

# **Stomach Infrastructure Paroxysm and President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda: The Consolidation of Poverty in Nigeria**

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of stomach infrastructure which is the use of foodstuffs, gifts, cash and other material items to induce the electorate during electioneering has in recent times, bedevilled the play of politics in Nigeria. This has led to the victory and subsequent enthronement of poor quality, inept and dishonest political actors who perpetrate corruption instead of delivering dividends of democracy. Using content analytical methodology, this study rigorously questioned the origins, dynamics and impacts of the syndrome and how it was adopted by the President Goodluck Jonathan-led administration from 2011–2015 as an instrument for looting and dispensing Nigeria's resources to politicians, both within and outside the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and others; clergymen and media elites, preparatory to the 2015 presidential election. The study found that the masses who were the target beneficiaries of the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA) were forced into worse levels of poverty instead of reaping the anticipated benefits of the programme. The study thus concluded that learning from the experiences of other nations notably China, India, etc., ATA possesses the potentials for boosting Nigeria's economy for unleashing prosperity on the citizenry if properly handled by a committed and patriotic leadership. We therefore called for the re-orientation and moderation of Nigerian elite's political behaviour and the demonstration of political will in managing the nation's resources a panacea to the crippling poverty and its accompanying iniquities in Nigeria.

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## **Introduction**

Since Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the successive leaders over the years have embarked on a flurry of public policies with emanating programmes designed to reduce poverty and to improve the living conditions of the citizenry. It is common knowledge that a public policy is more or less, a roadmap that provides a focus for political leaders to achieve transformation with a view to unleashing prosperity on the citizenry which in the Nigerian lexicon translates to the provision of dividends of democracy. The pioneer leaders who took over the reins of leadership from the departing colonial masters reeled out a litany of promises during the electioneering to spur Nigerian to massively support them (Okpaga, 1999; Ake, 2001; Omachi, 2015).

Before the nation was plunged into the three years and a half years bloody civil war, and the concomitant abortion of the First Republic, the promises had not been fulfilled. Instead, the pioneer leaders were hugely engrossed in primitively looting the treasury of the nation for personal aggrandizement while poverty intensified among the citizenry. Anyang'Nyongo aptly observed that 'African continent (and indeed Nigeria) went through the vicissitude of disappointment after independence, paving the way for the rise of authoritarianism, the operation by military rule, underdevelopment, and falling income' (Anyang'Nyongo, 2004, p.20). The first republic was marred especially by widespread corruption and ethnicity which grossly undermined the democratic experiment, culminating in its fall when the military juntas led by Aguiyi-Ironsi aborted the democratic government in the first bloody coup d'état. The prevailing poverty that engulfed Nigerians during the first republic was intensified by the civil war that hindered the smooth conduct of socio-economic activities in both the Eastern war ravaged zone and the other parts of Nigeria that were denied resources from the government because they were being deployed into the prosecution of the war by the federal government. The general policy thrust under Gen. Yakubu Gowon during the war was to import food and other luxury goods for the people's welfare (Omachi, 2015).

The Murtala/Obasanjo administration that overthrew General Gowon focused on agricultural revolution christened Operation Feed The Nation (OFN) with the hope of increasing food production, generate more income and correspondingly improve the living conditions of the citizenry. Similarly, President Shehu Shagari, Gen. Babangida and other leaders to date have adopted diverse programmes, though similar in content but with different togas; with the ultimate aim of providing welfare for the people and by extension, reduce poverty.

It is against this ritualistic backdrop of every administration reeling out its own programme that President Goodluck Jonathan introduced the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA) when he was elected as president of Nigeria and held sway between 2011 and 2015. The task of this paper is to critically assess the performance of the Jonathan agenda, which, rather than transforming agriculture as enunciated by its mandate, merely served as an instrument for dispensing favours to induce party men, the clergy, media elites etc., to generate support for 2015 presidential election, which tantamount to the promotion of what has come to be variously known in political parlance as economy of affection (Hyden 1980), prebendal politics (Joseph, 1987) and stomach infrastructure (Diamond, 2015) among others.

