

# ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY & NATION BUILDING: THE ANTITHESES OF CORPORATE THEFT & REGULATORY AGENCY GRAFT

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## Abstract

*The challenge of nation building in Nigeria has assumed the level of grave worry due to several inherent complexities that currently evoke national and global concerns. The study objected an assessment of the role corporate theft and agency graft have played in undermining the task of nation building through several corrupt practices like accountability and transparency deficits. The methodology adopted to drive the study consists of observation, anecdotal narratives and use of theoretical framework that are supportive of the conceptual issues in the general conference theme. The study revealed damaging under-hand practices of corporate giants and how most of them get collaboration and connivance from regulatory agency actors to rip-off customers, understate revenue collection levels and engage in 'heist' that on the aggregate undermine nation building and economic growth and development. These account for the seeming complexities in administering Nigeria across socioeconomic and even political fronts. It is also the reason why countries with which Nigeria was at par at independence are currently far ahead in sustainable development. The impact of the corrupt*

*practices has in combination resulted in Nigeria being rated as the world's headquarters of poverty, including instability and crime. Remedial strategies suggested include: electing/appointing competent and honest leaders and CEOs with vision into public and private establishments, adopting potent innovations and technologies to drive our transformational touch points, buying made in Nigeria manufactures to curtail revenue loss through brazen imports, among others.*

**Keywords:** Accountability, transparency, nation building, corporate theft, regulatory agency graft and corruption.

## INTRODUCTION

The hallmark of a mixed economy is the presence of private and public corporate actors in the business environment (Ekakitie and Oladipo, 2010; Familoni, 2001). The Nigerian economy as a typical example has a rich blend of the two divides. However, most forward looking world leaders and indeed economists argue that governments have no business being in business. In the same breath they also agree that government must sometimes partake in

certain business (to stimulate critical sectors for economic growth and nation building); while imposing regulations to provide guidelines and enabling environment for businesses to thrive to oil the wheel of economic development (Familoni, 2001; Iyoha and Ekanem 2015).

Regulatory agencies become necessary to prevent 'smart' corporate firms from laying 'landmines' in the business landscape that can both extort money, cause injury to citizens and even government establishments as institutional customers (Jobber, 2004; Kotler and Keller 2008). Without regulation, brazen business practices can make customers suffer losses and become mute (Agbonifoh, 2016) with no one to complain to.

Currently, the Nigerian economy is awash with complaints, angst and protests here and there on account of corporate firms corrupt practices. Public power supply has been an eternal bane of the Nigerian economy and ever since the unbundling of NEPA by the Obasanjo administration (1999 to 2007) (NEEDS Document, 2004) amongst them power generators (GenCos) and distributors (DisCos), their service delivery have not changed significantly. Even at this, the story of customers being extorted and shortchanged running into billions of Naira is still on the rise. Issues of estimated billings a.k.a. *crazy bills* (a theft) still reverberate across the nation.

Recent uproar that resulted in protests in cities of Benin, Asaba, Lagos, Enugu etc., between June and July 2019 have left industry watchers aghast on why power cannot be supplied and prepaid meters

installed in Nigeria as in Ghana were even in remote villages, prepaid meters are used. Recent court judgment jailing some Officials of power distributors in Enugu (mid 2019) is a judiciary awakening to its responsibilities to curtail corporate theft. The menace is so rife that no forward looking firm can rely on 'their' power to drive its operations. This same level of corporate theft is noticed in the banking/finance, insurance and, telecommunications sectors to mention a few.

Flowing from the above, the case of mobile telephony operators powering mobile devices, GSM communications is assuming a status of 'culture' in corporate stealing. In the days of MTN & ECONET, customers were simply robbed and forced to be mute as the two firms conspiratorially imposed a regime of extortions in the name of charges. Till date incidences abound where operators of telephony charge and deduct money for dropped calls, and such unbecoming habits of reckless deductions of monies for unsubscribed or unsolicited caller/ringer tones and other applications. Consumers and industry watchers now complaint to themselves; those who take initiative to call their Call Centers, if and when they get through, are answered by *machinesss...*...this can be very annoying as you may wait for hours!

