JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 – ISSN Online: 2992-4618 | Vol. 3, Issue 1, No. 2 / March 2025
https://www.jopd.com.ng

FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND SOUTH AFRICA

By Dr Ibrahim Echu

echuib@gmail.com
CEO, Better Educational Resources,
Nasarawa, Jos North LGA, Plateau State
08033771926

Abstract
This study interrogates the existing administrative and judicial approaches to the fight against official corruption in Africa's two largest economies - Nigeria and South Africa, and proposes a more functional, more pragmatic approach. The study relies on primary and secondary sources for its data, and utilizes Comparison, Ratio, Frequency and Table for data analysis. **Fighting, Corruption**, **National Survival**, and **Growth** and **Development** are the key words used in the paper. The failure of regimes to win the corruption war in the surveyed countries is examined against the backdrop of the contradictions inherent in policy and strategy. The study reveals, for instance, that rather than take practical steps to eradicate corruption, the State actually played a key role in promoting the cankerworm, with the trial of corruption suspects dragging for decades, or corruption suspects being offered political appointments or national honours, especially in Nigeria. It also examines the success factors in South Africa's anti-graft war, especially in the last one and a half years. The study reveals, for instance, that while corruption is now being severely punished in South Africa, the Nigerian case remains hopeless, because the government only pays lip service to fighting corruption. Practical recommendations are offered by the study, towards a total eradication of the corruption pandemic in the surveyed countries.

Keywords: Corruption, Africa, Nigeria, South Africa

INTRODUCTION:

This study has the singular objective of interrogating the causative factors for high levels of official corruption in the largest two economies of Africa – Nigeria and South Africa. It is imperative that issues around the war against corruption in these countries be explored in some dialectical detail, to identify the reasons behind governments' persistent failure to combat corruption, and thereby save the resources required for development. Therein lies the study's significance.

Statement of the Problem

Africa's two largest economies - Nigeria and South Africa - have grappled with corruption since their attainment of independence. Whereas successive leaders in the two countries have on several occasions vowed to stamp out corruption, the pronouncements are largely seen as mere rhetoric, with no significant success in government's anti-graft war. At 46 points, Nigeria ranked 146th among 180 countries of the world in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2019, the 145th in 2023, and the second most corrupt in the West African region.

South Africa's Corruption Perception Index has similarly remained below 50 since 2012, and dropped to its lowest level ever in 2023, at 41 points. https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2023.

Corruption has impacted the social and economic wellbeing of the surveyed countries in the following ways:

- *Less revenue is collected, with a loss to government;*
- *Policies are manipulated or distorted to maximize personal gains;*

Resources are diverted away from social and developmental priorities;

Society becomes unstable, because People become angry, particularly the poor who cannot afford to pay bribes and who get hurt the most;

The rich provoke resentment, through wanting more riches and flaunting their corrupt;

The society becomes unsafe in the process, as bribes protect criminals and facilitate crimes.

Corruption has also systematically weakened the State, damaged key institutions and eroded the social fabric in the surveyed two countries. Constitutional experts acknowledge that corruption is the antithesis of the open, accountable, democratic government required by the Constitution of these countries.

Materials and Methods

Interviews and review of relevant literature are the major tools employed in this study. I consider this approach to be the most reliable and most certifiable sources of data for a study of this nature. Table, Ratio, Comparison, Frequency and Percentage have been employed to analyze the data.

Theoretical Framework

Several factors would make reaching a consensus on the causes of, and solutions to corruption a bit problematic. Writing in the volume 3 edition of IFRA on *Corruption in Military and Civilian Regimes in Nigeria since 1999*, Edger Agubamah (2009), lists some of these factors to include (i) the uniqueness of each society and or country; (ii) the dynamic or changing nature of the socio political and economic interactions within the global community; and (iii) the differences in the perception of corrupt practices by different academic disciplines. Consequently, there have been as many approaches to the study of corruption as the number of opportunity costs of corrupt behavior.