### **Clarification of Concepts**

#### **The Concept of Stomach Infrastructure**

The history of development in all societies, underlines the special importance of infrastructure which is a sine qua non. For the avoidance of doubt, infrastructure refers to basic facilities, services and installations (notably roads, water supply, electricity, markets, hospitals, etc) needed for the functioning of societies (Ake, 2001). The provisioning of infrastructure is one of the primary responsibilities of the government to promote people's welfare and economic activities as enunciated in the Constitution (FRN, 1999). Successive administrations in Nigeria have not been fully committed to increasing and maintaining the infrastructure to match the demands of the burgeoning population. Thus, there is a huge deficit as manifested in pot-holes on public roads, epileptic electricity power supply, dysfunctional hospitals, ill-equipped educational institutions, etc (Lucas, 2012).

Against the backdrop of the deficit, the promise of providing physical infrastructures such as roads, bridges, potable water, electricity power supply, hospitals among others have until recent times, dominated the campaign messages of political aspirants into public office at

rallies. However, the populace have realized that the ritualistic promises are left unfulfilled when elections are concluded and winners are inaugurated leading to the neglect of infrastructure which scholars variously describe as a *tale of woes, a hidden sore or a national shame*. What with the billions of naira being budgeted by successive administrations for the provisioning of infrastructures that are never provided? (Lucas, 2012; Oyinlola, 2012).

In more recent times however, many astute and experienced politicians in Nigeria are aware of the widespread and dehumanizing nature of poverty in the land. These crop of politicians have resorted to the use of food stuffs, drinks, clothes, cash, vehicles and other gift items to induce the people in exchange for electoral support. Such politicians pride themselves as men of the people, and therefore dish out these packages that have come to be known in Nigerian political lexicon as stomach infrastructure (Diamond, 2015; Okute, 2015). According to Okute, stomach infrastructure refers to ‘donations of free food items, money and other materials as inducement to voters’ by a grass root politician as a counter to superior campaign strategy of elitist and estranged politicians who do not seem to appreciate the depth of poverty in the society and the desperation of the poor for immediate gratification; rather than grandiloquence and promises that were popular insignias of Nigerian politics in the past (Okute, 2015).

In agreement, Gabriel (2015) conceives of stomach infrastructure as a new vocabulary that entered Nigerian politics ‘after the Ekiti Governorship election when voters were given bags of rice, cash and other food stuffs to vote in certain directions’. Gabriel however added that the practice and the use of the phrase stomach infrastructure, though popularized in Nigeria especially by the Ekiti Gubernatorial elections, predate the Ekiti experience. Similarly, Bidwell is of the view that stomach infrastructure is ‘a cash and carry brand of politics that jeopardizes national interest and not an apt solution to the deteriorating and deplorable conditions in the country’ (Gabriel, 2018, p.2).

Against the backdrop of the sequel, we conceive of stomach infrastructure in this work as the situation where political office seekers resort to the use of cash, food items, clothes, drinks, vehicles and other materials to induce the electorate to provide support through voting, canvassing, security logistics, etc, at the polls as pay off upfront because of the belief that the aspirant who would eventually accumulate wealth in office would no longer be reached when inaugurated. It also connotes sacrificing, jettisoning or discounting the highly cherished value of integrity for money and other forms of materials which by implication means the promotion of demagoguery, prebendalism and shenanigan in Nigerian politics.

It is vitally pertinent to note that in civilized democracies where people are relatively better off than in Nigeria; and are better politically socialized, it is the electorate who ‘make money donations for the campaign rallies of candidates of their choice, but it is the opposite in Nigeria where they want you to give them money as potential voters. If I am going there to fight your cause, why do I have to bribe you? If Nigeria were to be a sane society politically, for all his popularity among the masses, GaniFawehinmi should have won an election. But Nigeria is a sick society’ hence the cash and carry, money for hand, back for ground politics, better tagged stomach infrastructure syndrome (Onabule, 2009, p.27).

