

Determinants of the Outcomes of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria: The Real Issues and their Implications.

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Abstract

Our appreciations of the “real issues” in the 2015 General Elections are likely to be as contentious and varied as the degree of comprehensiveness of our views of the Nigerian polity, what we expect to happen in the long term and in the short term, and what contending political formations and the media canvassed during their campaigns. Our appreciations will be informed by our understanding of what the electorate knows about class and non-class forces and their histories in Nigeria. Our appreciation of what the “the real issues” are will similarly depend on our perceptions of how the dominant global neo-liberal ideology has shaped political and social discourse and behaviour in Nigeria. Ultimately, then, the real issues are what the new ruling-class coalition, given the state of other social forces, will make of Nigeria after May 29 2015. Overall, the general credibility of INEC refereeing what is basically an intra-class war, the disillusionment of a significant segment of the electorate with the state of Nigeria and the continued influence of ethnic-nationalist, confessional and geopolitical forces significantly determined the outcome of the elections. The entrenchment of neoliberalism and the influence of non-class forces are not only related, they are not salutary. The implications of these observations for the politics of national liberation in Nigeria are discussed.

Introduction

Contemplating the determinants of the outcome of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria cannot be just about who won or lost elections, how credible or fair the elections and the umpires had been or how to improve the conduct of elections and electioneering in the future. Understanding the tasks ahead of the Nigerian people, especially those who believe that *Another Nigeria is Possible*, requires conscious struggle against the contrived and/or advertent collective amnesia that re-instate the same post-June 12 1993 view, popularized for totally different reasons, that Nigeria had the *freest and fairest elections*.

First, it is important for us to situate the hopes, limitations, social forces and popular consciousness surrounding the 2015 General Elections in the context of evolving political economy of Nigeria since the close of the 1970s; i.e. Nigeria as an epitome of the periphery of global neo-liberalism in regard to which Escobar (2006: p.15) noted:

[Globalization] ... has to do with maximization of profit; a huge concentration of capital; an unrestricted power of monopolies....Kurnisky tells us globalization has configured “a new world in which poverty, with no control of markets or the flush of cash coexist with no form of social equality....The uniformization and cultural and real impoverishment of the world”.

Regarding this “new world” which more or less the same generation of Nigeria’s ruling-class had been tinkering with since 1979, Amin (2012) concluded:

it is this system—commonly called “neoliberal” the system of generalized monopoly capitalism “globalized” (imperialist) and financialized (necessarily for its own reproduction) – that is imploding before our eyes.

Secondly, we need to identify *the social forces* that have nursed and maintained the system in Nigeria in the last four decades paying special attention to the constellation of the *dramatis personae* within the social forces. Specifically, we must note the constancy of the key praetorian forces and their collaborators in the remixes and reshuffles of public persons from 1979 to 2015 paying special attention to the unchallenged social and *economic* muscles of these elements till today in building, dismantling and, re-constructing the intra-class alliances they call political parties.

In the third place, this paper, as part of our effort to understand the determinants of the outcome of the 2015 General Elections, examines how three important elements combine to disempower the victims of global neoliberalism and its indigenous collaborators. The said elements are (1) the unity of the Nigerian bourgeoisie engendered by the imperative of that unity for sustaining class hegemony; (2) the strategic manipulation of geopolitical, ethnic-nationalist and confessional antipathies among the generality of the Nigerian people; and (3) arising from the ‘triumph’ of neoliberalism, engendered and powered through the deployment of coercive (police, army and other state apparati) and ideological institutions (the educational system, the media, religion, etc.) towards legitimization and stabilization of neoliberalism. The elections were conducted therefore in an atmosphere that suggested that *fundamental* ideological issues, between the two dominant parties, APC and PDP are settled.

Fourthly, in relation to the third element in the last paragraph, we need to understand that the triumph of neoliberalism demobilized and weakened the nationalist and labour movement especially their organized forces in the trade unions, the student’s movement and pockets of radical socialist groups that were allied with popular resistance. Many of these were fractured into NGOs which Tariq Ali (2002: p.3). characterized as *privatized civil society* !

In the fifth place we consider it crucial to relate the generally credible performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), especially in what we call the *Jega phase* of it, to the antecedents of INEC leadership in the Academic Staff Union and the connections with the labour movement. We then interrogate the role the INEC as an institution that supervise and *legitimize* processes of retention/transfer of state power in Nigeria's current political economy. We note the amount of energy that elements of the radical and patriotic forces of the left in INEC and the so-called Civil Society Organisations have expended on making the 2015 General Elections "free and fair". And, having regard to the limitations of INEC and the delinquency of Nigeria's ruling class, we believe that the Politics of Liberation of Nigeria needs to be reinstated by our urgently revisiting the question, "Reform or/and Revolution?"

The APC "Progressives": the class base of a platform erected on illusions

Protracted horse trading, ruling class opportunism and popular illusions were what created the emergence of the political platform of the new leadership of "progressives" that brought about the Muhammadu Buhari presidency that was inaugurated on May 29, 2015 as they did for the PDP rule that lasted from 1999 to 2015.

If the antecedents and the class base of the new national leadership in APC is decidedly neo-liberal, this means that its intellectors are domiciled in what has become known as the "troika"—the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Stiglitz, 2015—<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/Greece-creditor-demands-by-joseph-e-stiglitz-2015-06//ICT3TPdbEMBIgmt.99>). As Stiglitz (Ibid.) shows with regard to the current economic crisis in Greece the proposals the troika advance for resolution of the economic crisis of troubled polities simply deepen their crisis! This is what the Nigerian people have lived with from the mid-1970s to 2015!