Functionalist/Rational Choice Theories

To date, functionalist and rational choice explanations have been the dominant theoretical approaches to the study of corruption. Both approaches, however, face a number of challenges in explaining corrupt behavior, as we shall see shortly. Angell (1907) posits that functional psychology and behavioural functionalism emerged within psychology in the first half of the 20th century, to explain patterns in human behaviour as the result of response to external stimuli and adaptation to one's environment. In political science, functionalist explanations of corruption appeared in the work of scholars such as Samuel Huntington (1968), who viewed corruption as a way to "grease the wheels" to get things done, especially for investors and companies (Marquette and Pfeiffer 2015; Manzetti and Wilson 2007).

According to this view, corruption is a way of quickly cutting through burdensome regulatory requirements, distributing resources, and generating economic growth. Rooted in methodological individualism, rational choice theory models human behaviour as the result of individual, self-interested preferences. People are calculating and strategic, and they carefully weigh the costs and benefits of certain actions before undertaking them. Moreover, individuals have fixed, well-defined, ranked, and consistent preferences, and they behave instrumentally to achieve those preferences. The ultimate goal for

individuals is to maximize utility: to attain whatever goal makes them happier, more satisfied, or better off, such as power or money.

Second, corruption may (also) be a *principal-agent problem*. This is a function of organizing cooperative behaviour, which often requires delegation of responsibility for tasks both to and within formal institutions and organizations. Principals (i.e. citizens) give power to agents (i.e. bureaucrats) to act on their behalf, for instance to produce public goods like environmental protection or security. Agents are more likely to act in ways that maximize their own interests rather than those of the principal, particularly when information asymmetries exist and the principal cannot fully monitor the agent's behaviour.

Robert Klitgaard's famous formula explaining corruption also adheres to rationalist logic: "Corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability" (Klitgaard 1998, p.4; see also Klitgaard 1988). This is particularly relevant in the public sector, where government authorities (agents) often enjoy high levels of monopoly and discretionary authority over state resources and decision-making functions. As "corruption is a crime of calculation, not passion" (ibid), the ample information advantages enjoyed by government officials as rational actors provide them with opportunities to abuse their entrusted power for private (self-interested) gain. The advocated solution to such a situation is to reduce monopoly powers through transparency measures, broaden authority via participation, and ensure accountability through enforced penalties (sanctions) for bad behaviour. Current anti-corruption measures largely mirror this logic.

Corruption has also been modelled as a different type of collective action problem, the function of prevailing norms. Corruption may be systemic and widespread not because the institutions that constrain unethical behaviour are weak, but rather because of the existence of pro-corruption social norms. In this context, corruption is the expected form of behaviour, the accepted way of doing things that reflects a logic of appropriateness rather than of consequence, akin to accepted forms of greeting or other behaviours in social groups or driving on the right (or left) side of the road.

Rather than being a form of "rule-breaking," corruption is instead a form of rule-following that depends on the behaviour of other players. The likelihood of sanctioning corrupt behaviour is low or non-existent, since there is no normative preference for holding violators to account, even where accountability institutions exist.

My research on this subject suggests, however, that neither the functionalist, institutional nor modernization models seem to fully explain the pervasiveness of corruption in Africa. Functionalist explanations for corruption are generally unsatisfying and raise more questions than they appear to answer, since they often result in tautological arguments. For instance, it is very hard to know *ex-ante* when corruption will or will not be functional or useful; if corruption is functional, why do some people act corruptly while others don't, etc.

It is, therefore, imperative that we look for alternative models which could satisfactorily explain why people in privileged positions in every society indulge in corrupt practices.

Neo-patrimonialism

Neo-patrimonialism, as defined by Clapham, is "a … form of organization in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system

which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines" (It is a system in which an office of power is used for personal uses and gains, as opposed to a strict division of the private and public spheres. Neo-patrimonialism may underlie or supplant the bureaucratic structure of the state in that only those with connections have the real power, not those who hold higher positions.

Origin and Definition

Neopatrimonialism as a distinct term is generally held to have originated with Samuel N. Eisenstadt, in his 1973 book *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neo-patrimonialism*, deriving it from Max Weber's term, 'patrimonialism', who used the term to describe a system of rule based on administrative and military personnel, who were responsible only to the ruler. Neopatrimonialism, which is a modern form of the traditional Patrimonial form of rule, is a mixed system. Here, elements of patrimonial and rational-bureaucratic rule co-exist and are sometimes interwoven.

