



THE NIGERIAN STATE AND SOCIETY IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

The challenges posed by globalisation to the Nigerian economy are enormous as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters. This Chapter will focus on some aspects of its challenge to Nigeria as a political entity and nation state and to its society. Specifically, an assessment of the responses to the challenges of transiting from a military dictatorship to a democratically-elected system of government will be undertaken. In ordinary circumstances, this is an uphill task. In the Nigerian case, this process is further complicated by the forces and demands of globalisation, the not-too-gradual transformation of the world into a borderless one and the globalisation of the values of democracy.

Secondly, now that the country has exited from its pariah status, how is it coping with the problem of statehood under globalisation; with the problem of pervasive poverty; and, with the challenges of establishing good governance?

Thirdly, educating, mobilising and motivating the civil society to comprehend the nature and challenges of globalisation is a formidable task anywhere. In Nigeria, 45 per cent of whose population is illiterate, it looks like a mission impossible. And how in such circumstances can both the state and the society appropriate, over time, the ownership of the five fundamental global values of democracy and good governance which together also constitute the five pillars of a modern state? These are: justice, human rights, peoples' sovereignty, empowerment and accountability.

Fourthly, how can a rapidly globalising state and society establish compatibility between its market economy and its social system? Finally, how is the enormous task of reorientating the higher civil service in particular and public administration in general to the herculean challenge of facing the future of Nigeria been tackled. It must be borne in mind that the country is at the same time transiting from military system of governance to the democratic system while it is concurrently under pressure to take a

leap into the globalisation train.

The restoration of an elected system of governance

After many painful hiccups, Nigerians witnessed the restoration of an elected system of governance at federal, state and local levels on May 29, 1999. In the **NHDR 1998** the hope had been expressed that the country's protracted transition to an elected system of government would reach a fitting climax on May 29, when elected governments and legislative assemblies would take over the reins of governance at all levels throughout the country. The **NHDR 1998** also expressed the hope that the country would not take an unduly long time to fully recover from the cumulative negative impact of military dictatorship. Thirdly and finally, the hope was expressed for the fullest degree of cooperation between civilian and military leaderships so as to ensure a successful and satisfactory transition to sustainable democracy.

In his inaugural address as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo admitted of the urgent task ahead for the new civilian government the restoration of mutual confidence between the government and the governed. He acknowledged that there was a pervasive lack of trust on both sides of governance because of the bad faith, deceit and evil actions of past administrations (Box 4.1).

This Millennium NHDR comes after the completion of the first two years of the administration. In view of the historic nature of the restoration of elected civilian governments, any

The most urgent task facing the elected civilian governments - federal, state and local - that assumed office in May 1999 is the restoration of confidence between them and the people.

Box 4.1

Excerpt from the inaugural address of the President of Nigeria, May 29, 1999

Instead of progress and development, which we the citizens of Nigeria are entitled to expect from those who governed us, we experienced in the last decade-and-a-half, a particularly in the last regime but one, persistent deterioration in the quality of governance, leading to instability and the weakening of all public institutions. Good men (and women) were shunned and kept away from government while those who should be kept away from government were kept near. Relations between men and women who had been friends for many decades, between communities that had lived together in peace for many generations became very bitter because of the action or inaction of the government. The citizens developed distrust in government, and because promises made for the improvement of the conditions of the people were not kept, all statements by the government met with cynicism... One of the immediate acts of this administration will be to implement, quickly and decisively, measures that would restore confidence in governance...

We shall take steps to halt the decline in human development indices as they apply to Nigeria. All the impacts of bad on our people that are immediately removable will be removed

President Olusegun Obasanjo

assessment would appear rather premature. However, being half way through the four-year mandates of the federal and state governments and their legislatures, taking stock of discernible trends cannot be avoided.

The journey of the past two years has been rather bumpy. With the end of military dictatorship, a series of emotions and frustrations, hitherto sealed or pent up, was released in different parts of the country and these resulted in political unrests and strifes which more often than not resulted in violence. The political situation in the country has remained fragile due to a variety of factors. These include, first and foremost, the threat to national unity arising from ethnic and religious unrests in different parts of the country, particularly in the Niger Delta where there is a deeply felt concern that oil production has brought little economic and social benefits to the local community and people while polluting the lands and rivers.

