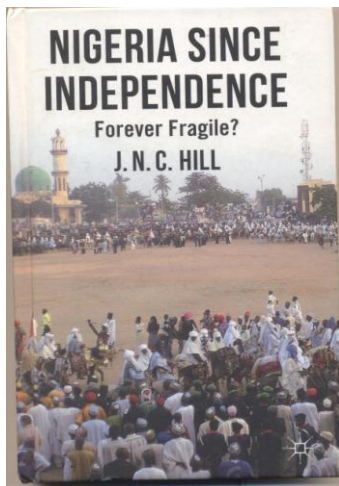


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**Book Review: *Nigeria Since Independence:  
Forever Fragile?***

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Jonathan Hill's text "Nigeria since Independence: Forever Fragile" is a text on state fragility with Nigeria in context. But state fragility, the analytical tool employed in the text, remains highly contested (see Mata, and Ziaja, User's Guide on Measuring Fragility; Easterly, and Fresch, Top 5 reasons why "failed state" is a failed concept). Hagman and Hoehne (Failed state or failed debate?) posited that "the failed state debate has failed to provide the appropriate analytical tools for a better understanding of contemporary African statehood...the debate reveals a dogmatic assumption and wishful thinking that all states will in the long run converge towards a model of Western liberal democracy"(p.20). State fragility is also often ascribed as a

wicked problem (Rittel, and Webber, Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning; Menkhous, State Fragility as a Wicked Problem) that has succeeded in polarizing the academic discourse of the causes of state failure into agency and structural approaches (Logan and Preble: Fixing Failed States: A Dissenting View).

The **agency approach** to causes of state failure situates the state within a Westphalian conception; the state as being incapable of providing public goods, lacking internal legitimacy, persistent violence including a comatose internal security. It is an approach that has continuously highlighted the relevance of Weber's characterization of the state. It is within this context that Hill categorized Nigeria as a fragile/failed state: "it is a failed state for two main reasons. First, the writ of its government does not run the length and breadth of its territory (p.1)...government does not promote the flourishing of all its citizens" (p.2). He was quick to add that "the picture of Nigeria's failure painted by this examination is full of paradoxes. For some of the main factors fuelling the insurgencies in the Niger Delta and North-East also double as vital mechanisms for keeping the country together" which include federalism, oil and the armed forces.

According to Hill Africa is most pronounced of state failure in global proportions. But such a scenario is not surprising. The world capitals and their military, intelligence, financial and economic institutions that securitize the failed state discourse be blamed instead, as they turn a blind eye to their transnational corporations (TNCs) that destroy the environmental, economic and social fabrics of African states (Ekwe-Ekwe, Conflict & Intervention in Africa, p.3; Thomas, The Environment in IRs; Bolton, Africa Doesn't Matter). Thus, securitizing the failed state discourse is not enough for the world powers after 9/11; there is the necessity to intervene on humanitarian grounds to prevent state failure (Scheffer, towards a modern doctrine of humanitarian intervention; Holzgrefe, chap.1, The Humanitarian Intervention Debate).

The AU should not be blamed for requesting political independence for African territories (p.20), for economy was the essence of colonialism. The Bismarck summoned Berlin Conference (1884-1885) was to settle economic differences arising from among European colonizing powers in Africa (Pakenham, the Scramble for Africa; Clarke, Crude Continent). Therefore, post colonial Africa's wellbeing was inconsequential. Instead puppet regimes and petty comprador classes were instituted to continue on their behalf. It is such neocolonial interests of the erstwhile colonial powers in connivance with their foot soldiers in Africa that has caused state failure in Africa (Nkrumah, Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism).

To many Nigerians, the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria and the eventual independence in 1960 was regrettable. For it

was in the interest of Britain to give power to a conservative north in order to control it upon political independence. True Leadership Magazine (April-June, 2012) posited that "...the British government falsified the census figures to make the North more in number...the British government wanted Nigeria to exist for its economical selfishness...to manipulate Nigeria as an independent country economically". As expected, neo-colonial Nigeria had since emerged in the interest of a minority few. States have a responsibility to protect her citizens. One of such keys areas is what Sodaro et al (Comparative Politics) qualified as economic democracy (i.e. the relationship between the citizens and the economy). In Nigeria there is a disconnection between the citizens and the economy. Basic life sustaining amenities are never evenly distributed. Therefore, the insurgencies in Nigeria's Niger Delta and North-East are to a large extent explained by government failure in promoting human flourishing.

