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## **Sixteen Unbroken Years of Civil Rule in Nigeria 1999-2015: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly Experiences**

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**Abstract:**

*Nigeria's experience in the last sixteen years (1999-2015) has been good, bad and ugly. On the good side, it has achieved a landmark success in the sense of not only instituting civil rule for sixteen unbroken years but as well, experienced peaceful and smooth transfer of political power from a ruling party to an opposition party as a result of an opposition presidential candidate defeating an incumbent president in a general election. These good experiences had never been had in Nigeria since independence until the period of discourse. However, in spite of all these, the bad and the ugly experiences Nigeria had in the past sixteen years seem to counter the joy that the above good occurrences might have brought. Against this backdrop, the purpose of this paper is to critically analyze Nigeria's experience of sixteen unbroken years of civil rule (1999-2015). The emphasis is on the good, the bad and the ugly experiences. The paper argues that in the midst of all the good results, corruption is still endemic, food security and national security have worsened, poverty rate has exponentially increased, and a lot of crises and conflicts have been on ground. It, therefore, blames sanctimonious leadership for being largely responsible for the bad and the ugly experiences and advocates for a transformational leadership that can sustain the good results and further help to bring the much-desired change to Nigeria. It is a qualitative research, which utilizes content or face validity method.*

**Keywords:** *Civil rule, the good, the bad, the ugly, transformational leadership*

### **1. Introduction**

Nigeria became independent of British colonial rule on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960. Therefore, by 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2015, Nigeria has attained a mature age of 55 years but of all these years, the nation has never enjoyed civil rule for an unbroken seven years until 1999. Now, it is historic that from 1999 to 2015, the nation has experienced an uninterrupted civil rule for Sixteen years without any military coup and this is the first time of achieving this kind of feat. It has also, among other numerous good experiences of the era under discourse, had smooth transfer of political power from civilian to civilian regimes without any military intervention; an opposition party defeating a ruling one in a Presidential election that the credible and transparent process and outcome made the incumbent President, Goodluck Jonathan (PDP) to congratulate the opposition candidate General Muhammadu Buhari even before the elections ended and never went to court to challenge the result; the implementation of the 30% affirmation right of the women was enforced largely to the point that more women were integrated into the political, economic and social mainstreams of life. Dr. Ngozi Okonjo Iweala (was minister of finance and co-ordinator of the Economy), Mrs. Dieziani Alison- Madueke, Minister of Petroleum, Ndi Okereke-Onyiuoke, Managing director, Nigerian stock exchange and so on. This was the first time in the history of Nigeria that women occupied this class of positions. The list is numerous and cannot be exhausted in this introductory.

However, some argue that although these numerous good experiences are on ground, some countervailing issues and events tend to be so bad and ugly to the point of giving Nigeria and her citizens some harrowing and unwishful experiences. They refer to worsening food security (Nwosumba, 2012), exponential increase in poverty rate (Nwagbara, 2003), acts of kidnapping, and terrorism (Boko Haram in particular), endemic and culture of corruption etc. in Nigeria as examples. Apart from the bad experiences, some other scholars argue that Nigeria has done well within the same period. For example, Egwemi (2013:1) in outlining the importance of elections in new democracies, applauds Nigeria for holding elections regularly "since the beginning of the fourth republic namely; 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011," and 2015. Despite this good experience, which Nigeria never had before 1999, the country suffered from bad leadership and so fell short of transforming the country from its underdeveloped status. Democracy remained at the nascent state begging to be taken to the mature level. Against this backdrop, it is the contention of this paper that why there are numerous bad and ugly situations in the country, the fact that civil rule has lasted for sixteen unbroken years is an indication that democracy, as widely believed and accepted is better system of government than military rule, which is usually authoritarian. Democracy has come to stay in the land, a point Jega (2010) agrees with. However, the failure of leadership in the country having persisted throughout the sixteen years as in the period in the past points to the fact that the present change mantra in Nigeria can end up only in rhetorics like those in

the past if the leadership fails to be transformational – oriented because as it is today, all is not yet well with the nation. For easy comprehension, this piece of work is divided into sub-sections that present the details of the above issues raised.

## 2. Methodology

The purpose of the paper is to critically analyze Nigeria's experience of unbroken 16 years of civil rule between 1999 and 2015. It is a qualitative research and so analytical in nature. However, due to the fact that the study is on contemporary issues, the methods of data gathering are mainly predicated on secondary and not oral sources, and so documentary – oriented. It also utilizes information from direct observation since the researcher is an eyewitness to most of the events that took place within the time of discourse. Based on the foregoing, the validity of instruments of data collection is thus guaranteed through the use of logical validation method. This enables the work to be publicly accepted as a reliable document. It is done through external consistency reliability method. Against the foregoing, the paper in analyzing the data collected, adopts the content or face validity method. Content or face validity method, as it is known, is objective and judgmental in nature.

