

# Bastardization of a nation's citizens

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The depth of treachery of the Nigerian State is rooted in the absence of any obligation to serve or uphold the rights of the people. Never has it become more obvious than presently that there is no civil contract between the government and its citizens. What exists is tokenistic, appearing to maintain the machinery of state sufficient to sustain its key players and present to the global stage a country with defined borders.

The story of Nigeria reflects the dissonance in its constitution, both of its people but more pertinent the non-existent rule of law.

Appraising the achievement of the government on global parameters such as the UN Sustainable Developmental Goals on poverty, hunger, health and education alone, leaves one in little doubt the common man remains invisible in the eyes of its leaders.

The story of Nigeria reflects the dissonance in its constitution, both of its people but more pertinent the non-existent rule of law. The so called Constitution is written not in the interest of the people but for the preservation of an entity, whose leadership is scripted and aligned to only one course. The preservation of an economic entity contrived originally to serve the interest of the British, but latterly that of the de facto curators whose goal remains a continuation of the enslavement of the people.

## **Poverty**

A reminder to this fact is evident in the gross inequality across sections of the society. The [World Bank poverty headcount ratio](#) estimates over 40% of Nigerians live below national poverty lines. This equates to over 80 million of its population as at 2018/19, and is projected to rise to 90 million post pandemic. The only other country fairing worse than Nigeria is Afghanistan with a ratio of 54.5%, and this is a country that has been ravaged by internal crises with the Taliban, just like Nigeria is currently faced with.

The Nigerian government during the recent [June-12 Democracy day](#), boasted it has succeeded in lifting approximately 10 million people out of poverty in two years by increasing income through a combination of raising minimum wages and cash gifts.

Buhari has been in government since 2015, and was re-elected in 2019. The reality is that this claim lacks verity. The Covid-19 pandemic has ravaged Nigeria all through 2020 and is still disrupting the economy presently. The onslaught of terrorist activities in the North and middle-belt of Nigeria and Banditry across the North East and spreading to the Middle belt and Southern states makes this claim really implausible and the government a laughing stock. Most importantly, with inflation, absence of basic infrastructures and insecurity such cash injection in the hands of a few is like water poured in a basket.

Objective measures of poverty takes into consideration true household incomes and its ability to meet its essential needs. The [Global Multidimensional Poverty Index \(MPI\)](#) has three dimensions of poverty - Health, Education and Living Standards with each of these sectors further subdivided given rise to ten indicators. In essence a combination of income and other non-monetary indices are critical to appreciating living standards across communities.

Sadly despite leadership being weighted in favour of Northern players at the National level, just like illiteracy, poverty is endemic in the North and has contributed to the spate of terrorist activities and banditry ravaging parts of the country.

## **Dearth of Human Capital**

Human capital is a function of the sum total of earnings or Lifetime income of workers multiplied by the working age population with respect to the total population of the country. Invariably higher incomes groups would be among persons who have gone through years of education, from basic through secondary and probably tertiary or professional studies. An average period of education would span childhood through teens and early adulthood, with some continuing formal training through their working years. The investment in basic and higher education clearly yields dividends in the form of returns contributing to Lifetime Income and ultimately in the Human Capital of the working age population.

The essence of human capital development is typified by the medical profession. A country the size of Nigeria with an estimated population of over 200 million has been recorded to have about [74,543 registered doctors with MDCN](#). However previous report estimates that only [half this number are actually practicing](#). The ratio of

1:2683 doctors in a population of 200 million, is grossly inadequate although the true number is probably half, that at 1:5000! Other professional groups also suffer such dearth although not to similar degree, given the years it takes to completing medical training and licencing. The United Nations Global drive for Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG) recommends a ratio of 1:600 doctors per given population.

The impact of quality Healthcare cuts across numerous domains - from infant mortality, through reproductive health, to burden of disease and life expectancy. The UN Sustainable Development Goal on Health (SDG) emphasises the need to "ensure [healthy lives and promoting well-being](#) for all at all ages". Inadequate training and retention of health professionals significantly cripples Human capital and has consequences on the wealth of the nation.

Investment in quality education has dwindled over the years. Statistics indicate less young persons are enrolling into school or furthering education beyond basic levels. The numbers [enrolling into schools](#) decrease as one travels northwards into the country such as to far flung states as Jigawa. The import of this decline in education is its consequence on Lifetime Income as it pertains to Human capital.

