

# Reflections, Realities, and the road ahead

*“We owe it to future generations to bequeath a country better than the one we inherited. This responsibility begins with truth-telling, courage, and decisive action. The journey ahead may be arduous, but it is not insurmountable”.*

*By Bello Gwarzo Abdullahi*

As articulated by Professor Chinua Achebe in his seminal work; “The Trouble with Nigeria”, the challenges confronting our nation can be unequivocally attributed to leadership. But what constitutes effective leadership? While there are myriad definitions, one undeniable truth remains: leadership transcends mere titles — it is a sacred trust. It ought to embody the aspirations of the populace and serve as a guiding beacon for national advancement. The calibre of leadership within any nation is intrinsically linked to its trajectory of progress or regression. In Nigeria's case, after 65 years of independence, this correlation has never been more palpable — or more disconcerting. As we commemorate the 65th anniversary of our liberation from colonial dominion, the moment has arrived not solely for jubilation, but for profound and candid introspection. Where do we stand today as a nation? What has gone awry? Why do we find ourselves ensnared in the same predicaments decade after decade? Most critically, what must we alter in our approach as we forge ahead? On October 1, 1960, Nigerians brimmed with optimism, envisioning a united, equitable, and prosperous nation where “no man is oppressed.” At that historic juncture, Nigeria stood on the precipice of greatness. With its abundant human and natural resources, substantial population, and strategic location on the African continent, Nigeria was poised to lead — not only in Africa but on the global stage. The expectations were unequivocal: a united, peaceful, and secure nation; visionary and principled leadership; robust institutions governed by the rule of law; equitable economic growth and prosperity; access to quality education and healthcare; and active citizen engagement in governance.

Regrettably, these aspirations have been persistently undermined by subpar governance, ethno-religious schisms, economic mismanagement, and — most critically — a profound crisis of leadership. The stark reality is that our nation is not lacking in resources; it is bereft of responsible, competent, and people-centric leadership. This is particularly evident in the performance of the current administration, whose tenure has been characterized by disillusionment, squandered opportunities, and, in some instances, outright dereliction of duty. The failures of the present leadership are almost palpable. They encompass economic decline, pervasive insecurity, a lack of accountability, and the erosion of democratic values. Instead of steering Nigeria toward growth, the current leadership appears to be navigating the country deeper into a quagmire of uncertainty, frustration, and despair. The pressing question now is: What is the path forward? The solution is not elusive. If we are to transcend mere survival as a nation and begin to flourish, we must confront the future with clarity and courage.

A rejuvenated Nigeria is conceivable — but not with antiquated attitudes and practices. We must shift from personality-driven politics to principle-driven leadership. Leaders must be chosen based on integrity, competence, and vision. Strong nations are built on strong institutions, not strongmen. Our judiciary, civil service, and security agencies must be fortified and depoliticized. An active and enlightened citizenry is crucial. Nigerians must engage beyond elections — demanding transparency and



**accountability at every level. Policies must prioritize education, healthcare, youth empowerment, and economic inclusion. Development must be visible and measurable. Our diversity should be harnessed as a strength, not wielded as a weapon. We must rebuild trust among ethnic groups, foster unity through justice, and craft a national narrative that inspires pride rather than division.**

At 65, Nigeria is far too mature to still be stumbling through the rudiments of governance and nation-building. We have paid an exorbitant price in blood, squandered potential, and lost time. We can no longer afford to romanticize our challenges or normalize failure. It is time to demand better, strive for improvement, and embody excellence — both as leaders and as citizens.

This anniversary of independence must not devolve into yet another photo opportunity for political elites or a hollow celebration of bygone glories. It must serve as a watershed moment — a national reckoning, a recommitment to the principles of justice, equity, and progress. If leadership is indeed a reflection of the populace, then we — the people — must also engage in self-reflection. What kind of nation do we genuinely desire? What sacrifices are we willing to make to achieve it? And when will we cease to settle for mediocrity? We owe it to future generations to bequeath a country better than the one we inherited. This responsibility begins with truth-telling, courage, and decisive action. The journey ahead may be arduous, but it is not insurmountable. With vision, accountability, and unity of purpose, a revitalized Nigeria remains within our grasp. Let this 65th anniversary be remembered not for its rhetoric or ceremonies, but for its spark — the moment when we collectively resolved to rewrite our national narrative.