It enables the researcher to have an adequate coverage of the topic under study. Black and Champion (1976), in supporting that content or face validity method relies heavily on objective interpretation and judgment of the individual researcher, confirm that the researcher may even determine the validity of his data through a careful definition of the topic, items under study, items to be scaled and the scale to be used. This is somewhat intuitive and unique to each researcher. The significance of the method to this study therefore, is drawn from the fact that since it is a qualitative research, interpretation of data is based on critical content analysis and not on statistical and laboratory-subjective analysis. As such, the analysis is multi-dimensional and multidisciplinary- oriented. This, however, implies that the work shall be useful to people of diverse background and interests especially those in academics, politics, governance, policy making and so on in and outside Nigeria.

## 3. Nigeria's Experiences from 1960 – 1999

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1960, Nigeria was granted independence by her colonial master, Great Britain. This was the time when civil rule was established in the country. Crowder (1973), Orjiako (1981) and Amucheazi (1980) reveal however, that there were high hopes that the nation, at independence, and with civil rule and a population larger than that of the rest of Western and Equatorial Africa put together, would prove a modern experiment in Africa. Alas! This hope was dashed in 1966 following the military *coup de'etat* of January, which led to the suspension of the Nigerian made constitution, disbandment of political parties and truncation of civil rule in the first republic.

History has it that after the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1966 coup, another coup followed in July the same year and that from that time until 1999 when the fourth republic was borne out of the military machination, Nigeria has experienced more military rule and influence. To prove this, literature is replete with the harrowing experiences of 30 months of civil war (1967-1970), 13 years of unbroken military rule (1966-1979), the annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential election mid-wived by military President Ibrahim Babangida led junta, the aftermath of the annulment which was characterised by civil disturbances, wanton destruction of lives and property and so on. In fact, apart from the oil boom of the 1970s which made Nigeria "great, "greatness which did not last long nor lay a propitious foundation for sustainable development, the other years have been those of military coups and counter-coups, fascistic rule, bad governance by both civilians and military regimes. Looking at this scenario, Umeh (2015), sums it up by asserting that the result of these is that Nigeria like most other African countries is not only underdeveloped but in crises of development.

Following this unfortunate situation, many have blamed misrule, tribalism, bribery and corruption for these Nigerian woes (Umeh, 2015; Adelegan, 2008; Efemini, 2003). Yet, these factors arose because as Achebe (1983), puts it, the problem with Nigeria is simply and squarely that of leadership, a point he shares with Ndife (2001), Olayiwola (2013) and many others. The significance of this critical analysis can be fetched from so many examples especially that of the deceased military head of state General Sani Abacha, who came to political power through a palace coup, ruled five years and wanted to transmute from a military head of state to that of a civilian President. To achieve this, he became a maximum ruler, very corrupt and determined to run the country dry; he even made Nigeria become a pariah state among the comity of nations in the international community (1995 to 1998). His regime's ideology was woven around what Adamson (1998) refers to as "Abachanomics." According to Adamson "Abachanomics" was the economic policy under General Sani Abacha, which was exclusively made for Abacha by those he calls "the architects of Abachanomics" namely; Prof. Sam Aluko and Chief Anthony Ani to be precise. This policy was based on "guided deregulation," a principle which was aimed at providing economic growth and stability but due to the transmutation strategy adopted by Abacha, Abachanomics" lacked a unity of purpose as it failed to provide solutions to the teeming socio-economic and political crises prevalent in Nigeria at the time. Many of us were witnesses to how Nigeria was sanctioned by and ostracized from the international community, a condition which heightened the social and economic hardship already present in the country.

By and large, the period before 1999, was one that placed many Nigerians on the road of pessimism, as they hardly believed that civil rule could be practiced again in the country considering how long and tight the military has ruled the country. Hope was almost lost about the possibility of our people being free again because human dignity and self-esteem were reduced to the dust; there were mass suffering, suspension of the constitution and non-adherence to the rule of law in the country. The polity, no doubt, was militarized. In fact, Nigerians were yearning for change in their remote abodes because there was no means of venting the frustration, rather, they became more stranded as the nation was heading for a doom. Anyone who lived in Nigeria at the time would attest to the fact that things had fallen apart in the country as civil-military relations almost made a majority of the civilian populace to live in fear, pessimism, hopelessness, in fact, resignation from leading a worthy life. Only a few military officers, the junta was in control of Nigeria. The political and economic space looked very gloomy as democratic practices appeared to have been reduced to be the level

of history. It was so bad that children born in 1983 down to 1998 were denied the opportunity of knowing what civil rule could be like because of its long absence in the land.