In the banking sector, a myriad of deductions under various names are made without prior information. Annoying alerts are received deducting various amounts as charges which on the aggregate can run into billions of naira. This is corporate stealing original! In the insurance subsector there

seem to be a practice of deliberate attempt to deny customers of their rights to full disclosures of information on insurance policies by the insurer. Often when a loss is suffered customers are confronted on reasons why they cannot be indemnified. On the part of regulatory agencies, the story is the same. Incidences of agency connivance with corporate firms to understate financial statements, revenue collected, issuances of fake receipts, clearance certificates, etc., are rife. All these combine to defeat the charter, objectives and goals of government in setting up these agencies.

The question in the minds of experts and industry watchers is a strong query with respect to how these techniques of graft and theft can lead us to effective nation building strategies for sustainable growth and development. How can we elect proper governments and leaders to drive ethos of good governance and the rule of law as we strive to build a prosperous nation where no man is oppressed? What can we actually do to stop corporate theft and regulatory agency connivance that understate our developmental strides? This is the focus of this study.

## **METHODOLOGY & STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

The methods of administration of this study consist of the use of theoretical frameworks, conceptual exposition and indeed, anecdotal narratives which are statements of experiential incidences that underscore graft, theft and shortcomings of these corporates citizens and agencies of government. Structurally, the study is divided into five sections. First, is the

introductory part and the review of concepts and theoretical framework. Section two, deals with issues of corporate theft and agency graft and their underpinnings. The third section deals with the theory of nation building, quickly followed by the relational connectors between variables implicated in the study which is the fourth section. The fifth section pertains to the conclusion drawn from the evidenced discourses and recommendations thereof.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Review of Concepts and Theoretical Framework**

**The Concept of Accountability:** The word accountability has several meanings to different sections of society; many of these meanings and clarification have integrity and objectivity as its basic drivers.

With respect to leadership, accountability in the opinion of Wikipedia (2018) has to do with:

*“ ... the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable ... ”*

With respect to (Department of Defense Dictionary, USA, undated) Military and Associated Terms. Accountability is generally conceived as:

*“The state of being accountable; liability to be called on to render an account; accountableness; responsible for; answerable for (military) The obligation*

*imposed by law or lawful order or regulation on an officer or other person for keeping accurate record of property, documents, or funds. The person having this obligation may or may not have actual possession of the property, documents, or funds. Accountability is concerned primarily with records, while responsibility is concerned primarily with custody, care, and safekeeping.*

Here accountability is seen as an imposed or required duty and obligation, an imposition with a force of law for individuals, corporate executives, security agencies and indeed political leaders to give narrated or documented evidences of what transpired under their tenure of office or tour of duty.

The consequences of accountability deficits can cripple economic development, lead a floodgate to fraud while the nation suffers and beneficiaries of graft smile home when left alone to enjoy their loot. The narrative below is a USA *Times Magazines* June, 2008 of the consequences of graft and leaders being askance to accountability dictates in the wake of then global economic meltdown:

*'...In recent times, accounting corporate scandals at Enron, WorldCom, and Nortel have resulted in corporate leaders being held accountable for their misdeeds, with some serving time in prison. Alberta-born, one-time Telecom tycoon Bernard Ebbers, for example, was found guilty on March 15, 2005, of conducting the largest accounting fraud in U.S. history. His convictions on*

*all nine counts and on the \$11 billion fraud carry a cumulative maximum jail time of 85 years. Ebbers' case is a continuation of white-collar crime exposure that made media headlines at the end of the 1990s when the high-tech bubble burst. The role of executive and board accountability has since become a major business issue in this millennium, with new laws being passed in the United States and elsewhere for dealing with corporate accountability infractions.'*

Several provisions to make leaders accountable in Nigeria have carried a force of law, starting from Assets Declaration, to processes during Office and after Office tenure. However, the creation of EFCC and ICPC as financial crime agencies by the Obasanjo administration (1999 – 2007) is an attempt at the highest level to fight graft at corporate and agency level in Nigeria.

**The Concept of Transparency:** The concept of transparency seems to be Siamese twins of sorts to that of accountability. Many literature and narrative almost always showcase them together.