More troubling is the phenomenon of 'brain drain'. Young and sometimes seasoned professionals after years of investment by state, on qualifying, and finding no meaningful employment opt to leave the country.

## **Intangible Wealth - sustaining capacity**

The benefits from a thriving workforce is the ability to create and sustain growth through initiatives that transform human and natural resources into income and assets. The sum total of the activities by Human Capital including what has been termed 'Total Factor Productivity', comprising knowledge and technology, contributes to growth in a manner that now explains the gap between the wealth of developed economies compared to low and middle income countries. This has been termed [Intangible wealth](#) as against Tangible wealth such as from products or commodities which contribute to natural capital. Incidentally, as countries become wealthier, natural capital as a component of total wealth shrinks and intangible capital increases. Developed economies appear to typify this disparity and explain why countries like USA and UK may not have abundant natural resources yet have

thriving economies.

Nigeria like most low and middle income countries despite posting GDPs and income from oil or other natural resources, are barely able to compete in the global stage with OECD countries in terms of effective wealth. The World Bank landmark article ["Where is the wealth of nations?"](#) makes the point on how countries like Nigeria fail to translate natural capital into produced capital, never saved rent incomes (from oil), and have poor governance structures.

A taste of the pudding is in its eating, but Buhari would not taste Healthcare in Nigeria knowing that it is not fit for purpose for the average Nigerian.

### **Corruption and failure of governance**

Despite all claims of Buhari's administration, institutions of government remain an embodiment of corruption. Transparency International ranks Nigeria as 149 out of 188 countries in its [Corruption Perception index](#) with a low score of 25. Over 40% of public service users reported they paid a bribe in the previous 12 months. The nation witnessed how at a [Public Hearing of NASS select committee](#) where the chair of the committee desperately acted to silence a witness from disclosing what was effectively scandalous activity of committee members. Leadership by example does not exist.

The promise to restore electricity within six months of assuming office in 2015 remains a pipe dream for the average Nigerian. The cost of business and lost man-hours from epileptic power supply sadly maintains the country in a state of retrogression and under productivity.

Schools have become a shell of what they were and privatisation of education has further widened the gap between haves and has not. Most state and Federal institutions are barely in session.

A taste of the pudding is in its eating, but Buhari would not taste Healthcare in Nigeria knowing that it is not fit for purpose for the average Nigerian. He may claim to have invested in Healthcare but the evidence speaks for itself. Private health sector has largely filled the gap but at a cost to the common man who cannot afford

it. The state hospitals are ill-equipped with patients having to procure basic items necessary for their treatment. Few states have taken up the challenge of improving health care delivery but much is required.

Insecurity and banditry continues to ravage the country. This was also his campaign promise, to rid Nigeria of Boko Haram (BH) and all forms of criminality. Terrorism is rife and Nigeria has slipped into the watch-list of countries to be avoided.

Rather than deal with the Boko Haram menace, Buhari has been largely silent on the [naming and shaming of this group](#). This posture has led many to believe he has been a [BH sympathiser](#) and perhaps supported this group and its mission to destabilize Nigeria during Jonathan's leadership. It is instructive to recall that in 2012 Boko Haram picked Buhari to moderate talks with the then Nigerian Government. Now he is in office would it not be plausible to believe he has all the while being engaged in covert negotiations with Boko Haram. This would explain why in the midst of the dastardly acts of this sect, the government is blatantly negotiating rehabilitation deals with them, something some Nigerian soldiers have referred to as ["setting our killers free"](#). More striking is the existence of Renegade Authorities, enclaves of Boko Haram terrorists directly controlling areas in the North East making the lives of communities unbearable.

## **South West and South East agitations**

The differential response to groups in the south of Nigeria agitating for inclusivity in the so-called '*One Nigeria*' is a stark contrast to the kid-glove approach of quelling the menace of Boko-Harram Terrorism, Fulani-Herdsmen crises and banditry. Unlike the North where majority considered BH and ISWAP as terrorists, the Indigenous People of Biafra *IPOB* and previously, [MASSOB](#) are indeed a group that arose out of the deliberate policy of marginalisation of the Igbos from main stream leadership. Incidentally the Igbos has been described as among the smartest people group in Nigeria. They remain the most industrious and ingenious group rising from the ruins of 'Biafra' to re-establish themselves in business. The Federal Government despite a policy of 'No victor no vanquished', at the end of the civil war, never truly opened up the South East for development for decades. Fifty years on, no Igbo citizen has been nominated or elected as president. The closest was Vice Presidency, Alex Ekueme in the second Republic. The history of the Civil War was conveniently expunged from

school curriculum for decades all in an attempt to proffer no space for reflection on its import.