As God always proves to be the God of Nigerians, many prayer groups sprang up, seeking the face of God, many civil groups agitated for change civil in the face of rampant sycophancy and surprisingly, the maximum ruler, General Sani Abacha died a sudden death that was jubilated instead of being mourned. This shows how deeply the people resented his regime and style of governance. He died on the 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1998.

After the death, his seat became vacant and all these events gave Nigerians a similar experience as it was when General Muritala Mohammed (head of state 1975-1976) was assassinated in a Lt. Col. Dimka's led but failed coup of 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1976. The difference between the two deaths was that while Gen. Mohammed was revered by many, General Abacha was resented because of the crises his government generated in the country. As it is natural in life that when a king dies another king will replace him, General Abdulsalami Abubakar became the God-sent head of State, who replaced General Abacha. Taking over power as the 11<sup>th</sup> head of State on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1998, the first step General Abdulsalami Abubakar took was to fight for the restoration of Nigeria's international prestige as an active, constructive and significant member of the international community as he held a close-door meeting with diplomats on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, 1998 in Aso Rock Villa, Abuja and this was followed by diplomatic shuttles to some Western countries. At the domestic scene, his regime commenced and concluded a transition programme of transfer of power from the military to the civilian government, which came to the climax on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999 (Omemma, 2009). This ushered in the long-awaited civil rule, which is still on going after unbroken sixteen years (May 1999-May 2015).

To conclude this foregoing historical analysis, Obaigbena (1999) observes that:

- After so many false starts and botched experiments, Nigeria's ship of state has finally berthed on the shore of democracy. The journey was, with no doubt, tortuous. On a number of occasions, the ship had to flounder. Like a rickety automobile, it jerked and often times hooted to a halt. Yet, like the proverbial cat with nine lives, it regained its breath even when all hope seemed lost.

This quotation simply captures Nigeria's experience from 1966 to 1999, May 28.

#### 4. The Good Experience

As has been noted above, the period before May 29, 1999 was dominated by military rule against civil rule. So, it is a historical fact that military culture had already pervaded Nigeria due to the long years of military rule of which the civilian populace was forced to accept one military regime after another. The implication of this situation is that when eventually democratic-civil rule was ushered into the country in 1999, many citizens had a sigh of relief, as they believed that the better days they were yearning for, clamouring for and praying for had finally arrived. As noted by Obaigbena (1999), on the eve of the new millennium, Nigeria was being re-born as a free and democratic society after along history of failed leadership, thus, the story is one of pleasant surprise; the ailing child has, even to its chagrin, found the tree for the woods. However, one of the celebrated developments in Nigeria since sixteen years now, is the transition from military to civil rule and the survival of civil rule for a straight sixteen unbroken years.

Since the return of power from the military to civilians on May 29, 1999, May 29 of every year has been declared a public holiday in commemoration of the "Democracy Day." In reality, according to Jega (2010), May 29, 1999 does not only mark the handing over of power from the military to civilians but as well, the commencement of an expectedly civilianized, rather than militarized, transition to democracy, with consolidated gains of democratic development. Jega, however, points out the fact that even when democracy has come, this was constrained and further complicated by the fact that the civilians who took over power from the military were essentially not democrats but merely, militicians, i.e. politicians with closed, authoritarian and uncivil mindset, mostly acquired under patronage and tutelage by successive military regimes. This is one of the aspects that makes this paper to conceive the Nigerian leadership as lacking critical thinking. President Obasanjo was the exemplary militician. This point shall be elaborated in the proceeding sections but for the sake of this section, the position of this paper is that no matter the type of democracy the military bequeathed to the civilians or the background of the civilians who received the power from the military, the significance of the eventual transfer is historic, laudable and well appreciated.

This is so because with civil rule in place, the political landscape of Nigeria became open to more people than it was during the eras of the military when only a few, especially the junta had access to state politics. As a result, political awareness and participation have become better than they were on the eve of transfer of power. This can be seen in the quantum of representatives who represent their different constituencies in the national, state and local government assemblies. By comparison, civil rule of the 1999 to 2015 has opened the way for participatory representation than what obtained in the previous years. This is possible because of the existence of the legislative arm of government, which was absent throughout the military regime.

This is so because it is the first time in Nigeria when civil rule has extended beyond sixteen years uninterruptedly and when the number of states has risen to 36. In the first republic (1960-1966) for instance, representatives were on regional basis, three regions first and four later and so were not as huge as they are today just as the second republic's representation was based on 19 states structure. Comparatively, now that Nigeria has 36 states, about 109 Senators plus 360 House of Representatives members form the crux of the national assembly, a significant number that should be able to drive development at the grassroots and as well, the national sphere. This is unlike the days of the military when the constitution and the process of making laws were abrogated thereby leaving these positions uncreated. In contrast, during the military eras, only a handful of officers constituted the Supreme Military Council, SMC, Armed Forces Ruling Council, AFRC, Provisional Ruling Council, PRC and their like and this was the highest decision-making body, which also promulgated decrees for the administration of the whole country. This made no room for checks and balances.

