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Living without the State: A Rear View Mirror of Nigeria's 50 Years of Independence

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Abstract: *The purpose of this analysis is twofold. First, it undertakes a critical review of Nigeria's performance within the five decades of its nationhood. Second, it compares its performance vis-à-vis a number of new states which started almost at the same time in both Africa and Asia using basic economic and political indicators. The article, however, infers that Nigerian political-economic performance is appalling, which has subjected citizens to living almost without the state in all ramifications. For a balanced view, the analysis argues that although there are few giant strides in terms of educational development and reduction in infant mortality as a result of improved health facilities, the gap between intent and actual practices is still very wide. The analysis recommends that the policymakers should visualize the next five decades and formulate appropriate reforms so that Nigeria may not eventually become a failed state.*

Keywords: State, independence, corruption, infrastructure, economy

Our mistake was not in our demand for freedom; it was in the assumption that freedom – real freedom – would necessarily and with little trouble follow liberation from alien rule.

- Julius Nyerere (cited in Adebisi 1989, 11)

Introduction

October 1, 2010 marked the fifty years of Nigeria as a sovereign state (Dambata 2010, 76). The independence of Nigeria from Britain was heralded with pomp and pageantry by both foreigners and the indigenous population. This essentially resulted from the perception that the country represents the hope for the black man, because it is the most populous black country in the world (Nwosu 2000). No doubt, Nigeria was considered as a “show piece of decolonizing Africa” (Kirk-Green 1976, 7).

However, ever since 1960, several of these hopes have been betrayed by the Nigerian state cum political elite. The political terrain has witnessed several hiccups not envisaged by those who placed great hope on the nation. The national politics has swung between civilians and the military, with the latter having a clear upper hand (see Ojo 2004a; Ojo 2006b; Ojo 2009c). Along the line, the country experimented with Interim National Government, an unprecedented contraption that collapsed after 82 days. In view of this, Nigeria had suffered tremendously from both political and governmental instability (Ake 1973, 28). Coupled with poor showing at political level is an abysmal

performance of the economy which has impacted negatively on the infrastructure which had moved from the status of decay to total collapse (*The Guardian* 2010).

Consequently, the aggravating problem of instituting a viable political order based on effective and legitimate governance has no doubt become the most pressing and fundamental pre-occupation of decision makers and the public alike since ‘flag independence’ in 1960 (Bassey 1989). The political reality of Nigeria as a developing world country even after five decades of independence has forced Africanists of every hue to have described the forms and character of Nigerian state in the last fifty years as ‘failed’ ‘collapsed’ ‘criminalized’ ‘rhizome’ ‘invisible’ ‘shadow’ (Amuwo 2004, 316-317) and even ‘the crippled giant’ (Osaghae 1998). The perception of this paper is that Nigerians are living virtually without the state in all ramifications as shall be demonstrated later.

This piece is an in-depth analysis of critical issues that are responsible for the country’s parlous state. It is organized into a number of sections. With the above introductory remarks, the second segment dwells on framework of analysis. The dilemma faced by this part is that of making a choice between two alternatives – either using theory of the state – which Nigeria is a complete deviant – or theory of development – of which Nigeria is also far away to its doctrine and precepts. In the face of that dilemma the paper simply anchored the work on the philosophical foundation of “the common good” (Ojo 2009c) which old textbooks argue are the basic functions of the state and juxtapose same with the reality on the ground with empirical data. For instance, Nigerian state is still incapable of providing basic health services and facility after five decades of her independence.

The federal Ministry of Health just recently disclosed that, the death toll from the scourge of cholera epidemic that ravaged some Northern states: Borno, Bauchi and five other states had risen to 571 from the 360 recorded earlier. The number of infected persons has also increased from 5,320 to 10,134 people, out of which Borno and Bauchi states recorded 2,617 and 2,417 cases respectively. The Health Ministry had earlier revealed that there had been more than 6,400 cholera cases since June 2010, with the disease detected in 12 of Nigeria’s 36 states (*The Punch* 2010, 14).

The regular outbreak of cholera in Nigeria is traced to poor sanitation and contaminated wells. The latest report from the U.S State Department revealed too that only 17.2 percent of Nigerians have access to pipe-borne water (*The Punch* 2010, 14). No doubt, the state is incapable of discharging its basic traditional and constitutional functions. The third main section highlights and discusses a number of issues that may be used in appraising the performance of Nigeria so far. Notable among them includes: elections and electoral processes, civilian versus military administrations, weak economy, and Nigeria’s struggle against corruption, exemplary leadership and asymmetric power relationships.