Campaign Promises: From Obasanjo (1999) to Buhari (2015)

Goodluck Jonathan, in 2011 promised transformative leadership and transformative policies in the power sector, improved infrastructure, job creation and commitment to fighting corruption. As for Muhamadu Buhari's campaign for the 2015 presidential elections, Ayo Olukotun, correctly (*The Punch* May 29, 2015: p. 96), doubted the feasibility of the promises to:

... grow the economy by 12 per cent annually, mount an elaborate social welfare programme ... [employing] 25 million people [with] N5,000 monthly and dish out one free meal a day to all public primary school pupils ...[get] the naira to be at par with the dollar, give Nigerians electricity round the clock.

We may characterise the main platforms of the illusions that the triumphant progressives canvassed into three: fight against corruption, eradication/reduction of poverty, and fight against insecurity (the latter, in international parlance, war on terror—WOT). We may conveniently subsume restoration of accessible social services (education, housing, power,

roads and transportation, health services, generation and sustenance of employment) under the general rubric of eradication/reduction of poverty.

But, having made all the grandiose campaign promises, Buhari has to face the crisis of neoliberalism created by Nigeria's ruling class parties (*The Punch NEWS* May 6, 2015: p.3; John Alechenu, reporting from Abuja). Curiously, in admonishing the APC governors-elect not to set "unrealistic" targets, the President-elect considered it necessary to justify the increase in petrol price and the origin of PTF under General Sani Abacha's dictatorship; he was quoted as saying, "... I think we should look for a better way to address the issue [the issue of unpaid salaries] and think of how to persuade the people to give us a chance to, organise the economy immediately and get something to pay salaries".

It is also significant that generally, some of the same personnel that anchored the PDP policies such as General Danbazau and Malam Nasir El-Rufai were prominent in the APC Policy Dialogue as reported by Jibrin Ibrahim (*Daily Trust* May 25, 2015). In regard to who and who were at the APC Policy Dialogue, the observations of *The Punch* columnist, Uche Igwe, quoted by Ayo Olukotun (*The Punch* May 29, 2015: p. 96), is particularly instructive:

"It was a collection of experts of some sorts. However some 16 years ago, as the civilian regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo was preparing to take over from Gen. Abdusalami Abubakar a similar conference was held. I looked around and saw exactly (probably a majority) of the people who attended the conference in Abuja. They also offered the same nice proposals and suggestions that we had last week"

And as if to adorn the cake of atavism with appropriate icing, it was further reported that the key note address at the APC Policy Dialogue was delivered by a representative of Tony Blair (of all people)!

To return to the history of campaign promises we must say that the triumphant APC was anticipated by PDP in 1999 and 2003. Again, Ayo Olukotun (*Ibid.*) observed:

... Obasanjo's example in grandiloquent avowals to make life better for all by improving infrastructure; in particular electricity, tackle corruption and reduce transport deficits ... told the nation in 1999 he would "make significant changes within a year, to curb corruption and restore public confidence in governance ... He repeated those promises in 2003 ... despite spending \$16 million on the power sector, the country remained, in darkness. Similarly, in spite of personally supervising the petroleum industry the fundamental problems of that industry remains unresolved.

Needless to say, the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's *Seven Point Agenda* was all about the same as Obasanjo's promises!

We insist that the promises of "change" by the APC are built on illusions because of the opacity of the declarations of the social program in terms of its ideological perspective, the antecedents of the leading lights and the body language of the leaders of the triumphant

progressives. In these general regards, the dominant economic perspective of the leaders of the new regime is neo-liberal—an economy led by the private sector, down-sizing of the public sector, privatisation and cost recovery in social services provisioning. We have heard and read also of contradictory promises of the state taking over the commanding heights of economy. However, with the existing rampaging programme of the privatisation of public assets (banks, power, telecoms, roads, iron and steel industries, public works etc.) and social services (education, health services, water supply, civic centres, etc.), such promises are empty without a parallel declaration of how these looted public properties will be retrieved. Apart from that fact, many of the “progressives” (foundation members, defectors and middle-rollers) are front runners in the looting called privatisation (Olorode, 2014).

The “Change” Campaign as an illusion

Let us re-iterate that by all available objective and subjective indices the six years of Goodluck Jonathan’s presidency (2009-2015) had been a monumental disaster for the people of Nigeria. However the disaster was a segment of the continuum which General Olusegun Obasanjo (retired) perfected since 1999 on his return to the scene of the ruling class crimes of 1977 to 1983 which became further accentuated under militarised neo-liberalism up till May 29, 1999. But as we observed above, all generations of Nigerian rulers since 1960 (military and civil) had promised to change Nigeria for the better. The consequences of these overlapping generations of conmanship have unfortunately not disillusioned a significant proportion of Nigeria’s citizenry. Or have they?

It turned out that the three major issues in the campaigns leading to the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria were security, corruption and the economy. These are already captured in the discussion on the campaign “promises” made by the candidates above. In the following sections, we address the problems and the prospects of the three issues which dominated the campaigns

Corruption and accumulation

The ruling-class representation and the general public perception of corruption as “indiscipline” and as a phenomenon unrelated to, and unexplainable as consequent upon, the way the economy is organised—the ownership of national resources, the organisation of production and allocation of socially-produced surpluses are at the root of the confusion as to how to eradicate corruption. Consequently, questions relating to the mode and ethos of wealth accumulation, private and public purpose, the relation of state power to private accumulation and public purpose are deliberately obfuscated. More importantly, we demonstrated the nexus in other segments of this presentation, what Batra (1985: p. 46) called the “acquisitive era” as epitomised by today’s dominant neo-liberalism and accumulation at global levels and within states by the dominant international forces—what Ake (1978: pp. 11-24) referred to as “bourgeois countries” *vis a vis* “proletarian” countries—and within countries by dominant ruling (bourgeois) classes. The consequences of the above circumstances in the accumulative process and the methods “which the African bourgeoisie is using to strengthen its material base” was succinctly addressed by Ake (Ibid. pp. 70-76); excerpts of Ake’s (Ibid. p.70; p.72) observations:

The reinforcement of these [regressive] characteristics [of capitalism] has to do with the situation of the ruling classes in Africa; particularly the disparity

between their economic and political power. ...The strengthening of its material base has naturally become the major pre-occupation of this bourgeoisie.

