

Uruguay's Jose Mujica and Nigerian Rulers: Selfless and Exemplary Leadership Versus Prebendal and Ruinous Rulership

Ugumanim Bassey Obo¹ and Theophilus Oyime Adejumo¹

Abstract

One major problem which has plagued Nigeria and its people since the end of colonial rule in 1960 has been that of poor governance propelled by the greed and myopia of the rulers. For Nigerian rulers, governance has always been about plundering of the country's resources and the accumulation of wealth at the country's expense. This essay highlights the selfishness of Nigerian rulers by drawing attention to the huge public resources which they allocate to themselves, and contrasts this situation with the amazing selflessness and patriotism of Jose Mujica, the president of Uruguay, who takes very little wages as the leader of his country. It is also argued that while crushing poverty ravages the Nigerian society, members of Nigeria's political class are among the highest-earning public officials in the world. The paper concludes that Nigerian rulers need to emulate the selflessness and austere tendencies of President Mujica of Uruguay.

Keywords: Leadership, Prebendalism, and Prebendal and Ruinous Rulership

A. Introduction

... Rare is the head of state who acts on behalf of the entire nation. The people are not so much governed as ruled. It is as if they live in a criminally mismanaged corporation where the bosses are armed and have barricaded themselves inside the company safe. Nigeria's leaders, like the colonialists before them, have sucked out billions of dollars and stashed them in Western banks.

- Karl Maier (2000: xxiii)

¹ Department of Political Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria. E-mail: talk2obo@yahoo.com

The above assertion partly depicts the tragedy that has befallen Nigeria as a country; but to describe the extremely unpatriotic and avaricious elite who have thoroughly misruled the country since independence in 1960 as “leaders” amounts to being excessively charitable and undeservedly generous. Throughout its post-colonial years, “Nigeria has been mismanaged by incredibly inept and embarrassingly incompetent, clueless, and egregiously kleptocratic regimes” (Obo, 2014), and it is thus a misnomer to refer to those who have superintended over the affairs of the country during this period as “leaders.” This essay reinforces the view that whereas in many other countries, those who govern often do so in the national interests of their countries, those at the helms of affairs in Nigeria regard their offices as avenues to enrich themselves and enjoy the highest levels of publicly-funded luxury and comfort.

Specifically, this essay compares the attitudes of Nigerian rulers with the amazing selflessness and patriotism exhibited by President Jose Mujica of the Republic of Uruguay – in terms of what the citizens of both countries (Nigeria and Uruguay) pay to those who govern them. This is not an assessment of the overall performance of Mujica’s government; rather, the focus is mainly on the little allowances and few privileges enjoyed by President Mujica and the urgent need for Nigerian rulers to emulate him. The reality in Nigeria has always been that while the long-suffering masses are regularly asked to make sacrifices and tighten their belts, the rulers live in obscene and indefensible opulence. As far as the issues of bad governance and lack of selfless leadership are concerned, we agree with the view that for Nigeria, “the beautiful ones are not yet born, while the ugly ones refuse to die” (Wilmot, 2000: 54). Indeed, the level of underdevelopment and backwardness of Nigeria – more than fifty-three years after the departure of the colonialists – reinforces the view that a nation’s destiny anchors largely on the quality and substance of its leaders. Nations that have achieved greatness in the 21st century have one thing in common: the system works. These nations are endowed with selfless leaders, who exhibited exceptional intelligence, courage and vision at every turn, to chart the best course, define the right path, and make the citizens believe in the outcomes (emphasis added) (Oladipo, 2013).

This essay comprises of four sections. Section one contains the introduction; in section two, a brief conceptual analysis of the terms “leadership” and “prebendalism” is presented.

The third section contains a comparative assessment of the austere and exemplary nature of President Jose Mujica and the selfishness and monumental greed of Nigerian rulers. The need for the rulers of Nigeria to borrow a leaf from the Uruguayan leader is also highlighted. Section four contains the conclusion.

B. Leadership and Prebendalism: Some Conceptual Perspectives

A fundamental problem which encumbers the analysis of social issues or phenomena is that it is rare to find concepts whose meanings or definitions enjoy universal acceptability. It is therefore important to clarify the central concepts of this essay. Indeed, "we are aware that all definitions are dangerous (**Jovanilus**) but they serve the purpose of indicating to the reader how the mind of the author is working" (Eze, 2010: 158). In view of this, a brief conceptual analysis of the terms "leadership" and "prebendalism" is presented below.

Leadership

Leadership is a very slippery concept to handle; it is one word for which every man studying its concept has, more or less, his own definition (Erero, 1995: 131; Okecha, 2010: 55). Bedeian (cited in Ezeani, 2006: 155) captured this point when he surmised that to some, it [leadership] is synonymous with holding an upper-level position. Thus, a president, governor, or chief executive is a leader by virtue of holding a high office. Others use the term leadership to mean the possession of certain personal characteristics such as alertness, perseverance, maturity and intelligence. Finally, to some, leadership is used to describe a category of behaviour. According to this view, it is a dynamic process in which an individual behaves in a certain manner, thereby, influencing others to follow.