These factors are far from being exhaustive, since each of them could be studied independently. The paper, however, infers that perhaps the only major achievement after the 30-month agonizing civil war fought between 1967 and 1970 is that the polity has not disintegrated despite the influence of centrifugal and centripetal forces all along.

Framework of Analysis

A brief discussion of what the traditional and constitutional functions of the state should be will aid the understanding of the political balance sheet of Nigeria in the last five decades. This is because in virtually all ramifications, the state has demonstrated sufficient signs of incapability. In the words of Daniel Wit, in all regions and climes of the world "...in all forms of government, democratic and non-democratic must have certain objectives" (Wit 1953, 6-8). These objectives are used to measure governmental performance and it is how well they are discharged that is taken to be good governance and development.

Wit, in his *Comparative Political Institutions: A Study of Modern Democratic and Dictatorial Systems* itemized these common objectives. To start with, of necessity, their very existence and desire to continue to exist, states should introduce the value of security. Both within the state and from its potential and actual foes abroad, such security is a primary objective which no government can afford to ignore. The snag however is that in the last couple of decades, Nigeria had been too weak in terms of enhancing security of lives and properties. Communities and individuals have resorted into self-help by employing personal guards and forming vigilante groups in the face of ineffective policing of the polity.

Recently, the National Daily, noted that more than anything else, the greatest obstacle to the nascent democracy is the pervasive insecurity of lives and property, as evidenced by the spate of armed robbery attacks, assassinations, ethnic and religious conflicts, coupled with the seeming helplessness of security agencies to handle criminal. The increasing number of unemployed Nigerians some of whom are ready recruits for criminal activities worsen the situation (Ojo 2008, 368). In addition to security, both democracies and dictatorships seek other common objectives. All forms of modern government attempt to promote the economic health of their particular state. That such must be an objective of any government is clear when one considers the extent to which national security is related to the vigor of the national economy.

The very survival of the nation is linked to the ability of its economy to meet the material demands of both people and government. In the words of Wit, "welfare constitutes a third objective of modern government" (cited in Ojo 2008, 368) One must turn to the feudalistic and hence mediaeval nations of the Arab world or of portions of South-East Asia to discover any approximation of the non-welfare government in the existing world. That welfare is an objective of all modern nation-states is a fact comparable to their common pursuit of national economic well-being. More so that welfare activity is engaged in by the state, because people everywhere in the world demand it from governments. In fact, the purpose of the state is the ultimate aim for which, its existence, which is two-fold: the promotion of individual welfare and the realization of the collective ends of society (Kapur 2006, 715).

No statement of the objectives of modern government can be complete without a discussion of that crucial area of divergence from which we obtain vital insight into fundamental differences between democracy and dictatorship. That area is liberty. The more a state can guarantee this the better for the citizenry. Wit concludes that a state that is really worth its salt would have "insatiable thirst for glory and exaltation in their own vigor" (Wit 1953, 6-8). This in common parlance is

known to be jealously guarding their sovereignty. No doubt, a regime, which intentionally or otherwise is incapable of discharging these functions by enhancing at least minimum sustenance, courts disaster (Ojo 2006b, 233).

It is the responsibility of the state to be able to enhance law and order for proper management of the economy, and be capable to provide basic infrastructures that will make life abundant for the citizenry within its jurisdiction. Amenities such as pipe borne water, electricity, care of the aged, health facility, food security and motorable roads along with education are essential elements of good living which are all regarded as ‘dividend of democracy’ (Ojo 2009c, 149-156) in contemporary Nigeria. The problem however is that the performance of Nigeria on these basic functions of a country is far below expectation. With the earlier listed functions of the state we now move to the substantive issues in Nigerian government and politics before we draw our conclusions and add few recommendations.

(A) Elections and Electoral Processes

Elections were introduced in Nigeria in 1922 with the introduction of the Clifford constitution, which provided for voting in Lagos and Calabar, as well as the emergence of political parties, beginning with Sir Herbert Macaulay’s Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). It is imperative to note that pre-independence elections were relatively free and fair, and violence free at least to some extent more so that organized large scale killings involving the use of fire arms were unknown (Nwolise 2007, 155-179). However, from the 1959 elections, which ushered in independence in 1960, the country began to experience exacerbated electoral violence. During the 1959 general elections, there were physical, psychological, and structural forms of violence, taking the form of thuggery, and election rigging. Even before the vote count was completed the then Governor General, Sir James Robertson, had asked Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of the Northern People’s Congress to form a government because the British colonial masters wished to hand over power to their long-favored ally, the North (Nwolise 2007).