As a response to the protests of IPOB in the South East and recently Oduduwa Sympathizers in the South West, the government has masterminded the arrest of Mazi Namdi Kano who is now detained to face charges allegedly for offence against the state. His crime? For protesting against the marginalisation of his people who have repeatedly fallen victims to terrorist activities in the North without any compensation or justice. Without appearing to be sympathetic to the often ill-advised methods of IPOB, the government in no little way has acted disproportionately at the onset of IPOB saga, and this in no little way has fuelled secessionist ideologies.

[Ken Saro-Wiwa](#), was an award winning playwright, innovative in his approach to awakening social consciousness. Though innocent of all charges brought against him by the Nigerian state, led by the military government of Abacha, he was murdered by the Nigerian government in a bid to silence MOSOP protest against oil exploratory activities of SHELL that had caused massive pollution of their land, destroying farms and waterways. In his last words he would state the struggle continues. The approach of Buhari clearly indicate he is probably not different from his erstwhile military self though cloaked in civilian gab.

Now we know Abacha stole Nigeria's wealth and starched it in foreign accounts. Who is indeed a true patriot? Ken Saro-Wiwa who fought for the rights of his people or Abacha who stole the wealth of his country?

Why should anyone believe Buhari and his gang when the Truth about leadership in Nigeria is so well laid out?

Indeed until justice, equity and freedom obtains in the entity called Nigeria, true nationhood will continue to elude its citizens.

### **Indebtedness from External borrowing**

The government prides itself by making claims regarding infrastructural developments such as roads and rail networks. Sadly the opaque nature of these projects and the sums claimed to have been borrowed to fund them leaves much to

be desired. Ghana, has similarly embarked on a rail project awarded to China, traversing over 500km at approx. \$2.2billion dollars, compared to the cost of the 156km Lagos-Ibadan rail project that was about \$2 billion dollars. The conditions of the borrowing, absence of a competitive tendering process, in addition to other factors have been implicated. Curiously the African Union and the AFDB queries the cost of Nigeria's rail projects including the controversial *Kano-Maradi line* which Buhari essentially told himself was his gift to his relatives across the border- at the Tax payers' expense. Any prudent leader would have considered measures including splitting the cost or indeed consulting with the AFDB regarding funding.

### **A rudderless ship**

The reality is that most Nigerians had once been proud of what they believed was a country worth its salt. The leadership of Nigeria since independence appears to have one thing in common. Devoid of vision, narrow minded and seem to be fiddles in hands of unseen masters. Admittedly no one is perfect. Political parties without ideologies. Inability to make the right choice of leadership has been a consequence of a system where candidacy is traded. Carpet crossing at the drop of a hat is the order of the day. An ex-state governor imprisoned for looting its state's coffers, returns to Nigeria and continues to hold court in his state with no remorse or shame. A state governor caught on camera receiving sums of money, yet continues in office with no consequences. Leaders who campaigned and were elected on the premise of providing X-Y-Z, fails to achieve these objectives yet has the gumption to request to be returned to office.

Repeatedly bordering on becoming a Pariah state, the current government of Buhari has little semblance of equity and service in terms of upholding a civil contract. As previously stated the primary interest of leadership in Nigeria is the arrogation of power to a select group, which is increasingly represented by persons of Fulani extraction, perhaps the most ill-prepared and unschooled group yet taking charge of this behemoth. Little wonder the last 50 years has witnessed only one change, regression.

### **Haunted by its past**



The resounding discord in tones across the land can only represent one fact. A people divided. The absence of the humane means the needs of the common man - whether in Zamfara, Birnin Kebbi, Ogoja or in Sapele is never met.

A people's constitution? Perhaps. Not a military diktat cobbled together by soldiers of fortune whose primary goal was to reinvent themselves to cover up their dastardly acts; during and since the civil war, with some still craving opportunities to do more harm.

Note the theme in Nigeria's leadership - Since 1966 all the military and later civilian leaders with military background or links, were participants of the July 1966 coup or actors at the ensuing civil war which was essentially a war of attrition against the Ibos. Muritala Mohammed key player in the July 1966 coup could not assume leadership and so Gowon, not the most senior military officer, was chosen. In a bloodless coup that took place whilst Gowon was away at an AU conference in Addis Ababa in 1975, Muritala Muhammed seized the office of Head of State. Muritala was assassinated in a bloody coup in 1976 less than a year later. Obasanjo after quelling the coup took over as Head of State with Shehu Musa Yar'adua as Second in command.