Wikipedia (2019) gives a wide variety of managerial definitions that border on the transparency question:

*Transparency is the extent to which investors have ready access to required financial information about a company such as price levels, market depth and audited financial reports. Transparency helps reduce price volatility because*

*all market participants can base decisions of value on the same data.*

**What is financial transparency?**

*Financial transparency according to the SEC (2016) means making information as accessible as possible. It means "timely, meaningful and reliable" disclosures about a company's performance. Financial transparency means that you are not actively hiding anything.*

**What is transparency in accounting ethics?**

*SEC (2016) says it is about improving ethics and it is crucial to enhancing accountability and vice-versa. Transparency. Generally, "transparency" implies openness, communication and accountability. It is a metaphorical extension of the meaning a "transparent" object is one that can be seen through.*

**The Concept of Nation Building:**

Okechuku and Onyishi (2014) in citing Claude Ake (1971:9) posits that nation building involves the challenge of winning for the political system, the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. It is the opinion of Weiner (1971) that national integration as a concept refers specifically to the problem of creating a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows-or eliminates-subordinate parochial loyalties. It also includes all the strategic initiatives of building a country's infrastructure and establishing a system of effective governance to deliver value and a good

standard of living to its citizens (Ekakitie, 2018).

**CORPORATE THEFT & AGENCY GRAFT: The Bane of Nation Building**

**Corporate Theft:** Most of what have challenged sound nation building in Nigeria is the prevalence of corporate theft, corruption and even agency graft. Corporate theft is gaining much stride in undermining nation building efforts of genuine leaders, both corporate and political in the economy. It would appear that giant organizations are not satisfied with marginal profits from honest creation of value-yielding products and services. They are tempted to engage in graft; they or their officials. Since the inception of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999, some corporate firms are increasing perfecting grand strategies to extort and steal from unsuspecting customers or forcing them to pay more for products and services under various hooded guises. This is noticed across the telecom industry, the banking and finance sector and indeed the public power supply sector

Corporate theft and consumerists apathy along with complacency of the Consumer Protection Council (CPC) has imposed losses and suffering on the consumers who are at the receiving end of poor service delivery, extortion and corporate theft (Ndubuisi, Anyanwu, and Nwankwo. 2016). Below are anecdotal narratives by a researcher (Olakunori, 2003) and industry watchers of corporate theft and consumer ambush. Its impact on nation building is anyone guess:

*"... NEPA, which changed to PHCN and now privatized... the outcry of consumers were*

*centered on the unabated poor services to consumers over the years which the Consumer Protection Council has no answer to. The consumers were made to pay bills without services rendered. In addition, the inability of aggrieved consumers to sue the power authority's default succeeded in keeping them arrogant and obstinate.*

It is the opinion of Kanyip (2005), the lack of competition in the power sector to a large extent contributes to why extortion and poor performance in power supply is prevalent in the sector.

In the telecom sector, the rip-off in cut-throat prices and poor services has taken center stage as a transaction norm. Obijiofor's (2003) observation of the situation in this sector is instructive:

*"...the services of telecommunications service providers belittled customers. The service subscribers had systematically received from their respective providers (MTN has the major share of the market) a mix of rudeness, infuriating deductions, lies, disrespectful treatment, frustration, headache and services that just could not match the type of efficient network, and warmth customers' service relationships required of them. These appalling services provided by those telecommunication companies seem to reach their peak towards the end of the year."*

In the scenario painted by Obijiofor's (2003) above, one finds huge losses on the aggregate on the subscribers end. On the slip side, monies deducted from calls that never connected, dropped calls and deductions on unsolicited applications including rip-offs in data bundle purchases make up the theft and corrupt practices in this sector. It took this researcher in 2017 six (6) months and a shouting match to get MTN to stop reckless deductions for a caller tone 'Queen of heaven' earlier subscribed to. The deduction was to be N50 per month, but in reality three (5) of such deductions were being made per month.

In the telecom sector the regulator, the National Communication Commission, NCC, submits that in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2018, the Commission received a total of 13,880 complaints (against the 2017 Q4 figure of 17,247) from subscribers. Its four major corporate firms are MTN, Globacom, Airtel and 9Mobile. Of the total MTN records 44%, followed by Airtel 23%, then Globacom operators 21% and 9Mobile 12%. With these figures it is clear customers are far from being satisfied with services rendered. A large proportion of the complaint continuum falls into the payment side with no value for money. This year, according to the NCC (2019) web site [www.ncc.gov.ng](http://www.ncc.gov.ng), billing Issues account for the highest number of complaints received during the Q1 i.e. 51%, while Value Added Services (VAS) and Call Setup complaints account for the second and third highest number of complaints received by the Commission with 14% and 8.4% respectively.