However, Nigeria's experience within the period of our discourse (1999-2015) has been that of a state where democratic institutions and ethos have been instituted notwithstanding how they have been used. There has been in practice the principle of separation of power, a necessity in a democracy. Although some people may argue that this is in principle only but the saying that a half bread is better than none and that a bird in hand worth two in the bush is realistic when a comparative assessment is made about the principle and practice of separation of power during the military and civilian regimes. There is nothing like that because the legislature, which is the oil that lubricates the machinery of democratic institutions and by extension, governance in the state is left out by the military, an anomaly that makes the junta to play both the executive, legislative and in some cases, judicial roles.

The good experience Nigeria has in this regard can be seen in the argument of Chimee (2011) that any democratic constitution must be able to outline the structures and powers of the various arms of the government which ensures competence and effectiveness in the administration of the state. This, as the author stresses, will always delimit the spheres of government with assigned powers and responsibilities to each sphere. In the case of Nigeria, the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in its Chapter V, thus provides for the legislature, both of the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly; the Federal Executive in its Chapter VI; and the Judiciary in Chapter VII (Chimee, 2011). The essence of these provisions the author argues, is to ensure that each arm of government is restricted within its area of competence and does not forage into the jurisdiction of another tier of government. As witnesses to the events of the period under survey, these foregoing separations have existed although not without evidences of arms – twisting between the legislative and executive arms as were the cases during the former President Obasanjo's regime and sometime, outright compromise as was the case during the tenure of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. By and large, even the judiciary arm of government which was usually caged or compromised in most cases especially during the military regimes also tried to assert its independence.

More so, during the period of our study, civil democratic rule in Nigeria has been able to guarantee the fundamental human rights of citizens more than the military regimes in the past especially by signing the freedom of information bill into law. This has freed the political landscape thereby making every citizen to be free to say anything he/she likes. The importance of this development is highly appreciated in this paper because prior to this period, nothing like that had ever happened in Nigeria since the military intervention in politics. It is a heralded development if we assess what role the social media plays in the development of democracy in the country. In a similar development, Aminu, Sani and Jibril (2015) are of the opinion that since 1999, democracy has greatly continued to facilitate development, freedom of speech, liberty, representation in government, political freedom, justice, improved standard of living for the masses, improved system of communication (the GSM and internet revolution comes to the mind here), etc. According to the authors, the country also regained international recognitions and as such improved her international relations especially through the now popular, shuttle diplomacy.

More still, between 1999 and the year 2015, Nigeria has experienced a fundamental transformation in general elections issues especially the Card Reader Technology introduced by the immediate past Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Prof. Attahiru Jega. This is a wonderful experience because it has set a record for Nigeria as a country where democratic elections could be held with modern technological devices. Witnesses to what happened during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria and the results that followed, can attest to the fact that the Card Reader Technology, CRT aided INEC to prosecute the election in a way and manner that many people accepted the outcome as being satisfactory.

For the fact that an incumbent President, Dr. Jonathan who was the Presidential candidate of the ruling party, the People's Democratic Party which ruled the country for an unbroken period of sixteen years for the first time in Nigerian history, accepted the outcome of the elections speaks volume of the credibility of the device, the body that conducted the elections, INEC, and the process and conduct of the elections. As a result of this revolution in electioneering in Nigeria, the then incumbent President, Dr. Jonathan accepted wholeheartedly his defeat at the polls, congratulated the opposition party candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari for winning the elections and never went to court to challenge the results. Perhaps, as believed by the researcher of this paper, this is indisputably, the most exciting aspect of the good experiences Nigeria had in the 16 unbroken years of civil rule in the country, especially as it marked the fourth successful general elections conducted during the period of study (2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015). This was followed by a historical transfer of power from a ruling party, the PDP to an opposition party, the APC on May 29, 2015 and this automatically reversed the status quo as the ruling party is now the main opposition party in the country while the former main opposition party is the ruling party. This is a feat that was not possibly achieved in Nigeria from 1960-2015.

Today, Nigeria, because of this achievement, has become one of the countries in Africa where an opposition candidate defeated an incumbent head of state. However, the most memorable and glamorous aspect of this history is that transition from the government of a ruling party to that of an opposition was done smoothly without violence. This may be due to the Abuja Peace Accord, APC signed between the then President Jonathan and the presidential candidates of the other parties that participated in the elections but significantly, may also be an announcement that civil rule has come to stay in Nigeria; other factors notwithstanding.