### **The Concept of Agriculture Transformation Agenda**

Following his inauguration in 2011, President Jonathan who was apprised of the deplorable living condition of Nigerians especially during his earlier stints, introduced the Agriculture Transformation Agenda (ATA) to resuscitate the neglected agricultural sector in the hope that

revolutionizing the agricultural sector would unleash prosperity on Nigerians, majority of who were farmers and lived in the rural areas. The agenda was designed to transform agriculture in Nigeria through the use of appropriate innovation and technology with a view to boosting productivity, increase farmer's income and correspondingly improve their living conditions. As a prelude to unveiling the blueprint, Jonathan noted that Nigeria was 'an economy that was recording 7.7 per cent jobless growth rate, agriculture contributing 42 per cent to GDP; manufacturing sector contributing about 4 per cent to GDP, epileptic power supply, massive poverty, deterioration in the provisioning of qualitative and quantitative social services, unstable exchange rate regime, widespread corruption, insecurity, and gender insensitivity among other inequities' (Cited in Ekpo, 2011). It was this crisis-ridden scenario that provided the motivation for the conception of the ATA because Jonathan believed that agriculture as an instrument par excellence, had the potentials for leapfrogging the nation's economy (Ekpo, 2011).

Interestingly, the emphasis was on the introduction of new methods of farming, the acquisition of improved varieties of seeds, the acquisition and use of modern tools and machines as well as chemicals, as well as liberalized access by farmers to bank facilities. Part of the mandate of the agenda was to give agriculture a new perception—indeed, a radical move from the drudgery and cynical attitude that relegated farming to the helpless and indigent rural dwellers without any other option for survival. Agriculture was to be repositioned and redesigned to be a lucrative business that would mop up the teeming labour army that were continuously gallivanting the streets in search of non-existent white collar jobs (Adesina, 2012).

The agenda was equally designed to massively build infrastructure and other social services to serve as an enabling environment for accelerating agri-business in all parts of Nigeria. Thus, the marketing of farm produce and the transportation of machines, chemicals and other materials would be hitch-free. In fact, transformation as used in the Jonathan conceived agenda implied what Ekpo (2011) calls 'a complete break from the old ways of doing things...a promise of a new economy...with a vibrant middleclass in Nigeria' (Ekpo, 2011, p.27). Indeed, Adesina, the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development under whose purview the programme was situated, noted that the ATA was basically about introducing changes and reformist strategies to agricultural practices with a view to boosting productivity to ensure food security as well as serving as a major revenue earner for the nation's economy. The ATA was also meant to create jobs to mop up the teeming unemployed youths across the length and breadth of Nigeria (Adesina, 2012).

To Mabogunje, a foremost Professor of Geography and a pundit of Nigeria's political economy, 'agricultural transformation suggests the abandonment of the traditional hoe and machete' and their replacement with 'the tractor' and other modern machines, tools and materials to enable the farmer appreciate the possibilities of large, owner-operated or co-operatively operated farms or of substantial wealth based on agriculture (Mabogunje, 2009). Mabogunje's submission is anchored on the Lewis famous thesis on human behavior which contends that people must speedily and consciously get mobilized and re-oriented towards abandoning archaic and moribund values and traditional practices that hinder their progress, and to embrace new ideas, innovative practices and pragmatic ideas that are more rewarding and result-oriented (cited in Mabogunje, 1990, p.470). Similarly, Aziz (1977) who stressed that land reform is germane to the success of any transformation agenda to enable it succeed, noted in his study of China's experience that land holding must be liberalized to ensure that the majority of the rural farmers have access to sufficient swathes of land to use as leverage

for keying into the agenda meant for their well-being. Interestingly, during the Jonathan administration, the hitherto existing land policy with its loopholes that he inherited remained unchanged. President Jonathan's conception of agricultural transformation consciously neglected land reforms.

