

Corruption and National Security in Nigeria: A Case Study of President Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (2015-2023)

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Abstract

Corruption remains a significant threat to national security in Nigerian political theatre since the inception of the Fourth Republic with an alarming rate during the administrations of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023). This study examines the extent to which corruption undermined national security efforts, focusing on governance, policy implementation, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures during President Buhari's administration. The study employed a qualitative design in which data were gathered through the use of interviews. Findings reveal that corruption has led to the mismanagement of security resources, weakened institutions, and contributed to rising insecurity. Despite various anti-corruption initiatives, systemic corruption persisted, affecting the efficiency of security agencies and public trust. Embarking on institutionalizing reforms, enhancing transparency, empowering independent anti-corruption agencies, embracing the culture of honour, reorienting the citizens, and prioritizing merit-based governance are crucial for improving Nigeria's national security and governance.

Keywords: corruption, security, national security, anti-corruption initiatives.

Introduction

No society develops without strong institutions and incorruptible officials at the helm of state affairs. A society devoid of corruption will witness massive development. This implies that corruption, which manifests in various forms such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and favouritism, has detrimental effects on society. It undermines trust in institutions, hampers economic development, perpetuates inequality, and more importantly, jeopardizes national security. In a corrupt society, resources are often misallocated, decisions are made based on personal interest rather than national interest, and meritocracy is compromised. Conversely, a fair and transparent system can flourish in a society where corruption is minimized. This can lead to increased trust in government and institutions, more equitable distribution of resources, a level playing field for businesses and individuals, a conducive environment for innovation and progress, and a secure environment for all. When merit and hard work are rewarded, individuals are motivated to strive for excellence, leading to overall advancement and development.

Corruption and insecurity remain two critical challenges that have plagued Nigeria for decades, undermining development, stability, and public confidence in governance. Corruption expressed through bribery, embezzlement, inflated invoices, looting, and the diversion of public assets, has weakened institutions and contributed directly and indirectly to Nigeria's security crises. Many of the nation's persistent threats, including insurgency, banditry, and organized crime, are sustained by the mismanagement of resources meant for security operations. Although the administration of Muhammadu Buhari introduced several anti-corruption initiatives, studies

show that corruption persisted due to structural weaknesses and political interference, including challenges in prosecuting high-profile individuals (Biereenu-Nnabugwu & Imoke, 2023). This deep-seated corruption has continued to endanger lives and property, raising urgent questions about the true effectiveness of the anti-corruption campaign.

Despite President Muhammadu Buhari's strong anti-corruption mantra, corruption and security challenges persisted throughout his administration (2015–2023). Nigeria maintained poor global corruption rankings, placing 154th out of 180 countries in the 2021 Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2022), reflecting entrenched corruption across sectors. This widespread corruption intensified national security threats, exacerbating terrorism, insurgency, and economic instability (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). While Buhari's government pledged to strengthen institutions and combat corruption (Omenma et al., 2020), research indicates that corrupt practices remained deeply rooted in government and society. This paper is an attempt to assess corruption and national security in Nigeria during President Buhari's civilian administration from 2015 to 2023.

Conceptual Clarifications

Corruption

This is the abuse of power for personal and selfish aggrandizement. The abuse of entrusted power for private gain, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and other forms of unethical or illegal conduct, is referred to as 'corruption'. Akindele (1995, p. 62) defined corruption as "any form of reciprocal behaviour or transaction where both the power holder and the office holder can respectively initiate the inducement of some rewards to grant (illegal) preferential treatment or favour against the principles and the interests of specific organizations or within the society.

Security

Security can be defined as the state of being protected from harm, danger, or threats while having the freedom to live, work, and pursue one's goals without fear or significant risk to one's well-being, possessions, or values. According to Booth (2007, p. 98), security is "the absence of threats" and when debating its politics, it is about "the pursuit of freedom from threat". Hough (2021, p. 12), posits that security is "the condition of being protected from danger or threat, whether real or perceived, to individuals, groups, or states. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (1994, p. 23), asserts that security should be understood as "safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression" and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or communities.