The importance and use of state (political) power for accumulation (what they call corruption) is what the “hegemonic factions” of the Nigerian ruling class deploys invariably to expropriate competing factions and the masses of the working people occasioning various levels of violence in “intra-class and inter-class” competition (Ake, *Ibid.* p. 72).

Bala Usman was also incisive (Usman 2001 in CDDRT, 2008: pp. 18-24):

... The state of California has no NEPA. The power generation there is entirely privatised and the distribution is also almost entirely privatised. But, California is right now being crippled by power-cuts, like Nigeria. Why is this happening, when private electric power companies like Enron, which is now expected, with the wave of the magic wand of privatisation, to solve the problem of power cuts in Lagos State?.....

....What is quite clear from the example of the California power crisis is that the separation of the holding of public office from the private accumulation of wealth is an essential requirement in any genuine attempt to fight corruption. While legislation and its effective implementation is a useful starting point, for, at least, it delegitimises corrupt practices, it is not enough. The people of Nigeria, and the political activist and leaders, at all levels, have to get down to the arduous task of promoting and defending public interest, building public organs, reviving and reconstructing the public service, and upholding the integrity of other public institutions.

And this apprehension of corruption is not just about Obasanjo or Jonathan or Alameiyeseiga or PDP or APC or Buhari’s magical powers and personal integrity. It is not about Yoruba, Igbo, or Hausa looters or what Jibrin Ibrahim called “Ijaw looters” [Jibrin Ibrahim, 2015; In: *Daily Trust* posted May25, 2015]. Usman (1984; In CDDRT, 2008: pp. 25-71) demonstrated the foregoing clearly by showing that corruption is the hand-maiden of a class represented also by “middlemen, consultants and contractors” produced also reproduced by a specific political economy: as we show below, generally endorsed by that political economy. Usman (*Ibid.*, p. 65) therefore, appropriately endorsed:

...dismantling [the subsisting political economy] in order to build a new and independent national economy in the service of, and controlled by, the working people of Nigeria and all those engaged in producing the wealth of the country...

As part of the post-February-28 2015 General Elections and the installation of a new regime in Nigeria, various accomplices to the financial and socio-economic crimes against the Nigerian working people have been posturing concerning their commitment to aid Nigeria to recover Nigeria’s public resources like the \$370 million of Nigeria’s stolen money kept abroad (*Sunday*

Punch Editorial, May 10, 2015: p. 16). The paradox of all this posturing by countries like Switzerland and the international financial organisations like IMF and the World Bank is, because of the international neo-liberal political economy they superintend, that they are not able to do much about massive international financial frauds by their own financial conglomerates like HSBC, JP Morgan etc.

Nigeria's neo-liberal ambience and the crisis of underdevelopment of the economy.

The crisis of Nigeria's economy and economic development is the crisis of neo-colonialism in the era of the dominance of global neo-liberalism. The crisis of neo-liberalism is consequently and characteristically exaggerated in Nigeria being a typical periphery. Claude Ake (op cit., 66-67) characterised the situation as follows:

Another aspect of the relationship of underdevelopment to the class structure of contemporary Africa is the developmental ideology of the ruling classes of Africa. They pursue the task of economic development in the context of an ideological orientation which essentially accepts the development in the global class struggle and [that] this becomes hegemonic.

Okonjo-Iweala's book (*Reforming the Unreformable* 2012; MIT Press, Cambridge) was perhaps the most eloquent defence of neo-liberalism in Nigeria of the past one decade or so. Okonjo-Iweala (2012: p. 50) claimed:

Nigeria's program of deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation remains controversial, part of the controversy is ideological. There is a core of intelligentsia inclined towards socialism in Nigeria—in academia, in the media, in the labour unions and elsewhere—who despite obvious failures of the state in Nigeria's case still believes in the people of the state as producers, employer and equaliser in society.

We already had a glimpse above of the general commitment and promises of the new APC regime in Nigeria in the ambience and substance of the APC Policy Dialogue of late May 2015 (Jibrin Ibrahim, *Daily Trust* posted May 25, 2015; Ayo Olukotun, *The Punch* May 29, 2015: p. 96).

The manifesto of APC says among other things (Olorode, op cit.) that the party is pivoted on *social democracy* and that the Nigerian economy, under the APC, regime will be a *broad-based market economy*. APC's cardinal programmes are curiously, on a *seven point* programme [remember the PDP seven-point agenda under Umaru Yar'Adua?]. Also, in a wide-ranging interview granted by the then Governor of Ekiti State, Dr. Kayode Fayemi and posted on the internet via <cso-apc-engage> on 12th August 2013 and quoted copiously by Olorode (Ibid.), Dr Fayemi asserted: "...our politics is more ideas-driven and our ideas are those consistent with social democratic, left of centre politics anywhere in the world." In a neo-colony at the apogee of neo-liberalism, this must be a social democracy *sui generis*; a

social democracy that admits a variegation of recruits from the entire ideology spectrum of Nigeria's ruling-class political parties as presaged in the Fayemi interview referred to. What passes for the social democratic manifestoes of the ruling-class parties in the 2015 General Elections were no more than neo-liberal posturing as public properties are being alienated; contractors, middle men (and women) and consultants have replaced civil servants, security and police service are privatised, private educational and health services become dominant; the state is privatised in what *the national leader* of APC, Bola Tinubu, called "common-sense revolution" concerning the sale of a Lagos State-owned Civic Centre on Victoria Island to Jim Ovia of Zenith Bank "that now pays tax to the state" (*The Punch*, May 15, 2015: p. 2; *NGF crisis paved the way for PDP's defeat*—Tinubu, Soyinka: Eniola Akinkuotu reporting).