As noted by Adefulu Razaq in his treatise on Neo Patrimonialism, the Modern African State and Corruption Syndrome (2007), the basic features of neo-patrimonialism include: (i) officials who hold positions in bureaucratic organizations exercise such power not as a form of public service, but see their position rather as a matter of private property relationship with other members of society; (ii) the relationship between officials and their clients or underlings then becomes one of personal subordination, as state officials treat their posts as personal fiefdom, use them to extract bribes or to appoint relatives to lucrative offices, even where the latter are not qualified. (iii) On their part, the subordinates cannot take official decisions without referring them upwards, because to do otherwise would be tantamount to slighting the authority of the boss. (iv) Because this system of social relations breeds subordination, it is often easy for common folks to worship political office holders, even as the latter are daily enriching themselves through corrupt means.

It would thus become difficult to eliminate corruption from the society, since almost everyone looks forward to partaking in the proceeds thereof.

Relevance of Neo-patrimonialism

Being the vertical distribution of resources that give rise to patron-client networks based around a powerful individual or party, neo-patrimonialism was once argued as necessary for unification and development after decolonization (see Nicolas van de Walle, in *Democratic Reform in Africa, 2005).* Though neo-patrimonialism seems like a form of corruption through coercion, it is not regarded as corrupt behavior by most countries where neopatrimonialism is present.

Neo-patrimonialism is not a synonym for corruption, but a distinct form of acquiring legitimacy and of dealing with difficulties in statecraft specific to a continent that is deeply rooted from pre-colonial times. For the weak state institutions left behind from colonial rule to gain legitimacy from the population, state leaders are left to either gain legitimacy through force or by paying off people and giving government positions in exchange for support of the ruling leader. Neopatrimonialism is the latter and was seen by governments attempting to gain legitimacy as a less violent and brutal way to rule, though often unstable.

Van de Walle (2005) also argues that neopatrimonialism is very prevalent in Africa since the departure of colonialism. African regimes are presidential, which facilitates clientelism since power is concentrated in a single individual with ultimate control of networks. As Joel S. Migdal (1998) puts it in his *Strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the Third World,* the state in African countries seems omnipresent in all

aspects of people's lives, from the very local to the central government levels. Van de Walle introduces the notion that in Africa, states are hybrid regimes where patrimonial practices and bureaucracies coexist to a higher or lesser degree. African states have laws and constitutional order and in parallel are ruled by patrimonial logic in which political authority is based on clientelism and office holders constantly appropriate public resources for their own benefit.

Shortcomings of the Model

One of the main issues with neo-patrionialism is that it undermines economic reform in contemporary Africa on multiple levels. Another problem is that neo-patrimonial States in and outside Africa have pursued a wide range of policies including some that are squarely developmental. In other words, other than indicating the style of governance, neo-patrimonialism does not tell us much about what policies a state will pursue and with what success.

Commonality and Difference

Corruption, defined here as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, has increasingly become a global epidemic in the 21st century. For instance, over two-thirds of countries scored below 50 out of 100 in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2023; this strongly indicates that these countries have serious corruption problems.

Nigeria is the 145th least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. The country's position in the global Corruption Perception Index varied during the period 2012 – 2021, with 2021 as the worst ever. South Africa's TI Corruption Perception Index has similarly remained below 50 since 2012, which signifies that corruption is a serious issue in that country, as can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Nigeria & South Africa's Corruption Perception Index 2012 - 2022

NIG	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
	27	25	27	26	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	25
SA	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**2023**
	43	42	44	44	45	43	43	44	44	44	43	41

Source: Transparency International

Although successive regimes in both countries have acknowledged the negative effects of corruption on society, the Nigerian State has relatively paid, and continues to pay lip service to fighting corruption.

The two countries surveyed in this paper are notorious for high profile official corruption. However, the South African State has demonstrated the political will to punish offenders in recent times, while the Nigerian State still pays lip service to fighting corruption. For instance, the trial of corruption cases drags in the courts for decades, and suspects are eventually let off without punishment. It is on record that only a handful of politicians were convicted for corruption in thirty-nine years (1984 to 2023), despite all the noise about fighting corruption. The Table below provides more details in this regard. It also shows that, before one politician is incarcerated for corruption in Nigeria, 8.4 more politicians would have been jailed in South Africa.