Moreover, right from independence, elections were programmed to fail. As shall be demonstrated in this section, the conduct of elections in Nigeria has failed to meet minimum internationally acceptable standards which, no doubt, have been the bane of democratic sustenance and consolidation. In the extant literature on elections and democracy generally, an objective electoral process must meet certain criteria. Firstly, every eligible voter must have the opportunity to participate in the process. Secondly, an independent body should conduct the elections. Thirdly, each vote must carry equal weight. Further, the process must be transparent. Moreover, the result should reflect the number of votes that have been cast. Lastly, dissatisfied candidates must be given an opportunity to challenge the results before independent courts and/or tribunals. In the absence of these key ingredients, it is difficult for any election to be deemed free and fair (Nwolise 2007).

The 1964 federal elections and that of 1965 regional elections too were far from being free and fair. Both were marred by violence and rigging. This eventually culminated into the 1966 military incursion into Nigerian government and politics. Commenting on the reactions of Nigerians to the 1964 general elections and the 1965 western regional elections, Chief Bola Ige (Nigeria’s former Minister of Justice and Attorney General), asserted that:

“... the election rigging of 1964 (at Federal level) and of 1965 were seen by the majority of Nigerians as despicable acts and the victory of anti-democratic forces. So they reacted, first by the general boycott of 1964, and secondly by the famous operation ‘wet-e’ in 1965 (in which properties of those suspected of selling out were set on fire)” (Ige 1992, 37).

The military interregnum ushered in by the muddled elections of 1965-66 lasted till 1979 when the military introduced another transition program. By 21st September of 1978, the ban on party politics was lifted. Eventually, five political parties were registered by the Federal Electoral Commission – to contest elections during the transition period. The parties participated in all the elections during the remaining period of transition. However, the transition program was enmeshed in a profound controversy. After the presidential election with Alhaji Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) leading, the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) went to court to challenge his victory over the correct interpretation of the constitutional provision of 122/3 of 19 states of the federation, a condition which to the UPN, none of the candidates satisfied. The Supreme Court later adjudicated and declared Alhaji Shehu Shagari the winner after the 122/3 legal ‘abracadabra’ thus casting serious aspersion on the election (Ojo 2004, 60-82).

In 1983, Shehu Shagari’s NPN controlled federal government conducted another federal election. Unfortunately, his party was determined to remain in government even when the electoral slogan in the North was ‘changì’ (change). The crisis that trailed the muddled election brought the second republic to its knees and the military, which had been lurking around the corridors of power intervened once again. The military interregnum lasted another ten years before the ill-fated 1993 general elections. Polling was generally conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, and there were no reports of serious violence or casualties. Despite the narrow choices available to voters (because of the two party system), the outcome of the election was eagerly anticipated in the wake of a successful poll. Within a short time, National Electoral Commission (NEC) promptly collated the election results and the national press leaked early returns despite an embargo on a piecemeal release of results.

The partial tabulations indicated a decisive victory for Chief M.K.O. Abiola of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), with a decisive 58 percent of the total votes cast (Newswatch 1993). Suddenly, after the announcement of the results for 14 states and their display on the score board, the announcement for the remaining 16 states were halted on the ground that Justice Tahir Saleh (Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory) had received a message from the Presidency that the announcement should stop pending the determination of Association for Better Nigeria, ABN’s case (*The News* 1993). On 23rd June, 1993 General Babangida’s government broke its silence when it suspended the NEC and annulled the election results. Decree 52 of 1993 which formed the pillar of the transition program was hurriedly repealed by the Federal Military Government, making it impossible to seek redress in the court of law (Ojo 2000, 1-25).

In the words of Nwabueze, the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election plunged the country into what indisputably is the greatest political crisis in its 33 years of existence as an independent nation. Never before, except during the murderous confrontations of 1966-1970, had the survival of Nigeria as one political entity been in more serious danger. The impasse created was

certainly unequalled by anything the country had experienced before (Nwabueze 1994). It was the spontaneous reaction from the civil society that culminated in the ‘funeral’ of General Babangida’s eight-year rule on 27th August, 1993 when he ‘stepped aside.’ Strangely, General Babangida (rtd) made deft efforts to come back as civilian president during the country’s preparation for the 2011 general elections before he jettisoned the idea.