It is instructive to note that during the period of Jonathan administration, most farmers especially in the rural areas in Nigeria were either landless or did not have sufficient access to land to key into Agriculture Transformation Agenda due to widespread conflicts between farmers and herdsmen over open grazing on the one hand. And on the other, since the beginning of the current democratic dispensation that started in 1999, many rich politicians and businessmen with rapacious proclivity for land acquisition, have descended on rural settlements and expropriated the poor farmers of their land, relying on the loop holes in the 1999 Land Use Act. To such groups, the ATA merely existed on the pages of newspapers, radios and the electronic media (Omachi, 2018).

Following Aziz (1977), Mabogunje (2009) and Adesina (2012) in the sequel, we conceive of agriculture transformation agenda as a roadmap for repositioning and revolutionizing agriculture through the use of innovations, technology and liberalized access to land policy for increasing productivity, and correspondingly, food security and improved living condition for people. It further connotes the carving of a new image for the agriculture sector to make it more appealing and profit-oriented in order to be more acceptable to all classes of people. It further implies the introduction of all fruits of technology to ensure that the stresses and drudgery that hitherto accompanied farming are removed.

### **Theoretical Framework: The Marxist Political Economy Theory**

Our discussions and analyses in this chapter have been subsumed within the Marxist political economy theory which contends that in all human societies, social, political, cultural and other activities and processes are determined and directed by economic considerations. According to Marx and his intellectual partner, Engels, it is the conflicting economic interests among groups in the society that generate disharmony as well as elicit struggles between classes. Accordingly, they asserted in their famous and often cited quote that 'the history of all human societies is a history of class struggle' to underscore the fact that economic consideration constitutes the base of all activities in the society and thus sets the trend, nature, character and direction of other systems (Gana, 1990; Ake, 2001; Ihonvbere, 2000). According to the theory, those who are economically powerful tend to dominate and direct the political activities in the state which they control, to further their interests while exploiting the masses. It is within the matrix of the Marxian enunciation that the dynamics of stomach infrastructure being used as an instrument for the accumulation of wealth by PDP stalwarts in the President Jonathan's government is brought to a sharp relief.

### **Interface Between Stomach Infrastructure and Jonathan's Transformation Agenda**

As we have noted in the foregoing, politics of stomach infrastructure is rooted in a grass root politician's understanding of the collective psychology of the poverty afflicting the citizenry who are in urgent need of cash gifts, drinks, food stuffs, and clothing among others to assuage their dire needs. The desperate populace are willing and eager to sell their voting rights and every other form of support to the highest bidder. The payment must however be made upfront because the politicians who now come to beg for votes can no longer be reached after elections. Obasanjo *et al.*, (1992) note that 'because of the past experiences of failed promises and seeming betrayals by politicians, a perceptible degree of cynicism now permeates the general thinking of Nigerians who believe that political office seekers go into



office to amass wealth (and so, they now insist on upfront) pay off for their votes because they see election time as their only opportunity to get their share of the spoils and rewards' (Obasanjo *et al.*, 1992, p. 6). Similarly, many aspirants give huge packages to party stalwarts as inducement to secure their approval and support to guarantee victory. As Aluko (2015) reported, President Jonathan ordered the release of N14 billion from the Central Bank of Nigeria, and shared to greedy ruling party stalwarts, elites of other parties, the clergy as well as media arrowheads as stomach infrastructure, to ensure a smooth sail in the 2015 presidential poll in what has ingloriously gone down Nigerian history as *Dasukigate*.