National Security

National Security is the safety of a country as managed through the exercise of economic and political power, intelligence agencies, and diplomacy. Simply put, it is the protection and preservation of a nation's core values, interests, and sovereignty from internal and external threats, including terrorism, insurgencies, organized crime, and other forms of violence or instability. Ujomu (2015, p. 21) has defined national security as the confrontation of threats to peace in society.

Anti-Corruption Initiatives

Anti-corruption initiatives are policies, laws, and measures aimed at preventing, detecting, and punishing corrupt practices as well as promoting transparency and accountability in governance. It simply means opposing or combating corruption.

An Overview of Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption has remained a serious and long-standing problem in Nigeria's political and economic system, cutting across different administrations. For years, the public has been repeatedly exposed to corruption scandals, especially within government institutions. These recurring cases suggest a steady decline in ethical standards among politicians, public office holders, and government officials. Existing studies on Nigeria consistently show that corruption and poor governance are major reasons behind the country's slow development. This problem did not begin with the return to democracy. It can be traced back to earlier military regimes. During the administration of Ibrahim Babangida, corruption became deeply embedded in governance. His government was known for distributing state resources, such as money and vehicles, to secure political loyalty. At the same time, the administration failed to properly account for the Gulf War windfall, estimated at \$12.4 billion. Scholars argue that this period helped shape a political culture where public office is often seen as a means of personal enrichment rather than a platform for national service (Ijewereme, 2015; Smith, 2022).

The election of Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 was widely seen as a turning point. Many Nigerians viewed it as an opportunity to confront corruption head-on. Widespread dissatisfaction with corruption under the People's Democratic Party (PDP) played a major role in ending its 16-year rule, as voters supported Buhari based on his promises to fight corruption, tackle insecurity, and revive the economy. However, the reality of his administration's anti-corruption efforts appeared mixed and sometimes inconsistent. The study by Okechukwu et al, (2024) submits that, the political arrangements such as power rotation, along with patron-client relationships and identity politics, actually encouraged corrupt practices during this period. The removal of the former acting chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Ibrahim Magu, in what many saw as a political move, further weakened the credibility of the anti-corruption campaign. In addition, the fight against corruption was often criticized for being politicized, with some allegations ignored and certain individuals protected due to their political connections (Okechukwu et al., 2024).

These concerns were reflected in Nigeria's performance on global corruption rankings. By the end of Buhari's first term in 2019, the country had dropped to 146th on the Corruption Perceptions Index and further to 149th in 2020 (Transparency International, 2020). By the end of his second term in 2023, corruption still appeared deeply rooted, and the goal of achieving good governance remained largely unmet.

The State of Corruption and National Security in Buhari's Civilian Administration in Nigeria (2015-2023)

Studies on corruption during the Buhari administration reveal persistent challenges across governance and public perception. Corruption within Nigeria's security institutions has had particularly damaging implications. Ikpe and Akpan (2019), using interviews with 150 military personnel and analysis of defense procurement data, found that about 25% of the defense budget between 2015 and 2018 was lost to corruption through inflated contracts, ghost workers, and embezzlement. Similarly, Okoye et al. (2021) documented widespread petty and systemic corruption in the Nigerian Police Force between 2015 and 2020, with 62% of citizens reporting paying bribes to police officers and approximately 30% of police funds being misappropriated.

Adebayo and Umar (2020) further showed that corruption significantly undermined counter-insurgency operations in the Northeast, weakening military effectiveness and contributing to prolonged conflict and increased civilian casualties. The economic implications of corruption are also evident in the private sector; Oluwafemi et al. (2023) found that 73% of SME owners had paid bribes for permits or to avoid harassment, increasing operating costs by an average of 15% and constraining growth and job creation.

As Nigeria's digital economy expanded, new corruption-linked security threats emerged. Adewale et al. (2021) analyzed cybercrime trends from 2015 to 2020 and documented a 300% increase in reported incidents, attributing part of this rise to corrupt practices within government information & Telecommunication (IT) departments and regulatory bodies that weakened national digital infrastructure. In a related study, Okafor and Nwankwo (2022) investigated corruption-facilitated cyber espionage targeting government institutions. Through simulated phishing attacks and vulnerability assessments, they found that around 40% of government agencies had critical security weaknesses, many of which stemmed from corrupt procurement processes and the appointment of unqualified personnel to cybersecurity roles.