Having regard to the solid commitment of various factions of the Nigerian ruling class to neoliberalism, across boundaries of political parties, we have shown (Olorode, *Ibid.*) that a large segment of its elements is unpatriotic, anti-people, fraudulent and criminal. Our resistance to neo-liberalism (deregulation, liberalisation, cut-back on social services and the public sector and privatisation of public property) also has a long history. This is particularly true in the case of privatisation. Olorode (*Ibid.*) also addressed the issue extensively.

Even members of the ruling-class political parties see through the fraud and rip-offs which privatisation of public property in Nigeria-represents. For example in 2012, the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria adopted the report of a committee that investigated the privatisation process since 1999 (Abdul-Rahman Abubakar reporting: *Daily Trust* 21/2/2011: p. 1; p. 5—*Senate rolls back OBJ privatisation*):

[ask] The Federal Government to cancel key sales of public enterprises executed during the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo over alleged breach of due process and failure of core investors to meet their obligations...the senate asked President Jonathan to fire the Director General of the Bureau for Public Enterprises Bolanle Onagoruwa, and the security agencies to prosecute former heads of BPE Nasir El-Rufai, Julius Bala and Irene Chigbue over their roles in faulty privatisation processes. Privatised companies that the Senate want seized back from their present owners are NICON Luxury Hotel, Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Sheraton Hotels and Towers Abuja, Daily Times Nigeria. Delta Steel Company, Aluminium Smelter Company of Nigeria (ALSCON), Bacita Sugar Company, Sunti Sugar Company and Volks Wagon (sic) Nigeria.]The Siege p. 23

Adamu Adamu (2011) also noted (BPE: Behind closed door [II] *Daily Trust* 19th August, 2011: p. 72):

Business in Nigeria is the crooked foreigner's paradise. A front to with a host of patrons backing him to the hilt, the foreigner can do as he pleases—and often does. He swindles Nigeria with the help of those whose duty it is to keep its trust. Without the right regulation in place to enforce the goals of privatisation and without the will or even desire to make the

new owners of privatised enterprises play according to the rules, the exercise becomes an economic bleeding wound. With its commanding heights in the hands of foreigners and the downstream sector of the economy comatose. Nigeria becomes a perpetual captive market and a dumping ground.

On this myth of the superiority of private enterprise *vis a vis* public enterprise the generalised crisis of non-survival, near-bankruptcy and actual bankruptcy of giant private profit-making organisations have become a global phenomenon. But the real paradox is that in both the centres of accumulation (such as USA) and the peripheries (like Nigeria), it is public resources that they use to *bail out or rescue* these fraudulent private organisations in what they now call *quantitative easing*. Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's CBN for example spent about N5 trillion to bail out some of Nigeria's failing privately-owned banks! There is also a N213 billion Nigerian Electricity Market Stabilisation Facility (fund for loans to gas firms which include Chevron, Shell, Pan Ocean, Seplat, NPDC etc.). From which N64.62 bn had already been disbursed by CBN (*The Punch* June 13, 2015: p. 54; Ifeanyi Onuba reporting). Government that is alleged to be unable to run business profitably thus funds private electricity companies that deliver no electricity!

What will the new leadership in Nigeria do with its mandate? Because of the statements, antecedents and body language of the leaders of the new regime, we think neo-liberalism is on course. For example Muhamadu Buhari's early visit to 10 Downing Street, the invitation to the G7 in Germany and the conspicuous display of Christen Lagarde in Buhari's group photograph with G7 "leaders", the unveiled interests of the new Nigerian leadership in the presidency of ADB all point in the general direction of neoliberal business as usual. We enlarge on some of these further when we consider the international interests in Nigeria's security and the so-called war on terror (WOT).

The Security Crisis, War on "Terror" (WOT) and the Increasing Incidence of Generalised Violence

General civil and international violence, and crisis of security are as characteristic of Nigeria as it is of the world globally. However, beyond the propaganda of indignation that greet what is called terrorism and the War on Terror (WOT) that the United States and its allies launched after September 11, 2001, the world and especially its peripheries have been left in confusion and unprecedented anxiety as to the origins of the current global wave of violence and where it is heading. In the foregoing regards, two major categories of violence are discernible: criminal and violent acts at individual, and small group levels, at localised levels, arising from material wants, poverty, exploitation mounted through state violence and anomie generated by both; national and international violence and terror arising from state terror and counter-terror arising from it. Two important foundational observations are important in these regards:

Chomsky (1988: p. 1) observed that the international and security policy of USA,

.....has as its primary goal the preservation of what we might call “the Fifth Freedom,” understood crudely but with a fair degree of accuracy as the freedom to rob, to exploit and to dominate, to undertake any course of action to ensure that existing privilege is protected and advanced. This guiding principle was overlooked when Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced the four freedoms that the U.S. and its allies would uphold in the conflict with fascism: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

And after 9/11, Tariq Ali (2002: p. 3) observed:

Capitalism has created a single market, but without erasing the distinctions between the two worlds that face each other across a divide that first appeared in the eighteenth and became institutionalised in the nineteenth century. Most of the twentieth century witnessed several attempts to transcend this division through a process of revolutions, wars of national liberation and a combination of both. But in the end capitalism proved to be more cunning and more resilient.