Diamond equally observed in a recent essay that during the 'Ekiti Gubernatorial Elections, Nigerian voters demanded that candidates seeking public office, pay attention to the infrastructure of the stomach' rather than merely dwelling on promises of roads, bridges, electricity power supply, potable water, etc, that they would provide when voted into office (Diamond, 2015, p.46). In agreement, Gabriel (2015) while critiquing the Ekiti Guber elections, describes the demand by the voters for food stuffs, cash and other materials in exchange for votes as asking for fish to eat rather than being taught how to fish, which apparently, is a more lasting legacy. Gabriel further stressed that the poverty-stricken populace reckon that 'government cannot be investing heavily on physical infrastructure (roads, water, bridges, electricity, hospitals etc), when the stomach is empty' (Gabriel 2015 p.4).

Thus, people now advocate for both physical development and stomach infrastructure to enable them survive to enjoy the dividends. The provisioning of immediate succour for the people famously christened, stomach infrastructure, has come to be widely accepted across the length and breadth of Nigeria especially because of the widespread poverty that cannot wait for the leaders to address through public policies when they get into office. Even more interesting is the failed promises and betrayals they experienced after they have voted their leaders into office. Thus, the 'Strongman of Ibadan politics', Lamidu Adedibu; and the equally Strongman of Kwara politics, Olusola Saraki, both used the strategy of stomach infrastructure provisioning to dominate and direct politics in their domains as kingmakers. As they provided small cash and food for the hungry, they sagaciously secured their loyalty firmly and used the garnered influence to win elections for their protégés in the abracadabra phenomenon that came to be ingloriously known in Nigerian political lexicon as godfatherism.

There is a consensus among scholars (Diamond, 2015, Gabriel, 2015, Okute, 2015, etc), that, the provisioning of immediate gratifications known as stomach infrastructure to the people by politicians is often done at the expense of physical infrastructure such as hospitals, roads, bridges, power supply, potable water, etc). Gabriel provided further insight into the syndrome noting that President Jonathan's Agriculture Transformation Agenda was a blue print for dispensing goods, cash and other materials to the ruling party's stalwart both as an appreciation for the president's victory at the polls during the 2011 presidential election; as well as an inducement to ensure his victory at the polls in 2015.

Gabriel stressed that 'stomach infrastructure is not necessarily a license for electoral victory at the polls...President Jonathan claimed that his administration succeeded in cutting the widespread poverty in the country by at least 50 per cent through ATA, because Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) fully subscribed to the principle of stomach infrastructure as a weapon for guaranteeing food security and job creation in Nigeria (indeed) no leader can lead hungry people' (President Jonathan, cited in Gabriel, 2015, p.4).

For Adoke (2019), the use of foodstuff, cash and other materials by Nigerian politicians to garner support is wrong and should be discontinued because they amount to mortgaging of physical infrastructures and social services that are germane to economic development of the society. Equally illuminating is the submission by Bidwell (2018) who noted that the cash and carry politics, euphemistically called stomach infrastructure strategy is grossly injurious to national interest. To him, it is not a solution to 'the deteriorating and deplorable conditions in the country. It is responsible for the 'wastages, inconsistency, project abandonment' as well as victory of dishonest people at the polls while patriotic candidates without money to induce the electorate are discarded at the polls' (<http://www.sunnewsonline.com>)

We found during our survey that many unpopular candidates who would ordinarily not win an election that is not manipulated and adequately supervised, which translates to a free and fairly conducted election, rely on stomach infrastructure syndrome to achieve victory. Although the acceptance of stomach infrastructure from candidates is a commitment/agreement to support a particular aspirant, many people accept bribes indiscriminately with the belief that what is being offered was part of their common wealth, stolen (Field Survey 2019). Thus, at rallies, every aspirant is expected to dole out packages to meet the pressing immediate needs of the prospective voters who are quick to interrupt a campaigner who addresses them and neglects to offer the anticipated package sometimes tagged 'item 7'. Interestingly, Nigerians now 'hear' their aspirants through the mouth; and aspirants are deemed to have 'spoken' well and deserve to be heard and taken seriously, only when they end their messages with the anticipated 'stomach infrastructures'; the bigger the package, the better. Interestingly, most politicians are perceived as professional liars and dishonest members of the society who should not be trusted (Field Survey 2019).