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# Nigeria @ 65

By Jibrin Ibrahim

This week, our country Nigeria reached the veritable old age of 65, but the consensus in the land is that we are yet to mature. Essentially, we have wasted our youth and adult life so there is no surprise that at sixty-five, we find very little to celebrate. In his independence-day address to the Nation. President Bola Tinubu acknowledged that we do not have enough electricity to power our industries and homes today, or the resources to repair our deteriorating roads, build seaports, railroads, and international airports comparable to the best in the world, because we failed to make the necessary investments decades ago. Almost immediately however, he slipped out of frank talk to claim that his Administration is setting things right and that we have finally turned the corner. The worst is over, he said: “Under our leadership, our economy is recovering fast, and the reforms we started over two years ago are delivering tangible results. The second quarter 2025 Gross Domestic Product grew by 4.23%—Nigeria's fastest pace in four years—and outpaced the 3.4 per cent projected by the International Monetary Fund. Inflation declined to 20.12% in August 2025, the lowest level in three years.” The problem is that Nigerians have not seen the change. Indeed, the overwhelming mood in the country is one of despondency. The most visceral problems Nigerians face is the overwhelming sense of insecurity. No one and nowhere is safe in the country as terrorists, bandits, insurrectionists and kidnappers ply their trade of death and destruction all over the country. For years, we have lived in a country where the military have been deployed in virtually every State in the Federation trying to restore law and order and failing in their mission. Our children are being killed regularly for daring to go to school and so many farmers can no longer go to their farms. Millions have abandoned their homes and camp as internally displaced persons living without homes, livelihoods or dignity. Our health system has collapsed and a significant part of savings are used to send the sick abroad in search of medical treatment. The incidence of poverty in our society today affects sixty-three per cent of our people, 133 million Nigerians who are multidimensional poor. Daily life is a perpetual struggle for the masses that live without electricity and potable water. Today the challenge for too many of our people is to get enough food to eat. Certainly, we Nigerians do not deserve this.

The key problem affecting the nation is known to all – hydra-headed corruption. The direction of development for corruption is perpetual growth and the Tinubu Administration has shown neither the will, nor the capacity to slow it down. The scale of corruption has been so massive that it has made nonsense of our efforts to practice the democratic mode of governance. Essentially, the key narrative of the Fourth Republic has been about corruption. Elections themselves have become narratives about corruption as vote buying and selling become the route to power. The combination of mega-corruption and poor governance has created a situation in which the state is imploding. The Nigerian state is no longer able to play its legitimate role of imposing law and order. Those in power use security agencies for private purposes thus privatizing state power. As the efficacy of violence as a tool for achieving one's purpose increase, many who are not in the corridors of power are also learning how to use it for their own agendas. The police exist only to supply privatized security to the rich and senior government officials. Many young and frustrated persons now devote their energy and inventiveness to acquire weapons to kidnap people

and get ransom as their slice of the pie. Our Constitution defines the purpose of the state as promoting the welfare and security of the people. Today, the people's welfare and security are at their most compromised in the country's history. Nigerian politics today is about trying to substitute those in office rather than trying to change the nature of the political game. In this context, it is not surprising that insurgency has been growing and more social actors are joining the fray of using the instruments of violence to achieve their objectives at the cost of thousands of lives. As for the economy, the government is determined to tax Nigerians into more poverty while we suffer the most severe cost of living crisis in our history.

The greatest threat to finding a path towards mending Nigeria is the lack of inspirational leadership. People are able to compete for power because they have had access to state power and have stolen billions and indeed, trillions of Naira. This is the reality that makes people lose confidence in the future. This problem creates a situation in which people who are honest and sincere keep out of the political fray. This

creates a bandwagon effect that makes every political generation worse than the previous one. The political challenge facing the country is to reverse this trend. Nigeria has a large number of talented and well-trained people who can provide good leadership. We must start the process of identifying such people in our communities and convincing them to engage the political process. As these people would not have amassed huge war chests composed of billions and indeed trillions of Naira, we must find ways of supporting them so that we can begin to change the nature of the political game. As we recall the great nationalists that fought for our independence, let us begin the process of producing and reproducing a political class that works for the Nigerian people.

Let our resolve be that we cannot allow those who want Nigeria to continue along the path of self-destruction to be the winners in Nigeria. Today, opponents of Nigeria are using fake news and photos to deepen our divisions and fan the embers of sectarian strife. They are succeeding because President Tinubu's Government that came in with such great expectations has not lived up to what it could and should deliver. The President spends a lot of time travelling all over the world but we do not see benefits accruing to the people. He is not addressing the crisis around insecurity nor is he responding to the deep identity divides that are growing deeper and subverting national unity and cohesion.

As we mark our 65th anniversary, we must remind ourselves that although we have been playing ethnic politics since the colonial era, any government that seeks the path of ethnic supremacy cannot hold sway in our country. The path to cohesion is equity not domination. We should always remind ourselves that at the epicenter of the current crisis that confronts the Nigerian state is bad governance and not bad tribes and religions. Over time, bad governance has manifested itself in the form of corruption, exclusion and state capture by successive political elites of all ethnic and religious groups. The result has been increased poverty, unemployment and deprivation of citizens, thereby creating conditions and incentives for violence in the country. What we need is a new approach to governance based on integrity and fair play.





