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# NIGERIA, 1914-2014: FROM CREATION TO CREMATION?

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## Abstract

Nigeria is a British creation fashioned out between 1861 and 1914. The 1861 annexation of Lagos gave Britain a firm foothold in Nigeria; and, between that year and 1903, virtually every Nigerian nation capitulated to British imperial rule. On 1 January 1914, Sir Donald Fredrick Lugard climaxed the British policy of unification in Nigeria by 'uniting' the two halves of the country – Northern and Southern Protectorates – in what has since been known as the amalgamation. The British thereafter administered the country they took five decades to create until Nigeria obtained flag independence on 1 October 1960. This implies that Nigeria is a century old as a geographical entity and approximately five decades old as an independent sovereign state. This paper is an appraisal of Nigeria at hundred. The paper contends that while the British may have created Nigeria; quite a large number of Nigerian leaders cremated it. Today, apart from the existence of legally constituted governments and the absence of pervasive internecine wars, Nigeria manifests virtually all the traits of a failed state. A country of inexplicable trajectories, despite enormous national wealth, intractable corruption has sentenced an overwhelming percentage of Nigerians to grinding poverty; health institutions are near total collapse resulting in high maternal deaths, preventable ailments and morbidity; social services such as potable water, power supply, good roads and a functional and dynamic educational system are either altogether non-existent or hopelessly inadequate and erratic thereby turning Nigerians into infrahumans. The paper concludes that while Nigeria, as a politico-geographical entity, is neither disintegrating nor dismembering, pervasive corruption, intractable unemployment, endemic poverty and infrastructural deficit had ensured that millions of her citizens are socially muzzled and economically cremated. The study utilised both primary and secondary data and employed the simple descriptive analysis of historical materials.

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## Introduction

The history of Nigeria divides into three—pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial. The present paper concerns itself with Nigeria's centennial and therefore completely excludes the first phase. While the second may not require any further division except one wants to underline and emphasise certain aspects and features of the various colonial constitutions and the ascending tone and tune of nationalism and constitutionalism, which eventually propelled Nigeria to flag independence thereby forcing the demurring British officials to retreat; the third period divides into two—the less than two and a half decades of democratic rule (1 October 1960 – 14 January 1966; 1 October 1979 – 31 December 1983 and 29 May 1999 to date) and the approximately three decades of military dictatorship (15 January 1966 – 30 September 1979 and 31 December 1983 – 28 May 1999).

This paper attempts a reconstruction of the vagaries of Nigerian history in the last hundred years. Although, fundamentally, history is the study of man's past actions with the objective of moulding the present for a secured future, this paper does not intend to over-flog the past because most of those who shaped Nigerian history during the period under examination are dead. From Sir Fredrick Lugard to General Sanni Abacha were found men who provoked joy and those who precipitated sorrow; men who mitigated suffering and those who multiplied misery; men who developed infrastructure and those who looted the treasury; men whose tenures of office prospered the people and those whose tenures pillaged and plundered the land and men whose administration benefitted the masses and those whose regimes brutalised the citizens. However, since men are supposed to draw lessons from the lives of both heroes and villains and since a historical reconstruction of the kind attempted in this paper must be logical and sequential, it must necessarily delve, even if briefly, into the past. This paper concerns itself mainly with the present because today millions of Nigerians are socially deprived and economically muzzled by governments elected by themselves. If the sundry deprivations Nigerians are daily confronted with are conceptualised and some of their ramifications and implications emphasised, the pervasive socio-economic problems ravaging Nigeria may abate somewhat.

Having justified the focus of the paper, a brief description of its structure and methodology might be necessary. The paper adopts the historical method of data analysis—a simple descriptive collation and

analysis of historical data rather than the period-regimentation approach. Following this introduction is what Lugard called 'necessity for amalgamation'<sup>2</sup> but which this author prefers to call background to the amalgamation. Thereafter comes a fairly detailed examination of prevailing socio-economic conditions in Nigeria and, lastly, the conclusion.

### Background to the Amalgamation

In Nigeria's parlance, amalgamation refers to the January 1914 fusion of hitherto separate administrative systems of the Northern and Southern Protectorates although Adiele Afigbo has argued that the amalgamation is much wider. According to him, it began much earlier than 1914 and is still ongoing.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding, the 1914 mega amalgamation is clearly the most celebrated in Nigerian history. A lot of scholarly works have been done on both the rationale for, and against, the 1914 amalgamation that requires no repetition here.<sup>4</sup> Although, scholars do not seem to agree on the immediate reasons for the 1914 exercise, Lugard, the arrowhead of the amalgamation, left no one in doubt regarding the factors that necessitated the amalgamation. Reading between the lines, he had three main reasons. The first was financial expediency. While Southern Nigeria was financially viable, Northern Nigeria was not. Indeed, on the eve of amalgamation, while the former was deriving about £1,138.00 from liquor duties alone with colonial reserves of about £1,007,625.00, the latter was largely dependent on annual grant-in-aid from Britain that amounted to about £314,500.00 on the eve of amalgamation.<sup>5</sup> Further, the Northern

Fredrick Donald Lugard was born on 22 January 1858. He served in Afghanistan, Burma, Nyasaland and the Imperial East African Company. He was High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria from 1900 to 1906; Governor of Hong Kong from 1907 to 1912; Governor of Northern and Southern Nigeria from 1912 to 1914 and Governor-General of Nigeria from 1914 to 1918. He died on 11 April 1945.

<sup>2</sup> 'Report by Sir F. D. Lugard on the Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria and Administration, 1912-1919 (1920)', 7. File RG/L4, National Archives Ibadan (NAI). This Report was presented to the British Parliament in December 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Adiele E. Afigbo, 'The Amalgamation: Myths, Howlers and Heresies' in Richard A. Olaniyan, *The Amalgamation and its Enemies* (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press Limited, 2013), 45-57.

<sup>4</sup> The three most recent are Richard A. Olaniyan (ed.), *The Amalgamation and Its Enemies*; Sam Momah, *Nigeria Beyond Divorce: Amalgamation in Perspective* (Ibadan: Safari Books Limited, 2013) and Usman Mohammed,

'International Political Economy of Nigerian Amalgamation Since 1914', *European Scientific Journal*, 9, No. 29 (2013): 429-457.

<sup>5</sup> F. D. Lugard, *Report*, p. 45, paragraph 109.

Protectorate was barely able to balance its budget with the most parsimonious economy and was unable to find funds to house its officers properly.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Lugard's budget of £135,000.00 for 1900 was supplemented to the tune of £45,000.00 by Southern Nigeria while the rest came from London as grants-in-aid.<sup>7</sup> This was at cross-purposes with Britain's colonial economic policy. It will be recalled, for example, that Lord Grey, a very influential Colonial Secretary (1846-1852) had maintained that 'the surest test for the soundness of measures for the improvement of an uncivilised people is that they should be self-sufficing'.<sup>8</sup> Grey's view had become state policy by the time Lord Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1895. Indeed, as Lady Lugard later pointed out, the financial concessions from the Imperial treasury 'were reluctantly made rather by respect for the judgement and wishes of Mr. Chamberlain, then occupying the position of Secretary for the Colonies, than by any strong conviction on the part of the British Government that Northern Nigeria was likely to prove a very valuable acquisition to the Crown'.<sup>9</sup> Lugard expressed the view that Nigeria's aggregate revenue was practically equal to its financial needs but that the 'arbitrary line of latitude' that divided the country into two created economic and financial imbalance and anomaly. The removal of this 'arbitrary [financial] line of latitude' constituted the primary aim of the amalgamation.