It is evident that corporate theft and failure of regulating agency to arrest the trend

dates back. Till date (2019) complaints dot the activities of NCC and perhaps for the purpose of public relations it has published the following challenges in its website as its major headaches. According to them, they are mostly **Billing** related complaints and they include the following;

- Deductions from activations of unsolicited VAS and telecom promotions and products
- Over deduction (Inaccurate charges)
- Charges for unauthorised services
- Charges for unsuccessful calls
- Charges for undelivered SMS
- Inability to change tariff plan
- Virtual top-up deducted but not received
- Charges for Caller Ring Back Tune not downloaded, etc.

Any casual observer will recognize that the underlined words above are all about money lost by customers to the telecom firms...no matter their explanations, these monies are never refunded and with 44% control of the market, MTN is allegedly engaging in corporate theft with no manifest attitudinal change in sight. The same goes for all other networks under the supervision of the NCC.

**Agency Corruption/Graft:** Major regulators of Nigerian financial system (Nzotta and Okereke, 2009) are Federal Ministry of Finance, the CBN – money market, the Security & Exchange Commission (SEC) – Capital Market, Nigerian Deposit Insurance Commission (NDIC), National Insurance Commission (NAICOM) and National Pension Commission (PENCOM).

The CBN, for instance, as a supervisor of the finance sector has not come clean in transparency over the years - from the military to civilian rules. For instance, in deciding which banks should be wound up or acquired its guidelines and *modus operandi* has been suspect. The cases of Savannah Bank and Oceanic Bank still leave much to be desired. It lacked facts and figures; it was more of political decisions to shut out the banks to create avenue for others to grab them. The shoddy activities in recent times of CBN and identities of recent shareholders of Polaris Bank (2018-2019) and its composition/structure: who bought what, when and how is still unclear.

Aside this, the graft which shook the financial sector of the economy in 2015 is to date still questionable. Ekakitie (2011) captures the sordid theft cases inter alia:

*“...Six CBN Official, 16 others to face trial for N8bn fraud” ...Reports. The report says that the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) arrested some public officers for allegedly stealing and re-circulating defaced and mutilated currencies. These suspects are drawn from the CBNs various units. These six (6) were alleged to have collaborated with sixteen (16) other persons who are employees of commercial banks to perpetrate the financial crime.”*

Above narrative as reported in the media it was mind boggling. But earlier in 2014, the then out-going CBN Governor, Malam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi raised an alarm that \$20bn USD was missing from the federation account. He insisted that the

NNPC had not remitted the amount (being proceeds from sales of crude oil) into the federation account. NNPC & CBN then engaged in a war of words, accusation and counter-accusation set the media space in frenzy with many wondering what kind of country Nigeria is as the amount kept fluctuating. It was an embarrassed President Jonathan who intervened by contracting Price Water House to do forensic audit on the NNPC accounts to verify if actually money was missing as the CBN Governor had alleged. However, Price Water House found NNPC culpable and asked it to remit \$1 USD to CBN.

Aside from the above, critical industry watchers, media organizations, etc., are daily looking at various agencies of government and their transparency deficit in dealings with respect to aggregate impact on national economic growth and development. Again, *The Nation*, a national tabloid in its January 17<sup>th</sup> 2013 edition, captured NNPC shoddy borrowing in this narrative:

*... the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, was borrowing \$1.5 billion to pay its foreign creditors, including Glencore and Mercuria, which it owes \$3.5 billion in accumulated fuel supply bills. The NNPC reportedly pledged 15, 000 barrels of crude per day as collateral for the syndicated loan deal said to have been brokered by Standard Chartered Bank, with funds to be supplied by a consortium of foreign and local banks, which would be paid over a period of five and half years."*  
The tabloid contends: "Granted

*Section 6 of the NNPC Act permits it as a state-run oil business concern to borrow with or without the approval of the "Council of Ministers", we unequivocally state that every constitutional righteousness must be fulfilled to ensure transparency and accountability in such transaction."*

No official in NNPC has denied it and till date 'all is well that ends well' but is it well for nation building?