The list of Politicians ever convicted for corruption in Nigeria since the country returned to democratic rule does not include any former President. Rather, Ministers and other Appointees who served under the number one citizen, as well as State Governors were the only officials convicted. The list includeDiepreyeAlamiesiegha, James Ibori, Lucky Igbinedion, Umaru Dikko, James Bala Ngilari, Orji Uzo Kalu, Joshua Dariye, Jonah David Jang, Olisa Metuh, and Ike Ekweremadu. The paper will now discuss the conviction and subsequent jail of these politicians in more detail.

Diepreye Alamieyeseigha was detained in London on charges of money laundering in September 2005. At the time of his arrest, Metropolitan police found about £1m in cash in his London home. Later they found a total of £1.8m ($3.2m) in cash and bank accounts. He was found to own four homes in London worth an alleged £10 million. On 26 July 2007, he pleaded guilty before a Nigerian court to six charges and was sentenced to two years in prison on each charge.

On Tuesday 12 June 2018, the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Gudu, Abuja, sentenced a former governor of Plateau State, Joshua Dariye, to 14 years' imprisonment, on charges of criminal breach of trust and misappropriation of funds (1.6 billion naira.Dariye's successor, Jonah Jang, was also charged to court alongside Yusuf Pam, a former Cashier in the Office of the Secretary to the Plateau State Government, for embezzling 6.2 billion naira from the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) and SUBEB funds.

James Ibori, Governor of Delta State from 1999 - 2007, was similarly alleged to have abused his office to get rich and laundered millions in Britain and elsewhere. He was convicted by a British court on July 21, 2017 for money laundering, with assets worth 101.5 million pounds ($130 million) confiscated by the British government.There was also the case of Bala Ngilari, a former governor in Adamawa State, who was arraigned at the Adamawa State High Court sometime in 2016, for allegedly conspiring with the Secretary to the State Government and the Finance Commissioner to award contract for supply of 25 units of Toyota Corolla saloon cars 2015 model to the tune of N167,812,500.00 without following due process.

Furthermore, Kalu Uzor Kalu was convicted by the Lagos Division of the Federal High Court on Thursday, 5 December 2019 and sentenced to 12 years in prison for a N7. 65 billion fraud while he served as governor of Delta State for eight years. He was convicted for defrauding the government of Abia State using his company, Slok Nigeria Limited.In a rather comical case, Lucky Igbinedion, former Governor of Edo State, pleaded guilty to a one count charge of embezzling 2.9 billion naira in December 2008 but asked to pay a paltry sum of $25,750 in fines.He was also invited by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission over alleged criminal diversion of public funds to the tune of 1.6 billion naira, but was never charged to court.

In comparison, a former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, and dozens of other Politicians who served before him were convicted for corruption. They are:
Leon de Beer, Ruth Bhengu, Allan Boesak, Bathabile Dlamini, Beauty Dlulane, Ross Henderson, Rhoda Joemat, Kenny Kunene, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mavis Magazi, Sophie Maine, Nana Mnandi, Garth Mngomezulu, Rubben Mohlaloga, Craig Morkel, Mildred John Ncinane, Robert Charles Redcliffe, Rodney Rhoda, EschelRhoodie, Jackie Selebi, Alice Sigcawu, Bangilizwe Solo, Jabu Sosibo, TsekoTaabe, Barbara Thomson, Abe Williams and Tony Yengeni. Interestingly, a good number of the convicted individuals were members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC). For example, 16 out of the convicted twenty-seven Politicians were members of the ruling ANC who pleaded guilty to

charges of defrauding the Parliament in what became known as the Travelgate Scandal.This is unlike Nigeria where corruption charges are often slammed on only the opposition.

Jacob Zuma's Conviction

While Nigeria and South Africa are still among the most corrupt countries on the black continent, the latter appears to have demonstrated greater commitment in the fight against theft of public funds, especially in recent times. Perhaps the most dramatic corruption trial in Africa's recent history is the former president's corruption trial. Jacob Zuma was indicted for Arms Deals in June 2005, and later charged with two counts of corruption, one count each for racketeering and money laundering, and twelve counts for fraud, all arising from his receipt of 783 bribe payments from businessman Schabir Shaik and a French Arms Company, Thales.

