to favour a group), and three, 'market-centred corruption' (when corruption is perpetrated for material or financial benefits).'¹⁴ In essence, irrespective of the types, forms, or interests' corruption serves, it is detrimental to the growth and development of a state.

The study operational definition of corruption or corrupt practices will however be flowing from one of Nigeria Anti-Corruption Agency, The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) (establishment) Act which defines corruption as:

non-violent criminal and illicit activity committed with the objectives of earning wealth illegally either individually or in group or organized manner thereby violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of government

⁹ Vargas-Hernández, J., The multiple faces of corruption: typology, forms and levels, Available at: <http://www.ameppa.org/upload/Typology.pdf>, 2008, p.3

¹⁰ See, Sarah, B., *Political Development and Corruption: Why 'Right Here, Right Now!?*, in Sarah, B., (eds.), 'Corruption and Development: The Anti-Corruption Campaigns', (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.5.

¹¹ See, Sarah, B., *Political Development and Corruption: Why 'Right Here, Right Now!?*, p.6.

¹² For full conceptualisations of these corrupt practices, See, Sarah, B., *Political Development and Corruption: Why 'Right Here, Right Now!?*, pp.5-7.

¹³ Sheriff, F., *Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria* in Ajayi, R., Fashagba, J.Y., (eds.), 'Nigerian Politics, Advances in African Economic, Social and Political Development', (Springer Publisher, 2021), p.20.

¹⁴ Antonia, T.O., *Corruption in Nigeria* in Adejumo, S., (eds.), 'State, Economy, and Society in Post Military Nigeria', (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.158-159; Heidenheimer, A., 'Perspectives on the Perception of Corruption', in Heidenheimer, A., Johnston, M., and Le Vine, M., (eds.), *Political Corruption: A Handbook*, (New Brunswick and New Jersey: Transaction, 1989), pp. 8-11

and its administration and includes any form of fraud, narcotic drug trafficking, money laundering, embezzlement, bribery, looting and any form of corrupt practices, illegal arms deal, smuggling, human trafficking and child labour, illegal oil bunkering and illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractices including counterfeiting of currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, open market abuse, dumping of toxic waste and prohibited goods, etc.¹⁵

***Ojelu-Oselu*: Nigeria State, Corruption and Everyday Stealing**

Ojelu-Oselu is a Yoruba metaphorical concept that is used to describe challenges emanating from political governance in Nigeria. Pragmatically, it is used to examine the abysmal depth of corruption and governance, the personality of corrupt public office holders, the apathy of these public office holders towards public welfare and governance. It is commentary used to define an average politician in Nigeria's personality and character which identifies their goal of governance as personal aggrandisement and self-enrichment at the expense of the public. As rightly observed by Michael Olusegun, *Ojelu-Oselu* projects the misadventure of the political class, affirming the truism that greed and corruption are endemic in Nigeria's public office, political history, and nation-building process.¹⁶

Nigeria's encounter with corruption, corrupt practices, and everyday stealing has a long history in Nigeria's politico-economic history.¹⁷ In the wake of Nigeria's independence, corruption was an important national question. The history of Nigeria from 1960 has been replete with misappropriation of funds, embezzlement or looting of the treasury, prebendalism, and "settlements" through graft and contracts.¹⁸ The first military coup plotters of January 15, 1966, had political corruption as one of its reason for intervening in Nigeria politics. As Major Patrick Nzeogwu Kaduna – leader of the coup plotters, stated in the broadcast which followed the military take-over signified that the coup was aimed at the nation's existing scourge of corruption, bribery, political profiteering, and brigandage.¹⁹ In Nigeria's First Republic, high-profile political office holders such as Chief Festus Okotie-Eboh and Chief K. O. Mbadiwe displayed a self-aggrandizement attitude towards the political office and public finance. Despite the intention of the coup plotters to get rid of corruption rooted in Nigeria's political space, what the state is currently facing in her fourth republic shows that such effort did not yield the desired result. It has rather become a Pandora's Box creating a deep crisis in Nigeria nation-building.

¹⁵ Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Establishment) Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2010, SS 2 and 46 respectively.

¹⁶ Michael, O., 'Visual Arts and Socio-Political Commentary: Nigeria as a paradigm' in Busani, M., Ndlowu-Gatsheni, S., (ed.), *Security, Conflict, and Peacebuilding in Africa*, (Pan African University Press, 2018), pp. 337-357.

¹⁷ For insightful comment on corruption in Nigeria precolonial and colonial era, see, Sheriff, F., *Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*.

¹⁸ Awonishakin T., *Nigerian Democracy and Kleptocracy*, Thisday, Lagos, (March 2006).

¹⁹ For detailed discussion about Nzeogwu and Nigeria coup, see, Obasanjo, O., *Nzeogwu: An Intimate Portrait of Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu*, (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1987).

