

Nigeria Since Independence

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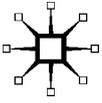
Nigeria Since Independence

Forever Fragile?

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Foreword © Dr Kwasi Kwarteng 2012

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*To my parents, Clement and Enid, and my wife, Sophie,
with love and gratitude*

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Foreword

The modern history of Nigeria is a story of conflict, corruption and simmering ethnic tensions. Added to this combustible mix are religious differences which, in recent times, have led to sporadic outbursts of violence.

Yet, despite these immense strains, modern Nigeria remains a united country. It has a distinctive character, and it is often described as a nascent superpower. Jon Hill's book is a much needed and subtle appraisal of the manner in which modern Nigeria has avoided fracture.

After independence in 1960, Nigeria's federal constitution almost immediately succumbed to secessionism. The Biafra war, which started in 1967, is perhaps the defining event of modern Nigerian history. In many ways, it was the first war of the modern media era. International pop stars, Swedish students, international aid agencies all made their contribution in different ways to the conflict. The civil war has also been represented in literature and film. Today, the tensions which gave rise to the civil war have been superseded by other controversies.

The continued existence of Nigeria as a unified state is a frequent matter of debate and speculation. In his penetrating book, Hill identifies three principal causes which have ensured the unity of this diverse state. The three causes in general terms can be characterised as federalism, oil and the armed forces. Federalism is perhaps the most difficult of these notions to grasp, given its ambivalent nature. It is often remarked that the diversity of Nigeria is, in itself, a source of both weakness and strength.

The very term 'Nigeria' first appeared in print in an editorial written for *The Times* in London in April 1897. This fact alone showed the extent to which Nigeria itself was an artificial construct. It had only been in 1892 that Lord Salisbury, the British prime minister, had observed that 'we have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man's foot has ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the

small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.'

Despite this artificiality, federalism does still have a resonance among the political elite. Many Nigerians feel a particular affinity to their region or ethnic group, while maintaining a significant sense of nationhood. This sense has been deepened by the enormous oil wealth which Nigeria commands. Oil damages the environment and encourages insurgency. Yet oil contributes to the nation's unity as non-oil producing regions remain fully committed to preserving Nigeria on account of its oil wealth.

Above this simmering cauldron, so to speak, sit the armed forces, which remain the most visible symbol of national unity. The contribution of the Army, in particular, to Nigeria's political life since 1960 has been enormous. The number of coups which have occurred since independence, as well as the civil war itself, is proof of this.

There remains a question about how the Army will accommodate itself to civilian rule in the future, although recent developments, particularly the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, show that some form of directly elected leadership can be sustained.

The future of Nigeria is of enormous consequence to the stability of Africa and to international politics generally. The economic development of Africa has been one of the most conspicuous features of the international scene in the past ten years. As developed economies struggled in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, political commentators, economic and financial analysts have become aware of markets outside Europe and North America, notably in the Middle East, Asia and, most recently, in sub-Saharan Africa.

If it remains a united country, Nigeria's position and role in this new world will be significant. If the country falls apart, however, it is difficult to see how this chaotic situation would resolve itself. In either case, the future of Nigeria is one in which politicians, academics, commentators and analysts all over the world should maintain a considerable interest. Jon Hill's book is an important contribution for all those wishing to develop that interest.

Dr Kwasi Kwarteng

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'There are three secrets', declared Somerset Maugham, 'to writing a novel. Unfortunately nobody knows what they are.' No such mysteries, however, surround the production of academic texts. And just as crucial to this bitter-sweet process as thinking, reading, research and writing is the help and support provided by friends and well-wishers, colleagues and peers. It is with profound sincerity, therefore, that I would like to thank all those who have assisted me in writing this book. For individually and collectively they have improved it beyond measure and deserve nothing but credit. Whatever mistakes remain or shortcomings the book still has are due to me and me alone.

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Abbreviations

AG	Action Group
ANPP	All Nigeria People's Party
AQILBS	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Lands beyond the Sahel
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
AU	African Union
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DOE	Department of Energy
DP	Dynamic Party
DPR	Department of Petroleum Resources
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FCB	Fourth Commando Brigade
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FEPA	Federal Environmental Protection Agency
FG	Federal Government
GIA	Armed Islamic Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IBB	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IMN	Islamic Movement in Nigeria
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
JTF	Joint Task Force
KPP	Kano People's Party
LSUF	Lagos State United Front
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MDF	Mid-West Democratic Front
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MIR	Movement for the Islamic Revival
MOPOL	Mobile Police

MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People
NBA	Nigerian Bar Association
NACOD	Nigerian Army Central Ordinance Depot
NCNC	National Council of Nigerian Citizens/National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NCS	National Council of State
NDC	Niger Delta Congress
NDPVF	Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force
NDVF	Niger Delta Vigilante Force
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NNA	Nigerian National Alliance
NNDP	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NPF	Northern Progressive Front
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
OAS	Organisation Armée Secrète [Secret Army Organisation]
OUA	Organisation of African Unity
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PDP	People's Democratic Party
RP	Republic Party
SSI	Strategic Studies Institute
SSS	State Security Service
UMBC	United Middle Belt Congress
UN	United Nations
UPGA	United Progressive Grand Alliance
ZCP	Zamfara Commoners Party