In 1999, Nigerians went to the polls once again. The election which brought Chief Olusegun Obasanjo back to power was conducted by General Abdulsalam Abubakar’s administration. The election was peaceful with little violence simply because Nigerians were already weary of military rule. After his first term, the civilian administration conducted another election in 2003. The election witnessed electoral violence, rigging and abuse of human rights (Human Right Watch 2003). In order to preserve the nascent democracy, the country waited patiently for another opportunity to truly elect their leaders. The reason for this great expectation is not unconnected with what some have called massive electoral frauds and malpractices.

Another opportunity came in 2007 general elections. The election was the third one to be conducted by the civilian government inaugurated in 1999, and was considered a watershed (Omotola 2009). Scholars assume that being a third election it will turn out to be important. Generally third election signals an opportunity for change and power turn over (Omotola 2009, 185). Given the global failure of previous elections in Nigeria, the 2007 elections also presented an opportunity to occasion a break with the past, and rekindle public confidence in the electoral and democratic process of the country (Adejumobi 2009). However, contrary to this optimism, the 2007 general election was a failure (Ojo 2007). This is not unconnected with the fact that the election could not meet basic standards of fairness, efficiency, and transparency which has thrown Nigeria once more into a frustrating impasse (Suberu 2009, 121). As noted by Suberu, across the federation (and notably in Anambra, Delta, Jigawa, Katsina, Nassarawa, Ondo, and Osun states) violence surrounding the voting’s conduct or outcome took an estimated two hundred lives, including those of 39 police officers. Arsonists struck the independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices, police stations and the houses of local PDP leaders (Ibid). Expectedly, the reports of reputable domestic and international observers of the elections were unanimous in their condemnation of the electoral process but also divergent on the way forward (Adebayo and Omotola 2007).

In fact, the elections were a missed opportunity for the consolidation of Nigeria’s nascent democracy. With preparation for another general election in 2011, all eyes were on Nigeria and the new INEC to conduct a free and fair election. Despite the initial problems which have necessitated INEC asking for review of the 1999 constitution to accommodate shift in election dates, the 2011 election was a marked departure from what it used to be. Although the election was considered free and fair it suffered enormously from credibility problem in the face of unprecedented electoral violence in the North.

(B) Civilian vs. Military Administration

Undoubtedly, one observable phenomenon in post-independence Nigerian government and politics is military intervention in politics. Shortly after independence, the military became ‘political

gladiators' in the battle for the control of the state through incessant interventions in politics and government. For instance, on eleven different occasions as a result of the military's desire to control the country Nigeria went through the labor pains of coups d'état that failed, were aborted or succeeded. Between 1966 and 1998, Nigeria has had seven military Heads of State, with a lot of coup victims to the bargain. At last count, over 117 persons, both military and civilians have been executed over coup charges. The death toll was 39 in 1976 and 10 in 1986, while the aborted coup in 1990 recorded the highest casualties of 60 (Ojo 2006, 261-262).

As a result of the frequent coups and counter-coups which occurred on the following occasions: January 1966, July 1966, July 1975, February 1976, December 1983, August 1985, April 1990, and November 1993 with six successful coups and two failed ones between 1966 and 1983, (Ojo 2009, 288-308), the Total Military Intervention Score (TMIS) for the country is indeed high. The military has ruled Nigeria for a much longer time than have its civilian counterparts. The civilians have held office for fourteen out of the first forty-three years of Nigeria's flag of independence, excluding the spell of Chief Ernest Shonekan's Interim National Government between August 27 and November 17, 1993 (Ojo 2004). This is simply the picture of a praetorian state or what Leo Dare called the "praetorian trap" (Olufemi 1998, 51). The only respite so far is the uninterrupted civilian administration since 1999 when democracy was inaugurated.

It is imperative to note however that successive military administrations since 1966 were guilty of the allegation of corruption that they used to justify their take-over. Virtually all reports of government probe panels indicted them. Thus, the military could not make themselves a better alternative to the civilians in terms of management of both the economy and the polity. The military's mismanagement of the polity led to the 30-month agonizing civil war in Nigeria. The military autocracy and absolutism was also characterized by horrendous human rights violations, unprecedented kleptocracy, hostage taking, forced exile and physical elimination of opponents that defined Germany in the period 1936-1945, while Stalin's Soviet Union also characterized the behavior of the state (Adesina 1989). Thus, the long years of military rule has complicated Nigeria's problem through a break in governmental legitimacy which normally erodes the foundation of government and of the state.