# A Great Nigeria is Still Possible

*Statement by Mr. Peter Obi, Labour Party Presidential Candidate in the 2023 Presidential Election, on the Occasion of Nigeria's 65th Independence Anniversary, 1 October 2025*

## Fellow Nigerians

Today should be a day of joy and remembrance, a day to celebrate the struggles of our heroes who fought to free Nigeria from colonial rule. It should be a day for gratitude to Almighty God for His blessings on our nation. On 1 October 1960, Nigeria gained independence to global acclaim as an emerging African economic and political power. Such was our potential that Time Magazine predicted the rise of a true African superpower that would lead the continent with pride. Our founding fathers fought for independence with confidence, passion, and determination to build a prosperous Nigeria that would stand alongside the world's most advanced nations.

Unfortunately, tragic failures of leadership derailed this vision. Yet despite these setbacks, Nigeria has always shown resilience. In 1999, we overcame military dictatorship and restored democracy, beginning a renewed journey toward prosperity, freedom, and justice. That journey helped us build Africa's largest economy and strengthen democratic institutions. But over the last decade, under the APC's incompetent, divisive, and corrupt leadership, Nigeria has been greatly diminished.

By the end of 2007, our total debt was about N2.5 trillion, only 10 percent of GDP, after President Obasanjo's government secured debt forgiveness of over 30 billion dollars. By 2014, Nigeria had become Africa's largest economy and was primed to achieve middle-income status. In 2015, for the first time, a ruling party was defeated in a presidential election, marking another milestone for our democracy.

Today, the picture is bleak. Our total debt stands at about N175 trillion, nearly 50 percent of GDP, without any improvement in productive sectors. Nigeria has fallen to the fourth-largest economy in Africa, behind South Africa, Egypt, and Algeria. Our democracy is now described as "undemocratic." In just one year, this administration pushed over 15 million Nigerians into acute poverty. Today, more than 150 million Nigerians lack access to basic healthcare, education, water, and sanitation. This number grows daily under an APC government that pursues brutal revenue-driven policies while ignoring the welfare of its people. Nigeria now ranks among the lowest in the world on human development indicators.

This government taxes struggling citizens and small businesses heavily, while indulging in extravagance. Billions are spent on new presidential jets, yachts, and luxury cars that cost more than the entire 2024 budget for primary healthcare. The Vice President's residence was renovated at a cost of N25 billion, more than the combined capital budgets of six major federal university teaching hospitals. Over N10 billion was allocated for car parks and canteens for the National Assembly, more than the capital budget of the Ministry of Science and Technology at a time when science is



crucial to national growth.

Meanwhile, Nigerians pay more for everything and receive less. Passports, permits, electricity, petrol, food, rent, and healthcare all cost more. Yet power supply remains unreliable, food insecurity deepens, and UNICEF and WFP project that 33 million Nigerians will face acute hunger in 2025.

This government borrows recklessly, not for investment in productive infrastructure but for wasteful consumption. Insecurity has further crippled our economy. Nigerians now live in fear of travelling by road. Kidnapping has become rampant, with billions paid in ransom. Incompetence in security management has turned our country into one of the most terrorized and unsafe nations in the world.

Cronyism, corruption, and disregard for the rule of law have scared away investors, while other African nations overtake us as preferred investment destinations.

Despite this mismanagement, Nigeria's potential for greatness remains. We cannot give up on the dream of a prosperous and secure nation. What we need is competent, compassionate, and committed leadership. Our priority must be prudent economic management, investment in human capital, rule of law, and infrastructure development. We must mobilize our enormous natural resources to drastically reduce poverty and achieve rapid, sustained growth.

We should learn from nations like China, India, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, which have turned around their economies through disciplined leadership and people-centered policies. Nigeria too can rebound, but only if we exit the path of incompetence and fiscal irresponsibility.

The current administration's failures must not lead us to despair. They should instead fuel our determination to rebuild. Nigeria has the resources, talent, and resilience to become an industrialized nation in record time. With the right leadership, we can defeat terrorism, restore security, and guarantee Nigerians safe communities where enterprise and social life can thrive. We must end a system where leaders feast while the people starve, where politics enriches a few and impoverishes the many. The old politics must end, and a new politics of prosperity for all must begin.

Against all odds, we will return Nigeria to the path of prosperity and justice. We will not relent. We will not be discouraged. The mission is clear: Nigeria will rise again.

I call on political leaders to reflect on the crises confronting our nation and recognize this as a moment to transcend personal interests. We must reject corruption, bigotry, and division. We must embrace a new Nigeria where leadership is defined by competence, compassion, and commitment. Despite today's challenges, the future remains bright. Happy Independence Day to all Nigerians. A new Nigeria is Possible.