Corruption at Nigeria's borders further compounds national security risks. Adeola and Ibrahim (2020) documented widespread bribery and smuggling facilitation at border posts between 2016 and 2019, estimating annual revenue losses of about \$5 billion and noting that porous borders allow criminal networks and foreign elements to infiltrate the country. Musa et al. (2022) also highlighted the link between border corruption and arms trafficking, estimating that up to 70% of weapons used by insurgent groups entered through corrupt channels at official crossings. The international dimension of these challenges is evident in Nigeria's declining credibility abroad; Adebayo and Okonkwo (2021; P.89) found that corruption-related concerns contributed to a 30% reduction in Nigeria's peacekeeping deployments between 2015 and 2020, as allegations of misconduct eroded trust among host nations and international partners.

Anti-corruption strategies in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Mikail (2016) maintained that at the instance of the fourth republic, President Olusegun Obasanjo inaugurated two new anti-graft agencies with the aim of reducing corruption to the barest minimum or eradicating it. His administration demonstrated this by taking a number of steps:

- i. Promulgation of laws against graft-Independent Corrupt Practices and (other Related Offences) Commission (ICPC) Act, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Act, money Laundering (prohibition) Act 2004;
- ii. Strengthening of anti-corruption and other economic crimes institutions for effective law enforcement;
- iii. Prosecution and conviction of high-ranking administration officials and tracing, seizing and confiscation of all proceeds of crime;
- iv. Institution of Due process mechanism in public sector procurements;
- v. Deregulation/privatization of failing public institutions and creating an enabling environment for effective private-public partnerships;
- vi. Monthly publication of distributable revenue from the federation Account to the different tier of government;

- vii. Institutions of transparencies in the oil and gas sector through the work of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI); and
- viii. Monetization policies and other administrative reforms in the civil service (Mikail, 2018).

Indeed, these were among the proactive measures for reforming the public sector with the purpose of ameliorating corruption and to instill the discipline of transparency and public accountability for the attainment of national development. Due to the ravage of corruption therefore, President Obasanjo proposed and signed Anti-corruption bill into law in 2003 and 2004 respectively. He established twin anti-corruption agencies (i.e. ICPC and EFCC) with different mandates as part of his national reform agenda to squarely address the menace of corruption and money laundering (Mikail, 2016).

The mandate of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) is to prevent corrupt practices and related offences while ensuring that appropriate legal sanctions are imposed on offenders. Section 6 of the ICPC Act stipulated three main responsibilities of the commission:

1. To receive and investigate reports of corruption and in appropriate cases prosecute the offender(s);
2. To examine, review and enforce the correction of corruption prone systems and procedures of public bodies, with a view to eliminating corruption in public life.
3. Educating and enlightening the public on and against corruption and related offences with a view to enlisting and fostering public support for the fight against corruption.

In like manner, the economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) is also empowered to investigate, prevent and prosecute offenders who indulge in:

Money laundering, embezzlement, bribery, looting and any form of corrupt practices, illegal arms deal, smuggling, human trafficking and child labour, illegal oil bunkering, illegal mining, tax evasion, foreign exchange malpractices including counterfeiting of currency, theft of intellectual property and piracy, open market abuse, dumping of toxic wastes, and prohibited goods (Section 46, EFCC Establishment Act, 2004, p.4).

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was established in 2003, partially in response to pressure from the Financial Action Task Force on money laundering (FATF), which named Nigeria as one of 23 countries non cooperative in the international community's effort to fight money laundering. The agency has its head office in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (www.efccnigeria.org). The twin anti-graft institutions play key roles for combating corruption in Nigeria and instilling fear in the political class who have self-centric desire to divert public funds for their own personal interest. Over 30 political office holders were apprehended and prosecuted and billions of naira were recovered from ill-gotten wealth through the effort of both EFCC & ICPC respectively.