The resultant effect is instability usually unleashed on the system. There is abundant evidence which shows that military coups and attempted coups tend to happen more during military rules than civilian governments (Ojo 2000, 13). The concomitant effect of successive military rule in Nigeria is the culture of violence, in that Nigeria's post-colonial state permits itself the luxury of employing violence against civil society (Ojo 2008/2009). This culture of violence has percolated into the 'marrows' of the polity to the extent of both political intolerance and human rights abuses (Ojo 2010).

(C) Weak Economy

In the last five decades, if there is an area where managers of Nigerian system performed too poorly, it is the economy. The problem is simply how to explain penury and squalor in a nation endowed with both human and natural resources at independence. The performance of a number of other

African countries that are in the club of 1960s, in terms of independence, is far better than that of Nigeria (see Table I below for the position of Nigeria among other African countries that obtained their independence almost at the same time in 1960).

The dilemma becomes more annoying when the Nigeria is compared with other countries like Malaysia, South Korea, Singapore and Indonesia that are not as endowed in natural resources and were in the same situation as Nigeria in the 1960s. These countries have experienced marked industrialization with improved quality of life for the vast majority of their population since the 1990s when Nigeria cannot confidently say it is on the path to industrial growth (Aiyede 2010, 23-25). Table II below juxtaposed Nigeria's performance along with Asian developing countries which equally started off as new states like Nigeria.

TABLE I
Performance of the class of 1960 in Selected Human Development Indicators

No.	Country	National Poverty Line	Life expectancy	Child Mortality	Maternal Mortality (100, 000 live birth)	Access to Drinking Water	Adult Literacy	GDP per capita (pps US\$)
1	Nigeria	54.4	46.8	193.1	1100	48	69.1	1, 128
2	Benin	36.8	56.2	130	840	67	39.7	1, 141
3	Ivory Coast (cote de'ivoire)	36.7	71.0	32.8	210	80	83	1, 648
4	Chad	64	50.6	178.4	1500	42	25.7	1, 427
5	Madagascar	67.5	59.0	93.1	510	46	70.7	923
6	Central African Republic	67.2	44.4	148.2	980	75	48.6	1, 224
7	Mali	47.5	53.8	187.7	970	50	22.9	1, 033
8	Niger	70	56.4	205.3	1800	46	29.8	781
9	Senegal	53.9	62.8	101.4	980	76	42	1, 792
10	Burkina Faso	36.2	49.1	189.8	1100	79	59.3	1, 213
11	Mauritania	46.3	63.7	97.2	820	53	55.2	2, 234
12	Togo	61.7	58.2	107.5	510	52	53.2	1, 506
13	Zaire (DRC)	71.3	46.1	218.9	1100	46	67.2	714
14	Somalia	-	47.7	219.8	1400	29	17.1	--
15	Congo	50.1	54.8	123.0	740	58	86	1, 262
16	Gabon	65.7	56.7	74.9	520	88	85.4	6, 954
17	Cameroon	40.2	50.3	126.5	1000	66	67.9	2, 299

Source: Ibrahim index of African Governance 2008 (198-199), UNDP Human Development Report. Also cited in Emmanuel 'Remi Aiyede, "Development Performance in Comparative Perspective," Sunday Tribune, 30 May, 2010 p.24, Ibadan.

From the above table, despite the fact that the three countries are oil producing states, Nigeria's GDP per capital is the lowest. Indonesia with higher population still performs better than Nigeria. In a perceptive public lecture, Charles Soludo – Nigeria's former Central Bank Governor – noted that Nigeria is potentially Africa's largest economy. Every year, the country produces over 200,000 graduates from tertiary institutions (including 104 universities both private and public), has the sixth largest gas reserves in the world, eighth largest oil producer (with abundant, but largely untapped natural resources—gold, limestone, among others), and with 60 percent of its arable land lying fallow (Soludo 2005, 10). In his words, Soludo noted further that Nigeria has also millions of its citizens in Diaspora, with estimated 100,000 Nigerian medical doctors and scientists abroad (Soludo 2005)

Table II
Nigeria's Status Relative to Selected Asian Developing Countries

Country	System and form of Government	Oil producing	Ethno-linguistic Groups	GDP per capital (PPUS\$)	Human Development Status	Population	GDP
Nigeria	Federation/Presidential	Yes	250 (three official indigenous language)	1, 128	Low (none G-20 member)	154 Million	\$207 Billion
Malaysia	Federation / Parliamentary	Yes	34	10, 882	High (none G-20 member)	28 Million	\$397 Billion
Indonesia	Unitary/Presidential	Yes	250	3, 843	Middle (G-20 member)	220 Million	\$511.7 Billion

+**Source:** Ibrahim index of African Governance 2008 (198-199), UNDP Human Development Report. Also cited in Remi Aiyede, "Development Performance in Comparative Perspective." *Sunday Tribune*, 30 May, 2010 p.24, Ibadan.