Another experience that qualifies as being good is the effort to implement the 30% affirmation order in which, in practice, women are to constitute about 30% of appoint table and electable positions in any regime. By so doing, women occupied some exalted positions hitherto exclusively preserved for and occupied by men. For example, speaker of the house of representatives (Mrs. Patricia Olubunmi Ette), Justice Aloomu Muktar (1<sup>st</sup> female chief justice of Nigeria), Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (the first female minister of finance and coordinator of the nation's economy), Mrs. Dieziani Alison- madueke (the first female minister of petroleum), Dr.(Mrs.) Ndi Okereke Onyiuke (Managing Director, Nigerian Stock Exchange) and many others. Some women even became deputy governors and one an acting governor in Anambra State. This is the beauty of democracy. Many of them were elected into local government, state and national assemblies. Coupled with this development, for the first time in Nigeria, a person from a core minority ethnic group was elected the president of the Federal Republic that was Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. General Yakubu Gowon may be argued by many to have ruled Nigeria as a minority ethnic group person but the fact is that he was not elected.

### 5. The Bad Experience

Perhaps, the greatest political crisis that Nigeria experienced within 1999 and 2015 is the absence of true democracy. The difference between the period before 1999 and that of 16 years later is that while there were problems of the military directly dominating and controlling the politics as in the former, in the later, there is no direct military intervention in state politics. So, if scholars like Efemini (2003) had argued that prolonged military rule and brief experiments with civil governance have been Nigeria's fate, referring to the pre-1999 democratization processes, this paper is of the view that if that had been the case, what about now that civil rule has lasted for unbroken 16 years, and Nigeria is still grappling with the challenges of nascent, crisis – ridden democracy. Nevertheless, the fact that Efemini's contribution was made at the early stage of the current democratization process makes his position valued considering what obtained in the past years, but as time progressed, the effort at consolidating democracy rested and still rests squarely in the hands of civilians.

Regrettably, Nigeria's democracy can be summarized as being for the elite, of the elite and by the elite. The masses who suffered the menace and misdemeanor of both military and civilian misrule in the past, many of whom were dehumanized, brutalized, ostracized, deprived, disfigured and even outright killed, became more dehumanized, deprived, and ostracized from the mainstream of the democratization process and even more from its benefits. The worst is that most of their constitutional rights were no more granted to them namely; right to vote and be voted for. By this act, many citizens of voting age became disenfranchised and ostracized or better put, denied the opportunities to vote. Political apathy resultantly appeared on a large scale on the political firmament of Nigeria, leaving the political environment and participation in the hands of a few elites who decided who got what, when and how in the nation.

This is in contrast to what democracy stands for because if elections are an important component of democracy (Egwemi 2013), and are among the most ubiquitous of political institutions, and voting is the single act of political participation undertaken by a majority of adults in a majority of nations in the world today (Anifowose, 2003), democracy in Nigeria within the time of our analysis, has not grown. Nigeria's democracy is not mature like the ones in the advanced countries like United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan, to mention a few where elections, as stipulated by democracy theoreticians and practitioners, are "means by which popular commitment to the regime may be mobilized" (Egwemi, 2013:2).

Now, let us look at the main functions of elections in order to further buttress the foregoing argument. Anifowose (2003:24), for instance, has given the following as the main functions of elections:

- Recruiting politicians and public decision makers;
- Providing representation;
- Influencing policy decisions;
- Educating voters;
- Building legitimacy;
- Strengthening elites;
- Providing succession in leadership;
- Extension of participation to many people.

All of these are important elements of election indeed but we argue that the most important of them is the extension of participation to many people. Our argument is based on the most widely accepted definition of democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. So, if this definition is anything to be guarded jealously by the people of Nigeria, it, therefore, implies that for the past 16 unbroken years of civil rule in the land, democracy has not been what many accepted it to be, it is not by the people, for the people and to the people. It is rather by the elite, for the elite and to the elite. It is also by the few, for the few and to the few instead of being for the people. What this means is that the Nigerian leadership since 1999 to date has refused to adopt and practice democracy according to its contemporary usage as:

- A form of government in which the right to make political decisions is exercised directly by the whole body of citizens, acting under procedures of majority rule, usually known as direct democracy.
- A form of government in which the citizens exercise the same right not in person but through representatives chosen by and responsible to them, known as representative democracy.
- A form of government, usually, a representative democracy, in which the powers of the majority are exercised within a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee all citizens the enjoyment of certain individuals or collective rights, such as freedom of speech and religion, known as liberal or constitutional democracy (the New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994:5).