Chapter Two, "The Enemy Within" made a recast of the idea of state failure and causes of Nigeria as a failed state. The Nigerian government granted presidential amnesty to militant youths of the Niger Delta on June 25, 2009. Post amnesty Niger Delta has since experienced four years of peace. This has translated into an enormous increase in oil production (see table below) with a widely acclaimed extra profit of \$39.3 billion in 2012 alone (Sayne, What's Next for Security in the Niger Delta?). The activities of MEND in post amnesty Niger Delta has not been a threat to the provision of public goods, rather the poor state of infrastructure in the oil rich region be blamed on the stakeholders-the Nigerian state, development agencies as the NDDC, state governments, oil TNCs, etc.

#### Post Amnesty Nigeria Crude Oil Production by Year

Year	Production	Change
2007	2,349.64	-3.70%
2008	2,165.44	-7.84%
2009	2,208.31	1.98%
2010	2,455.26	11.18%
2011	2,550.35	3.87%
2012	2,520.00	-1.19%

Source: Index Mundi, [www.indexmundi.com](http://www.indexmundi.com)

Section 10 of the 1999 constitution declared Nigeria as a secular state. Thus, Boko Haram's option for "negotiation only when we have brought the government to their knees...once we see that things are done in accordance to the dictates of

Allah...” (p.27) is more of politics at work than religion. In this respect Omoruyi (the Politics of Oil) had argued that,

There is a simplistic approach of power in Nigerian politics. Power analysts...should focus on the armed forces and the oil sector as power domain equally as critical as the Presidency or an office in the Presidency. This is the way the northern political leaders understand power in Nigeria. The northern leaders do not believe that power can be shared in Nigeria. They are right. Hence they hold the three domains of power as one and indistinguishable entity. The northern leaders also hold that they want to control the three and not one or the other.

Northern Nigeria’s **tripod approach** to politics (i.e. control of the presidency, armed forces and oil) is the basis of understanding Boko Haram. Religion or Sharia is used as the medium to wrestle power from wherever it is located. Contrary to Hill’s assertion (p.24), MOSOP has no secession bid. The Ogoni Bill of Rights (26th August, 1990) clearly stated that “while reaffirming our wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria...” ([www.mosop.org](http://www.mosop.org)).

Alamiyeseigha, the erstwhile governor of Bayelsa state, is portrayed in the text as a disgraced former governor (p.30). It is true that he was convicted but the text failed to highlight the political underpinnings of the anti-corruption crusade of the whole saga. Alamiyeseigha’s acceptance to be the vice presidential running mate to Atiku Abubakar, then vice president, earned him the president’s anger (My Ordeal: Why I Ended Up in Jail, Newswatch Vol.42, No.22, Nov.28, 2005).

Presenting Generals Murtala Mohammed and Muhammadu Buhari on the same pedestal is most unfair to General Murtala Mohammed (p.33). Gen. Buhari’s anti-press posture that culminated in the obnoxious Decree No.2 of 1984 (detention of persons without trial) is traceable to corruption. Gen. Buhari has not accounted for the \$2.8 million that got missing from the NNPC account in Midlands Bank, U.K, of which the Nigerian press had constantly pressed on him to account for prior to his ascendancy as a head of state (see [www.nigeriafilms.com](http://www.nigeriafilms.com)).

Chapter Three, “The Emperor’s New Clothes” characterized Nigeria as a theatre of paradoxes. Insurgent groups as MEND, Boko Haram, and MASSOB would continue to undermine federal authorities if unity in diversity as envisioned by A.T. Balewa in his “unity in Diversity in Independence” speech ([www.blackpast.org](http://www.blackpast.org)) is not shared and cultivated by political leaders in Nigeria.

Nigeria’s political crisis which culminated in a coup d’état on 15 January, 1966 is often described as an Igbo coup d’état (p.52), but Adewale Ademoyega (Why We Struck) noted that “the January Boys Coup” was never an Igbo coup, rather the original intention was to install Chief Obafemi Awolowo (a Yoruba) as president.