At the inception of the APC administration, came the volcanic episode of PENCOM (pension commission) scam. Over N20bn was alleged to have disappeared under Mr. Maina as CEO. The narrative was so sordid that it appeared that some government officials at the national level were covering up the graft at the agency. The manner of his sack by the Jonathan administration, his sudden emergence at the inception of the Buhari administration and his shocking elevation to the rank of Deputy Director left much to be desired. Many had asked: is Mr. Integrity rewarding theft?

Ekakitie (2015) in citing Omojemite (2009) avers that corruption has been variously linked to retarded growth in countries where they are endemic. In Omojemite's (2009) opinion, the links between corruption and economic growth have been supported by research studies over the years. A study by Mauro (1998) found that a reduction in the level of corruption index from 6 to 8 raises economic growth by 0.5% points. Also, Gyimah-Brempong's (2002) study of 21 African countries reported that a unit increase in the corruption score is

associated with a reduction in growth by between 0.7 and 0.9% for the period studied. These findings were corroborated by Ndikumana (2006) in his analysis using cross-country data, he found that the growth rate of capital is negatively correlated with corruption and other governance indicators. These, on the aggregate, impact negatively on nation building and indeed economic development.

### **THE THEORY OF NATION BUILDING: Context & Models**

Studies by Dobbins (2003) for the RAND Corporation sees nation building as the use of armed force in the aftermath of social conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy. For him the success of conflicted countries such as Germany (WWII), Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan (as case studies) and the successful transition into a peaceful dispensation, powering socioeconomic growth and development is a direct work and dividend of nation building strategies. The USA and UN and Civil Society Organizations, CSOs were entrenched in the securing of peace by military force, peace building and eventual democratization (Ekakitie and Agbada, 2018).

Nation building in this sense is therefore an external attempt to induce harmony and create an ordered paradigm to bring about development and allow the democratization process to take root for stability and emergence of popular government via universal suffrage.

On the flip side, nation building can be considered an *internal affair* of a sovereign country within its provinces to impart

stability and grow its economy. This conception of nation building is centered on conscious efforts at democratization, directed efforts at change through constitutional amendment process, the rule of law and administration in accordance with UN Charter of rights, privileges and responsibilities for leadership and followership alike. The processes of democratic transition and regime change vide the ballot box and the use of courts and legal mechanism in the adjudication of electoral disputes.

Okechuku and Onyishi (2014) in furthering the understanding of nation building aver that it is the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the State. For them, this process should aim at the unification of the people within the State so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run, Wikipedia, (2013) and Ake (1971) also hold this view. Nation building has its wider implications – it goes deep and is inclusive of issues of use of propaganda and development initiatives by government of the day to cause structural transformation that have capacity to induce harmonious coexistence among its people and provinces. This should lead to the correct development of appropriate value system by citizens and leaders alike to impact growth and development across institutions, instill a sense of unique identity and ensure perpetual existence as a sovereign nation unless otherwise collectively agreed vide self-determination provisions.

Long before now, (Deutsch 1966; Deutsch and Foltz, 2010) held that nation building is an architectural design or a mechanical

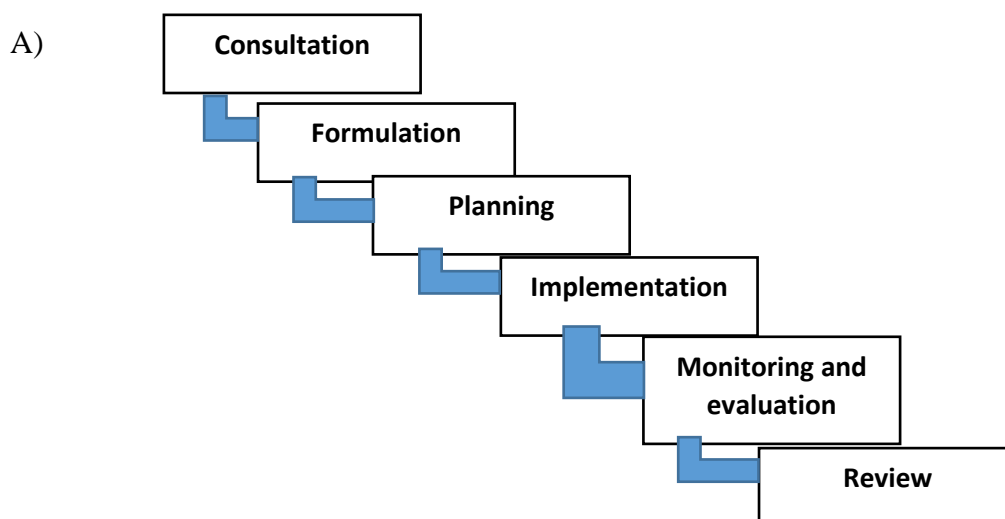
model that could be built based on authority needs and plan of the designer. The question of citizens loyalty (as well as engaging acts and behaviours that reduces cleavages along ethnic and racial lines) to the cause of nation building is a prerequisite to its success. The desire to effect unity and understanding and tolerance to differences and encouragement of similarities are cardinal to effective nation building (Emerson, 1967; Harris, 2012).