A second reason for the 1914 amalgamation was the pressing difficulty with regard to railway policy and coordination. It would be recalled that the Baro – Kano Railway Project embarked upon by Northern Nigeria in 1906 conflicted with that of Southern Nigeria. This created what Lugard described as unnecessary, unhealthy and acute competition between the two halves of the country. Citing an earlier report by Major R. E. Wagborn and himself, Lugard concluded that some sort of joint control and administration of railway policy in Nigeria was inevitable.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> By 1901, there were 104 colonial officials in Nigeria. Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* This was at cross-purposes with Britain's colonial economic policy. Indeed, as Lady Lugard later pointed out, the financial concessions from the imperial treasury 'were reluctantly made rather by respect for the judgement and wishes of Mr. Chamberlain, then occupying the position of Secretary for the Colonies, than by any strong conviction on the part of the British Government that Northern Nigeria was likely to prove a very valuable acquisition to the Crown.

<sup>8</sup> R. Robinson *et al*, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Rotberg, 1961), 101.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Moreover, the 1914 amalgamation was expected to bring the backward North to 'the highest plane attained by any particular part [of the country, i.e. the South]'.<sup>11</sup> I. F. Nicolson, a one-time Civil Servant in Lagos Colony and arguably the most outstanding critic of Lugard and the amalgamation, had attempted a very detailed examination of this factor.<sup>12</sup> As Heussler has also argued, 'Northern Nigeria commends itself for [Britain's] special attention being the most populous British-ruled unit in sub-Saharan Africa'.<sup>13</sup> This line of thought must have informed the view that the 'amalgamation of 1914 is, broadly speaking, the conquest and subjugation of Southern Nigeria by Northern Nigeria'.<sup>14</sup> There now seems to be sufficient evidence to add a fourth reason for the amalgamation: Lugard probably wanted to build a Nigerian Empire within the larger British Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Be that as it may, the Colonial Office consented to Nigeria's amalgamation on the 'strength' of Lugard's Report. Unfortunately, however, a careful perusal reveals that there is nowhere in the 173-page Report (broken into 206 lengthy paragraphs) where Lugard made reference to Nigerian unity as either the propelling force or remote consideration for the amalgamation. Thus, altogether omitted from the priority list in 1914, one hundred years after, unity still remains evasive and illusive in Nigeria to the point that today, the Federal Government expends millions of dollars annually on 'unity campaign' to counter centrifugal tendencies and convince the federating units on the gains and imperatives of unity.<sup>16</sup> A scholar had argued that the purpose of amalgamation in Nigeria was not to produce, nor has amalgamation anywhere aimed at producing, a smooth ethnological blend out of different nationalities; and that amalgamation in the United Kingdom, Canada, Switzerland and the defunct Soviet Union did not 'produce harmonious or human alloys'.<sup>17</sup> While it may be true that amalgamation

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed discussion of the 'importance' of these factors in Lugard's own words, see his *Report*, 7-8.

<sup>12</sup> F. D. Lugard, *Report*.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Times of Nigeria*, 5 May 1914.

<sup>15</sup> For this line of thought, see I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria, 1900-1960: Men, Method and Myths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 181 & 195.

<sup>16</sup> The President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, recently admitted that 'the greatest problems we have are lack of unity and love'. *Punch*, 30 December 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Afigbo, 'The Amalgamation: Myths, Howlers and Heresies', 47-48.



may not manifest or produce the same degree of consistency, coherence, smoothness and unity found in chemical alloys or amalgams; one would at least expect amalgamation to foster and promote some sort of political unity no matter how transient, modest or superficial.

This omission—calculated or inadvertent—became and probably still remains the hotbed of opposition to and criticism of the 1914 exercise. Indeed, this must have informed the submission that ‘the most remarkable thing about Lugard’s “amalgamation” of Nigeria is that it never really took place’.<sup>18</sup> A brief commentary on what Nicolson referred to as ‘Lugard’s amalgamation’ may be necessary. Although, Lugard eventually became the arrowhead of the 1914 mega amalgamation, the impression that he was the architect of the amalgamation is wrong. Lugard had precursors since he was not a member of the Selborne Committee<sup>19</sup> appointed by Joseph Chamberlain in 1898 to make recommendations regarding the future administration of Nigeria and which recommended a piecemeal fusion of the different governments and territories in Nigeria into one ‘Nigeria’.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, it was probably this Committee that originally recommended for Nigeria a central administration headed by the Governor-General.<sup>21</sup> Although, in a private letter to his brother in 1900, Lugard had broached the idea that the three Nigerias (the Colony of Lagos, the Southern and Northern Protectorates) had to be amalgamated someday; it was in 1905 that he wrote his first official confidential memorandum in which he outlined his ‘unity’ proposal to the Colonial Office.

Before we move away from the amalgamation and Sir Lugard, one more point is essential – immediate reactions to the amalgamation. While this paper does not intend to evaluate the balance-sheet of the 1914 amalgamation so as to avoid value judgements, it must not fail to point out that there existed and probably still exist two diametrically opposed viewpoints on Lugard and the amalgamation. Dame Margery Perham,

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<sup>18</sup> I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria*, 180.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Chamberlain appointed the Committee in 1898. For the Committee’s Report, see G. N. Uzoigwe ‘The Niger Committee of 1898: Lord Selbourn’s Report’, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4, No. 3 (1968): 467-476; and J. A. Ballard, ‘Administrative Origins of Nigerian Federalism’, *African Affairs*, 70, No. 281 (1971): 333-348.

<sup>20</sup> For the Committee’s Report, see G.N. Uzoigwe, ‘Administrative Origins of Nigerian Federalism’, *African Affairs*, 70, No. 281 (1971): 333-348.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

the British historian, probably remains the most celebrated supporter of Lugard and apologist of the amalgamation. According to her:

This plan stood the test of almost every critic and of six years' progressive implementation, emerging at the end as a working system substantially unchanged from his original design... He seemed to know from the very first moment what he would do and it was not as though he saw his work as simply a piece of administrative joinery. He made it a work of reorganization, indeed of reform.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, critics of the amalgamation and Lugard dismissed the former as otiose and the latter as a huge failure. Immediate opposition to Lugard and his policies was spearheaded by the Lagos Press, which battled him in and out of office. There was probably no single issue of the *Times of Nigeria*, *Lagos Standard* and *Lagos Weekly Record* between 1914 and 1920 that did not disparage Lugard and the planned amalgamation. Indeed, when Reuters broke the news of Lugard's retirement in 1919, the *Lagos Weekly Record* described how the news was received 'with joy and gladness by the loyal natives of Nigeria' who went on their knees to thank God for 'delivering his dusky children from the baneful effect of an inglorious administration'. The paper wrote Lugard off as a huge failure and 'a hopeless anachronism'. It went further to dismiss amalgamation as 'mess and muddle' and 'fossilized remains of an administrative experimental failure'.<sup>23</sup>

Two other papers poured unrestrained invectives on Lugard and his policies. While one accused him of grievous maladministration and racial pride,<sup>24</sup> the other dismissed amalgamation as an unwanted policy and accused Lugard of 'pride and self-sufficiency'.<sup>25</sup> The Southern press' antagonism to amalgamation came to the fore when Lugard's successor, Sir Hugh Clifford,<sup>26</sup> arrived the country. In its editorial, the *Lagos Weekly*

<sup>22</sup> Margery Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), 411.