In the aftermath of the judgement, President Thabo Mbeki fired Zuma as deputy president, and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) instituted formal corruption charges against him. However, the charges were struck off the court roll in September 2006 because the NPA was not ready to proceed with the trial.

On 16 March 2018, just over a month after Zuma resigned as president, the NPA announced that Zuma would again face prosecution. His first court appearance was on 6 April 2018 in the Durban Magistrates' Court, but the trial was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and by what commentators dubbed Zuma's Stalingrad defence. In the interim, in a separate legal matter, he was imprisoned for contempt of court.

The Table below shows the ratio of Politicians convicted for corruption in Nigeria and South Africa in the last forty years.

Table 2: Ratio of Politicians jailed in Nigeria and South Africa (1999 - 2023)

Country	Nigeria	South Africa
Total Number Jailed	8	28
Ruling Party Members	None	16
Members of the Opposition	8	12

Source: Findings from the Study

Corruption is Rewarded in Nigeria, Not Punished

History shows that the short-lived General Murtala Muhammed regime initiated many nationalist projects. These projects were completed by General Obasanjo, Muhammed's successor; however, these projects became conduit pipes to distribute favors among Obasanjo's cronies, or to enrich highly connected politicians. For instance, Obasanjo's *Operation Feed the Nation Program*, and the *Associated Land Grab* under the Land Use Decree were largely used to reward loyalists of the regime. Obasanjo's famous Otta Farm Nigeria (OFN) was alleged to have been borne out of this scandal.

Shagari's modest regime of 1979 – 83 was not spared of corruption charges either, as a number of federal buildings mysteriously caught fire during the period, after investigators started to probe the finances of officials working in these buildings. In late 1985, investigations into the collapse of the defunct Johnson Mathey Bank of London shed light on some of the abuses perpetrated during the second republic. The bank allegedly acted as a conduit to transfer hard currency for some party members in Nigeria. A few leading officials

and politicians allegedly amassed large amounts of money, which they sought to transfer out of the country with the help of Asian importers, through the issuance of import licenses.

Shagari's regime was toppled by Buhari in 1983, with the latter leader accusing the former of large-scale official corruption. Ironically, 53 suitcases were ferried through the Murtala Muhammed Airport by soldiers working under General Buhari's aide-de-camp, Mustapha Jokolo. Atiku was at that time the Area Comptroller of Customs in charge of the Murtala Muhammed Airport".

It can be said that corruption was institutionalized by General Ibrahim Babangida. His administration failed, for instance, to give account of the Gulf War windfall, estimated at $12.4 billion. He routinely disbursed vehicles and cash gifts to people to earn loyalty, and the discipline of the military force was eroded.

Like Obasanjo, Babangida used various government privatization initiatives to reward friends and cronies. which allegedly gave rise to the class of *nouveau riche* in Nigeria. From banking to oil, and to import licenses, Babangida allegedly used these favors to raise cash for himself and his family, and is regarded as one of the richest ex-rulers of Nigeria. The ex-ruler has significant investments in Globacom, one of the largest telecom operators in Nigeria.

The year 2000 saw the greatest revelation about the global nature of graft. French investigations of bribes paid to officials in Sani Abacha's government to ease the award of a Gas Plant construction in Nigeria led to the freezing of accounts containing about $100 million United States dollars.

Two years after Abacha's death in 2002, a Swiss banking commission report indicted Swiss banks for failing to follow the compliance process when they allowed Abacha's family and friends access to his accounts, and to deposit amounts totaling $600 million US dollars into these accounts. The same year, more than $1 billion US dollars was found in various accounts throughout Europe.

Although General Abdusalami Abubakar's regime was short-lived, it has been recorded as one of the most corrupt in Nigeria's history. Suspicions remain about huge amounts of wealth acquired by him and his inner circle in such a short period. Abubakar's regime was implicated in the Halliburton Scandal, and this might have financed the opulence he enjoys today in an exquisite mansion adjacent General Babangida's residence in Minna.