### **An Assessment of President Jonathan's Agriculture Transformation Agenda**

Basically, President Jonathan's ATA was aimed at tackling unemployment, creating wealth through massive job creation and achieving food security. The focus of ATA was on the value chains of ten crops that included cassava, rice, sorghum, cotton, cocoa, oil palm, tomato, onion, soya beans and maize as well as livestock and fisheries. The over-all aim according to the President was to make Nigeria self-sufficient and less dependent on imported foods. In fact, agriculture was no longer to be seen as an occupation for the indigent who resided in the rural areas without an option but a lucrative business for university graduates and other categories of Nigerians (Adesina, 2013).

On the positive side, the agenda was a milestone policy decision of a democratically elected Nigerian President towards diversifying the nation's economy from oil into agriculture to ensure food security and foreign exchange generation. It was also a bold move towards the creation of jobs in the agricultural sector as a poverty alleviation measure. The policy was also a bold move towards improving rural infrastructure throughout Nigeria to ease the movement of people, farm inputs and produce for marketing and consumption in the urban areas.

Further, the programme was a conscious design to liberalize farmers' access to credit facilities to enable them acquire the needed farm tools, seeds and machines. In particular, the Growth Enhancement Support Scheme (GESS) was put in place by the President to eliminate corruption in the procurement and distribution especially of farm inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizer and herbicides among others. This was to ensure that genuine farmers were no longer shortchanged as had been the practice over the years (Daniel, 2012; Manuaka, 2013). Interesting as the sequel appears, there have been several charges of failure of ATA to

achieve its set goals. First, critics contend that corruption during the ATA implementation period was unprecedented, and marred any achievement that could have been recorded. Even more worrisome was President Jonathan's ambivalence to the malaise as he carelessly told the international community that there was no corruption in Nigeria but mere stealing. Thus, his body language was evidently tolerant and receptive to corrupt practices and constituted a minus for ATA (Ardo, 2012; Oyeniyi, 2015).

In the area of infrastructure, Nigerian roads were in worse condition at Jonathan's exit than when he took over the reins of leadership. Power supply descended to the lowest level with many Nigerians going for weeks and months without electricity. As further insight, the mass media were awash with reports of mass relocation of big business organizations from Nigeria to Ghana and other African countries because of poor public electricity supply, widespread political violence, youth restiveness and corruption, which combined to increase their operational overheads. To Adams Oshiomole, the ATA was a 'Big Scam' designed to hoodwink gullible Nigerians. Oshiomole further insisted that no jobs were created by the ATA as promised; no machines were introduced to mechanize farming in Nigeria, stressing that hunger had become more widespread and crippling. According to him, Nigerians were still relying on imported food from other countries to survive (Manuaka, 2013).

Oshiomole's position has been reinforced by (Ameh 2017) who accused President Jonathan of running a voodoo government that unleashed poverty, hunger and joblessness on Nigerians. Indeed: Jonathan 'ran a voodoo economy, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. There was massive unemployment, massive inflation; there was shortage of petroleum products, there was oil subsidy which led to trillions of Naira subsidy fraud...mindless looting of government resources...the bumbling incompetence of his government sent the economy into recession' which the Buhari administration inherited (Ameh, 2017).

To Lawrence (2013), 'one is amused watching President Good luck Jonathan vacillating as he mouths growth that is not practically evident. The only growth that Nigerians have seen since his administration came on board is the show of vanity and corruption...do we expect peace in a country with 70 per cent unemployment? How do we expect order in a country where the major industries have collapsed? Nigeria is really at cross-roads' (p.77). Lawrence further reiterates this position while reviewing President Jonathan's scorecard in 2015, tersely asserting that 'Jonathan inflicted untold poverty and impunity on the land' (Lawrence, 2015).

