



## NIGERIAN MILITARY NARRATIVES AND PERFORMANCE ON CORRUPTION CONTROL (1966-1999): IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The thrust of this paper is to interrogate corruption in Nigerian military coup speeches and to evaluate their actual contribution to corruption control from 1966-1999. The study was anchored on correspondence theory of truth and employed content analysis and historical (output) analysis methods. The data were collected from the six coup speeches using coding sheet and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic/historical (output) analysis. The study found that Nigerian military leaders set relatively minimal agenda on corruption in their coup speeches and emphasized the depth of corruption in Nigeria; explained the negative impact of corruption; and promised to eliminate corruption. Rhetoric and performance evaluation analysis result also suggests that Nigerian Military leaders instituted relatively sufficient outputs to curb corruption within the period, even though corruption grew all through the military regimes. The paper concludes that there was hardly satisfactory corresponding practical evidence in corruption reduction among Nigerian military leaders within the period thereby undermining the nation's development and interest. To this end, the paper recommends that the military should be kept out of the nation's politics if the country must significantly reduce corruption to pave way for the nation's development.

**Keywords:** Corruption control, Correspondence Theory of Truth, Military performance, Military narratives, National development.

### Introduction

Soldiers are particularly skilled to fight and die (if necessary) for the country. They are to shield her from external aggression, protect her territorial integrity and are expected to do all these among others professionally by following the parameters laid down by the law of the land.

To this end, soldiers are always kept out of governance and are well equipped to carry out their constitutional responsibilities especially in sane climes. However, the situation has been different in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular. In Nigeria for instance, the army had strayed and stayed in national governance for a period of 29 years out of about 60 years of the nation's independence (1960-2020).

Barely few years into independence, Nigeria was faced with leadership crisis which degenerated into the first bloody military coup in 1966 that not only brought to an end, the first republic but also open the door for military interference in the nation's politics. Between 1966 and 1999 when the nation transited into a democratic civilian government that permits a civilian President to preside over the affairs of the country for four years of two terms therefore, the country had experienced six successful coup d'état (January, 1966; July, 1966, July, 1975; December, 1983; August, 1985; and August, 1993) and three unsuccessful ones (1976, 1985 and 1990). Scholarship suggests that the

military had intermittently interfered in the nation's body polity because of alleged "ineptitude, maladministration and corruption on the part of the leadership" (Abaya, 2008, p. 29-30).

In view of these, all the successful coups came with a coup speech, "an address prepared by coup plotters and read by their representative usually over the radio and on television to announce a change in government" (Akanbi, 1999, p. 1); and "to explain to the Nigerian populace why they had to take over the reins of governance" (Abaya, 2008, p. 30); as well as the need to support the new government. But does anyone care to examine those speeches in details especially as they relate to corruption which seems to have been one of the major banes to national development and interest?

According to Uji (2015, p.9), corruption '...is asking, giving or taking a free gift or favour in exchange for the performance of a legitimate task; the pervasion or obstruction of the performance of such a task or the performance of an illegal and illegitimate task, hoarding, collusion, price fixing, election rigging, abuse and or misuse of office'.

The World Bank and Transparency International (TI), a leading global anti-corruption watchdog, also earlier defined corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains and for the benefit of the holder of the office or some third party (as cited in Awojobi, 2014, p.153). Unfortunately, Nigeria has been repeatedly grouped by both national and international bodies as one of the most corrupt countries in the world and the status seems to have been consistent since independence under different shades of government (Onoja, 2019).

However, available literature suggests that in a clime where corruption is rife, national development and interest are often undermined (see; Agbibo, 2012; Awojobi, 2014; Bebenimibo, 2019; Dele, 2021; Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2017; Nagari et al. 2013; Ogbonnaya, 2018; Okoye, 2016; Onoja, 2019; PWC, 2016; Spyromitros & Panagiotidis, 2022; Uji, 2015). This, in addition to the public persistent outcry against corruption could explain why corruption control has often featured in Nigerian political and military rhetorics over the years. The thrust of this paper therefore is to:

1. Ascertain military leaders' narratives on corruption as contained in their coup speeches; and
2. Their level of performance on corruption control from 1966 to 1999.