Harris (2012) avers nation building processes could include authority actions such as territorial re-shaping, re-sizing in accordance with ethnic, religious necessities, away from initial boundaries by colonial powers, etc. The nation building process also includes creation of national icons, images that induce common identities such as national flags, insignia, anthem, pledges etc. For Walker (2011) and Hippler

(2005) and Anthony (1986), nation building and its efforts should include National Days celebration, edifices like National stadium and the like.

Several models of nation building, especially attempts at reinventing conflicted societies along with strategic planning frameworks for development abound. Nation building is about making plans, developmental and growth inducing strategies to cut across sectors of the economy. Nation building is not all about creation of structures and loyalty of citizens; it is about consultation and deliberate mission to deliver good governance following the principles of development and ethos of best practices within a political framework as a country. Its overall concerns are implicated in the model of development also known as ‘National Policy Cycle’ below:

**Fig 1: The National Policy Cycle**



**Source:** OECD, 2009. Integrating change adaptation into development cooperation policy guidance. OECD, Paris.

**B) Fig 2: Elements of National Planning Models**

ECONOMY:	Income and consumption patterns; ----- Capital and Investment Flows;
SOCIETY:	Population, Gender; Education, health; Income distribution; Labour force and productivity;
ENVIRONMENT	Natural resource stocks – depletion, conservation; ----- Pollution generation, etc.

**Source:** OECD, 2009. Integrating change adaptation into development cooperation policy guidance. OECD, Paris.

The above models are building blocks of nation building: A) Spotlights the national policy cycle – the factors implicated are germane to nation building; B) Spotlights the elements of national planning models, capable of national integration, developmental policy process and planning models (encompassing the triple critical areas of nation building: economy, society and environment). All these Nigeria has done, but done poorly, but the task is still on-going and has continued to be bugged down by increasing ethnic and religious cleavages along with bad governance. It is made worse in recent times by the emergence of terrorism and terrorist groups such that the very fabric of Nigeria’s foundation is currently in 2019 challenged seriously.

**DISCUSSION: Fitting the relational connectors**

This section attempt to x-ray the overall conference theme’s architecture with a view

to fitting their relational connectors and possible implications granted their variables. In this discuss national building is regarded as a domain variable; it may also be equated in mean to the concept of national growth and development.

**Accountability & Nation-building:** In many nations and indeed corporate organizations, there exist a protocol of action framework that guides policy formulation, implementation and review (Oghojaor, 2000; Kazmi 2002); the same exist for strategy formulation and implementation (Thompson and Strikeland, 2005). The existence of these guides is to provide a roadmap to achieving organizational goals and to technically and empirically show the modus operandi of administration that led to goals attainment and organizational successes. This dispensation is desirable for several reasons:

- a. It permits easy understanding of facts and figures under interrogation
- b. It clears off any iota of ambiguity, suspicion or doubt
- c. It encourages learning, training, mentorship and succession planning,
- d. It gives hope that the future of an enterprise as a going concern is guaranteed and the future and path of a nations development is assured,
- e. It implants a shared belief system and core values that guarantee success and enterprise/national longevity.

This is accountability and its fortification.

For nation building or national development to take its roots properly and yield its expected dividends, the notion, concept and practice of accountability must not only be entrenched in mere practices and observations, it must be a thing of law, that is, requirements to be complied with irrespective of 'who' comes to office or leaves. It must engage critical resources and capabilities; Nigeria must wake up to the reality that accountability is the *Mother of Nation Building*.

The people and leaders of China, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, etc., are well aware of the injury graft and illegal use of position power to personal benefit at the expense of national interest can inflict on national development. Hence imprisonment (without options) and death penalty is approved by their laws.