Ali then proceeded (Ibid. p. 3):

A disempowered people are constantly reminded of its own weakness. In the West a common response is to sink into the routines of everyday life. Elsewhere in the world, the people become flustered, feel more and more helpless and nervous. Anger, frustration and despair multiply. They no longer rely on the state [government] for help. The laws favour the rich. So the more desperate among them.....begin to live by their own laws. Willing recruits will never be in short supply.

We are now generally aware that a significant means, if not the means, of maintaining the hegemony of neo-liberal exploitation, is the creation and funding of terror groups and support for dictatorships by western neo-liberal hegemons. After over a decade of the disastrous adventure of the US and its allies in Iraq, President Obama was sending 4,500 “non-combat” personnel to Iraq “to train Iraqi soldiers” now under siege by ISIL (**BBC News**: 1800 Hrs. GMT June 10, 2015). On the whole issue of WOT especially since USA’s invasion of Iraq, Pepe Escobar (2006: p. 118) observed:

Executive Order number 13303, signed by George W. Bush in late May 2003. Executive order 13303 stated with respect to “all Iraqi petroleum and petroleum products, and interests therein”, that any attachment, judgment, decree, lien, execution, garnishment, or other judicial process is prohibited, and shall be deemed null and void.” Commenting on it, Jim Vallette of the Institute of Policy Studies in Washington said that “Bush has in effect corporations”.

Escobar (Ibid. p. 131) further observed:

The whole project is justified with the usual “democratization” and “fighting terror” house of mirrors, but Peters also highlights the “cat is in the bag, bag is in the river” factor: access to oil (for U.S. Corporation, that is). The refreshing side of Peters is his un-CNN frankness: “The de facto role of the U.S. armed forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing.”

Having created the global crisis and the attendant counter-terror neo-liberalism had roped the peripheries into the maelstrom inextricable in the Middle East and from Maghreb to the Nile. Thus, in Nigeria successive regimes from Jonathan to Buhari adopt the WOT and have approbated or reprobated it—many times thinking and acting exactly like the original owners of the crisis in Europe and USA! Escobar (Ibid. p. 337) was congruent with the observations of Ake (op cit., pp. 66-67) when he (Escobar, Ibid.) observed:

It was like the Borges fable where vanquished peoples are condemned by the Empire to be imprisoned behind mirrors and can only reflect the image of their victors. But then the resemblance starts to fade until, in a silent rebellion, they break on through to the other side of the mirror and invade the Empire. To be free, one must break the mirror of representation.

It is not surprising then, that the main reason President Muhammadu Buhari was invited to the G7 Summit in Germany was to sustain the apron-string status of Nigeria *vis a vis* NATO in the so-called WOT along with occupied countries like Iraq. Seyi Gesinde reported (*Nigerian Tribune* on 9th June, 2015: p. 46):

Nigeria’s newly-elected President Muhammadu Buhari, put a “shopping list” to the G7 leaders seeking help to fight Boko Haram rebel group...

Buhari, at his Chatham House speech in the U.K was reported (*The Punch* June 13, 2015: p. 12. *Boko Haram: Buhari and the burden of political hypocrisy*. Fisayo Falodi reporting) to have opined:

The government has also failed in any effort towards a multidimensional response to this problem [of Boko Haram insurgency] leading to a situation in which we have now become dependent on our own neighbours to come to our rescue.

The report then observed, “But barely four days after his [Buhari’s] inauguration, ... the President took his anti-terrorism campaign to Niger Republic and Chad to seek collaboration on how to curb the Boko Haram insurgency”.

What the new regime is entering into—or rather continuing, on WOT with G7 countries is the familiar confusion of occupation, power of G7 hegemons without responsibility and complex

tragic traumas as was recently reported by Amnesty International (AI) in Nigeria (*The Punch*, Tue. June 16, 2015: p. 28—Bayo Oluphunda reporting):

The organisation outlines a range of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity committed by the Nigerian military in the course of fight against Boko Haram in the North-East of the country. The report reveals that, since March 2011, more than 7,000 young men and boys died in the military detention and more than 1,200 people were unlawfully killed since February 2012. In the comprehensive report that has been a direct indictment on individual members of the Nigerian military, Amnesty International provides compelling evidence of the need for an investigation into the individual and command responsibilities of soldiers, and mid-level and senior-level military commanders.

Characteristically, the Nigerian Army has responded to the allegations of human rights violations by its top military commanders. In its reply, the military high command accused the international human rights body of blackmail and witch hunt.

Reading through these reports, Nigerians who are familiar with the excesses of our law enforcement agencies know that Amnesty report is an affirmation of what they already knew if we take into consideration their activities in places like Odi, Zaki Biam and recently in Jos where the Special Task Force was alleged to have decimated an entire village.

And, of course, a wide open opportunity for defence contractors, spies and “security” companies from Europe and America. In this regard, the **BBC News Hour** at 0800 Hours GMT on Wed. March 21, 2002 reported that at the time foreign private security organisations were pulling out of Afghanistan following Kazai’s frustration with the violence and impunity of foreign security organisations, private security forces were estimated to be 40,000 strong while the Afghan Forces for Public Protection numbered only 6,000. In this neoliberal era when *even war is privatised*, this was what happened in Iraq, Syria, the Kurdistan and is probably happening already from the Maghreb to the Nile including North Eastern Nigeria and the Niger Delta.