<sup>23</sup> *Lagos Weekly Record*, February 1919 and 14 June 1919.

<sup>24</sup> *Lagos Standard*, 2 April 1919.

<sup>25</sup> *African World*, 26 April 1919.

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Clifford was born on 5 March 1866. He was educated at Woburn Park under the 13<sup>th</sup> Lord Petre. He was appointed to the Malayan Civil Service in 1883; Commissioner of the Cocos and Keeling Islands in 1894; Colonial Secretary, Trinidad, 1903-1907; Chief Secretary, Ceylon, 1907-1912; Governor of Gold Coast, 1912-1919; Governor of Nigeria, 1919-1925; Governor of Ceylon, 1925-1927; Governor of the Straits Settlements; and British High Commissioner in Malaya, 1927-1930. He died on 18 December 1941. See Robert Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria*, xvi.



*Record* wrote that 'anything which will afford any degree of relief—however brief or temporary—from the blighting effects of Sir Fredrick Lugard's nefarious administration will be gladly welcomed by all loyal Nigerians'.<sup>27</sup> It must be pointed out, however, that 'all' in the above quotation is misleading, at least, as at the time of this very incident. This is because opposition to the amalgamation and particularly criticism of Lugard was almost exclusively confined to the South. While it is equally misleading to assert that Northern Nigerians had no misgivings about the amalgamation and Lugard, such misgivings were probably largely latent and muted at the time the editorial was published. On the whole, critics created the impression that viewed from any standpoint—political, economic, demographic and others—the amalgamation was completely otiose, poorly designed and badly executed. Let us consider, for example, the following verdict:

...instead of administering 'things' and developing 'services', Lugard [was] preoccupied with the widespread extension of rule over 'people' – an undertaking so unprofitable that it made amalgamation of the viable South and the bankrupt North...urgent...to free the home Government from the expensive [financial] millstone which Lugard had fastened round its neck and to transfer the whole burden to a new amalgamated Nigeria... Lugard's motives remain an inscrutable mystery... But whatever the reasons were [for the amalgamation], the failure was rapid and complete.<sup>28</sup>

While the amalgamation had its pains; it also had its gains. Apart from marking the beginning of modern Nigeria and politically fused northerners and southerners together thereby creating the single largest geo-polity in sub-Saharan Africa, it animated the political scene and propelled the country towards constitutionalism. Unfortunately, anytime the interests of any of the three dominant ethnic groups appeared threatened or circumvented, references were made to the amalgamation in a manner depicting it as a mistake.<sup>29</sup> Having briefly outlined some of

<sup>27</sup> *Lagos Weekly Record*, 14 June 1919.

<sup>28</sup> I. F. Nicolson, *The Administration of Nigeria*, 181 & 195.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, following pervasive North-South confrontation over the self-government motion moved by Chief Anthony Enahoro, an Action Group back-bencher, in the Federal House of Representatives in 1953, the Sardauna (religious head) of Sokoto and Leader of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), Sir Ahmadu Bello, made what has probably remained the most pointed remark about the amalgamation by referring to it as 'the mistake of 1914'. See Ahmadu Bello, *My Life, Autobiography of Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 133. In an apparent reference to Sir Ahmadu Bello's celebrated remark, Nigeria's former President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, argued that the '1914 amalgamation was not a mistake'. *Punch*, 30 December 2013.

the reasons for and reactions to the 1914 amalgamation, we can now proceed to the kernel of this paper.

### **Nigeria: One Century After**

Nigeria is one century old. In all, the country had had nearly two dozen administrators—colonial, civil and military.<sup>30</sup> Since its creation, the country had undergone quite a great deal of political transformation and turmoil as well as socio-economic viability and vicissitudes. The purpose of this section is to examine some of the prominent features of contemporary Nigeria. As should be expected of an ethnically varied and geographically (also demographically) vast country like Nigeria, there are localised features and challenges such as ecology, economy and culture. The features and challenges examined here are nation-wide and ubiquitous. Let us start with corruption. The word may have derived from the Latin verb '*rumpere*' meaning 'to break',<sup>31</sup> implying that it is the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit. Corruption occurs in several forms and shapes, but this paper focuses on what Hellman and Jones call 'administrative corruption'—that is, the use of public office for private gain or the use of official position, rank or status by an office bearer for personal benefit. According to the serving Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives in 2014, 'the manifestation of corruption, especially in the public sector of Nigeria, is legion, ranging from direct diversion of public funds to private pockets to contract overpricing, bribery, impunity, nepotism, general financial recklessness, fraudulent borrowing and debt management, public assets stripping, electoral fraud, shielding of corrupt public officers...'<sup>32</sup> It must be stressed,

<sup>30</sup> Nigeria's two dozen administrators—colonial, civil and military

—are: Sir Fredrick Donald Ludard, 1914-1919; Sir Hugh Clifford, 1919-1925; Sir Graeme Thomson, 1925-1931; Sir Donald Cameron, 1931-1935; Sir Bernard Bourdillon, 1935-1943; Sir Arthur Richards, 1943-1948; Sir John Stuart Macpherson; February 1948-1955; Sir James Wilson Robertson, 1955-1960; Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, 1960-1966; Major-General J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi, January-July 1966; Lt.-Gen. Yakubu Gowon, August 1966-1975; Major-General Murtala Ramat Mohammed, 30 July 1975-1976; Lt.-Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, 13 February 1976-1979; Alhaji Aliyu Sheu Shagari, 1 October 1979-1983; Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, 31 December 1983-1985; General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, 27 August 1985-1993; Chief Ernest Shonekan, 27 August-November 1993; General Sanni Abacha, 17 November 1993-1998; General Abdusalami Abubakar, 9 June 1998-1999; Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, 29 May 1999-2007; Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua, 29 May 2007-2010 and Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, 6 May 2010-2015.

<sup>31</sup> Aliyu Nurudeen *et. al.*, 'Nigeria's Cobweb of Corruption and the Path to Underdevelopment', *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3, No. 3 (2014): 105.