Beyond the widespread corrupt cases that characterised the Nigeria First Republic, the period between 1970 and 1980 witnessed another dimension in corrupt practices. After the Nigeria Civil War, 1967-1970, the Yakubu Gowon post-reconstruction policies - three "Rs" (Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, and Reconstruction) met with the oil fortunes and revenues. The period was characterised by high cases of corruption such as the Udoji Salary Awards that over-monetized the economy, discouraged rural farming, and constructed spatial inflation. As a result of the unprecedented personal aggrandisement and arbitrary awards (inflated contract awards) of the jumbo project to friends, relations, and foreign partners, the 3Rs project witnessed government and public commitment. The Muritala Muhammed/ Olusegun Obasanjo Administration coincides with the increase in oil price. Corruption cases as a result of the oil wealth increased. For instance, about N2.8 billion of oil revenue was allegedly declared missing from the state coffers in 1978.²⁰ This prompted the Obasanjo Declaration at Jaji in 1977 sign-posting the commencement of the battle against the creeping culture of corruption, bribery, and indiscipline.²¹

Corruption cases in the wake of Nigeria's Second Republic have become a pandemic. The Shehu Shagari administration was marred in gross corrupt cases. Despite the administration's priority for the Ethical Revolution, corrupt practices among federal government officials, state officials, public parastatals, boards, and ministries crippled the economy. Coupled with the reduction in oil price, the Shagari administration responded by introducing austerity measures – which further caused economic hardships. The era witnessed the phenomenon of arson-after-looting by officials in a bid to offset all records that could trace culprits.²² The Buhari-Idiagbon regime came to power in December 1983, War Against Indiscipline (WAI) was a practical approach of the administration to corruption. WAI forces focused on addressing indices of corrupt practices such as raiding illegal and informal "black-market" sales outlets, arresting and detaining corrupt politicians, and sentencing corrupt offenders to life imprisonment.

On August 17, 1985, the Ibrahim Babangida regime took over the reins of government. Over the course of government affairs was the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme. The SAP furthered entrenched corrupt practices especially through some of its programs such as privatisation, inflation, commercialisation caused economic hardship that birth crime rates in public and private spaces. During this period, corruption and indiscipline practices such as drug peddling, money laundering and advance fee fraud or 419 defined Nigeria's domestic and international relations strategies. As a result of the crisis, Babangida drafted the Corruption and Economic Crimes Decree in 1990 but was never promulgated. General Babangida's reign ended in June 1993 when he handed over to the Interim National Government (ING) headed by Ernest Shonekan. The political crisis that engulfed the ING paved way for the administration of General Sani Abacha. Abacha's administration was a replica of corruption. Abacha, a kleptomaniac, stole enormous amounts of money from just about any public source, including the Central Bank of Nigeria.

²⁰ Nwankwo, A.A., *The Stolen Billions*, (Enugu: Forth Dimension, 1999).

²¹ Sheriff, F., *Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, p.384.

²² Sheriff, F., *Corruption, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, p.384.

Corruption turned into the looting of the public treasury in Nigeria. Even years after his death, successive administration in Nigeria has continued to recover some of the stolen public funds in private foreign banks.

Since the emergence of democratic governance in 1999, successive administration has introduced several measures to curb the menace of corruption. At the inception of the Olusegun Obasanjo administration, corruption has become the buzzword in public and private service. The menace affected state government activities, local governments, and other government agencies, misallocation of state funds, corruption within political parties and the political/electoral process, and even within the police force.²³ It was within this process that Obasanjo's administration set up two bodies saddled with the responsibility related to corrupt practice and financial crises. These institutions are the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). As Paul *et.al.*, have noted, ICPC and EFCC marked a shift away from the use of probes or inquiries to combat corruption to the use of established institutions.²⁴

The Goodluck Jonathan administration was not exempted from the crises emanating from corrupt practices. The administration was characterised by high public treasury looting scandal. Jonathan attitudes towards corruption have been criticised especially if measured against other administrations despite the negligible success. Obe argued that Jonathan's administration only paid lip service to combat corruption.²⁵ The democratic election in 2015 ushered in the administration of Muhammadu Buhari. The administration declared a strong penchant for corruption at all levels of government activities and in public offices. The government not only declared a crusade against corruption but has engaged in some practical measures such as the whistle-blower policy (despite the perceived genuineness, it is yet to receive legislative backings), investigation and prosecution of several public office holders, implementation of Single Treasury Account, Biometric Verification Number among several others.

Fig 1: Nigeria's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), 1998–2020)

Year	Number of countries surveyed	Country rank	CPI score (%)
1998	85	81	19
1999	99	99	16
2000	90	90	12
2001	91	91	10

²³see, Antonia, T.O., *Corruption in Nigeria*.