The a priori expectation of this paper is that the military output on corruption control within the period in question should correspond with their narratives and or discourse on corruption in their coup speeches as stipulated in the Correspondence Theory of Truth.

### **Correspondence Theory of Truth**

Correspondence Theory of Truth is one of the ancient philosophical theories of truth that was formed around intuitive appeal and promoted by ancient philosophers like Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato. The basic assumption of the theory is that a statement or proposition can be said to be true if and only if (iff) it corresponds with independent facts (Dunwoody, 2009).

According to Aristotle as cited in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015), "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." Suffice to say that similar submission on truth can also be found in Plato (Onoja, 2019).

*The appropriateness of the Correspondence Theory of Truth to this paper lies in the fact that the theory offers valid argument as to the truthfulness or falsity of military leaders' discourse or narratives on corruption in relation to independent reality on corruption prevalence within the period in question.*

### **Corruption and National Development: Evidence from Nigeria**

The word corruption has received so many varying definitions as it has received different usages in different contexts and climes. Uji (2015) shares similar view when he says: “Corruption is an ethical and moral problem not subject to a consistent theoretical construct, because it varies from place to place, time to time, culture to culture and with the level of development in given country” (p.9).

However, the most prominent definitions share a common emphasis on the abuse of public power or position for personal advantage (Ogbeidi, 2012, p.5). In the layman’s language, corruption could mean using one’s position to collect bribe from someone who is in need of assistance such as seeking for admission into a higher institution or seeking for an employment in an establishment (Awojobi, 2014).

However, corruption goes beyond this to include other variables. For instance, the World Bank and Transparency International (TI), a leading global anti-corruption watchdog, define corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains and for the benefit of the holder of the office or some third party. To abuse public office according to TI as cited in Awojobi (2014) means:

... when official accepts, edicts or extorts a bribe. It is also abused when private agents actively offer bribes to circumvent public policies and processes for competitive advantage and profit. Public office can also be abused for the personal benefits even if no bribery occurs through patronage and nepotism, the thief of state assets or the diversion of state revenue (p.153).

Available research evidence showed that between 1960 to 2016, about US\$400 billion has been siphoned by corrupt Nigerian government officials (Okoye, 2016). However, Uji (2015) opines that corruption has a crowding effect on the growth and development of the country; its contributing effects on poverty and poor infrastructural development could be so worrisome.

Fabayo et al. (2011) as cited in Awojobi (2014, p. 142) take a critical look at the impact of corruption on investment in Nigeria using the Ordinary Least Square modus operandi and the Transparency International (TI) corruption index between 1996 to 2010.

In their analysis, they revealed that Nigeria is always at the bottom of (IT) rankings which indicated that the increased high-level of corruption in Nigeria leads to lower investment drive and slippery economic growth. In a similar study, Oji (2024) evaluates the effects of corruption on Nigeria's national development. The empirical results of the study after using some economic variables established that ‘the most devastating challenge that has threatened economic growth and sustainable development in Nigeria is corruption’ (p. 148).

He concluded that despite its global prevalence, corruption is fundamentally detrimental to development in all respects. Further to this, other African scholars in the horizon such as (Nageri et al. 2013; Agbibo, 2012; PWC, 2016) are also of the view that corruption is the bane of African development. According to PWC (2016), which is a member firm of PricewaterhouseCoopers International Limited, Nigeria’s GDP could have been 22%, 18% and 36% higher in 2014 if it had reduced corruption to Ghana’s, Colombia’s and Malaysia’s levels respectively.

In the same way, Nigeria’s 2030 GDP can be 22%, 19% and 37% higher if it reduces corruption to Ghana’s, Colombia’s, and Malaysia’s levels (p. 14-16). Little wonder why corruption has been resonating in different military coup rhetorics in Nigerian since 1960 when the nation got her independence. This therefore calls for the interrogation of military narratives on corruption and their actual performance on corruption.

## Methodology

This paper employed both content analysis and historical analysis. Because the study addresses multiple qualitative and quantitative elements of military narratives and national development and interest, the research methods were selected to complement each other, and to allow for triangulation, which ‘reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question... [It is] a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 8).

The content analysis was designed to enable the researchers ascertain the frequency, nature and direction of military leaders’ narratives on corruption in the selected coup speeches as well as differences in the attention given to corruption related issues by the selected military administrations in Nigerian political history.