<sup>32</sup> *Nigerian Tribune*, 10 December 2013.

however, that corruption is neither a recent phenomenon nor is it peculiar to Nigeria or even to Africa. It is an antiquity and a world-wide phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> For instance, in a survey of 150 high level officials from 60 third world countries, the respondents ranked public sector corruption as the most severe obstacle confronting the development processes of their respective countries.<sup>34</sup>

In the 1950s, corrupt Nigerian businessmen swindled many firms in Europe and elsewhere so that by 1952, Nigeria's trading name abroad was seriously threatened. Consequently, the colonial government decided to create a special department to halt the trend. This was what led to the creation of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in 1953.<sup>35</sup> Administrative corruption in Nigeria dates from the colonial period when messengers collected bribes from illiterates in order to allow them see District Officers and when the interpreter took money and 'gifts' before presenting litigants' cases before the expatriate dispenser of justice. Being the nearest to the then corridors of power, the messengers and interpreters wielded great influence. Later on came the council clerks of the Native Administration many of whom succeeded only too well in the perversion of the course of justice.<sup>36</sup> It must be emphasised that this is not an attempt to suggest that British colonial officials were not corrupt. Indeed, colonialism introduced corruption into Nigeria. Citing Ozoemene Uzugbe, an Igbo musician, Oguonu and Ezeibe contend that embezzlement, bribery, corruption, hoarding, profiting, break-and-enter, pick-pocket, burglary, were part of colonial legacies in Nigeria.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, after World War II, Britain became increasingly concerned about Nigeria's readiness for independence. Using their worry over political and administrative corruption, they argued that the transfer of power ought to be slowed down.<sup>38</sup> On 26 February 1952, the Emir of Gwandu moved the following

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed examination of the depth and character of corruption in Japan, see Klose Christoph, 'Corruption in Japan', PhD Dissertation, Universität Wien Philologisch-Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät BetreuerIn: Linhart, 2010. Available at <http://othes.univie.ac.at/10485>. In a recent survey in Canada, 53% of Canadians believe that the level of corruption in Canada increased in the past 24 months; 62% think political parties are affected by corruption; 39% hold that the media is affected by corruption while 3% reported paying a bribe to the judiciary. See <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/canada-politics> (accessed 14 April 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Gray Cheryl and Daniel Kaufmann, 'Corruption and Development' in IMF/World Bank, *Finance and Development*, 35, 1 (1998), 7.

<sup>35</sup> *West Africa*, 27 October 1956.

<sup>36</sup> Labanji Bolaji, *Anatomy of Corruption in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Daystar Press, 1970), 53.

<sup>37</sup> Chika N. Oguonu and Christian C. Ezeibe, 'Political Corruption and Economic Growth in Nigeria', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5, No. 27 (2014): 70.

<sup>38</sup> Robert L. Tignor, 'Political Corruption in Nigeria before Independence', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, No. 2 (1993): 175.

motion on the floor of the Northern Nigeria House of Chiefs:

That this House, agreeing that bribery and corruption are widely prevalent in all walks of life, recommends that Native Authorities should make every effort to trace and punish offenders with strict impartiality and to educate public opinion against bribery and corruption.<sup>39</sup>

In a similar vein, bugged by the problem of corruption in its civil service, the defunct Western Region set up a committee to study the ramifications of corruption and make appropriate recommendations to the regional government. One of the recommendations of the committee was the creation of an Anti-Corruption Office and J. O. Ajomale was thereafter appointed the Region's Anti-Corruption Officer.<sup>40</sup> Among others, the Western Nigeria Anti-Corruption Office recommended the dismissal of a messenger who accepted 10s (10 shillings) from another party whom he promised to help obtain a civil service job. Also, a medical officer who accepted payment for services he should have rendered free of charge was severely punished while an applicant for a senior civil service job who offered a £5 bribe to a government official was arrested, prosecuted and sent to prison.<sup>41</sup> Some four and a half decades ago, Bolaji Labanji voiced his dream of Nigeria as a place where 'politicians refuse to rig elections or filch public funds, where the police refuse to be bribed, where none on the bench can be swayed by monetary, ethnic or lascivious considerations, where men are no more propelled by greed and lust for wealth.<sup>42</sup> Although, unfortunately, the Nigeria Labanji craved for had completely disappeared; his prediction that 'there may come a time when many actions which Nigerians now regard as marks of corruption would be accepted as a normal way of life—as natural as the air we breathe'<sup>43</sup> is now fully fulfilled. Indeed, five decades after the Emir of Gwandu's motion, a member of Nigeria's Federal Parliament said 'whoever tells you there is no corruption in this House [of Representatives] is in fact corrupt. Ministers and heads of parastatals are often asked to bring money so that their budgets can be passed'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Daily Times*, 27 February 1952.

<sup>40</sup> 'Western Region of Nigeria Pamphlet on Bribery and Corruption by J. O. Ajomale, Anti-Corruption Officer, 1957'. File PS/A2, NAI.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Labanji Bolaji, *Anatomy of Corruption in Nigeria*, 139-140.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> *The News*, 4 April 2014.

What is being emphasised here is that while corruption may not be peculiar to Nigeria, the uniqueness of the Nigerian case may be the overt support her successive governments had given to corruption. Only recently, South African President, Jacob Zuma, was severely criticised for benefiting 'unduly' from a \$20 million state-funded security upgrade to his private home. In a report entitled 'Opulence on a Grand Scale', South Africa's anti-corruption agency accused Zuma of conduct 'inconsistent with his office'.<sup>45</sup> Also, in what has been described as China's biggest corruption scandal in more than six decades, Chinese authorities seized assets worth about \$14.5 billion from family members and associates of retired domestic security chief Zhou Yongkang while an Israeli court found a former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, guilty of receiving bribes up to the tune of \$160, 000.<sup>46</sup> Nothing remotely close to the above steps had ever been taken in Nigeria. Indeed, Nigerian newspapers are awash not only with sundry cases of monumental administrative corruption at all levels, but with biting allegations that the President is aiding and abetting corruption by shielding corrupt officials. A few examples will suffice.

Chief Diepreye Alamieyeseigha (1952-2015), a former governor of Bayelsa State, south-south Nigeria, probably stole more than \$5 billion state funds between May 1999 and September 2005.<sup>47</sup> Following his impeachment by the Bayelsa State House of Assembly on 9 December 2005, he was arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and charged for corruption. In July 2007, Alamieyeseigha pleaded guilty to all the charges against him and was sentenced to two years in prison from the day of his arrest two years earlier and was released a

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<sup>45</sup> *Punch*, 20 March 2014.

<sup>46</sup> *The Sun*, 31 March 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Chief Alamieyeseigha was elected Governor of Bayelsa State in May 1999 and was re-elected in 2003. His second term of office was to expire in May 2007, but was cut short by his impeachment on allegations of corruption on 9 December 2005. Investigations by the Proceeds of Corruption Unit of the London Metropolitan Police led to his arrest in September 2005. He was charged with three counts of money laundering. (At the time of his arrest, the Metropolitan Police found about £1m cash in his London home). After three weeks in custody, Alamieyeseigha was released on bail on conditions including the surrender of his passport, the payment of \$2.6 million to the English High Court in sureties and daily reporting to the police. Alamieyeseigha then sought to challenge his arrest and prosecution in England on the basis that he enjoyed state immunity under English law. The English Crown Court rejected this argument. In November 2005, Alamieyeseigha fled from England and returned to Nigeria.



few hours after leaving the courtroom. On 12 March 2013, the National Council of State<sup>48</sup> presided over by President Goodluck Jonathan granted Alamieyeseigha presidential pardon. Indeed, the President described the latter as his 'political benefactor'. President Jonathan hails from the same state as Chief Alamieyeseigha: he was the latter's deputy between 1999 and 2005 and became governor following Alamieyeseigha's removal from office. But for the fact that he is now dead, Alamieyeseigha would still have been eligible to vie for public office. In a report on Nigeria entitled 'Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government', the United States of America reinstated her opposition to Alamieyeseigha's pardon and condemned the impunity 'with which officials of the Nigerian government...frequently engaged in all forms of corrupt practices at all levels with the police and security forces factored in'.<sup>49</sup> According to Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, in 2013 alone, about 533 high profile corruption cases were investigated while about 117 public officials were convicted.<sup>50</sup> In all, the EFCC had secured the convictions of 773 public officials since inception.<sup>51</sup>

On 28 February 2014, about one hundred Nigerian leaders—dead and alive—received various awards at the grand finale of Nigeria's centennial celebration. General Sanni Abacha who, as military Head of State between November 1993 and June 1998, siphoned well over \$6 billion from Nigeria was one of the awardees. The centenary award, according to the Federal Government, was not 'a test of sainthood' but recognition for meritorious service. The Government argued that Abacha took over power when the nation was on the brink of a precipice and held the country together despite sundry centrifugal pulls. However, honouring a man who looted the nation's treasury so monumentally is tantamount to giving official recognition to corruption.