In concluding this discussion on the escalating security crisis at global and local levels, we observe that a situation has developed in which the crisis begins to alter the concerns and the consciousness of the victims of neoliberalism by changing the constellation of what they consider proximate threats and distant threats to their existence. The elements of the constellation of threats had thus changed from lack of water, electricity, shelter, health facilities, jobs, education etc. and *social security generally to just staying alive*, saving one’s skin from violent death or disappearance. This situation has, as part of the neoliberal paradigm, created a brand new regime of dependency of countries like Nigeria on their former colonisers, brand new industries (private security companies), *professional*

empathizers (international and local advocacies, refugee managers), war and munition industries and professional intellectuals who thrive on the deepening confusion.

2015 Elections: the continuing manipulation of ethnicity, geopolitics, religion and other categorical issues

At all times and in all climes, building an egalitarian none-exploitative society is an arduous task. This task is quite often carried out by a coalition of the oppressed (across ethnic and confessional boundaries) and segments of the bourgeoisie (among the comfortable and the intellectuals) who struggle to “burn their class boots”. Where and when this coalition is non-existent, fractured, weak, subdued or defeated as happens of-and-on since independence in Nigeria, recourse to ethnic, geo-political and confessional ideologies, led by hegemonic and/or aspiring segments of the bourgeoisie become dominant and even succeed in recruiting activists from those who subscribe to the idea of the primacy of class analyses of economic, social and political inequality towards their resolution.

Since the defeat of the radical movement (the students, the labour-movement and the intellectuals in the academia and the media) between the late 1980s and late 1990s, categorical politics has been on ascendancy.

This categorical politics of ethnicity, geopolitics and religion underpinned political alignments “zoning” of political positions, allocation of positions and parastatals and MDAs at national, state and local government levels. This situation at once enables the bourgeoisie at all levels to pursue its preoccupation of accumulation and to continually gang up against the oppressed across ethnic, geopolitical and religious boundaries as during the struggle of students against commercialisation of education, workers’ struggles for enhanced minimum wage, mass struggles against increases in fuel price, casualization of employment and degradation of the environment.

2015 General Elections and the deepening of geopolitical and ethnic-nationalist fissures in Nigeria

The sub-tittle of a Nigerian daily (*Nigerian Tribune*, April 14, 2015: p.1) was “How APC, PDP “partitioned” Nigeria. We guess *partitioned* was in quote because the report did not really mean *break* as happened in Pakistan, variously as in the Balkans and, recently, as in Sudan. But really, what the 2015 General Elections did was to split the country along the traditional fissures—the Southwest with most of the “North” on maps of Nigeria showing parties control which states such as the one in the *Nigerian Tribune* (Ibid.) are eloquent testimonies of the said partition. Of course the electoral partitioning was predictable from the threats and counter-threats of the ethnic and regional gladiators.

Perhaps the most celebrated of the threats by the ethnic irredentists was the one by the Oba of Lagos who, reportedly, warned the Igbos about the consequences of not voting for the APC. Between the Oba’s denials of the statements credited to him, the apologies by the Yoruba leaders of APC and their alibi that the Oba was not a card-carrying member of APC, the

whole affair exposed the fundamental tendency of the Nigerian bourgeoisie to manipulate ethnic and related categories. The fact, in relation to the traditional rulers is that they invariably profit from this tendency for accumulation and for enlarging their influence and privileges. In one of the South Western States, apart from huge accruals from state treasuries, the relatives and children of at least three prominent traditional rulers were commissioners between 2011 and 2015!

In spite of the fact that it is the Nigerian *bourgeoisie*, like the general African “bourgeoisie”, that has become “an obstacle to progress” as Claude Ake (Ibid p. 65) formulated it, the insistence among a large number of them that the 1914 amalgamation of “the North” and “the South” that is the *central* problem of Nigeria has become more strident in the last few years (Fayemi, 2013; Darah, 2013). This complaint has, curiously, assumed *even* greater intensity within the Yoruba bourgeoisie who are major “stake holders” among the triumphant faction in the 2015 General Election (Olajuyitan, 2015; Akintoye 2015; Gani Adams, 2015). Chief Bisi Akande, the Chairman of APC before Chief John Odigie-Oyegun, indeed, characterised the National Assembly fracas led by a faction of APC as a “Northern Conspiracy”! The same claim had been made directly or indirectly by a media organization (*The Punch* Editorial Dec. 9, 2014: p. 26). At other levels, the gaffe by the Oba of Lagos continues to ricochet on the street among victims of ruling-class hegemony as vividly captured by Alaba Igbaroola’s photograph captioned “Lagos belong to Yoruba Protest” (*Nigerian Tribune* 17th June, 2015: p. 49) To be sure, similar claims have been made by non-Yoruba segments of the Nigerian commentariat (Onumah, 2015). Many times, these claims by elements of the “Southern” Nigeria bourgeoisie have either accused the “north” of either parasitizing or slowing down the “progress” of their “south”. For a significant part of the history of geopolitical relations in Nigeria, “southern” fundamentalism has also attracted equally virulent responses from northern fundamentalism; what with the incorrigible and consistent “Northern Muslim” and “Southern Christian” commentaries and news renditions by media organisations like the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Nor does characterizing Diezani Alison-Madueke’s “crimes” as solely favouring “Ijaw looters” (Ibrahim, 2015) provide any illumination about the *essentially ruling-class character of looting in Nigeria!* More importantly, none of these inter-ethnic war drums stop intra-tribal and intra-ethnic wars that produce internal deportations of poor people as in the South-South, in Nassarawa State and other parts of the Middle Belt, in the South-East and in the South-West!

The foregoing perceptions of the *central* problem of Nigeria often find theoretical and intellectual succour in explanations of the problems of “plural” societies that ignore or play down social class and class-based inequalities in countries like Nigeria. For example Lijphart (1982, pp. 223-238) among other things asserted (Lijphart, Ibid. p. 230):

.....economic development and nation building are pre-requisites for democracy and hence also presumes that consociational engineering in the economically underdeveloped plural societies of the Third World are doomed to failure.