Leadership is a very serious task which requires a high degree of adroitness. In the words of one of Nigeria's most cerebral and venerable authors, leadership is a sacred trust like the priesthood in civilized, humane religions. No one gets into it lightly or unadvisedly, because it demands qualities of mind and discipline of body and will far beyond the needs of the ordinary citizen. Any [one] who offers himself or herself or is offered to society for leadership must be aware of the unusually high demands of the role and should, if in any doubt whatsoever, firmly refuse the prompting (Achebe, 2010: 49)

According to Fashina (2007: 17), leadership is both a relation and a process; it is a relation between persons who are engaged together, in some cooperative activity or set of activities to achieve a common goal. Fashina (2007: 17) also points out that leadership has been defined as "a complex process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task or objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent." He contends that leadership is not the same thing as holding an office since a person may hold an office that gives him authority and power but may fail to be a leader. In Fashina's words, "...leadership is acquired in the process of organizing people. Good leadership requires education, self-examination, experience, training and struggles. A leader, to excel, must continuously work on his performance, do a self-criticism of it, learn from errors and improve upon the practice of leadership on the basis of self-understanding and self-criticism (Fashina, 2007: 17).

It has been asserted that it is leadership that mobilises the people and arouses in them various levels of political consciousness. It is also leadership that sets the goals of the political community and ultimately determines their fate and destinies. Political leadership, it is reasoned, is one of those processes and effects of political power in which a number of actors, varying in their composition and roles from situation to situation, spurred by aspirations, goals, motivations, appeal to and respond to the needs and other motives of would-be followers with acts for reciprocal betterment or the achievement of fundamental change in their living conditions (Chikendu, cited in Nwoye, 2005: 267 and 268).

In an interesting analysis, Obadan (1998: 16-18) points out that leadership plays a crucial role in establishing a potentially creative (or destructive) socio-political and economic environment in which a people can pursue development through genuine and sustained collective sacrifices. He contends that the type of leadership that can impact positively on development is the transforming leadership which is characterized by innovativeness, high moral character and deep societal understanding. He also states that the higher the moral character of a leader, the greater is his ability for development; the deeper the understanding of the people in terms of their basic aspirations and motivations, the greater the ability for leadership; and the innovative ability tends to increase the less the aversion to risk-taking and the greater the unwillingness to bear uncertainty.

Obadan is also of the view that a transforming leadership would ensure that the choices that are made are the (weighted) revealed preferences of the people of the country if the people knew the facts, i.e., if they knew the opportunity set available to them. He lists some of the developmental goals which political leadership must pursue to include: real output growth/per capita economic growth; fairness in the distribution of output; social stability; personal safety; national political and economic independence in decision-making and actions; and aesthetic quality of life.

On his part, Director (2004: 3) opines that there are certain irreducible and universally acceptable standards for true leadership. Hence, in his words, a committed leader must simply be competent enough to exercise the duties and responsibilities assigned or thrust on him by virtue of his office and position. Consequently, he must at all times uphold the oath of his office and put smiles on the faces of his people and those who trusted him with responsibilities. A true leader does not run away from challenges, just as he is not expected to be selfish and or serve narrow interests.

The point has been made that it is the capacity to set new goals, to hold forth new and loftier expectations for the group, to embody moral and spiritual aspirations and to show the group its nobler potentialities that make a man a leader. Leadership is therefore identified both with individual pre-eminence and managerial talent (Bhagwan and Bhushan, 2007: 212). In examining the concept of leadership, Okecha (2010: 55) argues that it is an influence relationship among leader and followers, whose collective goal is to effect real changes that reflect their shared purposes or dreams. In his view, good leadership springs from a genuine concern for other people in any human organization, and some essential attributes of good leadership include: he must demonstrate credibility at all times; selflessness; he must have initiative and vision; he must be outward-looking and enlightened; he must be an objective person; he should have the capacity to manage information; he must believe in equity and fair play; he must be a man of integrity; he must be tolerant, patient and understanding; he must be self-disciplined; he must have the capacity to show forgiveness; probity should be his middle name; he does not inflict pain, he bears pain – i.e., he suffers for the good of all; he must be humble; he must be a high-minded person prepared to work to improve the lot of his followers. Okecha (2010: 56) also states that a leader has to be a man who does not want to be worshipped; he has to be a person so sure of himself that he only wants to get things done, not minding who gets the credit.

He is a man who does not seek to enrich himself but humanity... His watchword is service; he does not take but gives; he does not use, but is used; he does not merely preach, he is a doer that lets his deeds, not his mouth, speak. He must face challenges squarely.