The picture of democracy in Nigeria between 1999-2015 if painted, as it should, shall reveal many bad experiences, mainly passed through by the masses, which made them to view it as a system against them. One instance that stands out is a situation where the "purportedly elected" national assembly members were at their work of law-making allotting a great chunk of monetary benefits to themselves to the point of being ranked among the highest earning law makers in the world whereas, the Nigerian civil servant is being paid a minimum wage of N18, 000 as an average take home pay. This negates the principle of democracy as a respecter of the genuine wish of the people because the practice instanced here is not the people's wish. Lending credence to this view, Efemini (2003) argues that democracy requires high level of rationality since realizing it requires commitment to the pursuit of a reason-based society, which implies the respect of the will of and autonomy of the person. This is what he agrees that makes democracy liberal in this sense because it is based on the social contract view of society, which obliges the state to strive to realize the general will of the people without compromising the right of the individuals.

In the case of Nigeria, the state has to a large extent, failed to adhere to the contractual terms reached by the people at its foundation where they agreed to retain some of their inalienable rights but allowing the state to pilot the ship of state on their behalf, a condition which charges the state to chiefly; take care of the citizens' well-being and security and make them happy. In return, the citizens shall submit to the laws of the state by being obedient to the rule of law, patriotic and loyal to that state that provides for them. It is on this note that some people trace the challenges of security and national development in Nigeria to the failure of the state (Nwosumba 2015, Abah 2015). Nwosumba for instance argues that the failure of the Nigerian state to provide and protect the citizens made them to resort to any means possible to fend and defend themselves, hence a partial justification for insurgency, kidnapping, militancy, oil pipeline theft, public infrastructure vandalization and so on.

It can be argued, however, that due to this failure by the Nigerian State, the Nigerian leadership from 1999 to date has been trying to pacify the different groups that feel deprived and as a result unleash terror and mayhem on the State and her citizens, out of sense of guilt. Suffice it to say therefore, that it is in this sense that President Obasanjo pacified the Niger Delta people, especially the Bayelsans because of the Odi case by paving way for their son Dr. Goodluck Jonathan to become a Vice President, a step that eventually landed him on the presidential stool when President Yar'Aduah died in 2010. Also, the amnesty programme of late President Yar'Aduah was for the same purpose just as the now plan by the President Buhari's government to strike a peace deal with the Boko Haram group for a cease fire is equally believed to be in this context.

As evidence has shown in this work and as argued by Otonko (2015), the results of the democratic regimes in Nigeria (1999-2015), have left much to be desired. They are more counter-productive than productive, a realistic situation that makes some deprived persons to want to look back to the military as a better system. This paper does not agree that military rule is better than civil rule but in fairness, the failure of democracy to mature to the point of making more people feel secure and happy within the Nigerian polity is enough ground for a heated debate. In agreement with the foregoing, Otonko (2015), argues that there was no much difference in the state of affairs in Nigeria as corruption became institutionalized, destruction of life and property made a norm, erosion of the value attached to human work made a hobby, a crippling of freedom given legitimacy, a trampling on the virtue of transparency, a war against accountability and transparency and a blatant abuse of human rights. The Nigerian democratic experience of the period under discussion based on its peculiarities when compared with some other democracies especially the advanced ones tends to justify the now vulgarized concept "Nigerian democracy." This is a derogatory term, which implies a different type of democracy that is not universally accepted but specifically made for and practiced by Nigerians alone. Look at a situation where in sixteen years of civil rule, the legislators have not been able to come to a consensus on what to reform in the 1999 constitution bequeathed to them by the military. The implication is that they have lasted sixteen years only processing the process of constitutional reforms in the country when many issues are begging to be attended to for Nigeria to change for the better. State creation for example is important so that all the geopolitical zones can have equal number of states but it has been politicized and in the main time, laid to rest. What this means, however, is that the legislators have contributed to jeopardizing the maturity of democracy in the land by condoning marginalization of some sort. This may not be a conscious act but the implication is just what this paper is highlighting here. The consequences of all discussed above culminate to what this paper refers to as "the ugly."

## 6. The Ugly Experience

Boko Haram seems to be the ugliest experience of Nigeria in her 16 years of uninterrupted civil rule (1999-2015). Yet, there are some other aspects of our national life that are also ugly. They include exponential increase in poverty, worsening food security situation, epistemic crisis in Nigeria's education and chiefly, endemic corruption.

Notwithstanding the good and bad experiences of Nigeria between 1999 and 2015, there are also the ugly ones, a situation which makes Jega (2010) to regret that the return to civil rule has yielded stupendous dividends of democracy in terms of riches, power and prestige for only an exclusive and small group of elite; it has, in the main, only yielded poverty, disempowerment and frustration for most citizens. Hence, Jega is of the view that for an overwhelming majority of citizens, most of the hopes and aspirations, which heralded the transfer of power on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1999, have been dashed, and a formidable crisis of rising expectations had set in, resulting in frustration, cynicism, pessimism, as well as aggressive behaviors and violent tendencies especially among the youth. The Niger Delta militant activities that include kidnapping of expatriate oil workers at first and later, all and sundry, oil theft through pipelines vandalization and bunkering, forcing some oil companies especially Shell to produce at low capacity, loss of lives, secret cult activities and many more are the products of frustration and pessimism.