The historical analysis was also considered appropriate in this study considering the fact that the study is a reflection on the Nigeria corruption profile and control under the 29 years of military rule (1966 to 1999). As such, the researcher relied on historical documents, incidents/happenings and facts for the understanding of military outputs (decrees, policies, budgetary provisions, etc that were aimed at curtailing corruption) in relation to their narratives on corruption within the study period.

The population of the study is the six (6) successful coup speeches delivered by the military leaders within the study period. As such, this paper is a census of the six speeches that fell under the categories of coup speeches. The selected coup speeches are the ones delivered in January, 1966; July, 1966, July, 1975; January, 1984; August, 1985; and November, 1993.

The instrument for data collection is the coding sheet. The coding was done by the three researchers and the instrument was subjected to inter-coder reliability test using the coefficient of reliability. The result (0.82, that is 82% reliability) suggests a high level of reliability and as such was upheld.

The quantitative content analysis data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics like the simple frequency and percentages. However, the researchers used thematic and historical (output) analysis for the qualitative content analysis data.

## Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The data analyzed in this paper were quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage table) while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic/historical (output) analysis as seen below.

### Quantitative Content Analysis Data Presentation and Discussion

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Corruption among the Words found in the Coup Speeches**

Coup Speeches	Corruption Words	Total No. of Words	Percentage
January 1966 Coup Speech	2	864	25
August 1966 Coup Speech	0	1,132	0
July 1975 Coup Speech	0	1,132	0
January 1984 Coup Speech	5	1,130	62

August 1985 Coup Speech	1	1,887	13
August 1993 Coup Speech	0	884	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7,299</b>	<b>0.1</b>

As seen in table 1, the word ‘corruption’ appeared only 8 times (0.1%) out of 7,229 words used in the January, 1966; July, 1966, July, 1975; January, 1984; August, 1985; and August, 1993 coup speeches in Nigeria evaluated in this study. This indicates low agenda setting on corruption among Nigerian military leaders.

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Corruption Related Sentences**

Coup Speeches	Corruption Related	Total Sentences	Percentage
January 1966 Coup Speech	8	30	26.7
August 1966 Coup Speech	2	45	4.4
July 1975 Coup Speech	7	48	14.5
January 1984 Coup Speech	20	56	35.7
August 1985 Coup Speech	8	95	8.4
August 1993 Coup Speech	2	55	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>14.2</b>

Table 2 suggests that out of the 329 sentences found in the six selected coup speeches, only 47 (14.2%) were corruption related. However, January 1984 coup speech has the highest number of corruption related sentences (42.5%) while August 1966 and November 1993 coup speeches have the least (4.3% each). This further underscores the fact that Nigerian Military leader did not set sufficient agenda on corruption in their coup speeches.

**Table 3: Frequency Distribution of the Direction of Coup Speeches on Corruption**

Coup Speeches	Blames	Consequences	Depth	Intentions	Total	Percentage
January 1966 Coup Speech	0	0	0	8	8	17
August 1966 Coup Speech	0	0	0	2	2	4.3
July 1975 Coup Speech	3	2	0	2	7	14.9
January 1984 Coup Speech	2	4	8	6	20	42
August 1985 Coup Speech	4	0	0	4	8	17

August 1993 Coup Speech	0	0	0	2	2	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 3 represent the data generated on the frequency of the direction of the coup speeches on corruption and shows that majority of the 47 corruption related sentences (24, that is 51%) expressed the military leaders' intension or commitment to fight corruption; 19.2% (9) of the sentences blamed the past leaders for the spate of corruption in the country; 17% (8) merely described the depth of corruption in Nigeria; and 12.8% (6) of the sentences simply explained the consequences of corruption on the nation's wellbeing.

### Thematic Analysis of Corruption Related Sentences (Qualitative Data)

As seen in table 3 above, four major themes emerged from the analysis of the selected coup speeches. These include blame, consequence, depth of corruption, and intension or solution. Below is the detail discussion on each of the major themes.

#### *Blames*

Blames is one of the themes found in the July 1975, January, 1984 and August 1985 coup speeches as earlier stated. The blames came in two forms: those blaming past leadership/government for the depth of corruption in the country and those that blamed corruption for the spate of underdevelopment in the country.