Similarly, various corruption scandals allegedly broke out under Obasanjo's civilian presidency, including the one in which his Vice, Atiku Abubakar, was caught in cahoots with a US Congressman stashing cash in freezers. There were also the KBR and Siemens Bribery scandals which were investigated by the FBI. According to reports, a Japanese Construction Firm, Marubeni Corporation, agreed to pay a $54.6 million criminal penalty for allegedly bribing officials of the Nigerian government to facilitate the award of a $6 billion liquefied natural gas contract in Bonny to a multinational consortium, TSKJ. They allegedly paid bribes to Nigerian government officials between 1995 and 2004.

President Yar'adua was accused of frustrating the corruption-related trials of his friends - James Ibori, Lucky Igbinnedion, and Peter Odili - who previously served as Governor in their respective States. Through Yar'adua's influence, the then Attorney General of the Federation, Michael Aondakaa, could not obtain a conviction for these corruption suspects, even as the UK and other foreign courts successfully tried and convicted Nigeria's corrupt Governors who had served under Obasanjo's government. In addition, leaked diplomatic cables revealed that some Supreme Court Justices were bribed to legitimize the corrupt elections that saw Yar'adua's emergence as President.

Like Babangida before him, President Jonathan's regime was characterized by high profile corruption. Let us take a look at one epic example: Nigeria's then Central Bank Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi reportedly informed Jonathan in late 2013 that the nation's main oil company, NNPC, had failed to remit US$20 billion in oil revenues owed to the State. Jonathan, however, dismissed the claim and sacked Sanusi for allegedly "mismanaging the central bank's budget".
After the conclusion of the NNPC's account audit by the Senate, it was announced in January 2015 that NNPC's non-remitted revenue "is actually US$1.48 billion, which it needed to refund to the government". Upon the release of both the PwC and Deloitte report by the government on the eve of its exit, it was determined that truly, close to $20 billion was either missing, or misappropriated, or spent without appropriation.

Goodluck Jonathan's regime was also linked to several other scandals, including the 255 million naira BMW purchase by his Aviation Minister, as well as award of Security Contracts to Militants in the Niger Delta. Extensive kickbacks were also observed in the Ministry of Petroleum, in addition to the Malabu Oil International and other scandals too numerous to be listed here.
Series of scandals were also revealed in the wake of Buhari's civil rule. The Nigerian Senate's *ad hoc* Committee on the "mounting humanitarian crisis in the North East" indicted the then Secretary to the Buhari regime, Mr. Babachir Lawal, in a N200 million contract scandal. This was linked to the clearing of "invasive plant species" in Yobe State by Lawal's own company, Rholavision Nigeria Limited.

In the same year, Buhari was reportedly presented with evidence that his Chief of Staff, Abba Kyari, took a N500 million bribe from MTN to help the company slash the $5 billion dollar fine slammed against it for violation of Nigeria telecommunications regulations bothering on national security. MTN fired the staff involved in the scandal, but Abba Kyari remained in his position as Chief of Staff, despite public outrage. Even when Kyari was later probed by Buhari, the findings were not made public.

Abdulrasheed Maina was yet another sad case. He served as Head of the Task Force on Pension Reforms during the Goodluck Jonathan-led administration, but fled Nigeria in 2015 after claims that he had embezzled two billion naira ($5.6 million, 4.8 million euros).Despite the fact that an Interpol arrest warrant was issued, he managed to return to Nigeria and enjoyed protection from the Buhari regime.

It is instructive to note that many of the politicians who worked hard for the re-election of Muhammadu Buhari had corruption cases hanging on their necks. A Punch Newspaper report on 1st September 2018 revealed, for instance, that "eight politicians with N232bn corruption cases are working for Buhari's re-election". One of such politicians is Abdullahi Adamu, who served as Governor in Nasarawa State from 1999 – 2007, and was alleged to have stolen 15 billion naira from the State. Adamu was appointed a member of the National Advisory Committee for the Buhari 2019 Presidential Support Committee after his defection to the APC, and later elected Chairman of the new Party.