Earlier on Lijphart (Ibid. pp. 144-147) pointed to the error of what we consider, even in 1965, a typology of dubious validity in what he called the Lewis Model and which belittles the significance of class in some so-called Third World countries:

He [Sir Arthur Lewis in 1965!] distinguishes between the plural societies of West Africa and “class societies” like Britain, and France. Plural societies are divided by tribal, religious, linguistic, cultural, economic, and regional differences. Class societies are the essentially homogeneous societies of the West, in which social class is the major source of political identification but not a deep cleavage.

The truth indeed, is that it is not necessarily economic underdevelopment or absence of a national consciousness that is creating instability in either the so-called “First World” or “the Third world” today. It is increasing *inequality* (class) that is creating instability and threatening failure. We believe that the analyses of prebendalism in Nigeria in many instances (Joseph, 1991: p. 7; 2013; 2013) also downplays the massive collaboration we see among the various ethnic and related factions of the ruling classes while manipulating inter-ethnic and other antipathies for negotiation among themselves and enabling increased marginalization of greater and greater segments of humanity across the globe. Joseph (Ibid. p. 7), also made a rather categorical statement that appears to simply, and primarily, downgrade the import of “class”:

To assert dogmatically that a choice should be made by a businessman or a laborer between a class mode of behaviour or a more vertically oriented pattern of relations is to ask such individuals to substitute an abstract rationality for an experiential one.

We conclude that the 2015 General Elections have left ethnic and geopolitical fissures as deep as they have ever been and these fissures will get even deeper as the various factions struggle, in the immediate future, to seize vantage positions around state power for accumulation. All of this does not, however, obviate the role that class fissures will acquire under appropriate class-based organisations and mobilisation.

INEC: Honest Referee, Fraudulent teams and players!

From what we have said about the Nigerian ruling class as they constitute themselves into political parties that are constantly reshuffled, as they have, over time, elicited their major pre-occupation as accumulation, they will hardly permit peaceful or orderly democratic or electoral processes. This is why the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in the last four years has been the major guarantor of the relatively smooth electoral processes that Nigeria had witnessed. This credit that we assign to INEC is, in large measure, due to the robust labour movement and ASUU antecedents and personal integrity of a significant fraction of its leadership. The credit accrued also because of the vigilance of the Nigerian labour movement and segments of the civil society especially regarding portions of the recommendations (such as the one suggesting that the chairman of INEC be appointed by the

National Judicial Service Commission—NJSC) of the Justice Uwais Commission (on Electoral Reform) that President Goodluck Jonathan refused to implement.

Suffice it to say that in spite of the general credit earned by INEC, a number of significant problems remains for the institution. Among these is the question of the huge bureaucracy, personnel and cost of the organization required for conducting elections in Nigeria. Also, and arising from the character of Nigeria's ruling class, there is the problem of non-integration of INEC with State Electoral Commissions which are controlled by State Governments and which organize, or refuse to organise, elections at Local Government levels. The point we made earlier about the aversion of Nigeria's ruling circles for peaceful democratic processes is germane here. It is, consequently, not surprising that in spite of the occasional righteous indignation of state governments against what they see as the high-handedness of INEC and the Federal Government regarding electoral processes, they have not allowed elections to be held at local government council levels; rather, they have exploited their powers to simply appoint their minions to administer the so-called Care-Taker Committees in lieu of elected local government officials and, in the case of Lagos State, to manufacture what they call Local Council Development Authorities (LCDA's)!

It is trite to assert that one of the main problems (Therborn, 1976) of liberal democracy especially where, as we have observed, the major pre-occupation of the hegemonic class is accumulation, is the creation of a level playing field for the contending forces (individuals, group and class). Where the teeming masses are disempowered as in today's neo-liberal Nigeria, those individuals, groups and political parties, and especially classes, with means stipulate and control (through resource power and power of incumbency) *the choices* that are available to the "electorate". These choices are circumscribed by available and individual party funds (verifiable and non-verifiable). In these circumstances, especially as INEC has no "practical" or *de-facto* (as opposed to *de jure*) powers and capacity to regulate the amount and sources of party funds, debates will continue to rage as to how "democratic" elections are in political economies as Nigeria's.

Clearly, then, the ambient political economy does not engender a commitment, in the Nigerian ruling-class, to democratic ethos and processes that are non-adversarial, consensual and altruistic. These conclusions are inescapable from the way the governing party and the "opposition" tried at different times to blackmail and discredit the referee (INEC) in the build-up to, and the actual General Elections of 2015. Three important episodes will suffice. There was first, the Anambra State governorship election that installed Governor Obiano which the "opposition" called INEC all sorts of names. Secondly, there was the controversy over INEC's agreement with the shift of the date of the Presidential and National Assembly from February 14 2015 to February 28, 2015; again, APC accused INEC of conspiring with the governing party (PDP) to short the opposition. Thirdly, however, PDP remained quite happy until when INEC started collating and announcing the results of the February 28 election - - the rowdy performance Elder Godsdoy Orubebe and his verbal attacks on the Chairman of INEC (Professor Atahiru Jega) at the Abuja INEC collation centre on March 31, 2015 [www.channelstv.com/2015/03/31/orubebe-accuses-jega-if-being-tribalistic-selective-and-partial] is now history.

While it can be said that INEC (or is it the leadership of INEC?) had come out of the 2015 General Elections with its integrity intact, and a high degree of credibility, the overall credibility of the elections has been subject to considerable debate. On the side of approbation, we have those like many in APC and at international levels, organizations like G7. Augustine Ehikioya reported (*The Nation*: posted 9th June 2015 in “Featured News”) Garba Shehu, Senior Special Assistant to President Buhari as saying:

They (G7) acknowledged him [Buhari] is having emerged from an election adjudged to be the fairest in the nation’s electoral history....They (G7) took cognizance of the fact of several handicaps....leaving him [Buhari] with a government overstretched in capacity, itself riddled with mismanagement.