#### *Bad Leadership/Governance as Promoter of Corruption*

There were many instances where Nigerian past military leaders blamed the predecessors for the rate of corruption in the country and thereby used that as one of the main reasons for the coup d'état. For instance, the July 1975 coup speech opined that the previous government of General Yakubu Jack Gowon that ought to be a corrective leadership was "either by design or default, had become too insensitive to the true feelings and yearnings of the people" so much so that "After the civil war, the affairs of state, hitherto a collective responsibility became characterized by lack of consultation, indecision, indiscipline and even neglect".

In the same vein, the January 1984 coup speech of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari which berated the electoral irregularities and abuse of constitution, and mismanagement of funds avers that "the situation could have been avoided if the legislators were alive to their constitutional responsibilities; instead, the legislators were preoccupied with determining their salary scales, fringe benefit and unnecessary foreign travels,... which took no account of the state of the economy and the welfare of the people they represented". Major-General Buhari further noted that "the corrupt, inept and insensitive leadership in the last four years has been the source of immorality and impropriety in our society".

Similar thread of blame also ran through the August 1985 coup speech. For instance, President Ibrahim Babangida noted in the coup speech that "the history of our nation had never recorded the degree of indiscipline and corruption as in the period between October 1979 and December 1983. While this government recognises the bitterness created by the irresponsible excesses of the politicians, we consider it unfortunate that methods of such nature as to cause more bitterness were applied to deal with past misdeeds".

### ***Corruption as the Bane of Development and Growth in Nigeria***

In other instance, the theme of blame came in the form of attributing the nation's underdevelopment on the spate of corruption in the country; another justification for the military intervention in the nation's politics. However, this subtheme can only be explicitly found in the January 1984 coup speech. According to the speech, "corruption and indiscipline have been associated with our state of under-development... the source of immorality and impropriety in our society" adding that "as a result of our inability to cultivate financial discipline and prudent management of the economy, we have come to depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic pressure and soaring external debts, thus aggravating the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources".

### ***Consequences***

Another theme that emerged from the military rhetoric on corruption is the consequences of corruption. The coup speeches highlighted the consequences of corruption on the wellbeing of the country and her people in general. For instance, in his coup speech, Brigadier Murtala cancelled the 1973 census which the nation spent so much money to execute because it was rendered invalid as a result of corruption.

According to him, it was "now clear that whatever results are announced will not command general acceptance throughout the country". The consequence of corruption was also established in the January 1984 coup speech by Major-General Muhammadu Buhari when he opines that "while corruption and indiscipline have been associated with our state of under-development, these two evils in our body politic have attained unprecedented height in the past few years."

According to him, "in the case of Nigeria" the consequence of corruption "was aggravated by mismanagement". To this end, the country "depend largely on internal and external borrowing to execute government projects with attendant domestic pressure and soaring external debts, thus aggravating the propensity of the outgoing civilian administration to mismanage our financial resources".

### ***Depth/Dimension of Corruption in Nigeria***

Going through the coup speeches one could also see instances where the military leaders merely described the extent and dimension of corruption in the country. For instance, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari noted in his January 1984 coup speech that "corruption has become so pervasive and intractable that a whole ministry has been created to stem it." He also noted that the election preceding his coup was anything but free and fair to the extent that "the only political parties that could complain of election rigging are those parties that lacked the resources to rig," an "ample evidence that rigging and thuggery were relative to the resources available to the parties".

He further pointed out that "Arson has been used to cover up fraudulent acts in public institutions... the fire incidents that gutted the P&T buildings in Lagos, the Anambra State Broadcasting Corporation, the Republic Building at Marina, the Federal Ministry of Education, the Federal Capital Development Authority Accounts at Abuja and the NET Building" which according to him "occurred at a time when Nigerians were being apprehensive of the frequency of fraud scandals and the government incapacity to deal with them".

### ***Intension/Solution***

In 5 out of the 6 coup speeches studied, there were explicit and implicit promises to curb the menace of corruption in the country. This was always done to present the incoming military leader as the solution to the increasing rate of corruption in the country. Starting with the first military coup and the coup

speech in January 1966, Major Nzeogwu explained that the aim of the coup was “to establish a strong united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife”.