Anti-Corruption Measures under Buhari's Civilian Administration

President Buhari's administration introduced and strengthened several anti-corruption measures, and scholars have assessed their effectiveness in curbing corruption and safeguarding national security. Okonkwo and Adeleke (2021) evaluated the role of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) between 2015 and 2020, and their findings have shown 40% increase in high-profile corruption prosecutions compared to the previous administration, though conviction

rates for politically exposed persons remained low at about 15%. Similarly, Nnamani et al. (2022, p.105) examined the implementation of the Treasury Single Account (TSA), using data from the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation. Their study showed that the TSA recovered approximately ₦9 trillion (\$23 billion) in previously unaccounted public funds between 2015 and 2021, but they also noted persistent resistance from government agencies and continued challenges in achieving full implementation.

Oyewole (2021) analyzed Nigeria's CPI scores from 2015 to 2020 and found that although the country's ranking improved slightly early in the administration rising from 26th position in 2015 to 28th in 2016 and 2017 but it later stagnated, returning to 26th position from 2018 to 2020. This indicates that initial optimism about anti-corruption reforms was not sustained. Similarly, a nationwide survey by Adenuga and Okafor (2022, p.95) involving 2,500 citizens across all geopolitical zones found that 78% of respondents believed that corruption remained a serious problem throughout the administration. Regional variations were also observed, with respondents in the North-East and North-West reporting slightly more favourable views of anti-corruption efforts compared to those in southern regions.

Theoretical Framework

To explain the implications of corruption on Nigeria's national security, the study employed Human Security Theory. The Human Security Theory, introduced in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report, shifts the focus of security from the state to the individual. Rather than emphasizing military threats, it prioritizes “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” (UNDP, 1994, p. 23). Scholars like Sen (1999, p.101) and Haq (1994, p.23) expanded this perspective by stressing the need to protect the basic needs and freedoms of individuals. This approach marks a departure from traditional security studies, advocating for a people-centered security that considers social and economic well-being as core components.

Human security is defined by the UNDP (1994) as protection from chronic threats like hunger, disease, and repression, as well as sudden disruptions to daily life. It encompasses economic, health, environmental, community, and political dimensions (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007). Paris (2001, p.51) emphasizes that individuals, not just states, should be seen as the primary focus of security efforts, as threats can arise from both state and non-state actors. This interconnectedness calls for a holistic approach involving governments, international organizations, and local communities in tackling human insecurity.

Corruption poses a serious threat to human security by diverting resources away from essential services, worsening poverty, and weakening governance structures (Transparency International, 2020). Reports of mismanaged security and welfare funds during Buhari's tenure (Punch Newspaper, 2022) reflect how corruption undermines both national and human security. Clientelism further entrenches corruption by prioritizing personal gain over public welfare, weakening state capacity (Robinson & Verdier, 2013). Addressing corruption, therefore, is key not only for safeguarding territorial integrity but also for securing the well-being and dignity of citizens (Bayart, 2009).

Methodology

This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through interviews, while secondary data were sourced from relevant textbooks, journals, magazines, and newspapers. A structured interview method was adopted, involving seven informants: two officers from the Nigerian Armed Forces (a Group Captain and Squadron Leader), two police

officers (a Commissioner and Superintendent), and three academic staff (a Professor and two Senior Lecturers). This aligns with the recommendations of Creswell (1998; P.128), Patton (2002; P.85), and Edward & Baker (2005, p.91), who suggest that a qualitative researcher shall interview from 5-25 informants to reach the saturation point. The seven informants interviewed in this study fall within the range.

Data Analysis

The overall state of corruption in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023

The excerpts from the above objective are as follows in line with the views of informants as clearly stated:

The overall state of corruption in Nigeria is quite alarming, checking through all indices and indexes, either national outlook or international placement, there is a significant increase in corruption from 2015 to 2023 (Military Officer I-Informant A) Corruption has been institutionalized, endemic, and it is shameful and a menace (Academic staff II-Informant C).