Secondly, are conflicts between largely Muslim Northerners and largely Christian Southerners over the imposition of Islamic laws in some Northern states. Thirdly, is the emergence of groups of youth, usually unemployed and neglected by the society who are rebelling generally against the society. Militant groups have emerged in different parts of the country. Examples are the Ijaw National Youth, Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), the Arewa Peoples Congress (APC) and the Bakassi Boys. Fourthly, the tension-filled relations between the Executive and the Legislative arms of governance has posed a threat to the country's fledgling democracy. Fifthly, the high expectations among the people that after fifteen years of military rule that had impoverished majority of them, democracy would be accompanied by improvements in their economic condition has failed to be realised. The failure of this *democracy dividend* to materialise in terms of growing employment opportunities for the large army of unemployed college graduates and school leavers has exacerbated the conflict situation and eroded support for the democratic experiment. The marginalisation and dispossession of a large and rapidly growing proportion of the population has accentuated the political situation leading to conflict and violence.

The government at all levels, particularly the Federal Government, has been taking necessary measures to comprehend and master the many social, political and economic factors and forces that have brought about these conflicts and political instability. They have appreciated the importance of avoiding the danger of oversimplifying them as merely a democracy teething problem and the counter-productive stereotypic approach of lumping them together under the banner of ethnicism and religious intolerance.

There is need to identify most rigorously the diverse causes of these incessant acts of

group violence, conflict and threat to security. Among these diverse causes and factors are: abject poverty; youth unemployment which creates fertile recruitment ground for organised violent behaviour; elite manipulation of the impoverished masses; uneven distribution of amenities, resources and appointments; corruption, injustice and oppression; unpatriotic and corrupt communal leadership; low capacity of the law enforcement agencies; and, lack of sufficient sensitivity of multinational companies to the needs of the people and communities whose resources they are exploiting and whose ecological environments are being degraded.

What is now being gradually — albeit belatedly — realised is the havoc that has been wrought on the Nigerian society by fifteen years of continuous military dictatorship. Systemic vibrancy has been undermined and weakened. Military rule had negated age-long values and had forced on the people the very antithesis of those values. A successor civilian regime which inherits a legacy which was used to legitimising the illegitimate and which made brutalisation and violence the instrumentalities of power is at a disadvantage as it, would appear timid and weak because it seeks non violent solutions.

Without doubt, the prolonged period of military rule has undermined due process and the rule of law. Many institutions of civil governance, including the civil service and judiciary have been severely weakened and would require considerable resources, effort and time to revive. The Federal Government launched within hours of its assumption of power a programme of series of Reorientation Workshops for the Federal Permanent Secretaries and the Directorate Cadre whose overarching objective was to prepare the top echelon of the federal civil service for the challenge which would face a civilian democratic government and its public service, as the country makes the transition from 15 year-long military dictatorship. There is also the need to prepare the Federal Civil Service for the daunting task of facing and managing the unpredictable future of the twenty-first century while at the same time developing its capacity to master fully the present. The African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS) was given the overall responsibility for actualising this Programme.

In addition to the Workshop for the Permanent Secretaries which took place from 31 May to 10 June 1999, eighteen two-week long Courses were held for an average of one hundred members of the Directorate Cadre beginning with the Directors and subsequently covering the Deputy and the Assistant Directors. The Directorate Cadre collectively constitute the *management* of the Civil Service system and on their shoulder lies the success or failure of any Administration. Each of the 18 Directorate courses covered a wide-range of issues and themes, all designed to build the knowledge,

Half way through the mandates of the federal and state governments and their legislatures, stock taking of delivery and performance is unavoidable, even when it is agreed by one and all that the journey has been rather bumpy.

technical, moral and ethical capacity of the managers, motivate and inspire them so that working together they will raise the productivity and delivery levels, the image and the level of probity and effectiveness of governance in Nigeria and, *inter alia*, prepare the Nigerian Administration to face professionally the challenge of globalisation. This programme is still far from being completed, although about 80 per cent coverage has already been achieved.