Major Nzeogwu promised to do a lot to integrate the country, ensure supreme justice, promote general security, and to recover stolen property to a point that none will be ashamed to be called a Nigerian anymore. To this end, Major Nzeogwu went on to decree that “looting, arson, homosexuality, rape, embezzlement, bribery or corruption, obstruction of the revolution, sabotage, subversion, false alarms and assistance to foreign invaders, are all offences punishable by death sentence”.

However, Major Nzeogwu’s administration was truncated by a counter coup in July the same year and brought in General Yakubu Gowon who shared similar view on corruption. According to General Gowon as seen in his July 1966 counter- coup speech, “any act of looting or sabotage will be dealt with severely”. But after 9 years in office, General Gowon seemed not to have won the battle against corruption which could have prompted another coup in 1975 which brought General Murtala Muhammed into power in July, 1975. In his coup speech, General Murtala also declared that his military government “will not tolerate indiscipline... will not condone abuse of office”.

Similar commitment was also expressed in Major-General Muhammadu Buhari’s coup speech in January, 1984. According to him, his “government will not tolerate kick-backs, inflation of contracts and over-invoicing of imports etc; nor will it condone forgery, fraud, embezzlement, misuse and abuse of office and illegal dealings in foreign exchange and smuggling”. Major-General Buhari further declared that “Corrupt officials and their agents will be brought to book” and therefore expressed his wish that “all Nigerians, including those who participated directly or indirectly in bringing the nation to this present predicament, to cooperate” with him as “We shall remain here and salvage it together”.

However, in the August 1985 coup speech, Major-General Ibrahim Babangida rejected Major-General Buhari’s approach to corruption control noting that ‘While this government recognises the bitterness created by the irresponsible excesses of the politicians, we consider it unfortunate that methods of such nature as to cause more bitterness were applied to deal with past misdeeds’ and promised to look into the issue of corruption detainees with the view to make sure the innocent did not suffer for the crime they did not commit.

Major-General Babangida however pledged that “the War against Indiscipline will continue, but this time, in the minds and conduct of Nigerians, and not by way of symbolism or money-spending campaigns. This government, on its part, will ensure that the leadership exhibits proper example”. Similarly, General Sanni Abacha was not silence in voicing his intention to curb corruption as seen in his November 1993 coup speech where he noted that “We will not condone nor tolerate any act of indiscipline”.

### **Historical (Output) Analysis of Military Performance on Corruption Control in Nigeria (1966-1999) (Qualitative Data)**

It is clear from the thematic analysis of coup speeches in Nigeria that Nigerian military government often voice their dislike for corruption and expressed their commitment to fight same perhaps, due to the dire consequences of corruption on the nation’s development.

However, to what extent can one say that those corruption narratives as contained in their coup speeches translated into real war against corruption in Nigeria and how much of the battle against corruption was won and or lost under the military governance from 1966 to 1999? To understand the actual military performance or output on corruption control in Nigeria therefore, the researcher relied on historical (output) analysis. In doing this, the study x-rayed various programmes, policies, decrees, among others deployed by the military leaders at different times in the nation’s history to curb corruption. These was done vis-à-vis their commitments to fight corruption.

To start with, because the first military coup d’état on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1966 was aimed at establishing “a strong united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal rife”, the military leader declared war against:



political profiteers, the swindlers, the men in high and low places that seek bribes and demand 10 percent; those that seek to keep the country divided permanently so that they can remain in office as ministers or VIPs at least, the tribalists, the nepotists, those that make the country look big for nothing before international circles, those that have corrupted our society and put the Nigerian political calendar back by their words and deeds". (Coups Speech, January 1966).

To this end, Major Nzeogwu decreed in the January 1966 coup speech that "looting, arson... embezzlement, bribery or corruption... Refusal or neglect to perform normal duties or any task... trying to escape with documents, valuables, including money or other assets vital to the running of any establishment" will be severely punished.

In line with the above commitment to curb corruption, General Aguiyi Thomas Ironsi who emerged as the first military head of Nigerian state following the coup instituted a series of commissions of inquiry to investigate the activities of some government parastatals and to probe the widespread corruption that characterised the public service sector of the deposed civilian regime. The report on the parastatals, especially the Nigeria Railway Corporation, Nigeria Ports Authority, and the defunct Electricity Corporation of Nigeria and Nigeria Airways, revealed that a number of ministers formed companies and used their influence to secure contracts.