While this paper may not concern itself with the suitability or otherwise of the awardees, it seeks to point out that an overwhelming percentage of them are the architects of Nigeria's socio-economic and political

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<sup>48</sup> The National Council of State advises the Executive on policy making. Its members are the President (Chairman); Vice President (Deputy Chairman); all former Presidents and Heads of Government of the Federation; all former Chief Justices of the Federation; President of the Senate; Speaker of the House of Representatives; all Governors of the States of the Federation and the Attorney-General of the Federation.

<sup>49</sup> *ThisDay*, 1 March 2014.

<sup>50</sup> *Daily Independent*, 19 March 2014.

<sup>51</sup> *Punch*, 11 April 2014.



problems. As far as awards to past Nigerian leaders are concerned, for instance, apart from the pre and independence leaders, Lt.-Col. Yakubu Gowon who fought a decisive 30-month Civil War to keep the country united and General Abdusalami Abubakar who spent less than one year in office and restored democracy after one and a half decades of military dictatorship, there are probably no convincing or justifiable reasons for any kind of awards to the others. Even the contributions of Yakubu Gowon and Abdusalami Abubakar to nation building in Nigeria require some qualification. While Yakubu Gowon may have won the 'war of unity' with a 'no victor no vanquished' slogan; his government was seriously indicted for corruption, hence precipitating the General Murtala Muhammad coup.<sup>52</sup> The brevity of the Abdusalami's regime notwithstanding, it was laced with monumental corruption. As General Abdusalami Abubakar replaced Abacha, what has been described as the 'rotten status quo' was maintained. The regime diverted huge sums supposedly expended on the Independent National Electoral Commission, the hosting of the 1999 World Youth Championships in Nigeria and the National Electric Power Authority. Within ten months, General Abubakar 'expended' | 24.32 billion on the three items mentioned above.<sup>53</sup> However, the lure of office notwithstanding, the Abubakar regime probably remains the briefest in Africa. To a very large extent, therefore, the centenary awards were awards in recognition of corruption. It is not surprising that some Nigerians, including Noble Laureate, Wole Soyinka, turned down their nominations. Indeed, Soyinka described the entire centenary celebration as scooping 'up a century's accumulated degeneracy in one preeminent symbol, then place it on a podium for the nation to admire, emulate and worship'.<sup>54</sup> Soyinka was particularly averse to what has since then been referred to in Nigeria as 'Abacha award'. He dismissed it as 'a sordid effort to grant a certificate of health to a communicable disease that common sense demands should be isolated'.<sup>55</sup>

As if to demonstrate to the whole world that the Nigerian Government had stood logic on the head, five days after the award, the United States'

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, John S. Ojo and Oluyemi F. Fagbohun, 'Military Governance and Civil War: Ethnic Hegemony as a Constructive Factor in Nigeria', *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 14, Issue 4(2014): 19 & 21.

<sup>53</sup> Oguonu and Ezeibe, 'Political Corruption and Economic Growth in Nigeria', 71.

<sup>54</sup> *Nation*, 13 March 2014.

<sup>55</sup> *The Sun*, 2 March 2014.

Department of Justice announced the freezing of more than \$500 million corruption proceeds hidden in bank accounts around the world by Abacha in what the US Justice Department described as the 'largest kleptocracy forfeiture action...in the Department's history'. The US described Abacha as 'one of the most notorious kleptocrats in memory who embezzled billions from the people of Nigeria while millions lived in poverty'.<sup>56</sup> Ironically, barely two weeks after the centennial awards, the Nigerian Government recanted by filling fresh corruption charges against the Abacha family alleging that Abacha's eldest son coordinated the looting of about \$2.67 billion from the country's treasury.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the President constituted an Inter-ministerial Committee to advise the Federal Government on the best use to which part of Abacha's repatriated loots could be put.<sup>58</sup>

Despite enormous national wealth, ineradicable corruption has sentenced millions of Nigerians to grinding poverty.<sup>59</sup> In the last one and a half decades, Nigeria had earned about \$50 billion from Liquefied Natural Gas alone<sup>60</sup>; but today Nigeria is home to 7% of the world's poor with poverty level as high as 72% in Northern Nigeria; 27% in parts of Southern Nigeria and 35% in the Niger Delta.<sup>61</sup> Thus, in a recent World Bank report, Nigeria was rated as an 'extremely poor country'. In contrast to Singapore that has 35 functional refineries, Nigeria has four all of which are either epileptic or in permanent limbo.<sup>62</sup> Further, Nigeria is one of three countries in the world, along with Afghanistan and Pakistan, where polio is still endemic and where more than seventy million citizens have no access to safe drinking water and electricity.<sup>63</sup> While South Africa

<sup>56</sup> *Nation*, 6 March 2014.

<sup>57</sup> *Vanguard*, 11 April 2014.

<sup>58</sup> *Vanguard*, 20 June 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Poverty is not peculiar to Nigeria. According to the International Monetary Fund, poverty afflicts about 45% of Africa's households.

*Daily Independent*, 30 May 2014.

<sup>60</sup> *ThisDay*, 17 March 2014.

<sup>61</sup> *Vanguard*, 11 April 2014 and *Nation*, 10 March 2014. In a report published on 2 April 2014, the World Bank rated Nigeria as an 'extremely poor country'. See *Nigeria Daily Times*, 4 April 2014, and *ThisDay*, 6 April 2014.

<sup>62</sup> According to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC, the combined average capacity utilisation of Nigeria's four refineries in December 2013 was 25.95%. This was a significant improvement from the 6.46 per cent average capacity utilisation of the refineries in November 2013. See *Vanguard*, 15 April 2014.