Forces limiting national capacity for globalisation

But in addition to institutional barriers to effective governance and participation in globalisation there are other forces and factors that are inhibiting and limiting the state's capacity to become a proactive participant. The fundamental ones are pervasive poverty, pandemic corruption, marginalisation and dispossession of the mass of the people and excruciating debt burden. All these make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the state to be competitive. And as we have already made abundantly clear, competitiveness, efficiency and social discipline are factors that make for the optimal utilisation of resources, maximisation of individual satisfaction and of profits and a rational allocation between consumption and investment and between present and future production. It is by getting full utilisation of existing human and natural resources that grinding poverty can be alleviated. The problem of getting the goods and services that individuals and communities want, in the particular amounts in which they are wanted can only be surmounted through vigorous competition.

These fundamental forces will be focused upon seriatim.:

Poverty

Poverty in Nigeria and its eradication are the main focus of the **NHDR1998** which indicated that 48.5 per cent of the country's total population (i.e. about 55 million) live below the poverty line. Indeed, the report was formally launched by the President of the Republic a couple months after assuming office. Not only has the federal government deliberated on its findings, virtually all the actions taken by government on poverty alleviation have derived from the report and/or are follow up thereto.

Since that 1998 NHDR covered the many dimensions of poverty in Nigeria and analysed at great length the country's poverty profile as well as its spatial profile before putting forward targeted poverty alleviation and eradication policies and programmes of action, it will not be necessary to repeat them in this Millennium Report. The concern here will be limited to a brief review of the poverty situation since 1998 and the progress or the lack thereof made since the Report was launched in

July 1999.

In spite of all the efforts made by the government and in spite of the extensive support of the international community in general and the United Nations, particularly the UNDP, the poverty situation has become worse. The estimate of the **NHDR 1998** that 48.5 per cent of the country's population are living below poverty level has been revised upward to 66 to 70 per cent with all the different dimensions of poverty and deprivation having become more severely aggravated.

- The current shortage of staple food leading to high increase in prices of the most basic foodstuff is a warning about the severity of physiological deprivation of Nigeria. There is a growing threat to the bare physical survival of the people. Apart from water, food is the most basic input for human survival. In addition, human deprivation, income poverty and social deprivation have become aggravated.

- In both the 1996 and the 1998 NHDRs the imperative of ameliorating the vulnerability of women was emphasised. Because of the strategic importance of a pro-gender poverty alleviation and eradication strategy, it is worth repeating what was stated in both reports

- Putting in place measures to reduce the excessive burden carried by women (Table 7.1 of **NHDR 1996**)

- Enhancing considerably women's capacity in their quintuple role of mother, producer, home manager, community organiser and social, cultural and political leader through improved access and equality of opportunity i.e. the economic and social empowerment of women (**NHDR 1996**)

- Access to credit and agricultural services by women must be geared up. Micro credit programmes for women must be replicated throughout the nation. Efforts by some NGOs to adapt traditional practices to create dynamic community development programmes have begun to make significant impact on the lives of women. They should therefore be emulated throughout the country. Micro credit programmes are exceptionally suitable for women as they will accelerate the achievement of poverty alleviation since increasing women's income will benefit the entire household (**NHDR 1998**).

- Evidence generated over the last two decades indicates that poor people have the capacity to work themselves out of poverty if financial services in the form of credit or savings are made available to them. And since 70 per cent of the population of the poor are

In spite of all the efforts of the past two years, the poverty situation has become worse. Between 66 and 70 per cent of the Nigerian population is now estimated to be below poverty level. In 1998, the estimate was 48.5 per cent.

women, targeting them for micro credit will redound very positively on poverty alleviation.

- There is an urgent need to involve women fully and proactively in environmental protection and regeneration. They interact a lot with the environment and make extensive use of natural resources — land, forest and water — and cause corresponding damage to the environment. Their household activities involve the burning of biomass and fuel wood to provide fuel energy for cooking and charcoal production. With regard to household sanitation, women are responsible for dumping refuse around the homes and into drains and other places where they pollute air and water. Educating women on the importance of environmental protection and sustainability is therefore urgently required as a measure for alleviating and eradicating (NHDR 1996).