²⁴Paul, O., Abubakar, M., 'Corruption and Reform in Nigeria', in Sarah, B., (eds.), *Corruption and Development: The Anti-Corruption Strategies*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.103-121

²⁵ For some insightful discussion on corruption in Jonathan years, see, Raheem, O., *Stealing is not Corruption: A Discourse on the Languages of Corruption in Nigeria*, Ajayi Crowther University Press, (2018): pp.66-89. Obe, T., Is President Jonathan right to say most corruption is just common stealing? 2014. Premium Times.
<http://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/166648-is-president-jonathan-right-to-say-mostcorruption-is-just-common-stealing.html>. Last updated August 14. 2014, (Accessed, March 24, 2021)

2002	102	101	16
2003	133	132	14
2004	145	144	16
2005	158	152	19
2006	163	142	22
2007	179	147	22
2008	180	121	27
2009	180	130	25
2010	178	134	24
2011	183	143	24
2012	176	139	27
2013	177	144	25
2014	175	136	27
2015	168	136	26
2016	176	136	28
2017	180	148	27
2018	180	144	27
2019	180	146	26
2020	179	149	25

Source: Adapted from the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Available at: www.transparency.org/cpi, (Accessed 30 December, 2021)

When Corruption Fight Us! '10 Percenters'²⁶ and Nigeria Public Space

It is important to note that due to widespread corrupt practices, it is impossible to identify half of corruption allegations in Nigeria. However, some prominent cases of corruption cases will be cited. Between 1960 and 1999, corruption cases were interrogated through the use of commission of enquiry, panels of fact-finding investigators to investigate corruption and tribunals. In 1960, the Elias Commission of Inquiry looked into the activities of Nigeria Railway Corporation, 1970 Inquiry into the Apapa Road Project fraud, 1980 Tribunal of Inquiry into fraudulent crude-oil sales, 1983 Ayo Irekefe Panel on alleged N2.8 billion from NNPC's bank account in the UK, the 1999 Christopher Kolade Commission into the Award of Government Contracts and the Idris Kuta Panel Report on the Award of Contracts by the Senate between June 1999 and July 2000.²⁷

Since the emergence of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, there have been high-profile corrupt cases. Among these cases includes the Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun, who allegedly embezzled 128 million dollars while in office. Also, former Bayelsa State Governor, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, was accused of many charges, particularly that of multiple money laundering abroad. The former Governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye was found to have mismanaged the N1.6 billion ecological funds. Also, by 2006, there were petitions on stealing,

²⁶ Note: The term 10 percenters were used by Major Patrick Nzeogwu after the military coup of January 15, 1966 to describe the corrupt politicians in the First Republic, 1960-1966.

²⁷ Paul, O., Abubakar, M., "Corruption and the Crisis of Development in Nigeria," paper presented at the conference on "Redesigning the State? Political Corruption in Development Policy and Practice," (Manchester Metropolitan University, 25 November, 2005), p.18.

money laundering, and fraudulent contract awards against twenty-four (24) serving State Governors in the federation.²⁸ There has also been a consistent effort by successive fourth republic governments to recover Abacha loots traced to local and international banks as well as foreign countries.²⁹

The Colonel Dasuki of the National Security Adviser (NSA) under President Goodluck administration (2010–2015), allegedly diverted \$2 billion meant for the purchase of military equipment to fight Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast to the members of the former ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) during the 2014 and 2015 electioneering activities. The former Minister of Petroleum under the same administration, Mrs. Diezani Madueke, also allegedly appropriated several million dollars of public funds for personal use. Also, there have been allegations of a snake swallowing over sixty million naira in a national examination body in 2018. In January 2016, the Nigerian Government's Minister of Information, at the launch of a corruption awareness campaign, claimed that fifty-five (55) people who were government ministers, state governors, public officials, bankers, and businessmen stole 1.34 trillion Naira (approximately US\$6.8 billion) from Nigeria's public purse throughout 2006–2013, with a breakdown which included the theft of 147 billion Naira (US\$742.42 million) by 15 former state governors, 524 billion Naira (US\$2.65 billion) by bankers and 7 billion Naira (US\$35.35 million) stolen by four former government ministers.³⁰

Equally, between October 2019 and May 2020, corrupt cases in the Niger Delta Development Commission an alleged diversion of N81.5b was uncovered; the Chairman of the EFCC, who was to be an embodiment of integrity had cases of corrupt financial practices. Also, in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Federal Government claim unsubstantiated spending of tens of billions of Naira for distribution across Nigeria as COVID-19 palliatives, among other obvious brazen corrupt acts.³¹ As a result of corrupt acts, individuals such as the former governors, Dariye of Plateau State, Jolly Nyame of Taraba State, and Orji Nzor Kalu of Abia State, have been jailed over corrupt practices they engaged in while serving as Governor. The corruption agenda of the Buhari government has also been criticised for some political patterns and politicisation such as national questions are being addressed.³²

While cases of political and public holders' corrupt practices have been topical, evidence from news and literature reviewed shows that corruption is beyond these categories of individuals. In ministries and among government workers,

²⁸ Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, 2006 "About ICPC". <http://www.ICPC.org>, (Accessed April 27, 2021)

²⁹ Jason, P., "The Making of Olusani Abachanjo" Vanguard, Lagos, (November 25, 2006).