<sup>63</sup> According to the National Bureau of Statistics general households survey, up 2013, 10.4% of Nigerians had access to pipe borne water; 26.8% got water from a bore hole (not necessarily owned by them); 33.3% obtained water from a well; 24.4% from streams/ponds and 4.1% from water vendors. *The Nation*, 26 May 2014.

generates about 40,000 megawatts of electricity for a population of about 50 million and South Korea generates about 83,000 megawatts for 55 million people; Nigeria currently generates a paltry 3,400 megawatts for a population nearly three times that of either South Korea or South Africa.<sup>64</sup> It is therefore not surprising that apart from consistently maintaining the lead in the importation of generators in Africa since 2007, Nigerians spend about \$8 billion annually running generators.<sup>65</sup>

Today, many Nigerian leaders will not only accuse, but will almost certainly cast aspersions on, British colonial administrations for not embarking on development programmes aimed at the holistic development of Nigeria. This study has no intention of justifying colonialism, yet it points out that during the colonial period, some superficial attempts were made at building power generating stations and roads. For example, the colonial government expended millions of pounds on the Ijora 'B' power project. In 1946, the Governor of Nigeria requested the Director of Road Research of the United Kingdom Department of Scientific and Industrial Research to send a representative to Nigeria to assist the Public Works Department in the construction and maintenance of roads.<sup>66</sup> Indisputably, Nigeria's colonial economy, like any other colonial economy, was thoroughly *disarticulated*<sup>67</sup> and was a mere appendage of the metropolitan economy; however, the fact that fairly large funds were injected into power generation and road construction is incontrovertible. If colonial administrations could construct feeder roads to facilitate the export of raw materials to the metropolis, indigenous administrations should do much better. On the contrary, expenditures on road and power generation had dwindled significantly so that today good roads and stable power are rarities in Nigeria.<sup>68</sup> According to the Global Road Safety Facility of the World Bank, Nigerian roads 'rank among the poorest in the world in terms of safety

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<sup>64</sup> *Punch*, 8 August 2012.

<sup>65</sup> *Vanguard*, 1 September 2014.

<sup>66</sup> H.W.W Polilitt, 'Impressions from visits to Nigeria' (1950). File PG/P4, NAI.

<sup>67</sup> A disarticulated economy is one whose parts or sectors are not complimentary. For a detailed discussion of the features of colonial economy, see Claude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa* (Essex: Longman, 1981), 43-87.

<sup>68</sup> Nigeria has an estimated total road length of 193,200 kilometres— 65,000 paved and 128,200 unpaved. The 193,200 kilometres comprise 34,123 km Federal roads, 30,500 km State roads and 129,557 km Local Government roads. See *The Nation*, 26 May 2014.

facilities and road network'<sup>69</sup> yet a cabinet minister squandered about •12 million state funds on air charter services for non-official trips within the last two years.<sup>70</sup>

In the report referred to earlier, the US expressed the view that the Nigerian Federal Government has deliberately stymied the country's anti-corruption agencies by denying them of requisite funding, logistic support and *laizzer faire* attitude to corruption cases.<sup>71</sup> For instance, after ordering a series of probes into stolen oil subsidy money in which the country lost more than \$1.2 billion, an amount far in excess of Nigeria's capital budget for 2014, nobody has been convicted more than two years after. Another corruption case was the purchase of two cars for about \$1.5 million for/by a former Aviation Minister. Following public opprobrium, it took the President four months to reluctantly bow to public outcry that the minister be sacked. Finally, the immediate past Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria probably remains the only holder of that office who regularly briefed the nation about the state of affairs at the Bank. Throughout his tenure of office, he alerted the nation now and again on the disappearances of huge sums from the Federation Account. The latest was his insistence that about \$20 billion was missing from the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation-Federation Account. In February 2014, the President sacked him for 'financial recklessness and gross misconduct', but obviously for exposing the monumental corruption in the NNPC.<sup>72</sup> The instances cited above, among others, may have led the House of Representatives to the conclusion that the President's 'body language' encourages corruption.<sup>73</sup> This is also probably what Alliyu *et. al.* meant when they referred to the Nigerian Federal Government as 'grandfather-spiders of corruption'.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> *Vanguard*, 16 June 2014.

<sup>70</sup> See *Vanguard* and other Nigerian newspapers of 21 March 2014 for details.

<sup>71</sup> Nigeria has two anti-corruption agencies – the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) established on 29 September 2000 and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) established in 2003.

In December 2013, the EFCC told the Nigerian Senate that the Commission was poorly funded thereby hampering its operations and efficiency. See the Editorial, *Punch*, 19 March 2014.

<sup>72</sup> A landmark judgement by Justice Ibrahim Buba of the Federal High Court, Lagos, alluded to this inference. See *Daily Independent*, 4 April 2014.

<sup>73</sup> *The Guardian*, Nigeria, 5 March 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Alliyu Nurudeen *et. al.*, 'Nigeria's Cobweb of Corruption and the Path to Underdevelopment', 103.

Another prominent feature of Nigeria at 100 is unprecedented insecurity/terrorism. Since the return to civil rule in May 1999, Nigeria has witnessed an upsurge in civil strife and insurgency particularly kidnapping. The severity and intensity of the current insecurity in Nigeria is far beyond what had been witnessed since the end of the Civil War in 1970. While the South-west is relatively peaceful, kidnapping has rendered the South-south thoroughly unsafe.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, in an attempt to stem the tide of kidnapping in the South-south, the Federal and the Rivers State Governments inaugurated a special security outfit known as 'Operation Spark'—comprising the Police, Army, Navy, Air Force and the Department of State Security.

The situation in Northern Nigeria (particularly the North-east) where the Boko Haram sect has almost permanently brought socio-economic activities to a halt is even more desperate and devastating. The group *Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad*, which in English means 'people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad' known the world over as Boko Haram,<sup>76</sup> is an extremist Islamic sect that has caused unprecedented dislocation and destruction of lives and properties across Northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital, Abuja. Its violent attacks on government offices, villages, churches, mosques, schools and other public places and utilities had led to the death of thousands and the collapse of hundreds of businesses.<sup>77</sup> In the south-south geo-political zone, Abuja and Lagos, dozens of aliens and

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<sup>75</sup> A special security unit known as 'Operation Spark' – comprising the Police, Army, Navy, Air Force and the Department of State Security– was inaugurated in Rivers State, South-south Nigeria, to curb the high rate of kidnapping in the state. *The Sun*, 17 April 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Boko Haram (meaning western education is sinful) was founded in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State, North-east Nigeria, by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. The group launched an uprising in 2009 leading to nearly a week of fighting that ended with a military assault, which left about 800 people dead. Yusuf was captured and later killed when, according to the police, he was trying to escape from custody. Thereafter, the group went dormant for about a year before re-emerging in 2010 and has since carried out brutal attacks on government offices, churches, schools, public utilities, and military formations. See Andrew Walker, United States Institute of Peace, 'What is Boko Haram?', <http://www.usip.org/publication/what-boko-haram> (accessed 4 April 2014).