The wide inequality and enormous variations which exist among local government areas and the states aggravate tension and social unrest. Nigeria's very poor states are concentrated in the North West, North East and North Central zones. The urban-rural disparities accentuate the disparities among the states. Most northern states are predominantly rural. But explosion in the rate of urbanization is aggravating urban blight and squalor. The states with the largest degree of urbanisation are Lagos (94 per cent), Oyo (69 per cent), Anambra (62 per cent) Osun (56 per cent), Edo (45 per cent) Ogun (45 per cent) and Kwara (43 per cent). States with the lowest proportion of urban dwellers are Jigawa (7 per cent), Taraba (10 per cent) and Akwa-Ibom and Kebbi (12 per cent each) (NHDR 1998).

One of the recommendations made in (NHDR 1998) was the need to review the poverty alleviation institutional landscape with a view to putting forward a programme for rationalisation and streamlining.

This recommendation was immediately implemented by the federal government when the President set up in July 1999, a **Presidential Panel on Streamlining and Rationalisation of Poverty Alleviation Institutions and Agencies** headed by Alhaji Ahmed Joda.

The Panel was charged with the responsibility of reviewing the factors responsible for ineffective and inefficient performance of the existing poverty alleviation establishments and making recommendations that will ensure the government's success in executing programmes to eradicate poverty and raise the standard of living of Nigerians.

In addition to the 18 specialised institutions listed in the **NHDR 1998** (Box 6.1 at page 63) the Panel identified 15 federal ministries whose activities have a direct impact on the poor. After considering the Panel's report, the federal government made the following policy decisions in its National Poverty Eradication Programme:

- Twelve ministries and fourteen agencies are recognised as core poverty alleviation institutions.

- The ministries are Agriculture and Rural Development; Industry; Power and Steel; Employment, Labour and Productivity; Women Affairs and Youth Development; Health, Works and Housing; Environment; Finance; National Planning Commission; Solid Minerals Development; and Science and Technology.

- Fourteen agencies are recognised also as core poverty eradication agencies. These are Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB), Universal Basic Education (UBE), River Basin Development Authorities (RBDAs), Small and Medium Industries Development Agency (SMIDA), National Industrial Development Bank (NIDB), National Electric Power Authority (NEPA), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria (FMBN), Nigerian Mining Corporation (NMC), Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC), National Research Institute for Chemical Technology (NARICT), Projects Development Institute (PRODA) and Federal Institute for Industrial Research, Oshodi (FIRO).

- The Federal Government in addition established the National Poverty Eradication Council (NAPEC) to coordinate the poverty-reduction related activities of all the relevant ministries, parastatals and agencies under the chairmanship and deputy chairmanship of the President and the Vice President respectively.

- The functions of NAPEC are:

- a Formulate policy and review all policies and strategies of Government designed to alleviate and eradicate poverty;

- b Set annual targets for institutions and agencies of Government mandated to undertake such programmes, as well as monitor the attainment of such targets;

- c Mobilise and allocate resources for approved programmes;

- d Establish the legislative and constitutional framework for the successful implementation of these programmes;

- e Approve and establish the

Wide spatial differences and enormous variations which exist among local government areas aggravate tension and social unrest.

proper administrative instruments necessary to ensure the implementation and success of poverty alleviation and eradication programmes; and

f Monitor the functions of the Coordination Committees.

• In addition a National Coordination Committee is established under the Presidency to implement and execute the directives and policy initiatives of NAPEC. Its chairperson is appointed by the President while the members of the Committee are officials (not below the rank of a director from relevant Federal Ministries plus the Presidents of the Nigerian Guild of Editors and Nigerian Labour Congress and representatives of registered political parties.