³⁰ Reuters, Nigerian minister says \$6.8 bn of public funds stolen in seven years, 2016 Reuters

Africa.<http://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN0UX0D4?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>. (Accessed April 22, 2021).

³¹ Morphy, R., Nigeria's Failing War against Corruption. Leadership, Abuja, (July 2020).

³² Note: Some corrupt cases have been jettisoned as a result of over-politicisation of corruption prosecution especially under the All Progressive Congress of Muhammadu Buhari Administration. Corruption cases and charges were dropped against members of APC or PDP who defected into the ruling party had their prosecution waived.

there are elements of corrupt practices. For instance, In October 2014, the government of Nigeria declared that it had uncovered a total of 60,000 ghost workers in federal establishments across the country following a staff audit of the federal government ministries, departments, and agencies on the implementation of the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Information System. This discovery saved the government about N170 billion (approximately US\$9 billion).³³ Even in the educational sector, Okoduwa identified the following form of corrupt practices which includes corruption in academics, plagiarism, social and administrative matters takes form of admission and certificate racketeering; examination malpractice; bribery; embezzlement; nepotism; sexual harassment; cultism; falsification of official records; over-invoicing; contract kick-backs; unlawful levies; irregular procurement processes; discriminatory recruitment; discriminatory promotion and discipline; and so on.³⁴

Corruption has also become an everyday dealing in many Nigerian institutions. For instance, in the police, in the 2015 Afrobarometer survey 72% of Nigerians stated that the NPF is the most corrupt institution in Nigeria.³⁵ A result of the incessant corruption in NPF was one of the core objectives of the END-SARS protest that rocked Nigeria's political and governance space.³⁶ Other security agencies – Nigeria Customs Service, Nigeria Immigration Service, and the National Assembly have numerous cases of individuals or groups of these institutions involved in corrupt activities. The Judiciary is not exempted. A Premium Times online published report of the ICPC noted that at least N9.4bn has been paid as a bribe for justice between 2018 and 2020.³⁷ A survey by the African Report also reveals that 34% of Immigration offices collected bribes to speed up the issuance of passports and other immigration procedures.³⁸ Even among the youth, corrupt acts such as 419, Yahoo-Yahoo has become normalized and not criminalised.

'Fight', 'Crusade', or 'War' Against' Corruption and Nigeria State

Fight', 'Crusade', or 'War' Against' Corruption are various diction that has been employed by the various successive government in their effort to curb the incessant nature of corruption. Corruption in Nigeria has now appeared to

³³ Anthony-Uko, N., FG uncovers 60,000 ghost workers. Leadership.

<http://www.leadership.ng/news/387811/fg-uncovers-60000-ghostworkers>. 2014, (Accessed 24 April, 2021).

³⁴ Okoduwa, R. A., The anti-corruption crusade: ICPC perspective. Paper Presented at the Anti-Corruption Seminar organized by the ACTU (Anti-corruption and Transparency Monitoring Unit), Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State, 2009.

³⁵ Pring, C., *People and corruption: Africa Survey 2015*, (Berlin: Transparency International, 2015).

³⁶ For insightful discussion on ENDSARS movement, see, EndSARS: Post-Colonial Nigeria, Government Corruption and the Way Forwards, available at:

<http://www.crossfirekn.org>, last modified November 1, 2020, (Accessed, 23 April, 2020).

³⁷ Premium Times, At least N9.4bn paid as bribe for justice in Nigeria in two years – ICPC Report, Last modified, 26 December, 2020, (Accessed, 23 April, 2020).

³⁸ The African Report, Nigeria: The Buhari administration's Failed Anti-Corruption Crusade, available at: <http://www.theafricanreport.com>, last modified, 9 March, 2021, (Accessed April, 23, 2021).

become complicated. As Aluko has rightly observed about the dimensions of corruption and corrupt practices, he stated thus:

Corruption now appears to have become a permanent feature of the Nigerian polity. It had become completely institutionalised, entered into the realm of culture and the value system; it is now a norm and no longer an aberration. The young ones are born into it, grew up in it, lived with it, and possibly die in it. The aged are not left out as they are socialised and begin to conform to it. Succeeding generations now see it as part and parcel of the social order and the normative system. Cultural transmission takes place and as such behavioural traits which confirm corruption begin to emerge.³⁹