Moreover, they were found guilty of misappropriation of funds as well as disregarding laid down procedures in the award of contracts by parastatals under their ministries (Ogbeidi, 2012). However, the military administration of General Ironsi could not survive corruption allegation owing to the way they assumed office. As such, the zeal to punish the wrong doers of the First Republic died with the Gowon counter coup of July 1966 which ended the regime barely 8 months after it was constituted.

Unfortunately, Major General Yakubu Gowon did not prioritize corruption in his coup speech as the word did not appear anywhere in the August 1966 coup speech but only promised "to resolve most of the problems that have disunited us in the past and really come to respect and trust one another in accordance with an all-round code of good conduct and etiquette" and criminalized "act of looting or sabotage".

Correspondingly, General Gowon did not initiate any serious policy or programme in support of the fight against corruption during his tenure from 1966 to 1975 other than a few efforts like the institution of a Commission of Enquiry in 1967 to investigate assets of fifteen public officers in the defunct Mid-Western Region. At the end of the enquiry, "the commission indicted all the public officers investigated of corruptly enriching themselves and recommended that the public officers should forfeit such ill-gotten gains to the government"

That notwithstanding, General Gowon administration (1966-1975) was engrossed in corruption so much so that even though he ruled the country at one of the most prosperous period (the oil boom of the 1970s), the fortune could not profit the country much because of mismanagement of resources and deep-seated corruption (Ogbeidi, 2012). By 1974, reports of unaccountable wealth of Gowon's military governors and other public office holders had become the crux of discussion in the various Nigerian dailies. Again, corruption became the primary reason for another coup in July 1975 which brought in General Murtala Mohammed to address the situation.

General Murtala Mohammed/General Olusegun Obasanjo who rule between 1975 and 1979 emphasized in their coup speech their readiness to fight corruption as the administration was not ready to "tolerate indiscipline" or "condone abuse of office". Murtala/Obasanjo's military administration therefore began the war against corruption by introducing asset declaration. General Murtala declared his assets and asked all government officials to follow suit.

General Murtala also launched the first military-sponsored anti-corruption campaigns- "Operation Purge the Nation" – which he said would "rid the nation of political/administrative incompetence, corrupt and morally delinquent civil servants and politicians and bring back respectability and professionalism to the country's public service" (Nwaodu, 2012, p.80). He instituted

a series of probes of past leaders including the Belgore Commission of Inquiry and the Federal Assets Investigation Panel of 1975 among others.

The Federal Assets Investigation Panel specifically found ten of the twelve state military governors in the Gowon regime guilty of corruption, dismissed and forced same to give up ill-acquired properties considered to be in excess of their earnings (Maduagwu cited in Gboyega, 1996, p.3). In the same vein, the Belgore Commission of Inquiry which investigated the ‘Cement Armada’ indicted the Gowon government of inflating contracts for cement from the required N2.9 million at a cost of N52 million to the 16 million metric tons of cement it ordered at a cost of N557 million for the ministry of defense (Afolabi, 1993).

Similar commissions of inquiry were constituted by the new state governments which resulted in the immediate dismissal of several corrupt officials, many of whom were in turn ordered to refund the money they had stolen (Ogbeidi, 2012, p.8). It was also on record that the anti-corruption programme of General Murtala/Obasanjo resulted in the purging of 11,000 people suspected to be “ghost workers” from the national civil service, a move that was interpreted in some quarters as witch-hunting of none supporters of the government.

In October 1979, the civilian government of former President Shehu Shagari was ushered into power. However, the period again saw the surge of corruption in Nigerian political system. This was compounded by the President’s indifference posture to the alarming looting of public funds by elected officials. Report has it that over \$16 billion in oil revenues were lost between 1979 and 1983 under President Shehu Shagari’s watch. Again, the military, led by General Muhammadu Buhari, was infuriated by the level of corruption in Shagari’s government and seized power from the civilian elected President on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1983.