<sup>77</sup> In a speech in France at the regional Summit on Security in Nigeria, President Jonathan estimated that the Boko Haram insurgency had claimed the lives of more than 12,000 Nigerians and injured more than 8,000 others. *Daily Times*, 18 May 2014.

prominent Nigerians had been kidnapped and released upon the payment of ransoms. In the last twelve months, more than 450 school pupils had lost their lives to the Boko Haram insurgency. According to the United Nations, more than 57,000 Nigerians have fled to Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic as a result of Boko Haram's serial attacks while more than half a million are internally displaced.<sup>78</sup> The most horrendous attack of the sect in recent times was probably that of 25 February in which about 59 students of a federal college in Yobe State were killed. According to the *New York Times*, the attack brought 'maximum humiliation to President Goodluck Jonathan, occurring as it did, two days before centennial celebrations'.<sup>79</sup> In a speech titled 'One Massacre Too Many', the Speaker of the Federal Parliament summarised the attack in the following words

...a horrendous terrorist attack that stuck a total blow at the heart and soul of the Nigerian nation and desecrated values that descent peoples of all nations hold dear...about 59 students of Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, Yobe State, were killed in the most heinous manner. Some of our future leaders were mowed down in gruesome circumstances in their sleep... That day was a day that will live in infamy in the history of this nation.<sup>80</sup>

Although, the killing of the 59 students did not stop the grand finale of the centennial celebration which held twenty-four hours after the attack, it effectively arrested the educational pursuits of hundreds of thousands of youths in the North-east in particular and Northern Nigeria in general. In March 2014, the Federal Government shut six colleges in areas described as 'high security risk' in the North-east.<sup>81</sup> The Borno State Government followed suit by shutting down 85 of its secondary schools thereby truncating the educational aspirations of about 115,000 students.<sup>82</sup> In addition, more than 15,000 school pupils dropped out of

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<sup>78</sup> *Vanguard*, 12 March 2014. Again, the problem of violence-related displacements is neither peculiar to Nigeria nor Africa. For example, according to the United Nations Organisation, more than two million Africans were internally displaced between January and September 2014. See Punch 5 October 2014.

<sup>79</sup> *The Nation*, 6 March 2014.

<sup>80</sup> *Daily Independent*, 12 March 2014.

<sup>81</sup> *The Sun*, 6 March 2014.

<sup>82</sup> *The Guardian*, Nigeria, 14 March 2014.



school in Borno State between February and May 2014.<sup>83</sup> This is very significant given the fact that compared with Southern Nigeria, Northern Nigeria is educationally backward. The United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF) estimated that of the 10.5 million children who are out of school children in Nigeria (the highest in the world), 6.3 million (60%) are in Northern Nigeria.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, in virtually every sphere of life—social, economic, medical among others, North-eastern Nigeria is now almost completely paralysed.

A number of factors are responsible for the inability of the Federal Government to quash Boko Haram. One is that the Nigeria Police and the Army are poorly equipped. This, once again, takes us back to cyclical and ubiquitous official corruption which ensures that monies voted to developmental projects are not expended on same. Thus, despite enormous national wealth and abundant human resources, the Police and the Army remain ill equipped. According to a former Governor of Borno State, members of the Boko Haram sect are better armed than the Nigeria Armed Forces even though about \$1.339 trillion had been supposedly allocated to and expended on defence in the last five years.<sup>85</sup> Despite the widely held view that the Alhaji Shehu Shagari's administration (October 1979 - December 1983) was outstandingly corrupt, the last time the army was effectively equipped was during his regime.<sup>86</sup> Before he was overthrown, his administration ordered 50 Chinook helicopters for carrying equipment and Armed Forces personnel, procured several armoured vehicles and ensured that the armouries in all the divisions were well equipped.<sup>87</sup>

However, following a succession of military rulers starting from Major-General Muhammadu Buhari to General Ibrahim Babangida and the late General Sani Abacha, the army was demobilized for selfish reasons. Indeed, even when former President Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired general who should have reversed the rot, assumed office in 1999, he continued

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<sup>83</sup> *Daily Times*, 17 June 2014.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Budgetary allocations to the defence sector in Nigeria since 2010 are as follows: 2010: \$1.459 billion; 2011: \$2 billion; 2012: \$5.293 billion; 2013: \$2.091 billion; 2014: \$1.954 billion. See *The Nation*, 2 June 2014.

<sup>86</sup> *Saturday Punch*, 8 March 2014.

<sup>87</sup> See *ThisDay*, 24 June 2014.

with the demobilization of the Armed Forces probably to prevent ambitious officers from overthrowing his government. Indeed, the history of Nigeria's Armed Forces is a microcosm of the larger Nigerian society. For example, immediately after the Civil War in 1970, Nigeria with a population of 56.13 million had a military strength of 250,000 troops, which was by far the largest in West Africa. Today, with an estimated population of 170.2 million, Nigeria has a little over 100,000 Armed Forces personnel that are ill-equipped, poorly trained and poorly motivated.<sup>88</sup> It is not surprising that the Nigerian Armed Forces have not been able to curtail Boko Haram in the three North-eastern States of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno, the hotbed of insurgency. Nigeria has become a country flowing daily with the blood of her citizens: about 75 people were bombed to death in a highly crowded motor park in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, on 14 April 2014 and on the following day about 230 college girls were abducted from their dormitories in Chibok, Borno State by members of the sect.<sup>89</sup>

Intractable unemployment is another outstanding feature of Nigeria's 100 years anniversary. Unemployment, like corruption, is not a tree of recent growth. For instance, in 1935 the Governor of Nigeria inaugurated an Employment Committee, which was chaired by C. W. Leese. The Committee, saddled with the duty of registering 'all persons residing in Lagos who had no employment or means of sustenance', registered about 4,000 unemployed persons.<sup>90</sup> Successive Nigerian governments, as already pointed out, had in one form or the other castigated British colonial administrators, yet as a follow up to the recommendation of the Employment Committee, the same colonial government in a memorandum to the Colonial Office insisted that 'measures for improving the physical and social conditions of the people [of Nigeria] must now have a claim on our attention which should take precedence over other considerations'.<sup>91</sup> Today, the improvement in the 'physical and social conditions' of the people occupies the bottom rung of the priorities of

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *ThisDay*, 15 April 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Sessional Paper No. 46 1935:

'Report of the Committee appointed by His Excellency the Governor to inquire into the question of unemployment'. File CE/L3, NAI. Other members of the Committee were E. R. J. Hussey, M. P. Sells, A. Alakija, Eric O. Moore and Henry Carr.

<sup>91</sup> 'Report on Native Administration and African Political Development, 1940-1941', paragraph 188. File RG/H1, NAI.

successive Nigerian governments. Even with about 51 million unemployed Nigerians public office holders embezzle billions of dollars annually that could be channelled into industrial and economically productive ventures.

With a conservative estimate of an average of about 200,000 graduates from 129 universities and hundreds of thousands from intermediate colleges, polytechnics and colleges of education entering the job market annually, Nigeria's job market is probably the most crowded in sub-Saharan Africa. It is, therefore, not surprising that the army of jobless Nigerians who have become socio-economic liabilities to themselves, their families and the nation at large engage in sundry illegalities and anti-social acts. In effect, there are enough un-utilised and under-utilised able-bodied men that politicians could recruit as thugs; or who could take to kidnapping-for-ransom, while several others could readily swell the ranks of Boko Haram. Indeed, the Inspector-General of Nigeria Police in 2014 opined that 'unemployment and poverty are responsible for the widespread insecurity in Nigeria'.<sup>92</sup> This view agrees with that of the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, who, while commenting on the increase of job opportunities in Britain said 'more jobs mean more security, peace of mind and opportunity for the British people'.<sup>93</sup>

The ill-fated recruitment exercise into the Nigeria Immigration Service in 2014 during which about 700,000 job seekers scrambled for fewer than 5,000 jobs clearly illustrates the prevalence of unemployment in Nigeria. The resultant stampedes led to the death of about 20 applicants including pregnant women and nursing mothers.<sup>94</sup> Following what was obviously a national disgrace and disaster, the Nigerian Senate expressed grave concern over escalating unemployment rate in the country and opined that it could provoke a re-enactment of the French Revolution (1789-1799) or even the more recent Arab Spring that led to violent change of governments in North Africa and the Middle East.<sup>95</sup> The Senate went

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Independent*, 11 April 2014.