• The terms of reference of the Coordination Committee are:

a Ensure the implementation of the policies and decisions of the NAPEC;

b Collate and vet the programmes submitted by various implementing agencies, make preliminary approvals and submit same to NAPEC for necessary changes and final ratification;

c Document poverty alleviation and eradication activities at all levels of Government;

d Relate with Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs in order to facilitate the development of their capabilities as well as foster partnership with them;

e Coordinate and document the contributions of international donor agencies as well as the private sector in poverty sector in poverty alleviation and eradication programmes;

f Undertake a periodic assessment of programme implementation and prepare reports accordingly for submission to NAPEC;

g Set up such other sub-committees as may be required; and

h Do such other things and carry out such other directives as may be given from time to time by NAPEC.

• Other institutions identified in the National Poverty Eradication Programme Blueprint are State Coordination Committees, National Assessment and Evaluation Committee and Local Government Monitoring Committee.

There is no doubt that the new institutional landscape for poverty alleviation and eradication is much more elaborate than the one criticised in **NHDR 1998**. However, there is still the need to fully incorporate state governments, local government authorities and community-based organisations and, for that matter, the poor in the battle against poverty cannot be won until all stakeholders particularly the poor, have a say in the future. It is worth reiterating (Box 4.2 below) what was said in the **HDRN 1998** about the system as it had evolved during the past three decades.

In the meantime, it must be repeated once again, the population of the poor has continued to soar. Estimates recently released by the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) based on work done collaboratively with the World Bank have put the percentage of the Nigeria's poor population at 66 per cent i.e. about 70 million. This is already 15 million more than the estimates of 55 million in the **HDRN 1998**. Finally, a point that was made in Chapter 3 is worth recalling for emphasis; poverty cannot be successfully alleviated under distorted price re-

Box 4.2

Poverty Alleviation Institutional Landscape Revisited

..... The greatest flaw in these poverty alleviation strategies is their "top-down" approach. All the initiatives have been taken by the federal authorities; the state and local governments were reduced to mere implementing authorities. Even here their areas of manoeuvre were extremely limited as autonomous institutions manned by people with extremely limited relevant experience were set up. Needless to add that the involvement of the supposed beneficiaries both in the conceptualisation and the implementation of the programmes was conspicuously negligible.

Empirical studies into the role of grassroots indigenous community development organisations undertaken between 1993 and 1995 by three institutions — the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), the Research Group on Local Institutions established by a consortium of Local Government Departments of Nigerian Universities and the Poverty Alleviation Programme Development Committee established in 1994 by the National Planning Commission — have showed that these programmes have been perceived by the diverse community organisations and associations in different parts of the country as being either inappropriate or unsuitable because of the failure to synchronise them with community needs. The people believe that many of the programmes have been politically motivated, designed more to buy legitimacy for the government rather than being primarily functional and genuine in their intention to help the poor.

These programmes are also perceived as being anti-people and anti-poor because they have not only been designed at levels far removed from the people and the poor but they have also been implemented through contractors or government machinery with little or no involvement of the local community. Inevitably, the people and their organisations believe that the projects from the programmes are over priced and costly because of inflated contract rates. And worse still, these projects were invariably shoddily executed with the result that no sooner have they been commissioned than they suffered frequent breakdowns. Finally, the poorest people hardly ever benefit from these programmes.

Just as indigenous traditional community organisations have been bypassed by the government in its poverty alleviation programmes, so have the modern non-governmental organisations (NGOs) been ignored.

gimes and a free-for-all imports of consumer goods that put Nigerian enterprises out of business and exacerbate the large-scale unemployment problem.

Corruption

Corruption has become so pandemic in Nigeria that it was a major issue in the inaugural address of the President (Box 4.3). To back his words with action he promptly submitted an Anti Corruption Bill to the National Assembly. After its enactment, the government has es-

for FDI is based on the assumption that the governments and people of Nigeria will succeed in their war against corruption.

Public debt burden

In all the discourse about public debt, focus is invariably limited to external debt. However, the **NHDR 1996** — the maiden issue — adopted a holistic approach to the country's debt problem. After all, domestic debt was about 18.9 per cent of the country's GDP in 1998 while external debt was 22.3 per cent. And

Box 4.3

Corruption

Corruption, the greatest single bane of our society today, will be tackled head-on at all levels. Corruption is incipient in all human societies and in most human activities.