Unfortunately, despite all these, Nigeria has been unlucky in the first fifty years of its independence with sustained good political governance. A peep into the 2008 first quarter CBN report released to the public admitted that Nigeria's economy is in crisis; (*Nigerian Tribune* 2008, 1, 4 and 11); the apex bank attributed the high rate of inflation in the country to the erratic power supply. According to the report, the inflation rate on a year to year basis was 7.8 percent, compared to 6.6 percent and 5.2 percent record in the preceding quarter and the corresponding period of 2007. Indeed, nothing can be more soothing to the nation's debilitating power crisis, largely fingered for stunting the economy rendering it comatose and occasioning a declining industrial sector, whose capacity utilization nosedived to a paltry 20 percent by the end of 2006. Epileptic power supply, a very prohibitive business climate and inconsistency in government policies, have combined to

smoother the country's industrial sector leading to the closure of multi-nationals, like Michelin, Panalpina, and other notable firms.

The shrinking of the textile sector from 170 in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to 10 in the 1990s also evinces the acute nature of the problem. The recent disclosure by the House of Representatives Committee on Power, which probed the power sector that the country now generates less than a pitiable 1,000 megawatts, makes mockery of the country's vision of becoming one of the 20 largest and most resilient economies in 2020, compared to South Africa, a country of 42 million people, which generates over 42,000 megawatts of electricity. Most of Nigeria's investment in the power sector has been enmeshed in corruption and enthralled in the lust of the political elite for primitive accumulation (*Nigerian Compass* 2008, 16).

Meanwhile, the concomitant effect of poor economy is lingering poverty. Nigeria's poverty conundrum has assumed a frightening dimension. In the words of Dr. Magnus Kpakol, Senior Special Assistant to the President and National Coordinator of National Poverty Eradication program, in a public lecture entitled "Poverty Solution: The Role of Government in Poverty Eradication" declared that "The number of poor Nigerians could be put at an estimated figure of 20 million ... in 1980, the figure was 28.1 million, 1985, 46.3 million 1992, 42.7 million, 1996, 65.6 million and 1999, 70.0 million, 2004, 54.4 million" (*National Life* 2008, 8). He gave the statistical break down along the six regional levels to "North-East, 72.2%; South East, 26.7%; South-South, 31.5%; South-West 43.1%; North Central 67.0% and North-West, 71.2%" (Ibid).

Nonetheless, something must be wrong somewhere for a critical official poverty statistics which revealed that over half of Nigeria's 150 million populations is poor is unexplainable going by the abundant human and material resources in the country. The economy is so gloomy to the extent that 2007/2008 UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) ratings placed Nigeria at 158th position out of 177 countries (Ibid). In view of this it is indeed a false claim by politicians and public office holders that democratic dividends are being felt by the masses.

Be that as it may, there are a number of reasons why the economy is so battered. For instance, Nigeria's federal budget since 1997 (last time Nigeria recorded a budget surplus) had been in acute deficit. Since 1999, Nigeria's three-tier partners (Federal, States and Local Government Areas) had shared among themselves over N35 trillion (about 250 billion dollars), yet their macro and micro socio-economic sectors have remained dangerously bastardized. While external reserves have depreciated from over 60 billion dollars in 2007 to about 42 billion dollars in December of 2009. Furthermore, foreign debts have also increased from about 3.2 billion dollars in 2007 to about 5 billion dollars in early 2010 (including the sum of 915 million dollars loan hastily approved by the National Assembly. Similarly, local debts too recorded a sharp increase, from about N1.7 trillion (about 10.02 billion dollars in 2006/2007 to about N3.2 trillion (20.01 billion dollars) as at December of 2009 (Okonkwo 2010).