Contrary to the foregoing reported observation of G7, the European Union’s Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) levelled an extensive and rounded criticism against INEC and the political parties with regard to the conduct of the 2015 General Elections. Nduka Chiejina and Chioma Onyia reported, among other things, (*The Nation* April 14, 2015: p. 45; p. 60) quoting EU EOM:

..... total number of registered voters in the declaration of the presidential election is, without any public explanation given, lower by 1.4 million than the total number of registered voters previously officially announced by INEC.... The announced official turn-out is thus 47.09% with a total of 29,432,083.

Some state representatives and candidates of the PDP and APC were seen to misused incumbency. There were reported cases of abuse of state resources and also biased policing Intimidation of opponents and deployment of armed things reported occurred in Rivers, Lagos, Kaduna, Ogun and Oyo States.

From all we said previously about the character of the Nigerian ruling class in the specific ambience of neo-liberalism, the observations of EU EOM are eminently predictable. And this is why the general myth of the 2015 General Elections being “the fairest in the nation’s electoral history” may indicate a serious national, or at least dominant, illusion!

What are the implications of the tasks arising from the outcome of 2015 General Election in for Nigeria’s Liberation movement?

In concluding this discussions on the real issues of Nigeria’s 2015 General Elections, we must return to the genealogy of the Jega phase of managing electoral process in Nigeria and appraise the implication of its genealogy in what Mokwugo Okoye (1986) called *The Politics of Liberation in Nigeria*. Having appraised the limitations of what a competent and committed “referee” can do in an ambience that produces and reproduces massive economic and social inequalities, categorical politics and antipathies, and social and related insecurity. It is clear that INEC has massive limitations and that a referee with such limitations in contests involving delinquent players may only be able to legitimise

the delinquency by managing it. For a significant segment of the time of existence of electoral commissions in Nigeria, they had been led by prominent intellectuals to most of whom we may ascribe the characteristics of the intellectual as Paul Baran (1969) did—Eme Awa, Humphrey Nwosu, Maurice Iwu, Atahiru Jega.

In a way, the appointment of Jega as INEC Chairman dowsed the “On Uwaish We Stand” slogan of the labour movement and the civil society that were critical in the ousting of Professor Maurice Iwu—Jega’s predecessor at INEC. Jega’s credentials thus arose largely from his antecedents in the radical intellectual wing of the popular movement that struggled against neoliberalism and its agents in Nigeria at a point that neoliberalism could not entertain pretensions to being “democratic” i.e. under military dictatorship. It is indeed a genuine irony that it was from that generation of radical intellectual, anti-imperialist forces of the 1980s and 1990s, that the inheritors of the neo-liberal state, imposed through years of military dictatorships (especially between 1984 and 1999), looked for, and found “credible” umpires (especially since 2010), to mediate the contests for state power. The irony is even more tragic because from our foregoing analysis, the current locus of state power in the hands of the Nigerian bourgeoisie will, *ceteris paribus*, continue to deepen inequalities in Nigeria, generate insecurity and violence and, to serve imperialism.

In perhaps all Gramscian epochs of societies, i.e. epochs when existing decadent systems have reached their dead end but new humane societies cannot be born, controversies always arise as to what proponents of new, more humane societies should do. Should they engage in ameliorating the effects of the decay of a moribund system on the polity and the oppressed classes, (i.e. endorse reform as a sole strategy of intervention) or should they formulate and implement a programme among the oppressed to bring about the birth of a new societies—one that completely overthrows the moribund system? Needless to say, a third option opines that a combination of reformist and revolutionary tactics is more desirable especially where a deep-rooted coherent and creative revolutionary movement, one that engages robustly in the Politics of Liberation, exists. We think that the third option deserves serious consideration from all those that are persuaded that another Nigeria is not only possible but is an imperative because of the staying power and flexibility and that third option.

Obviously, the task of midwifing a new Nigeria is as old as Nigeria itself. It has, indeed, always been the task of building a liberation movement. Various efforts have not only been made, even before 1914, but are, or may be, on-going at different levels and different intensities today. The setbacks of these efforts and the crisis of today however, in our view, developed from the frustrations, political schizophrenia and unilateralisms that led many of our otherwise perceptive comrades compatriots on the left into ethnic-nationalist and confessional politics, into NGOism, into bourgeois party politics and consequently to surrender to the “new reality” of neoliberalism and its consequent “new barbarism”

Today’s task, our task, is to reinvent the Politics of Liberation—to reinvent the Nigerian left and the popular movement that does not wait for bourgeois elections, and for messiahs of constantly-unravelling bourgeois coalitions, to struggle for a humane society. We conclude with excerpts of Kagarlitsky’s (1999) admonition which we consider particularly apt for the peripheries of the so-called global village:

The left remains hostage to its own failures and neuroses. It is not only weak politically but it lacks the determination and moral strength needed for action. It can win elections but not struggles. Unless it dares to speak again about class solidarity, nationalization and redistribution, unless it challenges the system of

global capital and its local political representatives, it has no chance to change anything. And with the crisis of capitalism becoming deeper, with democracies more and more divorced from real decision-making and global economic forces escaping control, the alternative posed by Rosa Luxemburg is becoming clearer: socialism or barbarism. Now we understand that this was not an exaggeration, not a poetic way of speaking about possible dangers. This is just the only real choice. Leftist politicians, who do not dare to choose socialism and fight for it, will bear full responsibility for the possible outcome: the triumph of barbarism.

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