It is imperative, at this juncture, to ask the following questions. 1. Why has it become very easy to divert or steal public funds in Nigeria? 2. Why is it that holders of public office no longer think of rendering service? 3. Can Nigeria ever become great in a situation where serving the common good is often sacrificed on the alters of self-aggrandizement? 4. What indeed is the solution to the problem of corruption in Nigeria? Answers to these questions have been provided in a recent Focus Group interaction between the author and Anti-

Corruption officials in two Federal HRD Agencies in Jos. Echu's 2024 study on *The Impact of Corruption on Public Service Deliveryin Nigeria* is quite revealing. It shows how official corruption has systematically denied citizens basic services such as education, health, road networks, food and social security. Respondents in the interview sessions preferred to remain anonymous for security reasons. Below is a summary of their responses.

1. The incidence of corruption is on the rise in Nigeria due mainly to the non-enforcement of extant anti-graft laws;
2. Public officials in Nigeria enrich themselves at all cost because the entire society itself is corrupt, and respects only individuals who have money;
3. Patriotism is not on the agenda of a great majority of politicians, so they do as their individual or collective greed dictates. Respondents also expressed concerns about the actions of some top executives who interfere in their anti-graft work;
4. The only way to stop corruption in Nigeria is to strengthen anti-graft agencies, and to strictly enforce the relevant laws.

Findings and Lessons from the Study

We have seen from the foregoing that, rather than take practical steps to eradicate corruption, the State (especially in Nigeria) has actually played a key role in promoting the cankerworm. Hence, the trial of corruption suspects has dragged for decades, and the accused are either forgiven and the case closed forever, or are jailed for only a few months and let off. This is a far cry from the exemplary experience of the Southern African country, as discussed above.

No President of Nigeria that I know of, either alive or dead, has been convicted or jailed by the judiciary till date, despite the massive looting of the national treasury under their watch, as the study has demonstrated. As reported in this paper, Nigeria lost N21. 63 trillion to looters between 1999 and 2011, and $47.4 billion between 2011 and 2015. Obasanjo, Yar'adua and Jonathan respectively served as President for those 15 years of unbridled theft of public funds.

This study shows that, a considerable number of elites who held important positions of power in Nigeria have abused their offices by indulging in corrupt practices. Besides, the reward for official corruption, especially in Nigeria, has been so enticing that it is often hard to resist the associated temptation. Also, merely imprisoning convicted suspects has proved to be insufficient as deterrent for indulging in corrupt practices, as the crime is on the increase in the surveyed countries, but more especially in Nigeria. The specific lessons taught by this study are listed below:

1. Rather than take practical steps to eradicate corruption, the State (especially in Nigeria) has actually played a key role in promoting the cankerworm. Hence, the trial of corruption suspects drags for decades, while the accused are either forgiven and the case closed forever.
2. Whereas the government of Nelson Mandela could jail the President's wife for corruption, Nigerian presidents have consistently protected corruption suspects from the wrath of the law, as exemplified by Musa Yar'adua, Goodluck Jonathan, Olusegun Obasanjo, and Muhammadu Buhari.
3. Public officials (including members of the Ruling Party) and other persons who indulge in fraud are punished in South Africa irrespective of their rank, or the political party they belong to. Thus, Jacob Zuma was convicted for corruption and contempt of court, and subsequently jailed. On the contrary, no President of Nigeria has been convicted or jailed by the judiciary till date.
4. No member of the business community has ever been jailed for corruption in Nigeria.
5. Unlike the Nigerian State, South Africa is steadily moving closer to winning the war against corruption, with its judiciary having convicted one thousand, three hundred

corruption suspects in a period of four years. Comparatively, only nine politicians convicted for corruption-related offences in Nigeria during a 29-year period (1983 - 2022).

Recommendations and Conclusion

The survival of Nigeria and South Africa will continue to be at stake for a long time to come, due to the pervasiveness of official corruption. I, therefore, offer the following practical recommendations for ending massive stealing of public funds in both countries.