Anti-corruption can be described as a series of movements against corruption championed by the government, international organisations, civil-society organisations, and Non-governmental organisations. Successive administration has continued to initiate anti-corruption measures, especially through institutions. These institutions include⁴⁰The Criminal Code Act, 1990; the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal Act, 1990; constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act, 2000; the Economic and Financial Crimes Act, 2002/2004; Money Laundering (Prohibition) Act, 2004; Public Procurement Act, 2007; Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) ACT, 2007; Whistle Blower Protection Act⁴¹ and a Proceeds of Crime Act. Other institutional frameworks saddled with anti-corruption responsibilities include The Public Complaints Commission (PCC); the Code of Conduct Bureau and Tribunal; the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission; The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit; Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML); the Bureau of Public Procurement; the Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms (TUGAR); The Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT).

³⁹ Aluko, M.A.O., 'The institutionalization of corruption and its impact on political culture and behaviour in Nigeria', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 11(3), (2002): pp.393–402.

⁴⁰ For detailed discussion about the activities about these anti-corruption institutions and legal framework, see, Ogbu, O.N., 'Combating corruption in Nigeria: A critical appraisal of the laws, institutions, and the political will', *Annual Survey of International & Comparative Law*, 14(1), (2008): pp. 99–149.; Obianyo, N.E., Emesibet, V., Anti-corruption strategies in Nigeria- failure of theories or failure of policies? Finding the missing link. Paper presented at the conference on Anti-Corruption Research and Policy-Making in Nigeria: 40 Years after the theory of two publics, Abuja, (2015).; Technical Unit on Governance and Anti-Corruption Reforms(TUGAR), Report of scoping survey of anti-corruption initiatives in Nigeria. Abuja: (TUGAR, 2012).; U.S. Department of State, Nigeria 2015 human rights report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, available at:<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/252927.pdf>, 2015, Accessed 18 Apr 2021; Ijewereme, O.B., 'Anatomy of corruption in the Nigerian public sector: Theoretical perspectives and some empirical explanations', *Sage Open*, 5(2), (2015): pp.1–16.

⁴¹ Note: For insightful comment on Whistleblowing policy, see, Oludayo, T., Policing Looted Funds with the Whistle: Newspaper Coverage of the Anti-Corruption Crusade in Nigeria, *Africa Development*, Volume XLIV, No. 4, (2019): pp.73-90

Fig 2:The perception of the citizen on changes in corruption in the last 12 months, 2015 Survey

3 BEST PERFORMERS Lowest percentage saying corruption has increased		3 WORST PERFORMERS Highest percentage saying corruption has increased	
Burkina Faso	28%	South Africa	83%
Mali	31%	Ghana	76%
Cote D'Ivoire	32%	Nigeria	75%

Source: Transparency International. (2015, November 30). Corruption in Africa: 75 million people pay bribes. Available at: http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_in_africa_75_million_people_pay_bribes. (Accessed 15 April 2021).

It is important to examine to what extent has the identified institution, legal and constitutional framework has been able to address the persistent nature of corruption. Taking, for instance, the EFCC, the leadership, and activities of the institution have been marred in politicisation. At inception, President Obasanjo appointed Mr. Nuhu Ribadu as the chairman of the institution. At the end of Obasanjo's tenure in 2007, Mr. Nuhu Ribadu has been replaced with Mrs. Farida Waziru. President Goodluck Jonathan on assumption of office changed the leadership of the institution by appointing Ibrahim Lamorde as a new Chairman. Under his regime, cases of corruption allegations against an individual such as Stella Oduah, the former Minister of Aviation, and Abdulrasheed Maina, Chairman of Pension Reform was carpeted because of political calculation were how the institution was losing the battle against corruption.

The administration of President Buhari also took a similar step by appointing a new chairmanship of Ibrahim Magu. Under Magu's watch, corruption allegations include the Dasukigate. However, two important factors are important so far for consideration. On the politicisation of the anti-corruption institution leadership and its functions. At the end of 2020, one of the biggest ate that befall the thrust of the institution was when Ibrahim Magu himself was found guilty of corruption charges which led to his exit and the appointment of Musa. This was a huge blow to the institution's credibility status.