But it must not be condoned. This is why laws are made and enforced to check corruption, so that society would survive and develop in an orderly, reasonable and predictable way. No society can achieve anything near its full potential if it allows corruption to become the full-blown cancer it has become in Nigeria. One of the greatest tragedies of military rule in recent times, is that corruption was allowed to grow unchallenged, and unchecked, even when it was glaring for everybody to see. The rules and regulations for doing official business were deliberately ignored, set aside or bypassed to facilitate corrupt practices. The beneficiaries of corruption in all forms will fight back with all the foul means at their disposal. We shall be firm with them. There will be no sacred cows. Nobody, no matter who and where, will be allowed to get away with the breach of the law or the perpetration of corruption and evil.

Under this administration, therefore, all the rules and regulations designed to help honesty and transparency in dealings with government will be restored and enforced. Specifically, I shall immediately reintroduce "Civil Service Rules", and "Financial Instructions" and enforce compliance. Other regulations will be introduced to ensure transparency.

The rampant corruption in the public service and the cynical contempt for integrity that pervades every level of the bureaucracy will be stamped out. The public officer must be encouraged to believe once again that integrity pays. His self-respect must be restored and his work must be fairly rewarded through better pay and benefits, both while in service and in retirement.

Olusegun Obasanjo
Presidential Inaugural Speech
May 29, 1999

In spite of the tremendous anti corruption effort of government, there is still tidal wave of corruption which continues to rob the Nigerian economy of resources for poverty eradication and human development.

established the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, an independent body whose Chairman is a former Appeal Court Judge whose integrity is widely acknowledged. A level of transparency has been introduced into government procurement and project contract. Recently, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a state enterprise, published its accounts for the first time in years.

But in spite of all the effort there is still a tidal wave of corruption. This is the perception held both in Nigeria and abroad which was recently echoed by the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria at their conference held in April 2001. Without doubt, pervasive corruption has continued to rob the Nigerian economy of resources that otherwise could have been used for poverty alleviation and eradication. The country's reputation for corruption also scares away many potential investors who would otherwise have come to invest. Given Nigeria's great potential both in terms of resources availability and market size, it is a great tragedy that corruption is a deterrent to foreign direct investment and, sometimes, ODA. Needless to add that corruption constitutes a major hurdle to the full and effective participation in the globalisation process. The optimism expressed by TNCs about Nigeria being among the five top countries eligible

between them both were 41.2 per cent of GDP in 1998 (Table 4.1).

In 1960, Nigeria's stock of both domestic and external debt was N118.0 million or 4.9 per cent of GDP. Almost forty years later, the total public debt had increased more than eight-fold as a percentage of the GDP while in absolute figures, the increase was almost 100 fold. Indeed, the lower proportion of public debt to GDP between 1995 and 1998 did not represent a reduction in the level of public debt. It was due to the use of official exchange rate in determining the Naira value of external debt, while the pricing of the gross national product was based on the market-determined and highly depreciated exchange rate. It is this manipulation of the exchange rate that inflated the ratio of public debt GDP. It was the era of devaluation that altered the relative share. Until this had happened, domestic debt dominated the public debt scene — reaching in 1977 to a peak of 92.7 per cent to total debt with external debt accounting for only 7.3 per cent. Even with the 45.9 per cent that domestic debt currently constitute it is quite a formidable burden. This is more so as unlike in the 1960s and 1970s when development stocks dominated the domestic debt structure, it is now ways and means advances treasury bills and certificates that are dominant. In other words, instead of pub-

lic borrowing for development purposes, with a view to increasing the country's productive capacity, the emphasis has shifted to borrowing for consumption and recurrent expenditures.

embark earnestly on a process of transforming the country's low-intensity democracy into a peoples' democracy, a popular participatory peoples' republic where government and the civil society work in cooperation for the com-