### **Transparency & Nation Building**

The conceptual underpinnings of transparency can be varied and wide. In whichever manner it is conceived,

understood and interpreted, its bottom line is underscored by the twin factors of 'clarity' and 'full disclosure'. Clarity as adduced by Oxford Advanced Learners (2015) is the quality of being expressed clearly, the ability to think about or understand something clearly.... It can also connote (by a corollary) the attribute, attitude and procedure in a manager of any firm, Governor or person holding public Office to lay bare activities and goings-on in his domain of responsibilities for scrutiny and perusal. The person as CEO and an enterprise resources (personnel) for transformation, should be able to lead people, their skills, processes, procedures and systems to aggregate a transparent, easily observable template of administration and its outcomes.

Without transparency, the process of nation building will become a challenging problem and drawback. In government circles, it is now difficult to reconcile the promises of the APC administration and the frustration now being experienced in Nigeria. Nearly all promises made to Nigerians as contained in the manifesto (a nation building document) are hardly implemented. There is lack of transparency in the financial administration of the nation. It is really difficult to ascertain how and why the national debt profile has risen to N24trn within the Q1 of 2019. It is difficult to see why the insecurity problems seem intractable with the \$1bn US taken from the Consolidated Revenue Account. Some quarters accuse elements in the administration, 'cabal' of being tacitly behind it.

### **Facts, Politics, Propaganda & the Task of Nation Building**

One of the phrases that aptly capture the Nigerian society and its people as a sovereign nation is that "...Nigeria is a complex country and a challenge to administer..." (IBB, August, 2019).

**The Problem with Nigeria:** Perhaps a fundamental problem with Nigeria and the task of sound nation building template is the nature and manner of its formation, its colonial experiences and military interventions in governance back in 1966 and the negative consequences which still persists till date. Conspiratorial strings are still attached to Nigeria and most African states by colonial masters; many sponsor and manipulate governments in and out of power and manipulate policies and programmes with a view to furthering their interest in politics and commerce.

Even in those early days the task of nation building was partly clear and focused when after independence Nigeria had three (3) federating regions and later four (4) with the creation of Midwest region, all these on the political platform of federalism as entrenched in the 1963 people's constitution. Then came the Nigeria military in 1966 and 30 odd months of war wasting nearly 2 million lives was allowed to occur. At the end of the war several State creation exercises were made – a centralized military-styled-command structure was imposed on Nigeria. National Productivity waned and a self-imposed mono-cultural economy heavily dependent on Crude Oil export for revenue was entrenched (Ekanem, and Iyoha, 2015; Ekuerhare, 1996). This followed quickly

with rise of citizen and government appetite for foreign commodities from Western countries, especially food, fabrics and used electronics. To arrest the decline in the economy the several military dictatorship governments embarked on several failed economic development programmes: Ekakitie (2015) citing Odion (2009) took pains to capture them:

*“Though programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) which was launched in the 1970s and Green Revolution initiated by the Shagari administration in 1980 existed in the past to address the phenomenon of poverty, they were essentially aimed at boosting agriculture. Other efforts made by successive governments included the establishment of Directorate of Foods, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Better Life Programme (BLP), the People Bank of Nigeria (PBN), Family Support Programme (FSP), Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS).*

On the domestic front several challenges emerged, many overlapping. These are also rollover from military mis-governance and dictatorships. Crude Oil export took a nose dive and domestic refining of same product all but seriously waned and imports of crude oil became a government policy

(Amadasun, and Iyoha, 2012). Nigerians have to pay more to fuel their power generating machines at home and in their businesses. Public power supply could not go beyond 3,000mwts far below Y'Adua's promised target 6,000 megawatts for a population of nearly 190m people at that time (2007 – 2010). This figure has not changed even in 2019 with 200.9m people (UN estimates, 2019). On the education and human development angle, Nigeria has 13m out-of-school children with several industrial unrest, especially in the education sector. Quality of education took the hit as some Nigerian families either took their wards to neighboring Ghana or to Western countries.