On the effect of politicising anti-corruption, the administration of President Obasanjo and President Buhari offers vivid insight. For instance, under the Obasanjo administration, the EFCC adopted selective investigation and prosecution of corruption cases. Despite the recorded success of Obasanjo anti-corruption war such as the impeachment of sitting governors on allegations of corrupt practices and abuse of office as well as publicized investigation of many

others with leading revelations,⁴² EFCC was designated as an instrument of vendettas for politically motivated trials and convictions during the Obasanjo administration.⁴³ For individuals who opposed the presidency and served as opposition leaders the decision and governance process of the president corruption cases were opened. Among these individuals include Tafa Balogun, Fabian Osuji, Alamieyeseigha, Joshua Dariye, Bola Tinubu, Orji Uzor Kalu, Mike Adenuga, and more recently Ibrahim Babangida and Abubakar Atiku.⁴⁴

Under the leadership of President Buhari and the change mantra in which anti-corruption was a core aspect of the change has also generated fundamental questions, controversies and often outright condemnation from the populace. However, what the study is concerned about is the politicisation of the anti-corruption process. Despite the administration resolve that every individual guilty of corruption must face the consequences, it has been affected by the party leadership's political calculation and gains. Lists of politicians alleged to have looted public funds excluded names of members of the ruling political party.⁴⁵ There were claims of reports that some individuals had refunded a huge amount of fund looted from the public.⁴⁶ Also, members of the opposition party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) who were found guilty of corruption charges suddenly become a saint with charges stepped down after cross-carpeting to the ruling party. Such processes and patterns have affected the credibility of the institution in the anti-corruption war. With politicisation, the anti-corruption war has suffered discontinuity and setbacks.⁴⁷

In the anti-corruption war, the 'Public' and Anti-corruption effort is a primary factor in any anti-corruption war. The attitude of the public to government efforts is perhaps most important. If an administration should lose public support, it makes such an effort difficult to attain. This, hence, brings us to the

⁴² Shopeju, J.O., and Ojukwu, C.C., 'Patrimonial rule in Olusegun Obasanjo's Nigeria', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 7(6), (2013): pp.266–273.

⁴³ Lawson, L., 'The Politics of Anti-Corruption Reform in Africa', *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47(1), (2009): pp.73–100.; Shopeju, J.O., and Ojukwu, C.C., 'Patrimonial rule in Olusegun Obasanjo's Nigeria'.

⁴⁴ The News, "The Case against Atiku", Lagos, (September 18, 2006).

⁴⁵ Alagbe, J., Anti-Corruption: A tale of two lists. The Punch, April 7, 2018, (Accessed on April 12, 2018), from <http://punchng.com/anti-corruption-a-tale-of-two-looters-lists/>; New Telegraph, Looters' list: Between selectiveness and breach of law, (Accessed on April 14, 2021), from <https://newtelegraphonline.com/2018/04/looters-listbetween-selectiveness-and-breach-of-law/>

⁴⁶ Kazeem, Y., Nigeria says it's recovered \$9.1 billion in looted funds, but won't name the culprits, Quartz Africa, 6 June, 2018, (Accessed on April 15, 2021), from <https://qz.com/700036/nigeria-says-its-recovered-9-1-billion-in-looted-funds-ut-wont-name-the-culprits/>

⁴⁷ Campbell, J., Resistance to President Buhari's Anticorruption Campaign. Council of Foreign Relations, October 16, 2017, (Accessed on March 25, 2021), from <https://www.cfr.org/blog/resistance-president-buharis-anticorruption-campaign>; Ekpo, C.E., Chime, J., and Enor, F.N., The Irony of Nigeria's Fight against Corruption: An Appraisal of President Muhammadu Buhari's First Eight Months in Office, *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* 4(1), (2016): pp.61–73; Dixon R., The aftermath of Nigeria's fight against corruption: Officials have luxury cars, but can't afford gas. Los Angeles Times, December 27, 2016. (Accessed on March 24, 2021), from <http://www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-global-nigeria-corruption-2016-story.html>; Ekpo, C.E., Chime, J., and Enor, F.N., The Irony of Nigeria's Fight against Corruption

problem of followership in Nigeria. Another vivid example can be cited to illustrate this position. When the 'Bail Jumping Governor of Bayelsa state after corruption charges was arrested and charged in London in 2005, a Professor Kimse Oko was reported to have said, 'the Ijaws cannot accept a situation where one of its most patriotic leaders is being vilified and humiliated without any shred of evidence.⁴⁸ Upon his return to Nigeria, the governor was welcomed in a grand style, heroic manner and by people 'agog with jubilations', and was hailed the 'conqueror of the British Empire.' Crowds of people cheered him as the 'local son' who had outwitted the British police. He 'drove into the state capital, Yenagoa, in a long convoy.'⁴⁹ Similarly, corruption allegations against a former public officer are interpreted along ethnic and sometimes religious lines which affect the anti-corruption credibility gap.