Prebendalism

In an interesting study of Nigeria, Richard Joseph (1991) adopted the concept of "prebendal politics" in his analysis of the governance and political processes in the country in the Second Republic (1979-1983). He defined a "prebend" as an office of State, typical of feudal Europe and China, which an individual procures either through examination or as a reward for loyal service to a Lord or ruler (Joseph, 1991: 55-56). Joseph (1991: 67) also points out that a prebendal system can be seen not only as one in which the offices of State are allocated and then exploited as benefices by the office-holders, but also as one where such a practice is legitimated by a set of political norms according to which the appropriation of such offices is not just an act of individual greed or ambition but concurrently the satisfaction of the short-term objectives of a subset of general population. The point is also made by Joseph (1991: 10), however, that a prebendal system is often wasteful, unproductive, and contributes to the increasing affluence of a relative few, paltry gains for a larger number, and misery for the great majority of the people. This assertion, as shall become clear shortly, perfectly captures the reality in Nigeria.

In his essay, Luqman (2012: 419) reasons that prebendalism as used by Joseph (1991) denotes patterns of political traits in which a high premium is placed on the State as the avenue for personal accumulation and competition to gain access to the State thus become "zero-sum game". While citing Joseph (1991), Luqman points out that prebendalism entails the patterns of political behaviour, which reflects as their justifying principle that State positions and offices may be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of office-holders as well as that of their reference or support group. It has also been observed that prebendalism is essentially a system of shared identity and social solidarity expressing itself through a circuit which concentrates and redistributes income; and exclusion is a result of the absence of social bond between the insiders and the outsiders (Dommen, 1997: 493).

In a prebendal system, legal rules and procedures governing the operation of State offices are used as fig-leaves behind which State resources are appropriated; and under the confiscatory system, government officials simply seize public assets without even attempting to camouflage their behaviour behind rules and procedures (Joseph, 1999: 49-50). It has been observed that Joseph's formulation portrayed three salient aspects of the Nigerian system. First, there was a widespread appropriation of nominally "public" resources for personal or parochial gain. Second, such allocations were patterned by ethnically-delineated patron-client networks. Third, the distributive arena was largely decentralized, and clientelist relations were diffuse. Prebendalism was sustained by a relatively narrow civil-military elite, and necessarily embodied deep social inequalities (Lewis, 1996: 100).

In an impressive critique of the concept of prebendalism, Iweriebor (1997: 70-71) excoriates Joseph's (1991) perspective, arguing that it does not substantively differ from the established Western approaches to the study of African social processes. He points out that in the first place, prebendalism is a concept derived from the sale and purchase of offices in feudal Europe, and it is, therefore, a historically alien concept whose application to African politics is an intellectual imposition. Iweriebor also opines that the intellectually and historically appropriate places to seek the practice of prebendal politics are the Western capitalist successor States of feudal Europe. Secondly, Iweriebor contends, there is nothing uniquely African or Nigerian about the competition for and use of political office for the advancement of personal and reference group – ethnic, business or military – interests. Indeed, in his words, what Joseph (1991) describes as prebendalism, and seeks to portray as peculiarly Nigerian and African, is also a tradition in U.S. politics as American politicians use their offices to advance their own interests and those of their constituencies, clients and sponsors.

In this essay, we take "prebendal and ruinous rulership" to depict patterns of political behaviour and governance processes characterized by massive corruption in which State offices and political power are acquired and deployed mainly for private accumulation of wealth. In this system, the essence of governance is to guarantee the comfort and luxury of the rulers and not to promote the welfare of the majority of the masses. Moreover, in this type of system, there is a dialectical connection between the rulers and the ruled: the more wealth the former extract from the system, the more impoverished and pauperized the latter become.

In order to meet the selfish and unquenchable desires of the rulers for wealth, public resources and common patrimonies are hijacked and privatized, and this often gives rise to what Stanislaw Andreski (cited in Osoba, 1996: 377) calls “institutionalized robbery of the State by its very custodians”.

C. Jose Mujica and Exemplary Leadership: Lessons for Nigerian Rulers

It is important to stress that this essay is not an evaluation of the policies and programmes of the Mujica-led government in Uruguay. Rather, it is a comparative overview of Mujica’s personal sacrifice and selflessness, and the enormous greed of Nigerian rulers. While Mujica takes home very little wages, members of the parasitic political class in Nigeria are among the best-paid in the world. Indeed, the Uruguayan President clearly agrees with Professor Soyinka’s view (cited in Kennedy-Ukaga, 2007: 25) that leadership is about being selfless, and anyone who wants to be a leader must be ready to sacrifice many things for his/her people. This assertion is reinforced by Owolowo (2012), who points out that “a good leader is meant to be the servant of his/her followers, making necessary sacrifices to achieve greater objectives for the common good”.