The above submissions conform to the views of Adamu and Ojo (2024; P.128), that corruption in Nigeria remains pervasive and deeply entrenched, affecting all sectors of society and normalizing practices such as bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement to the extent that one cannot offer any services either at the public level or private sector in line with the mandate of their organization or institution to the populace without certain gratification or token as kickback or extortion in doing their mandated role.

Specific examples or corrupt scandals that was prominent during Buhari's administration

The case of the Accountant General of the Federation was a serious case as he was supposed to be a watchdog over the accountability of the national treasury, but he was found embezzling a huge amount of money up to 80billion Naira, which is highly disappointing for someone of his calibre and many others (Academic staff I-Informant B)

Meanwhile, the significant case was the AbdulRasheed Maina's scandal. Maina, a former chairman of the Pension Reform Task Team, was accused of embezzling billions of naira in pension funds. Despite being dismissed and fleeing the country, he was controversially reinstated and promoted in the civil service under Buhari's administration (Academic staff III, IV, and V-Informant D, E, and F)

These align with the views of Ibrahim and Osei (2023, p.114) as they explore notable corruption cases in Nigeria during the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023). They provide detailed analyses of prominent scandals, including high-profile cases involving government officials, public enterprises, and political figures. This trend has tarnished the image of a government that preached on outlawing graft in its midst and to entrench public probity. Alas, the reverse was the case.

Corruption impacts on Nigeria's national security from 2015 to 2023

Corruption has had a profound negative impact on Nigeria's national security. Funds allocated for security and defense were often diverted for personal gain, leaving the military and security agencies underfunded and ill-equipped. This mismanagement of resources hindered the fight against insurgencies such as Boko Haram and other security threats (Academic staff III-Informant D)

Corruption within the military has had disastrous effects on national security. Funds meant for procurement of arms, ammunition, and welfare of troops was siphoned off by senior officers, leaving frontline soldiers poorly equipped and vulnerable. This has resulted in numerous defeats in the battlefield and loss of territory to insurgent groups (Military officer II-Informant G)

The above submissions conform to the views of Musa and Bello (2024) that corruption has significantly compromised Nigeria's national security by diverting funds intended for security operations, facilitating the proliferation of arms, and weakening institutional capacities.

Specific incidents of corruption that directly affected national security measures or outcomes

One notable incident was the mismanagement of funds meant for the fight against Boko Haram. In 2016, it was revealed that the former National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, had diverted \$2.1 billion meant for arms procurement. This corruption scandal severely impacted the military's ability to combat Boko Haram effectively, as the troops were left without the necessary weapons and equipment. (Academic staff III, IV and V-Informant D, E and F)

The above submission is in tandem with the position of Mikail and Abbare (2017); Okafor & James (2023) who note that corruption breeds fund mismanagement and bribery, undermining the security operative to halt insurgency like Boko Haram's fight by causing procurement scams and weakening intelligence and operations.

Role of corruption on the effectiveness of security agencies under Buhari's administration

Corruption played a significant role in undermining the operations and effectiveness of security agencies under Buhari's administration. For instance, funds earmarked for improving the capabilities of these agencies were frequently embezzled or misappropriated by high-ranking officials. This led to a shortage of necessary resources such as equipment, training, and infrastructure, directly hampering the ability of security personnel to perform their duties effectively. (Military officer I-Informant A)

The above submission aligns with Adeyemi & Olanrewaju (2024), who affirm that corruption weakened security agencies through embezzlement, procurement fraud, and the diversion of vital resources from key operations. This trend has affected the security agencies to discharge their role judiciously in meeting their target for combating insecurity in the country.