Conclusively, it is on record that Nigeria has 33 solid mineral deposits lying substantially untapped and not mechanized, owing to corruption and lack of requisite manpower and technological know-how. The worst is that Nigeria's petrol-dollar economy is still neo-colonized while the net of servicing bureaucracy itself is enormous. The salaries and allowances of the 17,500 top public office holders in Nigeria now gulp N1.2 trillion annually. These officials only constitute

0.014 percent of the Nigerian population. There are 472 Federal Executives, 469 federal legislators, 1,152 state legislators, 3,096 local government executives, 8,692 local government legislators among others. These 17,500 Nigerians earn the total salaries of N94, 960 billion annually and sundry allowances of N1.03 (Okonkwo 2010). This is a heavy burden on the economy.

(C) Struggle against Corruption

The issue of corruption is not new in Nigeria. Even long before the British colonialists withdrew, corruption had become pervasive in all spheres of the country's national life. In the words of a colonial government report of 1947, "the Africa's background and outlook vis-a-vis public morality is very different from the present day Britons. The African in the public service seeks to further his own financial interest; Mordi (2010, 18) unfortunately, in poor colonial Nigeria, this mindless looting of the state treasury has developed into a system with pattern and purpose. In contemporary Nigeria, corruption has become an institution with a soul. It is pathetic that Nigeria has earned around US\$500 billion in oil revenues since the 1970s, yet remains mired in poverty, unemployment, a burgeoning domestic debt, infrastructural squalor, insecurity of lives and property, abysmal health and educational services, and attendant social frustration and unrest (Suberu 2009, 122).

Over the years, Nigeria gained an unprecedented global attention on account of its unenviable record in corruption (Eweremadu 2006, 42). For instance in 1999, Nigeria was ranked the second most corrupt country in the whole world by the Transparency International. In year 2000, it emerged the most corrupt country (Ibid). After eight years of the purported war against corruption, the summary of the report of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which conducted its assessment of Nigeria in February of 2008, scored the country low on good governance, noting that its immense internal wealth notwithstanding, the country currently hosts the third largest population of the world's poor people.

The report noted further that the country's anti-corruption crusade since 1999 had facilitated the recovery of about N120 billion naira (\$1 billion US dollars) from oil companies as a result of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative to which Nigeria is a signatory. The APRM, however, regarded the succession as just 'modest' (*Nigerian Compass* 2008, 1, 8). The panel led by Kenya's former Ambassador to France, Bethuel Kiplagat, divided corruption in Nigeria into three categories of petty corruption, grand corruption and outright looting (*Nigerian Compass* 2008, 8).

In the same vein, the 2008 Corruption Perception Index released by Transparency International, showed that Nigeria is rated 121 out of 180 countries surveyed by the Berlin, Germany-based organization. On a scale of 10.0, Nigeria scored 1.6 in 1999, 1.2 in 2000, 1.0 in 2001, 1.6 in 2002, 1.4 in 2003, 1.6 in 2004, 1.9 in 2005, 2.2 in 2006, 2.2 in 2007 and 2.7 in 2008 (Transparency International 2008). Deplorable as it is, the ranking is a major jump from the bottom of the ladder that it had been placed for years. In 2005, the country was placed 152 out of 158, and it was 147 in 2006 and 2007. In the 2008 ranking under consideration, Nigeria is placed 121 along with Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and Vietnam, Denmark, New Zealand and Sweden are in

the number one position, while Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan, Afghanistan, Haiti, Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia are the most corrupt (*Nigerian Compass* 2008, 1).

It is shocking to discover that Nigerian leaders have embezzled about \$400 billion US dollars between 1960 till date and most of them are still not being challenged (*Nigerian Tribune* 2008, 5). The amount recovered by the EFCC from assets and other sources till date is more than 20 percent of the 2008 federal budget proposal which stood at N2.5 trillion naira. If only a portion of it had been used to develop electricity generation alone, incessant power failure would be no more (*Sunday Tribune* 2007, 15-17). In a recent public lecture, Kenya's Prime Minister, Raila Amolo Odinga, noted that in Africa "corruption has been and remained the major scourge preventing economic growth and stability in our nation (*The Guardian* 2008, 2).

(D) Exemplary Leadership

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the country since independence is effective and exemplary political leadership. Chinua Achebe, Nigeria's literary giant put it succinctly thus:

"The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land, climate or water or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to a challenge of personal example, which is the hallmark of true leadership" (Ojo 2009c, 308).

In fact, nothing threatens a nation like mediocre leadership. Nothing impoverishes humanity or diminishes a country like mediocre leadership. Unfortunately, Nigeria has not had the redeeming grace of sound leadership. This is the worst crisis Nigeria faces. According to Nixon, the formula for successful leadership has three elements: a great man, a great country, and a great issue. "The small man leading a great nation in a great crisis clearly fails the test of greatness. The large man in a small country may demonstrate all the qualities of greatness but never win the recognition (Adeleye 1997).