The 1983 coup was also carried out with the aim of halting corruption and restoring discipline, integrity and dignity to public life. General Buhari’s regime promised to bring corrupt officials and their agents to book. Consequently, the regime set up a special military tribunal to recover public properties from the politicians of the past government.

To this end, many of the state governors and commissioners who were arrested and brought before tribunals of inquiry were convicted and handed stiff prison terms that were longer than the normal life-span besides the seizure of public properties and wealth found at their disposal. As part of efforts to curb corruption, the General Buhari led administration also introduced the anti-corruption programme called: “War against Indiscipline” (WAI) with the aim of promoting and emphasizing discipline and professionalism among civil servants as a way of improving political and administrative efficiency (Nwaodu, Adam & Okereke, 2014).

The General Buhari regime was toppled by the General Ibrahim Babangida in a bloodless in-house coup on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1985 because of his firm posture against corruption. According to General Babangida as seen in the 1985 coup speech, while his administration “recognises the bitterness created by the irresponsible excesses of the politicians [Shagari’s administration], we consider it unfortunate that methods of such nature as to cause more bitterness [Buhari’s anti-corruption approach] were applied to deal with past misdeeds”.

Nevertheless, Babangida’s administration made no serious attempt to stop corruption but rather gradually dismantled the anticorruption and disciplinary institution put in place by its predecessor on the grounds that they were too rigid, uncompromising and highhanded (Nwaodu, et al., 2014) and therefore institutionalized corruption so much so that even those found guilty by tribunals under the General Murtala Mohammed and General Muhammadu Buhari’s regimes found their way back to public life and recovered their seized properties (Maduagwu quoted in Gboyega, 1996, p.5). In the words of Lewis (1994) as cited in Nwaodu et al. (2014, p. 159):

Corruption has long been endemic to Nigerian politics, but the levels of malfeasance in the waning years of the Babangida’s regime eclipsed those preceding governments. The regime even facilitated corruption in the private sector. For instance, it was during this regime that

various decrees (NO. 49 of 1991: NO 70 of 1992: and No. 24 of 1993) were promulgated which directed those various properties earlier seized from past government officials be returned.

Coupled with the June 12<sup>th</sup> 1993 annulled election, intense public opposition to Babangida's rule forced him to reluctantly stepped aside and handed over power to a non-elected military-civilian Interim National Government on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1993 which was later ousted from power by the military under the leadership of General Sani Abacha on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1993 who stayed in office until his demise in 1998 (Ogbeidi, 2012). General Sani Abacha did not make the fight against corruption his major policy thrust in his coup speech but only emphasized that his government would not 'condone nor tolerate any act of indiscipline'.

Abacha's regime was credited for the institution of the War Against Indiscipline and Corruption (WAIC) as a way of fighting corruption in the country. His administration also reconstituted the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and many probe panels were set up to investigate several government agencies and parastatals like Customs, NITEL and Nigerian Airways. The activities of the Failed Bank Tribunal were also credited to the Abacha's Administration" (Nwaodu et al, 2014).

However, Abacha's regime furthered the deep-seated corrupt practices, which already characterized public life since the inception of the Babangida regime. Under General Abacha, corrupt practices became blatant and systematic. According to the International Centre for Asset Recovery (2009), the estimated cost of the embezzlement of public funds and corruption proceeds of General Abacha and his family amounted to USD 4 billion. This estimation amount seemed to have surpassed that of other notorious African rulers, such as Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now called the Democratic Republic of Congo) (Ogbeidi, 2012).

### **Conclusion/Recommendation**

This study further substantiated the earlier position of scholarship that corruption is antithetical to national development and interest and lends credence to the fact that Nigerian military leaders equally share similar concerns in their coup speeches from 1966 to 1999.

It has been established in this study that even though Nigerian military leaders set a relatively low agenda on corruption in their coup speeches within the period in question, it was clear from the analysis that they were committed to the fight against corruption by introducing necessary outputs like programmes, policies, decrees, constitution of panel of inquiries among others to stem the tide of corruption in the country.

However, a cursory look at corruption reality in the country within the period suggests that the corruption outputs did not translate into considerable corruption control. Rather than reducing the scourge of corruption, there seemed to be an increase in the spate of corruption during the military era in Nigeria. To this end, the paper recommends that the military should be kept out of the nation's politics if the country will ever attain a status of corruption free society.

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