Table 4.1

Federal Government Public Debt Outstanding

Years	Domestic Debt (N million)	External Debt (N million)	Total Debt (N million)	Domestic Debt as % of Total Debt	External Debt as % of Total Debt	Domestic Debt as % of GDP	External Debt as % of GDP	Total Debt as % of GDP
1960	23.5	94.5	118	19.9	80.1	1	3.9	4.9
1965	216.2	141.8	358	60.4	39.6	6.4	4.2	10.7
1970	1,111.90	175	1,286.9	86.4	13.6	19.8	3.1	22.9
1975	1,678.90	349.9	2,028.80	82.8	17.2	7.8	1.6	9.4
1980	8,231.50	1,866.80	10,098.30	81.5	18.5	16.2	3.7	19.9
1985	27,952.00	17,300.60	45,252.60	61.8	38.2	38.6	23.9	62.5
1989	47,051.10	240,393.70	287,444.80	16.4	83.6	20.9	106.9	127.9
1990	84,124.60	298,614.40	382,739.00	22	78	32.3	114.6	146.8
1995	341,082.30	716,865.60	1,057,947.90	32.2	67.8	17.2	36.2	53.5
1998	537,490.90	633,017.00	1,170,507.90	45.9	54.1	18.9	22.3	41.2

Source: Central Bank of Nigeria

With a total public debt of nearly N1.20 trillion, Nigeria's debt burden is without doubt most excruciating and it is imperative that the federal government should achieve a breakthrough in the immediate future. Debt relief that would make Nigeria exit from debt is an illusion and the longer the debt crisis is prolonged the greater the extent of economic regression. It is nigh impossible to achieve much success in poverty alleviation, unless the debt burden is substantially reduced. But the debt problem is political, not technical. Debt diminishes sovereignty as it confers power on the creditor over the debtor. However, this should not prevent Nigeria and other countries from focusing global attention on the collusive behaviour and unfairness that brought about the debt crisis. But it is imperative that home grown strategies to get out of the debt trap should be devised and implemented before the country is overwhelmed. This is where the actualisation of the principle of self-reliance becomes a matter of national integrity. Failure to act promptly will undermine the country's fragile democracy.

Internalising democracy and good governance

If the Nigerian polity is to become strong, virile, vigorous and purposeful, the political parties, their leaders and the people of Nigeria must

mon good. In other words, Nigeria's two-year old fledgling democracy must be transformed from a skimmed-milk to a full-cream democracy.

Global political and ethical values of justice, human rights, peoples' sovereignty, empowerment and accountability (Box 1.3 of **NHDR 1998**) must become internalised into the machinery of governance as the pillars of the modern state of Nigeria. And finally, governance must be humane, sensitive to the needs of the people, that is pro-people, pro-gender, pro-nature and pro-poor.

In other words, democracy in Nigeria must be seen as both an end and a means. Democracy should be seen as an indispensable instrument in the search for peace, stability and development. While it is true that without democracy, good governance is nigh impossible, democracy does not always result in good governance. Where the political class is not imbued and motivated by the higher ideals of democracy, bad governance will prevail. Justice, equity and fair play are the qualities which bond people together in a state. Where they are absent, greed, selfishness, dishonesty, infidelity, corruption, double talk and lack of trust are the prevailing attributes. The state will never be at ease with itself and the centre will never hold. Indeed, things will fall apart. If leaders and members of the political class and

The benign neglect of the internal debt burden makes the discourse on Nigeria's debt incomplete as domestic debt constitutes almost half of the country's debt burden.

the public services are not always guided by high principles, if they exhibit disdain and contempt in their attitude and approach to the people they are supposed to serve, the state will always be at logger-heads, at war against itself. Usually a failed state in moral and ethical spheres will in all probability be a non-caring state, unable to ensure the security of its citizens, protect their lives and property and provide basic and essential public goods.

Nigeria as a state has had a checked political life during the past forty years — a nation which peace, real peace and happiness, has always eluded. In 40 years, it has had twelve governments — giving an average of three-and-a-half years as the life span of each government. When account is taken of the Gowon Ministry and the Babangida administration which lasted nine and eight years respectively, the average life span of governments in Nigeria has been two-and-a-half years. Indeed, the governments of Ironsi and Shonekan lasted only six months each.