Nwosumba (2015 a), in a similar tone with Jega (2010), stresses that it is as a feeling of deprivation that both insurgency, terrorism, kidnapping, militancy and the like escalated in Nigeria since the year 2000. Using the theory of relative deprivation in that work as posited by Wilson (1973), Nwosumba argues that the causes of violent conflicts in Nigeria have largely, been related to relative deprivation in the sense that it is the conscious feeling of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and present actualities that makes people to resort to violent conflicts. Marginalization, oppression, suppression, ostracization, cheating of a group by another or others are examples of relative deprivation and so some of the main reasons why some people take to violence in order to seek redress and then meet their social expectations in the society. This implies, therefore, that people can use violent conflicts, in some cases, to achieve some political ends either by obtaining concessions from the government or in attracting political patronages. This can be deduced in the case of the Niger Delta militants who were granted amnesty by the Late President Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010) government, a rare occurrence in Nigeria.

Today, most of the militants who got the amnesty are under the federal government scholarship scheme studying abroad and even in Nigeria while some are undergoing some skill acquisition trainings. Some have even graduated. However, a certain argument is required here in the sense that one would have been thinking that the federal government should have presented the militants as

criminals, murderers or saboteurs of the national economy, peace and tranquility but instead of doing that contrarily granted them amnesty and treated them like obedient and productive members of the society. Probably, the foregoing points might have given the Boko Haram insurgents the impetus to embark on their own programmes.

Undoubtable, Boko Haram, apart from the civil war (1969-1970), has remained the greatest national security and development threat to Nigeria's unity, peace, territorial integrity and sovereignty. In the history of Nigeria before 1999, there has never been a situation where over 200 school girls have been abducted and bombs thrown indiscriminately in churches, mosques, motor parks, police stations and so on but within the period of our discourse, Boko Haram did all of these and other heinous things that space and time may not allow us to articulate here. These indeed, are ugly experiences because many lives and property have been lost just as many people do not feel secure in their country again due to fear of the Boko Haram random attacks on citizens, infrastructure and society at large.

These and other ugly experiences have made many Nigerians not to be able to remember at times some remarkable achievements of the fourth republic namely; revolution in telecommunications (GSM in mind); internet services; Keke Napep; first international airport in South East geopolitical zone; 13 or more federal universities in about 3 years in a row; a vice President of the Federal Republic becoming a President (Dr. Goodluck Jonathan); a woman becoming the Chief Justice of Nigeria, CJN (Justice Alooma Muktar); a woman being a substantive Minister of Petroleum (Mrs. Dieziani Alison-Madueke); A Peace Accord was signed for non-violence before the general elections in 2015. The list is endless. More important is the fact that before the period of our discussion these occurrences never took place in Nigeria. They are, indeed historic.

Amidst the good and bad experiences was another ugly experience, that of endemic corruption in Nigeria, a situation that called for the establishment of a powerful anti-corruption agency, which is dreaded by many, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the EFCC. The ugly thing as Nwosumba (2015 b) argues is that while many people have become impoverished, pauperized, unemployed, homeless, hungry, displaced and dehumanized due to under-development challenges orchestrated by corruption, the federal government is busy using the EFCC as a political pawn. This, no doubt, is an ugly experience because not only have the citizens become pessimistic about the assurance by the different leaderships of fighting corruption to a halt, corruption has permeated all the fabrics of the society and thus appears to be part of our culture, this, we know, hurts the poor more.

However, although Presidents Obasanjo and Jonathan at different times used the EFCC as a political pawn, nevertheless, Nigeria experienced a fight against corruption, as it was never fought before. Record has it that the commission has achieved a lot in both arresting, prosecuting and sometimes, jailing some individuals. For example, a sitting Inspector General of Police, Tafa Balogun was arrested, prosecuted and jailed for six months for stealing N17 billion Police Funds, which he siphoned through seven of his companies (The EFCC, 2007). This was the first time a sitting Inspector General of Police could receive this kind of treatment in Nigeria. Some sitting governors like Joshua Dariye, Ayo Fayose, D.S.P. Alamiyesiegha, etc were also arrested and prosecuted just as some influential and wealthy fraudsters such as Emmanuel Nwude who collaborated with the Vaswani brothers to dupe a Brazilian Bank of a huge sum of \$242 million, late Chief Maurice Ibekwe, received the same treatment (The EFCC, 2007). The list speaks volume but we shall leave it for another day's discussion.