The civil war was avoidable (p.52), if only the terms of the Aburi Accord were adhered to by both parties. However, the avidity for petroleum resources in the Niger Delta (then under the Eastern Region) rendered the civil war inevitable (Ikporukpo, In the name of oil: the Nigerian civil war and the Niger Delta crisis). Or what explains Gen. Gowon's order to relocate the headquarters of all oil companies operating in the Niger Delta to Lagos? The use of the phrase "its final victory over Biafra" (p.77) was inappropriate, hitherto the federal government had described the outcome of the Nigeria/Biafra Civil War as **no victor, no vanquished**.

State creation (p.55) has never enthroned the desired ethnic cohesion behind the exercise, instead ethnic suspicions and divisions are strengthened between erstwhile neighbours (Alapiki, State Creation in Nigeria). General Gowon's original motive in creating states in 1967 was to break Col. Ojukwu's stronghold in the Eastern Region especially the oil rich Niger Delta. True federalism, especially its fiscal component, is the solution to Nigeria's political logjam.

Chapter Four "Fuel to the Flames" situated oil as Janus faced within the Nigerian context. At one side of the coin oil has prevented Nigeria from disintegrating and at the reverse side the damaging elements contributing to state failure in Nigeria. Though against numerous predictions of an eminent state collapse (Karl Maier's *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis*; John Campbell's *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*; NIC, *Mapping Sub-Saharan Africa's Future*), Nigeria has survived several of such predictions. However, state collapse in Nigeria is entirely not written-off, especially as, the discovery of oil in Sokoto State; Northern Nigeria (if in commercial quantities) could trigger separatist agitations.

The environmental condition of the Niger Delta is enough reason for world governments to pressure Nigeria government to give a face-lift to the region. However, the deafening silence among world governments indeed succeeded in exposing the double standards among them. The manner of Barak Obama's U.S government committed efforts in containing the Gulf of Mexico oil spillage be extended to the Niger Delta. As an oil state, Nigeria is replete with oversight environmental and transparency agencies (e.g. NESREA, DPR) with requisite guidelines (e.g. EGASPIN, NEITI) but what is the compliance level of oil TNCs with such guidelines? Therefore, oil production discrepancies (p.74) are bound to occur. It is Shell and not the NNPC that has the accurate statistics of oil production figures in Nigeria (Cummins and Beasant, *Shell Shock*). Again, there is too much secrecy within the Ministry of Petroleum, NNPC, and the DPR. For example in the recent past, serving presidents (such as Presidents Obasanjo and Yar'Adua) doubled as petroleum ministers. Nigeria's oil production and receipts presented in pp.78-81 would make a better impact if presented in tables. Also, NESREA has replaced FEPA (p.84).

There is a discrepancy in the text as to what states constitute the Niger Delta. Is it the nine states mentioned in p.75 or six states mentioned in p.91? The Niger Delta is a delta. Cartographically, “the Niger Delta is a region of difficulty. It is a low lying region riddled with intricate system of natural water channels through which Niger finds its way into the sea” (Udo, Geographical Regions of Nigeria, p.55). Oil and the Niger Delta feature prominently in any discourse on contemporary Nigerian politics. A cartographic definition of the Niger Delta is a sine-qua-non. Oil presence in any locality in Nigeria does not translate to Niger Delta, as the oil discovered in Sokoto State does not make Sokoto State Niger Delta. Thus, Hill’s reliance on NDDC definition of the Niger Delta (p.75) is misplaced.

Shell is accredited in the text as first in every sector of Nigeria’s oil and gas industry (p.75) but Shell is also first in everything negative in Nigeria’s oil sector. For instance, Shell is first in environmental degradation (Watts, Curse of the Black Gold), desecration of social and family values (Rowell, et al, The Next Gulf), litigation with communities (Frynas, Oil in Nigeria), most heavily armed (Drohan, Making a Killing), lying and divisiveness (Cummins and Beasant, Shell Shock; Bakan, The Corporation), human right abuses (Azaiki, The Evil of Oil; Mbeke-Ekanem, Beyond the Execution), etc.

MEND is described in the text as an insurgent group desirous to secede the Niger Delta from Nigeria (p.93). On the contrary MEND, as part of the Joint Revolutionary Council is working on the basis of the Kaiama Declaration (December 11, 1998) which stated unequivocally that “we agree to remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for self government and resource control for the Ijaw people”.