The judiciary (Justice System) process is another major crisis affecting the anti-corruption war. For instance, plea bargaining, which can be found in Section 14(2) of the EFCC Act has been applied to high-profile cases of corruption. Plea bargaining is a process whereby the accused persons are allowed to plead guilty after they have agreed to forfeit some of the assets acquired through fraudulent means especially the one possessed through the diversion or embezzlement of state resources. Among high corruption cases, this concept has been applied to include the case of former Chief Executive Officer of Oceanic Bank, Cecilia Ibru, who amidst 25-count charges was convicted on a three-count charge with the forfeiture of her assets worth 191 billion Naira and sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment. Plea bargaining has a gross implication for the anti-corruption war.⁵⁰ It makes corruption consequences too cheap to bear. It presents an opportunity for public officers to become acquainted with their corruption charges by returning meagre stolen public funds. Hence, the popular saying is that 'if you want to steal public funds, you will have to steal court prosecution money and the ones you will return'. Apart from this, the political interference in the justice system and delay in corrupt related judgment also endangered the process. Many high-profile corruption cases are either abandoned or dismissed.⁵¹

Everyone is doing it: Everyday Corruption, Nation Building or Nation Destroying

⁴⁸Nigerian Tribune, 30 September, 2005 cited in Paul Okojie and Abubakar Momoh Corruption and Reform in Nigeria.

⁴⁹ Oji, G., and Okocha, C., 'Alamieyeseigha in Dramatic Escape from London', 2005, ThisDay, 21 November, www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id_33889, (Accessed March, 21, 2021), p.1.

⁵⁰ For insightful discussion on plea bargaining, Nigeria justice system and anti-corruption, see, John, S.O., *Anti-Corruption War and the Ambivalence of Legalism in Nigeria*, (Springer Publisher, 2020).

⁵¹ Adesemoju, A., No more dismissal of Corruption cases without Trial-CJN. The Punch, July 19, 2016, (Accessed on April 12, 2021), from <http://punchng.com/no-dismissal-corruption-cases-without-trial-cjn/>; Jibueze, J., Tracking high-profile corruption cases. The Nation, January 23, 2018. (Accessed on April 12, 2021), from <http://thenationonlineng.net/tracking-high-profile-corruption-cases>

The term nation-building began to gain ascendancy in the early 1960s following the achievement of independence in Africa and other parts of the world.⁵² The concept of nation-building refers to all processes aimed at unifying a given group of people into a united and viable sovereign state. The nation-building process is achieved when social, economic, political, and infrastructural mechanisms are put in place. By nation-building is meant the effort to contribute to an institution that can be called a nation; that is, a situation whereby an entity or a people can be said to have a relationship that can be held to be national. The idea of nation-building may involve practical measures such as physical labour, personal adjustments and developments, creations and recreations, cultural advancements, institutional readjustments, and collective self-appraisal or reappraisal. However, what underlies all these is the attempt to achieve certain status through values and ideals by and through which a people can consider themselves to be different or distinct from others and to have more reasons to be more deeply committed to others than ordinarily would be the case.⁵³

The use of 'everyone is doing it' illustrates everyday corruption in Nigeria's nation-building process. It is an attempt to show that corruption exists between Nigerians and their daily activities. In other words, it demonstrates the entrenchment and complexities of this menace. As the former Minister of Finance found on assuming duty in 2014 rightly observed, 'Nigeria [has] become virtually synonymous with the word "corruption."⁵⁴ The persistent nature was described by a Noble Laurel, Wole Soyinka when he asserts that 'there is corruption everywhere—in the Church, police, judiciary, national and state parliaments, in the local authorities; even to play for the country's national football team, the Super Eagles, one can bribe a coach to get a shirt. It is that bad.'⁵⁵

In the process of nation-building, the role of government institutions cannot be underestimated. However, in Nigeria, institutions required for nation-building have been destroyed because of leadership challenges emanating from corruption. Scholars have argued that corruption is no longer a function of two publics in Nigeria (The primordial and the Civic) but has become a culture that supports unethical leadership and bad governance. In other words, while corruption can be said to be the root cause, it has continued to foster opportunities and epidemics across all sectors. Hence, institutions, rules, and norms of behaviour are redirected towards personal aggrandisement rather than the public good.⁵⁶ This gross implication of these patterns is bad

⁵² Smith, A., *State Making and Nation Making* in J. Hall (ed.) *States in History*, (United Kingdom: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

⁵³ Lawrence, O.U., *Theoretical Foundations of Nation-Building*, in Olorunfoba, S.O. Falola, T., (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of African Politics, Governance and Development*, (Springer Publication, 2021), p.125

⁵⁴ Okonjo-Iweala N., *Reforming the unreformable: Lessons from Nigeria*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), p.81.

⁵⁵ Soyinka K., *Nigeria: Fighting the corruption scourge*, *Montrose Journal*, 12, 2012 (Winter). <http://www.montroseassociates.biz/article.asp?aid=76>. (Accessed 27 April, 2021).

⁵⁶ Gray, C.W., and Kaufmann D., *Corruption and development*. *Finance and Development*, 35(1), (1998): pp.7–10.

governance which cannot support the path of nation-building. Institutions, which were designed for the regulation of the relationships between citizens and the state, are being used instead for the personal enrichment of public officials (politicians and bureaucrats) and other corrupt private agents (individuals, groups, businesses).