Little wonder that policy discontinuities have been the plight of the Nigerian state. The lack of sharp focus, the lack of proper targeting of the people, the imposition of programmes and policies that alienate rather than motivate the people are the familiar hallmarks of a failed state. No matter its origin, a state is sustained for the sake of a good life for its citizens. A state which reneges on this fundamental role is indeed a failed state where lack of national cohesion and unity and the prevalence of turbulence, civil strife and war become the order of the day. In such a state, engrossed as it is in a state of permanent political crises and polarisation, democracy cannot thrive (Box 4.4).

Given the history and heterogeneity of Nigeria, a federal political and governance system is the only way of achieving sustainable peace and political stability. The strict observance of the principle of subsidiarity and levels of government will go a long way in promoting good governance by keeping centrifugal forces in check and encouraging the emergence of proactive forces which can foster cooperation, peace and stability. True federalism requires that the federal and state governments are, within their prescribed spheres, coordinate and independent.

For democracy to become sustainable, there must be a strong and vibrant civil society, good governance, effective dynamic relationship between people and the government and entrusting the management of the State in the hands of men and women of high technical competence and integrity.

It is a misunderstanding to equate democracy with the electoral processes — a pluralistic political party system and the ballot box. Nowadays, there has been so much emphasis on these that even dictators, by holding multi-party rigged elections, are acclaimed to be democratic. The ease with which the international community gives its seal of approval on any semblance of free and fair elections in any part of the world, particularly Africa, has validated the equation of democracy with elections and multi-partysim.

It is this type of democracy — the low-intensity democracy — that has failed to win the affection and loyalty of the people. True democracy must be sustained i.e. internalised in the society. It must become a way of life manifesting itself at all levels of the social and political systems with shared ethical and political values of justice, human rights, peoples' sovereignty, empowerment and accountability (Box 4.5). It is to be hoped that Nigeria's fledgling democracy will move in this direction after the ups and downs of the first two years after its restoration.

For democracy to become sustainable there must be a strong and vibrant civil society and, of course, a high quality of good governance which is needed to build an effective

Box 4.4

Democracy in a state engrossed by political crises and polarisation. What prospects?

Democracy cannot thrive in a situation of permanent political crises and polarisation. Nor can it take root in a polity where politics is transformed into warfare with winners enjoying virtually absolute power while losers not only forgo power but face a real prospect of losing liberty or even life.

Source: Adebayo Adedeji, "The Nigerian Nation State: Cohabitation Without Marriage?"

Box 4.5

Guiding principles of democracy

- Ø Democratisation is an ongoing, long-term process that cannot be achieved through elections alone. There is no instant democracy; nor is there a definitive and final state of democracy.
- Ø Democracy must grow within a country; international agencies or national authorities cannot impose it.
- Ø There is no one form of democracy that is universally appropriate. Democracy must suit the circumstances of each society and its people. There are, however, commonly-accepted democratic values that provide a basis for all democracies — such as free elections, respect for human rights, the existence of political parties and a free press.
- Ø Democracy should be seen as an indispensable means for achieving long-term peace, stability and development.

Source: International Institute for Democracy & Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

tive relationship between the people and the government. The degree of responsiveness to the people's legitimate demand and expectation is a measure of good governance whose basic requirements are accountability, order and capacity.

Accountability means holding those who take or implement decisions to account. This requires workable mechanisms for reselecting or deselecting political office holders and penalising or removing non- or mal-performance. But most important, it requires a high degree of integrity in selecting such office holders. Much too often there are many

square pegs in round holes. The practice referred to by President Obasanjo in his inaugural speech on May 29, 1999 of good men (and women) being shunned and kept away from government at all levels while those who should be kept away were drawn near is still very much alive today. The deterioration in the quality of governance remains unabated. Hence, bad governance still persists. There is still as much distrust of government today as there has ever been. And until these weaknesses have been addressed, Nigeria's vibrancy as a player in the globalisation process will be minimal, if not zero or even negative.

Democracy in Nigeria must be seen as both an end and a means.