Armed forces are no strangers to business (Brommelhorster &Paes, the Military as an Economic Actor). The Nigerian armed forces, the theme of Chapter Five, are merely being unpatriotic (Army’s Secret Deal, TheWeek Vol.28, No.11, Oct. 27, 2008). The disappearance of the MT African Pride is one incident too embarrassing. The Niger Delta, the hotbed of such corrupt practices, has become a lucrative region of the military and their postings. The oil related activities of the armed forces in the Niger Delta are known to the Nigerian government. Chief E.K Clark (**No Justice, No Peace in Niger Delta. Newswatch vol.48, no.6, Aug 4, 2008, p.19**) told former President Obasanjo that,

The security agencies know those who are doing the major bunkering: mechanized bunkering, the professional bunkering, the commercial bunkering...most of these bunkering were being carried by former military people and even some of the present military people, particularly, the Naval officers...The wealthy retired military officers particularly the Navy, where did they get their money from?

Globally, defeating insurgent groups (p.105) by force of arms is always a daunting task. The United States and her allied forces never got total victory in either Iraq or Afghanistan. MEND's ability to infiltrate the ranks of the military by whatever means possible is of less impact, instead the military's paucity of a thorough knowledge of the deltaic region vis-à-vis MEND's ability is the *raison d'être* for MEND's seeming intractability. Thus, geography stands in the gap in defeating MEND in the Niger Delta. To this extent, "failure to defend" (p.105) as contributing to Nigeria's failure is inappropriate. Negotiated settlement, such as the amnesty deal for Niger Delta or the ongoing amnesty talks for Boko Haram insurgents is a better option.

Hill erroneously asserted that "the largest and most successful military campaign ever mounted by Nigerian forces, either, at home or abroad was against the breakaway region of Biafra" (p.110). Adopting Africa as the corner stone of her foreign policy, Nigeria has consistently committed enormous human and financial resources to several peace and security missions across Africa and beyond (Omotoso, *Essentials of Nigeria's Peace and Security Missions in Africa*). Liberia and Sierra Leone owed their statehood to Nigeria through the ECOMOG. It is true that federalism, oil and the military remain paradoxes in Nigeria. Oil royalties have compelled a federalism that has been ably sustained by a ruthless military that is "subjugating local communities" (Kandeh, *Civil-Military Relations*, p.150).

Several state fragility indexes exist (e.g. the Global Peace Index, Index of State Weakness, Country Policy and Institutional Assessment) for policy and academic consultations. Thus, no single fragility index is perfect, especially as "...indexes are often criticized for being subjective, arbitrary in terms of where they draw the line between performing and non-performing institutions, and for inconsistencies within and between them (McLoughlin, *Topic Guide on Fragile States*). Moreover "ranking fragile states is pointless...the West seems to be obsessed with ranking things...ranking countries...not usually by their successes but by their failings...time and again mainly Northern based organizations feel at liberty to opine about the progress of nations (Claire Leigh, *Telling Countries there are the worst in the world doesn't really help them*).

Hill's work "*Nigeria since independence: Forever fragile?*" is **agency model** biased (Westphalian conception). On the contrary, the **structural approach** to the causes of state failure conceives of the Westphalian statehood as too western-centric, which Paul Williams (*State Failure In Africa*, p.3) assessed as "not successfully taken root across all of Africa because local conditions were inhospitable to state building and exerting high levels of state control over local societies". Jackson and Rosberg (*Why Africa's Weak States Persist*, p.21) also argue that "a definition of the state primarily in terms of means rather than ends-particularly the means of force-emphasizes the empirical rather than the juridical, the *de facto* rather than the *de jure*,

attributes of statehood (p.2)...juridical statehood is more important than empirical statehood in accounting for the persistence of states in Black Africa. Better still, assessing causes of state failure in Nigeria from a structural approach ensures a “measure of stability and order within divided societies” (Thomson, an Introduction to African Politics, p.65).

Finally, Nigeria’s federalism like any federal state “has with difficulty come to exist, it is only with difficulty that it continues to exist. Its operation requires great skill and tact. Its success depends upon an enormous patience and an enormous capacity for compromise...” (Wheare, What Federal Government Is, p.23). Also, relying entirely on **The Fund for Peace’ “Failed State Index”** and the Westphalian characterization of state (**agency approach**) in assessing state fragility in Nigeria, a position the author also critiqued elsewhere (see Hill, Beyond the Other?), is not only subjective but necessitates an updated and enlarged edition of the text.