<sup>93</sup> *The Guardian*, London, 22 January 2014.

<sup>94</sup> See, among others, *ThisDay*, 18 and 19 March 2014. The President thereupon annulled the entire exercise and promised three employment slots to each of the families of the people who died in the stampedes. Those who were injured were also to be given automatic appointments into the Service. A seven-member committee was set up to conduct a fresh recruitment exercise. Earlier in 2008, about 17 of the 195,000 applicants who scrambled for about 3,000 jobs in the Service also lost their lives. *The Nation*, 14 July 2008.

<sup>95</sup> *ThisDay*, 19 March 2014.

further to describe Nigeria as a country 'in the grip of an acute employment crisis', which had brought many Nigerians into 'the coalition of the oppressed' and concluded that revolution is 'staring Nigeria in the face'. The Executive was consequently asked to set aside between 15 and 25% of the nation's total annual budget to address the problem of unemployment. It must be stated that majority of members of the Senate had, at one time or the other, served as state governors and federal ministers and did very little or nothing to fight unemployment. To commemorate the 15 March 2014 tragedy, a youth organisation—Re-Orientation Advocates of Nigeria—declared March 15 of every year a national day of unemployment in Nigeria.

The acute unemployment problem in Nigeria is a consequence of paucity of industries and the neglect of agriculture. Since the discovery of crude oil, successive Nigerian governments had paid mere lip service to the development of agriculture and the diversification of the economy. Industries like textiles, shoe, food, tyre, glass, rug, carpet, iron and steel, among others, which would have provided jobs for millions of Nigerians have either folded up or relocated elsewhere. The Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) estimated that in Lagos State alone, more than 9,000 businesses had either shut down or relocated to other countries within the last one year due to a harsh environment occasioned by lack of electricity and other power related problems. The Association had suggested that Nigeria requires a minimum of 85,000 megawatts (500 megawatts per one million people as against its paltry 3,400 or 20 megawatts per one million people) of electricity to cope with the industrial and commercial needs of the country.<sup>96</sup> According to the Nigeria Labour Congress, the performance index of industries in the country has dropped from 46% to 25.81% while service industry more than doubled to 50% from 23%.<sup>97</sup> This is not surprising given the nexus between constant power supply and industrialisation as industrialisation is a nullity without regular sufficient electricity supply. Unlike the Asian nations of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, and the emerging industrial nations of India, Brazil, Taiwan and Thailand, Nigeria failed to take advantage of increased flow of capital

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<sup>96</sup> *The Guardian*, Nigeria, 5 April 2014.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Times*, 8 April 2014.

and the opening of markets in the advent of globalisation thereby failing to increase the pace of its national development and job creation.

### Conclusion

Nigeria as a political and geographical entity is neither disintegrating nor dismembering, but because of pervasive corruption, intractable unemployment, endemic poverty, infrastructural under-development, neglect of agriculture and paucity of industries, scientific and technological backwardness as well as the absence of basic social services, millions of her citizens are socially muzzled and economically cremated. Indeed, the welfare of the ordinary citizens of Nigeria had meant very little to successive Nigerian governments. This consideration may have informed the view expressed by Niran Adedokun that 'Government cares about no one. You build your own home, provide your own water, find a way to bring power into your home, struggle to feed yourself and family, ensure that the road leading to your home is motorable and at the end die on your own ... without being noticed by the state that should ordinarily record your death'.<sup>98</sup> Despite the grinding poverty afflicting ordinary Nigerians, each of the country's 109 Senators earns about \$1.7 million per month (\$20.4 million per annum) approximately five times the \$400,000 annual salary of President Obama of the United States of America.<sup>99</sup> As far as millions of Nigerians are concerned, except for tenuous unity, Nigeria has little or nothing to celebrate at hundred. In his own assessment, which a very high percentage of Nigerians will refute with facts and figures, President Goodluck Jonathan had said:

On my watch, we have witnessed high national economic growth rates, steady improvements and expansion of national infrastructure including airports and roads, the restoration of rail transportation, the efficient implementation of a roadmap for improved power supply, a revolutionary approach to agricultural production, as well as advances in education, sports, youth development, healthcare delivery, housing, water supply and other social services.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> *Punch*, 2 May 2014.

<sup>99</sup> *The Guardian*, Nigeria, 6 June 2014.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted from *Daily Times*, 29 May 2014. See also *Punch*,

29 May 2014. According to the United Nations, Nigeria accounts for 14% of the world's maternal mortality with 630 deaths for every 100,000 births while about 800,000 Nigerian children die before their fifth year. See 'Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010', United Nations (2012),7.

On the contrary, a former Lagos State Police Commissioner, Abubakar Tsav, identified the outstanding features of the Nigerian state as 'insecurity ... corruption and waste of resources'.<sup>101</sup> Thus, at hundred, Nigeria is corruption-infected, poverty-ridden and lagging behind in many facets of life. We may therefore conclude with the several questions raised by Lawal Ogienagbon:

What is there to celebrate about a nation where the per capital income is nothing to write home about? What is there to celebrate about a nation where the gap between the rich and the poor keeps widening by the day? What is there to celebrate about a nation, which is the ninth producer of oil in the world but cannot meet its people's domestic need for petroleum products? What is there to celebrate about our 100th year when all the industries, which used to be our pride in the 1970s and 1980s are dead? Those that did not die have since relocated to smaller countries like Ghana and Togo. What is there to celebrate about a nation that does not care about its people? The people only matter to our leaders in times of elections.<sup>102</sup>

As should be expected, the rather awry socio-economic state of affairs in Nigeria has taken incalculable tolls on the personality of Nigerians at home and the image of the country abroad. In desperate attempts to access those socio-economic opportunities that are available elsewhere, Nigerians had perpetrated serious financial crimes and engaged in sundry social misdemeanours so that by 2008, more than 20,000 Nigerians who were supposed to be making diverse contributions to the political and socio-economic transformation of their fatherland were languishing in prisons abroad with about 60 of them on the death row.<sup>103</sup> In 2012, more than 16,000 Nigerians were in jail in other countries<sup>104</sup> and in August 2013, the Nigerian Federal Government estimated that 9,500 Nigerians were in various prisons across the world with the United Kingdom alone holding 752.<sup>105</sup> According to a *Punch* editorial, 'this is not the Nigeria our founders envisaged. Things have changed and continue to change in a nasty sort of way. This is a failing nation – thanks in no small measure to successive governments and their prowling elites.'<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> *Daily Independent*, 29 May 2014.

<sup>102</sup> *The Nation*, 13 March 2014.

<sup>103</sup> Editorial, *Daily Trust*, 14 July 2008.

<sup>104</sup> *ThisDay*, 25 June 2014.

<sup>105</sup> *Punch*, 2 August 2013.

<sup>106</sup> *Punch*, 19 March 2014.