What makes the EFCC fight an ugly experience for Nigeria within the time of our study is the inability of the agency to investigate, not to talk of, prosecuting and even jailing any Nigerian former President or head of state, an anomie that has made Olisa Agbakoba and Lanke Odogiyon (The EFCC, 2007) to criticize the EFCC of selective justice. The case of former President Obasanjo stands out as one of the examples of selective justice for while he has been indicted for the use of the EFCC to fight perceived enemies during his tenure just as Dr. Jonathan (Izeze, 2010), the EFCC has not been able to "invite" him to come and clear himself of these allegations:

- Before he became the President in 1999, he had only N20,000 left in his bank account but on leaving office in 2007, he had acquired the following: 10,000 hectares of land in Cross River State; 5,000 hectares of land in Kwa Plantation in the same state; 20 million shares in Transcorp Company; Bells University of Technology; Presidential Library Project that 36 Governors then contributed N100 million each; a parcel of land in Rivers State etc (Insider Weekly, 2008).

Imagine this monumental wealth! So, the question is, if, he had lived on his legitimate income as President, would he be able to amass this kind of wealth? The EFCC's failure to look at this and other related allegations as argued by Nwosumba (2015 b) has contributed to the politics of corruption in Nigeria, a type of politics which has proved to be inimical to the advancement of democracy and development in the country since the return to civil rule (1999 to 2015). Corruption, due to the politics attached to it escalated as the effort of the EFCC to fight it, nevertheless, shows. According to www.thetidenewsonline.com, by 2015, statistics have shown that the worth of the property recovered by the EFCC is about N11 billion. At this juncture, the question is of what benefits has the return to civil rule since 1999 to date been to a common man in Nigeria since a chunk of what would have been deployed to salvage his state of abject poverty, worsening food insecurity and hopelessness have been siphoned into private bags?

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

- On the whole, a few good things have indeed happened in the ..... years. They are not as much as we would have wanted, given our country's vast potentials, and our confident and high expectations. But they are, nonetheless, substantive, even transformative, in many fundamental respects.... And in my view, as the Hausawa say, as bad as ten (10) would seem, it is better than five (5); our admittedly unwholesome transition to democracy under civil rule even though influenced by militarians is still much better than being under military rule. Relatively, there is more openness, inclusiveness and transparency; also, there is relatively less human rights violation, executive lawlessness and abuse of judicial powers (Jega, 2010:15).

More so, no matter the bad and ugly experiences within the period of discourse, Nigeria has managed to remain a united and resilient sovereign state even in the face of United States' prediction that the country might break up in 2015. Again, the country has demonstrated before the whole world that its democracy is on the way to maturity following the success recorded in the 2015 general elections and transfer of power from a ruling party to an opposition party. Nigeria's ability to cage the military in the barracks for the 16 years also demonstrates the country's commitment to an enhanced civil military relation, a feat which places her above most African States where coups and military interventions in state politics are the order of the day in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The foregoing experiences notwithstanding, a lot is still required to be done especially in the areas of education, health, food security, poverty alleviation, national security; in fact, the overall development of the people and state of Nigeria. These however, cannot be achieved if true and nature democracy as well as, good governance are not in place. It is only when these two major attributes of a developed state are in place in Nigeria that we can agree that the 16 years of unbroken civil rule which is still on-going can be appreciated in full by the majority of Nigerians.

Easier said than done, one may say here, this is so because when a critical assessment is made on how things are going in the country today, it will be observed that some of the factors that challenged Nigeria in the pre-1999 periods are still present; chiefly, sanctimonious leadership. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria's experience when it comes to leadership has been so bad that issues like ethnicity, religion, political cleavages, corruption, cronyism, and so on have been promoted above the collective aspirations of the entire citizens by our leaders mainly while they go on deceiving the people that they are for them. "I am for nobody but for every body". It is against these agents of bifurcations and altercations, that the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, states emphatically that the primary purpose of government is the security and welfare of the people and not the promotion and projection of what divides us. Yet, due to the syndrome of sanctimonious leadership, some leaders go on making the people to believe that they are morally better than others are whereas, they are the same when the results are compared. The realities of hardship, abject poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and national security and development challenges have been here since 1999 and were there since independence. What are we saying then? If one leader has been better than others, the results on ground would have been different. Nevertheless, all the results amount to under development and national insecurity.

Therefore, on this note, this paper is recommending transformational leadership for Nigeria if the country must really change. It is only a transformational leader, who is a critical thinker that can make the change mantra in our land today to be realized. It is such a thinker that can know the hope and aspirations of the Nigerian people and then live to give them just that. Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore did it for their people and so should be emulated by our leaders. It is all about transformational leadership whereby a leader leaves his country in a better stead than he met it on assumption of office.

## 8. Future Scope

Follow up research can come from the angle of trying to expand the discussion on how Nigerian leaders can become transformative and not sanctimonious because this paper believes that once this is achieved the change most Nigerians have been praying for shall surely come. The limitation encountered in this work is your journal charge which did not allow the researcher to write more than he wrote although the topic is inexhaustible and attractive.

## 9. Short Bio

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