Comrade Shehu Sani added his voice to the litany of criticisms, describing Jonathan's government as a sham that took 'corruption to the highest level with the state abetting. Nigeria has today sunk deep into the abyss of poverty, pervasive insecurity and corruption. Nigerian workers and non-workers today bear the brunt of the transformation agenda that had no human face' (Sani, 2012). The submission of Akinkuotu, the Executive Editor of Tell Magazine is most instructive as he asserts: 'the president has of late been assuring Nigerians that they would soon start feeling the impact of his Transformation Agenda...it is in agriculture that Jonathan is raring to give Nigerians greater dividends of democracy. The irony, though, is that about N80 billion allocated to the sector in 2013 is less than two per cent of the total budget. Thus experts in the field say government has not matched its promises with commensurate allocation of resources to the sector' (Akinkuotu, 2013, p.6).

The most scathing of the criticisms came from President Jonathan's own godfather, an Ijaw stock who promised Nigerians Armageddon if Jonathan was not re-elected in 2015; and a



highly revered ethnic compatriot cum diehard enthusiast of Jonathan who had variously served in state and federal government positions, Chief Edwin Clark. Chief Clark who recently described former President Jonathan during a press interview as a weak leader 'who lacked the political will-power to fight corruption' thereby agreeing with the popularly touted hypothesis that President Jonathan was more or less, an innocent looking 'figure-head who manned a kleptocratic government that ruined Nigeria's economy...(indeed, an umpire) of a nightmare of robbery festival that underscored his era' (Samson 2015 pp. 19-20).

Williams provided more insight into Jonathan's ambivalence to corruption and weakness stressing that even when \$20 billion was reported missing from the accounts of the (NNPC) under the close watch of Diezani Allison-Madueke, the Petroleum Minister; by the then Central Bank Governor, Sanusi Lamido, rather than investigating the issue, President Jonathan 'waived the allegation aside as baseless and instead 'suspended the former governor until his tenure ended'. A more startling revelation was made by the Premium Times which reported that under the watch of Ms. Allison-Madueke, 'dubious oil-marketers stole trillions of Naira of oil subsidy money' (Cited by Williams 2015, p.14). Williams further revealed that the Petroleum Minister was 'untouchable because of her perceived affinity to President Jonathan' which made all allegations of graft (including the hiring of private air crafts with over N10 billion public fund) against her to fall flat on the face (p.14).

In sum, ATA performed dismally and did not achieve its mandate of unleashing prosperity on Nigerians due to widespread corruption, ineptitude and the dearth of political will of the Jonathan administration. The inglorious Dasuki-Gate involving N14billion looted from the public treasury and shared among PDP stalwarts—Chairman N650million; BOT Chairman N260million, among other party men is still fresh in the minds of Nigerians (Okakwu 2018, p.1). As Alukorighly asserted: 'it has been proven beyond doubt as revealed by the participants themselves that government money had been used to directly fund a ruling political party in elections, and that the money was used to buy off individuals and other political parties (Aluko, 2015, p.1). Thus, ATA did not make any positive impact on the people, especially the rural dwellers whose living condition deteriorated due to exacerbating rural poverty, hunger, increasing unemployment, decaying infrastructure and social services among a plethora of other iniquities. Till date, farming in Nigeria, especially among the rural populace who constitute the majority is largely a cutlass and hoe affair like the colonial era as farmers still rely on old seeds saved and depend on natural sunlight and rainfall for their activities which greatly undermines their productivity (Omachi, 2018; Field Survey, 2019).

Equally disturbing is the despicable state of infrastructure and social services in all parts of the country. Electricity power supply was oscillating between 2000–3000 megawatts at the end of Jonathan's administration. In fact, the huge money invested in the programme was money down the drain. It is vitally important to stress that the existence of deleterious land tenures systems in almost all parts of Nigeria, and the equally hostile 1999 Land Use Act; coupled with the open-grazing system and the attendant farmers'/herdsmen conflicts that were rife during the Jonathan administration, none of which was sufficiently addressed by the federal government during the ATA implementation period to democratize people's access to land, grossly undermined the performance of the agenda.