Side by side with these is the emergence of a seriously weakened exchange rate. Under the President Jonathan's administration the Naira exchanged between N159 – N165 to the dollar; currently in the APC administration it is nothing less than N340 to the US dollar. With respect to insecurity in Nigeria according to the UN (2019) *Boko Haram* has killed 24,500 lives and displaced over 3 million citizens since its formation in 2009. Government officials have denied this as lacking in correctness. Today, Nigeria is virtually on fire as killings of genocidal proportion, kidnappings for ransom are unleashed everywhere. Many claim Nigeria has failed as a nation (Soyinka, Agbakoba, Falana 2017 – 2019).

## **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

This study on the economic front has examined the several worries with nation building in Nigeria. The transparency deficit worry has been revealed to be strong.

Nigeria has taken to borrowing to finance budgets for most of the President Buhari's first tenure in Office (2015 – 2018). The implications for infrastructural development, inflation and nation building are clear. The current recession and its impact on industry and exchange rates are quite clear for a heavily import dependent nation. Borrowing to finance budgets has incurred debts to the extent of N24trn (CBN, 2019); repayments hopes is shifted to the next generation. Compared with countries with which Nigeria was at par at Independence in 1960 – Brazil, India, Malaysia, etc – Nigeria has badly disappointed itself and the world.

With respect to the issues of corporate and agency corruption, it is clear that there has been connivance over the years with corporate firms to both cheat on government and rob customers through *Ponzi* billings. The admittance of agencies like NCC of deductions for unsolicited or undelivered services across GSM services providers is a testimony of the heavy presence of corporate and agency graft within the strangled economy. It is generally believed that corruption hampers nation building and laws and guidelines put in place are indeed necessary but not sufficient to curb the level of the act.

As customers suffer the brunt of corporate theft and mis-governance, citizens and customers are forced to endure without compensation. Nkamnebe, Idoko and Kalu (2009) had adduced complexities of influence of marketers, consumer related factors, circumstantial or environmental as likely influences on these corporate misbehavior. For Ijewere and Obeki (2011)

the customer suffer in silence because of poverty and weak capacity to legally challenge corporate firms' infringements on customers rights; this along with prevailing tenuous judicial system to get justice frustrate individuals from seeking redress and compensations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Elect Best/Most Competent Hands into Office:** Nothing works well like sound, competent and visionary leadership across all critical touch-points of nation building and economic development. America and most counties of Europe choose, elect and appoint their best and capable minds into public office. This practice enthrones the culture of *excellence and competence*. Africa's bane is the deficit of vision and competences of its leaders.

**Emphasize Accountability & Transparency:** Flowing from the above (3), public office holders should be made accountable for use and administration of public funds and show transparency in how decision on appropriation are done, how projects were implemented and what the contract sum was and which firm was awarded the job. The adage that he who comes to equity must come with clean hands is rife and should be a guiding compass to holders of public trust.

**Infusing Innovation, Technical Competences:** Innovations and technology are the driving forces of transformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No matter the dancing around and away from this centrifugal force of technological transformation, nation building will come tough for Nigeria. As India, Malaysia,

Brazil, etc., are coasting home on these fronts, Nigeria, the sleeping giant ant of Africa must wake up.

**Punish Graft:** No country survives or can engage effective nation building with a preponderance of graft and other unwholesome practices. Corruption has capacity to underdeveloped countries and erodes their capacities to grow its critical sectors. Graft must be punished and public servants who engage in it must be made to face its consequence, legally and socially. In China, graft is punishable by death.

**Building Strong Institutions:** Creating and administering strong and effective institutions is the pathway to good nation building. Hilary Clinton in her visit to Nigeria in 2010 spoke strongly on the need for African countries to run strong institutions. The railways, airways, power infrastructure all over Africa are collapsing on account of deficit of effective management of public enterprises. Strong efforts should be made in this direction to achieve effective nation building.

**Enthroning the Culture of 'Buy Nigeria':** If Nigeria wants to achieve stability and economic prosperity, she should at least be self-reliant on basic commodities such as food production, clothing and daily needs. Buying Nigeria manufactures will curtail capital flight, grow local industries, create jobs and create a platform for firms intending to go into the global market to do. Government should be at the forefront of promoting the 'buy Nigeria' agenda for effective socioeconomic development.

**Unfetter Nigeria Regions to Better Competitiveness:** For effective nation building to take place, there must be a political framework that allows internal dynamics and competitiveness of productive units with tradable commodities, equitable and just system of resource exploitation and allocation. The need for true federalism constitutionally cannot be overemphasized if we are serious on the quest for effective nation building and economic growth and development.

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