Underdevelopment and increasing economic inequalities in Nigeria's domestic and international relations are a manifestation of corruption. Heidenheimer rightly observed that the effect of corruption on a developing economy is undoubtedly disastrous and negative which in turn affects the process and pace of national development.⁵⁷ Resources and funds designated for public development are siphoned into private pockets. Hence, domestic infrastructures suffer. The increasing bad roads in Nigeria are evidence of contractors who collected government money to purchase luxurious cars and build a mansion or rather to make maximum gains, and eventually make inadequate construction. The reason why public health facilities are lacking in Nigeria's rural areas is the re-direction of funds meant for such purpose into private use. In the oil-rich Niger Delta where the bulk of Nigeria's oil reserves is situated is evidence of what corruption does to a nation. The area remains part of the least developed nationally. It was on such premises that economic analysts have described the economy with terms such as resources curse, petro-naira syndrome and the paradox of plenty. Hence, corruption contributes immensely to increasing underdevelopment.

Apart from the domestic space, despite the contribution of natural resources to foreign earnings, the culture of corruption has affected the utilisation of these funds. The Niger Delta's 13% derivative allocation and the perpetual underdevelopment of the region is a vivid case study. Hence, the government results in 'everyday borrowing' from international financial institutions to sustain the domestic economy. The tragedy of the situation remains that, funds borrowed are still victims of corruption. The same situation applies to the period of the Structural Adjustment Programme. The inability of the government to meet up with the domestic financial and economic demands led to the implementation of SAP programs and conditionalities. However, the poor implementation during the process was evidence of massive corrupt practices that prevailed across all levels and branches of government even in private sectors.

From the international dimension, corruption has affected Nigeria's identity. It was with such premises that the former British Prime Minister, David Cameron described Nigeria as 'fantastically corrupt. Whether such an assumption is true or false, what is certain is that corrupt practice is posing a negative influence on the country's external relations. In addition, corruption has also played a key role in driving foreign investments away, as some foreign companies have refused to set up operations after demands from the officials to pay bribes and do business exclusively with local party officials.⁵⁸ Nigeria thus remains one of the very few countries where production industries were discouraged from

⁵⁷ Heidenheimer, A., Political Corruption: Concepts and Context.

⁵⁸ Osunyanmi, P.O., "Development Implication of Nigeria's Economic Crisis" *Journal of Development Perspective*, 2(1) (2007): pp.34-59.

investing.⁵⁹ Hence, Nigeria's economic performance –domestic and international has been grossly affected.

Corruption affects human welfare. The contraption has contributed to the increased poverty rate in Nigeria and growing economic inequalities. As of 2005, the life expectancy of Nigeria was 46.5% compared to Gabon at 56years, Sao Tome and Principe at 65years, and Ghana at 59 years. In terms of literacy, Nigeria trails behind several African countries without half of the country's natural resources. These human development statistics are evidence of corruption and bad governance. Leaders prioritise patron-client relationships in domestic welfare programs, and most of these programs are delayed to the election period to appease the populace for a vote. Corruption fans the flames of poverty, crime, and by extension, insecurity.⁶⁰ Armed robbery, cultism, terrorism, disease, unemployment, and other factors that lead to insecurity have therefore been directly or indirectly linked to corruption.⁶¹

Conclusions

The paper has examined the inter-related space and process of corruption, anti-corruption, and nation-building in Nigeria. It is important to emphasise that the study of corruption in Nigeria is not new. Works of literature have focused on the political, social, economic, and cultural implications of corrupt practices for a developing country like Nigeria. It is also with such premises that these works have criticised successive Nigerian government efforts at addressing this national menace. This chapter, in contributing to the burgeoning body of knowledge on corruption menace in Nigeria, has x-rayed the origin and causes of corrupt practices in Nigeria, anti-corruption war, and its implication for nation-building or nation-destroying. Hence, the chapter has further joined ranks with similar studies to emphasise that the concept of nation-building is informed by the conscious and focused application of collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space identify as ours. However, there is no gainsaying the fact that corruption, not only defeats such notion but the process to attain such national goals. Hence, there is a need for government at all levels to adopt a multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach targeted at the economic, political, legal, social, moral, and administrative sectors of the state and supported with strong institutions, good governance, and political will.

⁵⁹ Tanzi, V., "Corruption around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope and Cures," IMF Staff Papers 45 (4) (1998).

⁶⁰ Fagbadebo, O., "Corruption, governance and political instability in Nigeria", *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 1(2), (2007): pp.28-37.

⁶¹ Ajodo-Adebanjoko, A., Okorie, N., "Corruption and the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria: political economy implications", *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: F Political Science*, 14(5), (2014): pp.10-16.

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