1. The punishment for high profile financial crimes should be a minimum of 20 years' imprisonment with hard labour, and without option of fine. Offenders should also be banned from holding public office for life. Convicted officials and their collaborators in the business community should be ostracized by the whole society, such that no church or mosque would accept donations from these criminals.
2. Similarly, citizens who are caught paying bribe to public officials should be severely punished by local courts of competent jurisdiction. They should also be discouraged from worshipping persons who are alleged to have looted the treasury at one time or the other.
3. Anti-corruption institutions should be strengthened to be more effective in the fight against corruption. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from South Africa, with regard to establishment of the National Prosecuting Agency, Anti-corruption Tribunals, Anti-corruption Task Team and the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council.
4. The so-called *Immunity Clause* in Nigeria's Constitution, which seeks to protect a sitting President, Governor or Law Maker from being prosecuted, should be removed, since it encourages people to steal as much as they can while in public office.
5. The judicial process should be fast tracked such that there are no delays in the trial of people suspected of grand looting. All the pending cases of corruption should, therefore, be concluded within three months.
6. Anti-corruption programmes should be incorporated in the curriculum of universities in the surveyed countries. These programmes should be mandatory courses of study, since politicians who eventually become leaders in their countries are graduates of these institutions.
7. It is also recommended that the Nigerian government takes urgent steps to reduce the cost of governance, especially in regard to the law making arm of government where each of the 109 members of the upper Legislative House is currently paid the sum of N250, 000,000.00 per annum.

References

Alabi S A (2021), "Inside Ibrahim Babangida's Famous Hilltop Mansion (Photos)," August, Retrieved 2 August 2022.

Alfaro, Jairo and Mordt, Matilde (1988), The Robert Klitgaard Anti-corruption Formula.

Angell (1907), *Historical Institutionalism, Critical Junctures and the Divergent*, see https://academic.oup.com

Clapham, Christopher (2009), Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival.

Countrystudies.us. (2021) "Nigeria - The Muhammad and Obasanjo Government". Retrieved 2021-05-17.

Daily Maverick (2020), "Open Secrets - Jacob Zuma – Comrade in Arms". Retrieved 23 December 2021.

Echu, I. (2024) Summary of responses received during Focus Group Interviews in a study on *Impact of Corruption On Public Service Delivery in Nigeria.* Findings from the study werepresented at Covenant University' First International Conference on Leadership and Development, held on 12th September, 2024.

Federal Government of Nigeria (2017) "Why we re-instated fugitive ex-Pension Chief Maina - Premium Times Nigeria". Retrieved 2020-05-09.

Human and Environmental Development Agenda Resource Center (2022), *A Compendium of 100 High Profile Corruption Cases in Nigeria*, p. 47.

Huntington, S. (1968), The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Johnson O. (2016), "N500m MTN Bribery Allegation: Presidency orders probe of Abba Kyari". Vanguard News. Retrieved 2020-05-09.

Jonah, Kindness Innocent (2016) "Oil Bloc in Nigeria: Obasanjo, IBB, Atiku Abubakar, T.Y. Danjuma, David Mark, Dangote, and Adenuga are Syndicates of Corruption". Retrieved 2 July 2016.

Juan de Onis, (1981) "Rice Shortage in Nigeria Brings Charges of Corruption", The New York Times, January 18.

Leon Dash, (1983) Mysterious Fires Plague Nigerian Investigations, The Washington Post, February 27.

Manzetti and Wilson (2007), Why Do Corrupt Governments Maintain Public Support?

News24 (2008) "Full Zuma Judgment". 13th September. Archived from the original on 14 September 2008.

Nigerian Bulletin (2015) "NNPC Audit: No Missing $20 Billion". Retrieved 8 February 2015.

Sahara Reporters (2016) "Buhari Presented with Evidence His Chief Of Staff Took N500m To Help MTN Reduce Fine". Retrieved 2020-05-09.

The Globe and Mail (1985), "British Banks Linked to Import Swindles", December

THISDAY LIVE (2015) "Leaked Files Link Abdulsalami Abubakar, Chris Garba to $182m Halliburton Bribery Scandal, Archived from the original on 2015-05-12.

Vanguard News (2011) Tim Cocks and Joe Brock (6 February 2015). "Special Report: Anatomy of Nigeria's $20 billion "leak". Reuters. Retrieved 6 February 2015.

Vanguard News (2011) "Yar'Adua Knew Aondoakaa Was Corrupt But Could Not Sack Him – Wikileaks. Retrieved 2 July 2016.

Wikipedia.com, (2024) Politicians Convicted for Fraud in South Africa, retrieved 2024-1-27

Wikipedia.com, (2024), Politicians convicted in Nigeria, Retrieved 2024-1-

www.efcc.gov.ng (2024), Ngilari bags 5 years jail for procurement fraud. Retrieved December 5, 2024.