This problem manifests itself in the inability of political leaders to better the lot of the masses of the people. Weak leadership is revealed when there is a conspicuous absence of sound social programs geared toward the production and provision of food, health care, employment, shelter, and education for all. As of now with more than ten years of democratic practice, in the country there is no social security scheme that takes care of old persons, the sick, the hungry, the homeless, the motherless, and the destitute. Whereas, it is only a people who are content that will be ready to serve the nation in any capacity including death. The reverse is however the case in Nigeria. Malcontents imperil the stability of the state. Finally, another manifestation of bad leadership in the contemporary Nigerian context is the inability of Nigerian leaders to conduct a free and fair election. In essence, any system without a charismatic leader may find it difficult to excel.

(E) Asymmetric Power Relationship

Perhaps the most controversial issue in Nigeria's fifty years of existence is asymmetric power relationship. It is one of the perennial problems which have not only defiled all past solutions but also have a tendency for evoking high emotions on the part of all concerned (each time it is brought

forth for discussion or analysis). This problem of ‘balanced’ or ‘true’ federalism vis-a-vis equitable power sharing keeps on recurring. In Nigeria’s plural and deeply divided society, power has different connotations in terms of its dimension be it military, bureaucratic, media, intellectual or political (Ojo 2009c, 145-146). The most controversial however is who occupies federal executive seat and for how many years. In a recent discourse, Amadi Osondu (2010), using percentage and number of months glaringly revealed which zone(s) of the country has upper hand in terms of wielding executive powers. Table III below is a graphic representation of the time period used by each zone of the country holding executive position in percentages. From the table below, the Northern part of the country taken together had been in power for 441.5 months translating to 73.6%, while the Southern part had been in power for some 158.5 number of months also translating to 28.4% of the total time period since independence (Osondu 2010, 74).

Concluding Remarks

This analysis has taken a cursory look at Nigerian politics though its level of development since independence in 1960. It has, to some extent, catalogued the woes till date. However, it is imperative to note that it has not been history of failures all along in the sense that in the last 600 months, a number of giant strides have been taken in stabilizing the polity (Ojo 2009). Within the time period covered by this study, Nigeria experienced enhancing increase in enrollment in schools at all levels, presently, there are as many as 107 universities both public and private from a few ones at the time of independence while infant mortality rate too had reduced drastically. Infrastructural facilities too had been expanded with better network of roads. Literacy level has equally been enhanced which gave fillip to the birth of several media houses both print and electronic. The focus of Nigerian governing elite for now should be what the country should look like in the next fifty years.

TABLE III
Nigerian Heads of State 1960-2010 (600 Months)
Geo-Political Zone

S/NO	NAMES AND PERIOD	NORTH EAST	NORTH WEST	NORTH CENTRAL	SOUTH-WEST	SOUTH-EAST	SOUTH-SOUTH
1	Tafawa Balewa (Oct.1 st 1960-Jan.15,1966)	63.5					
2	Aguiyi Ironsi (Jan.15, 1966-July 29. 1966)					5.5	
3	Yakubu Gowon (July 29,1966-July 29, 1975)			108			
4	Murtala Mohammed (July 29,1975-Feb. 13, 1976)		6				
5	Olusegun Obasanjo (Feb. 13, 1976- Sept., 30, 1979)				43.5		
6	Shehu Shagari (Oct. 1st 1979-Dec. 31, 1983)		51				
7	Mohammed Buhari (Dec. 31, 1983-Aug. 26, 1985)		20				
8	Ibrahim Babangida (Aug. 27, 1985 – Aug. 25, 1993)			96			
9	Ernest Shonekan (Aug. 26, 1993 – Nov. 14, 1993)				2.5		
10	Sani Abacha (Nov. 15, 1993 –June 8, 1998)		55				
11	Abdulsalam Abubakar (June 9, 1998 – May 29, 1999)			12			
12	Olusegun Obasanjo (May 29, 1999 – May 29, 2007)				96		
13	Umaru Yar'Adua (May 29, 2007 – Nov. 30, 2009)		30				
14	Goodluck Jonathan (Dec. 1, 2009-Oct 1, 2010)						10
	600 Months	63.5	162	216	142	6.5	10
	Percentage %	11	27	36	23.5	1	1.5

**Source: The Sun, Lagos, October 1, 2010, 74.*

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