Key anti-corruption initiatives implemented by Buhari's administration

One of the key initiatives was the establishment of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption (PACAC) in 2015. This committee was tasked with reforming the anti-corruption campaign and enhancing the legal and institutional frameworks to combat corruption. (Academic staff III-Informant D)

Buhari's administration also implemented the Treasury Single Account (TSA) policy, which aimed to consolidate all government revenues into a single account at the Central Bank of Nigeria. This initiative significantly reduced the opportunities for embezzlement and mismanagement of public funds by increasing transparency and accountability. (Academic staff IV and V-Informant E and F)

The views above agree with Adebayo & Nwankwo (2024), who highlight reforms such as PEBEC, the TSA, and judicial improvements aimed at boosting transparency and strengthening

the prosecution of corrupt officials. These reforms would aid the system towards reducing the gravity of corrupt practices in Nigeria. It also boosted the revenue mobilization at the federal level and by extension some states have adopted it at their domain for equity and accountability to thrive.

Effectiveness of these measures in reducing corruption

The effectiveness of these measures was mixed. While the establishment of PACAC and the strengthening of anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC demonstrated a clear commitment to tackling corruption, the actual impact was somewhat limited. The initiatives did lead to several high-profile arrests and increased public awareness, but systemic corruption remained pervasive (Academic staff III-Informant D)

The above submission aligns with Ojo and Fatima (2024), who assess the impact of measures like the TSA, Whistleblower Program, and judicial reforms in improving transparency while noting that significant challenges still hinder the reduction of corruption.

Steps were taken by the Buhari's administration to enhance national security during his tenure?

Buhari's administration took several steps to enhance national security. One of the key measures was the increased funding and resources allocated to the military and other security agencies. This included procurement of new military hardware, vehicles, and equipment to better equip the armed forces in their fight against insurgency and other security threats (Military officer I-Informant A)

From a military standpoint, the Buhari administration prioritized the modernization and restructuring of the armed forces. This included the acquisition of advanced weaponry and technology to improve combat readiness and effectiveness (Military officer II-Informant G).

The above submission aligns with Adeyemi and Usman (2024), who note that initiatives such as restructuring the armed forces, creating specialized security units, improving intelligence capabilities, and increasing security funding were key efforts under the Buhari administration to address insecurity, despite notable shortcomings. There was improvement on security architecture especially in northern region than past government of President Jonathan. The fact is that, the government has closed down most of the security check points that serve as the threat to the people and even to the security personnel.

Challenges faced by Buhari's administration in fight against corruption

One of the primary challenges was the deeply entrenched nature of corruption within the political and administrative systems. Corruption had become so pervasive over the years that dismantling these networks was an enormous task. (Academic staff III- Informant D)

The main challenge is that, it is not only few Nigerians that are corrupt. The corruption itself is like an epidemic or virus that is in the bloodstream of virtually all Nigerians, so it becomes challenging when you say you want to fight corruption, it is going to fight back and now it is fighting back from different angle because a lot of people are corrupt (Academic staff I-Informant B)

The above submission aligns with Mikail (2016); Eze and Nnamdi (2024), who note that weak inter-agency cooperation; poor enforcement, political interference, and judicial corruption have

severely undermined anti-graft efforts, rendering many institutions ineffective in tackling widespread corruption.

Specific recommendations towards improving national security in Nigeria

One of the most effective strategies is the implementation of comprehensive institutional reforms. This includes strengthening anti-corruption agencies like the EFCC and ICPC by ensuring they have adequate resources, independence, and authority to perform their duties effectively. Additionally, enhancing transparency and accountability in government operations through measures such as open budgeting and procurement processes in line with Bureau of Public Procurement BPP (Act) can significantly reduce opportunities for corruption (Academic staff I-Informant B).

To improve national security, the informant has recommended investing in comprehensive intelligence gathering and sharing systems. Enhancing the capacity of intelligence agencies and improving inter-agency coordination will enable more effective and timely responses to security threats. Additionally, increasing community engagement and building local partnerships can help in gathering actionable intelligence and fostering cooperation between security forces and civilians (Academic staff III-Informant D).

For improving national security, they have recommended on to increase the focus on modernizing military equipment and technology to stay ahead of evolving threats. Implementing better training programs and strategic planning exercises will enhance the readiness and capability of security forces (Military officer I, II-Informant A, G).