We thus agree with critics of the ATA that it merely liberalized poverty rather than unleashing prosperity on the citizenry as enunciated in its mandate. It is therefore no wonder that the PDP programmes and many of their candidate, especially incumbent Jonathan; at both the federal and state levels were roundly rejected at the polls in 2015 (Daniel, 2015).

### Recommendations

From the foregoing submissions, it is apparent that Nigeria's political leaders have over the years been mired in corruption with the Jonathan administration taking the nation to the nadir which made it impossible for the ATA to positively impact on the living conditions of Nigerian. The time has now come for the nation's leaders to borrow a leaf from civilized climes such as China, India etc., and demonstrate sufficient political will in the management of public resources and programmes. We recommend that Nigeria's political leaders demonstrate zero-tolerance for corruption especially in public office. This also suggests that anyone found misappropriating or misapplying public resources must be severely punished to serve as deterrent to others. A mechanism should be put in place to make the abuse of public office for personal gains difficult and unattractive. All offenders without exception must be made to face the full weight of the law. They should also be made to forfeit what they looted to serve as deterrent to others.

Also, we agree with the World Bank (1993) that government should provide infrastructure, funding, farm machines, herbicides, research reports, improved varieties of seeds and fertilizers among others. In addition, the 1999 Land Use Act needs to be reviewed to ensure that the loopholes inherent in the Act which desperate political stalwarts and business tycoons capitalize on to expropriate rural farmers of their land are repealed. The reform should as a matter of priority, be targeted at redistributing land so that rural dwellers would have sufficient land for their farming activities rather than living as squatters and mere labourers that live on mere wages earned from their employers. Also, the extant grazing methods in Nigeria should be reviewed to conform with the 21<sup>st</sup> century global best practices to put an end to the perennial farmers/herdsmen clashes and the attendant consequences that hinder the progress of Nigerian economy. In addition, Programmes meant for the people must articulate their demands and aspirations from on set. This suggests that the top-down formulation and implementation of programmes that serve as a recipe for the elites to capture the benefits meant for the target group should be stopped as it no doubt amounts to a waste of public resources.

### Conclusion

The foregoing exploration clearly shows that what Chinua Achebe (1985) calls the 'trouble with Nigeria' has remained a factor in the citizen's way of life. This is understandably so because 'the character of the Nigerian state...has not changed' since the colonial epoch (Babawale 2007.p.209). As Ake asserts, 'much of what is uniquely negative about politics in Africa (indeed Nigeria), arises from the character of the state, particularly its lack of autonomy, the immensity of its power, its openness to abuse and the lack of immunity against it. The character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of the state makes the capture of power (and its misuse for primitive accumulation) irresistibly attractive' as clearly demonstrated by President Jonathan like his predecessors (Ake, 1996 p. 7). The so-called transformation agenda was an instrument for dispensing booties, spoils and rewards from the political system while sloganeering rhetorics of poverty alleviation, food security, agribusiness and profitability a la job creation to hoodwink the people. We cannot but reasonably agree with Ake (2001) who aptly suggested that a good blueprint with the capacity for positively impacting on the citizenry should go beyond merely making it profitable as enunciated in the Jonathan agenda. 'Rather, what is needed is a strategy that encourages farmers to do what they are doing better, to become more efficient and more productive...by putting the farmer at the centre of development...as well as giving him more access to the things he needs to be more efficient...this (above all), requires improving rural

infrastructure' (Ake 2001, p.43). To the extent that the agenda failed to recognize these critical issues, it is pertinent to conclude that President Jonathan's Agriculture Transformation Agenda which was bedeviled by the syndrome of primitive accumulation variously called benefit capture, prebendalism, economy of affection or stomach infrastructure syndrome only aggravated the widespread poverty in Nigeria. Perhaps this theory of stomach infrastructure paroxysm may be used to appreciate the play of politics in other states in Africa and beyond.

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