Shehu Shagari(Minister in First Republic), Mohammadu Buhari(coup), Babaginda(coup), Ernest Shonekan, Sanni Abacha(coup), Abdulsalami Abubakar, Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (Brother to Shehu Yar'adua, Obasanjo's previous 2iC), Goodluck Jonathan, Mohammadu Buhari(history of coups).

In this list of leaders, the marginalization of the Igbos is apparent.

Truth and justice has not reigned in Nigeria. Subterfuge has laid sway hence the lies of revenue derivation formula, so-called Federal character and a Federation currently run like a unitary state. Interesting to observe now that some Northern states have found solid minerals in their region there is agitation to have sole rights to its mining. Yet oil blocks in the south has been divvied up to northern elites who have no more claim to these blocks than a southerner might ever have if this was located in the North.

Nigeria as it stands was a product of chicanery of the British colonial masters. Although tribes and tongues have learnt to accommodate and tolerate each other, the union was perforced and not necessarily adopted by each people group. The pre independence leaders negotiated membership of the new Nigeria in terms that

presently does not exist. The Military, like the British thrust an aggregation of states that eroded the powers of the regions in order to squash secession threats of Biafra. In the new configuration, the North has by some fiat (Murtala Mohammed) acquired more states than the south, and claims to be more populated than the south despite the fact that it is predominantly arid land. The evidence for these [acclaimed numbers remains contrived](#).

Given this choice, it is more than probable majority would opt to remain if they are also given the right to determine 'A people's constitution'. A configuration where each region/state is autonomous would promote organic growth, subsequently evolving into a nation state that perhaps might truly become the giant of Africa.

### ***Which way Nigeria?***

Nigeria has all it takes to become a great nation. However in its 60 years of its birth, all it has succeeded in doing is live the lie that was bequeathed to it by its colonial masters.

In its diversity, respecting each people group and promoting mutual existence seem to be impossible. The reasons may be a result of a number of factors but perhaps linked to failure to recognise that some cultures may be docile whilst others are neoteric and intractable. Oil and water may not mix.

The independent Nigerian state was a product of restive minds who believed in the autonomy of reasoning and negotiated change with the British effectively achieving what otherwise some other countries battled to attain.

The regions perhaps were a compromise until the sectarianism of the first republic reared its ugly head. Distrust and the covert claim to leadership by the majority ethnic groups robbed the nomination and election of the best and most qualified for state offices. The inequity in appointments, with ineptitude has had significant consequences in the quality of decisions, human capital and the abuse of the rule of law, all contributing to poor governance and regression below the mean.

The incursion of the military for whatever reason has sought to impose a will that really was certainly not the 'Will of the people'! The so-called democratic dispensation is failing and may continue to fail in its current form because there is no reason for accountability. There is no consequence when people are given what

they have not truly earned.

The apparent gains of a nascent nation were soon pulverised. Economic advantage of natural capital from oil post-civil war suffered from ethnocentric divisions. Rather than increasing produced capital by re-investing rents and divesting equitably in human capital across the regions, with particular focus on the impoverished North, Nigerian leaders scrambled for the 'national cake' in a free for all that haemorrhaged its resources in no time.

It is saddening that the best of Nigeria is serving in foreign lands and are making the most of the opportunities these communities offer, achieving to their utmost potential across various sectors globally. It has been stated that Nigeria in its current form has destroyed more hopes than ought to be the case. The Biafran civil war certainly achieved this in its three-year onslaught. The last three decades or more has witnessed a strung-out destruction of lives and hopes across length and breadth of the country. Little wonder, the many *Andrews* that seek to escape its shores.

The evidence would suggest a perennial failure of leadership and this is most succinctly reflected by the predicament faced today. A nation who votes a vacuous panhandle into its most critical office deserves what he gets. But sadly the outcome is the bastardization of its citizens.

Every people group should have the choice to remain or leave the entity called Nigeria in a referendum that honours these rights and also allows citizens to state their preference as to the configuration of a future Nigeria. Given this choice, it is more than probable majority would opt to remain if they are also given the right to determine 'A people's constitution'. A configuration where each region/state is autonomous would promote organic growth, subsequently evolving into a nation state that perhaps might truly become the giant of Africa. It may be that if this choice is revisited, people would feel more regarded in their decision to stay and not necessarily wish to leave.

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