The above submission aligns with Yusuf & Aliyu (2024, p.9), who recommend modernizing security infrastructure, improving inter-agency coordination and intelligence capacity, strengthening community policing, and tackling socio-economic drivers of insecurity such as poverty and unemployment. These would serve as measures towards enhancing the services of anti-graft institutions to discharge their duties as expected, it will also improve the security measures to the nation due to taken non-kinetic security measures such as poverty alleviation and job creation to the teaming youths for making them more relevant to nation building.

Discussion of Major Findings

Findings of the study revealed that corruption in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023 became increasingly severe, systemic, and deeply entrenched across institutions. Despite, Buhari's early anti-corruption promises, corruption remained pervasive, aligning with Adamu & Ojo's (2024; P.12) position. High-profile cases such as the National Carrier scandal from Ministry of Aviation, the Accountant General's embezzlement, and the mismanagement of IDP funds by former Secretary to the Government of federation Babachir Lawal David. This reflects Ibrahim and Osei's (2023, p.11) analysis of notable corruption incidents. Corruption within the security sector critically undermined national security, as highlighted by the diversion of funds meant for military operations and welfare. These failures weakened operational capabilities, morale, intelligence gathering, and public trust in governance, thereby prolonging conflicts and insecurity nationwide.

Although Buhari's administration introduced significant anti-corruption reforms, including PACAC, the TSA, and strengthened roles for the EFCC and ICPC, this development, has really yield positive result in apprehension of political rats of immediate past government of President Jonathan such as Mr Olisa Metuh, the former National Publicity Secretary PDP, Mrs Diezani Allison Madukwe, former Minister of Petroleum resources, Joshua Dariye, former Governor of

Plateau state, Jolly Nyame, former Governor of Taraba state, Orji Ozor Kalu, former Governor of Abia state and James Ngillari of Adamawa state were apprehended and detained for corrupt practices during their tenure in office. While former National Security Adviser Col. Sambo Dasuki (Rtd) was prosecuted on \$2.1 billion for arms procurement which was popularly refers as 'Dasukigate'. The above was among the laudable achievement in Buhari's anti-corruption crusade.

Consequently, there is a systemic corruption, selective justice, judicial inefficiency, and political interference that limits the effectiveness on anti-graft institutions to do better or as highly expected thereof. Deep socio-economic challenges such as, poverty, unemployment, and inequality inherited by the previous administration has further fueled corruption and insecurity, while internal resistance, political patronage, and bureaucratic inefficiencies hindered reforms. Effective strategies require comprehensive institutional restructuring, judicial independence, transparent procurement, strengthened security-sector and accountability. Future administrations can build on existing efforts by institutionalizing reforms, enhancing transparency, and empowering independent anti-corruption agencies, sensitization campaign to the citizens, and prioritizing merit-based governance to sustain long-term progress.

Conclusion

The study underscored the profound and detrimental effects of corruption on Nigeria's national security. While the Buhari administration made commendable efforts to address these issues as well as the prosecution of high-profile corruption cases, significant challenges still remain. In fact, the entrenched nature of corruption within the Nigerian society and governance structures poses a continuous threat to national security and development. Moving forward, future administrations must build upon these efforts, address the identified gaps, and implement comprehensive strategies to combat corruption and enhance national security effectively.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve anti-corruption measures and strengthen national security in Nigeria:

- i. **Strengthening Judicial Reforms and Institutions:** Strengthening judicial reforms is essential for tackling corruption and enhancing national security. Future administrations must streamline court processes, eliminate delays, protect whistleblowers, and ensure no individual is above the law. Anti-corruption institutions such as the EFCC and ICPC must also be adequately funded, empowered, and shielded from interference to effectively safeguard the nation.
- ii. **Enhancing Intelligence and Security Systems:** Enhancing national security requires the use of modern technologies such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and other sophisticated military hardware. The police and armed forces must be equipped with state-of-the-art technology and sophisticated weapons to fulfil their constitutional roles effectively.
- iii. **Promoting Merit-Based Appointments:** Ensuring that all the civil servants and their directors and chiefs of ministries are competent individuals with adequate skills is very crucial. Merit-based appointments and providing better support and incentives for military personnel can reduce susceptibility to corruption and enhance operational effectiveness.

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