Jose Mujica, a former member of Tupamaros – a Uruguayan leftist guerrilla movement, was elected the president of his country in 2009. Running on the platform of his party, the Broad Front Coalition, he defeated Luis Alberto Lacalle of the Nacional Party in the second round of voting, and assumed office on March 1, 2010, succeeding Tabare Vasquez. Mujica’s party also won the majority in both chambers of the Uruguayan parliament (www.wikipedia.com).

In 2010, President Mujica’s annual personal wealth declaration – which is mandatory for officials in Uruguay – was \$1,800 (£1,100), the value of his 1987 Volkswagen Beetle (which is all his wealth), and in 2012, he added half of his wife’s assets – land, tractors and a house – reaching \$215,000 (£135,000). This was only about a third of the figure declared by his predecessor as President (news.bbc.co.uk cited in **The Punch**, November 16, 2012: 57). Sometime in 2012, the residence of President Mujica was described thus:

Meet the president – who lives on a ramshackle farm... Laundry is strung outside the house. The water comes from a well in a yard, overgrown with weeds. Only two police officers and Manuela, a three-legged dog, keep watch outside.

This is the residence of the President of Uruguay... whose lifestyle clearly differs sharply from that of most other world leaders (news.bbc.co.uk cited in **The Punch**, November 16, 2012: 57).

Mujica has not only shunned the luxurious house that the Uruguayan state provides for its leaders and opted to stay at his wife's farmhouse, but his austere lifestyle and the fact that he donates about 90% of his monthly salary, equivalent to \$12,000 (£7,500) to charity has led him to be labelled the poorest president in the world. His charitable donations – which benefit poor people and small entrepreneurs – mean his salary is roughly in line with the average Uruguayan income of \$775 (£485) a month (news.bbc.co.uk cited in **The Punch**, November 16, 2012: 57). By refusing to be paid huge wages, President Mujica has demonstrated that public offices are not meant to be used for self-aggrandizement; rather, they are to be deployed as instruments for service delivery to the public. And this is an invaluable and inescapable lesson for Nigerian rulers whose jumbo pay and allowances are scandalous as well as criminal. They are paid for everything from the absurd to the ridiculous. Allowances for wardrobe, for furniture, for car, for sitting on committees, for sneezing, for absenteeism, for eating, for personal hygiene, for having sex with their spouses and concubines, for fighting same set of lovers, for talking on the phone, for lying, for bribery and for corruption! (Oluwasanmi, 2013)

While Mujica sacrifices his personal comfort in the service of his people and country, the political elite in Nigeria luxuriate in obscene and unconscionable materialism. When Nigerian rulers travel, their long convoys are adorned by very exotic and posh cars. In 2012, it was reported, for example, that the Nigerian President moves in a convoy of over 30 cars, that consist of an armoured Mercedes Benz S-Class (2012 edition), BMW 730 Ld and Range Rover, all armoured; 10 escort motorcycles, six Mercedes Benz S-500 and a number of police vehicles. This is way beyond the convoys of his counterparts in richer countries. Sadly, the immodest opulence is replicated in the two other tiers of government... (emphasis added) (Ademosu, 2012: 26)

Presently, the Nigerian president has – for his use and comfort – ten aircrafts in the presidential fleet which is said to gulp over nine billion naira (over fifty million U.S. dollars) annually for maintenance (Anofi, 2013).

This makes Nigeria's presidential fleet one of the biggest (if not the biggest) in the world. And in the 2014 budget proposals presented to Nigeria's parliament in December 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan has proposed to acquire the eleventh presidential plane! And this would be at the cost of over one-and-a-half billion naira (over ten million U.S. dollars). It is instructive to state that some of Nigeria's profligate and ruinous elites now own private jets. For example, in 2012, Godswill Akpabio and Rotimi Amaechi, the governors of poverty-ravaged states of Akwa Ibom and Rivers (both in South-South Nigeria) respectively acquired new \$45million Gulfstream and \$45.7million Bombardier Global 5000 jets. As a major Nigerian newspaper stated then, the recent acquisition of private jets by the governments of Rivers and Akwa Ibom States is as reckless as it is highly insensitive. The massive waste of money is coming at a time when the rate of poverty and deprivation is worsening in the country. It is indefensible for state governors to add acquisition of jets to the life of luxury they are already known for... (emphasis added) (The Punch, November 7, 2012: 18).

When Nigerian rulers embark on foreign trips, their selfish interests are put on the front burner. For example, in September 2012 it was reported that President Goodluck Jonathan's delegation to the United Nations General Assembly was identified as being financially reckless, his Pierre Hotel Suite alone costing Nigeria \$10,000 per night. His Minister of Petroleum Resources was said to occupy suites in two different hotels, one at the Four Seasons Hotel for \$5,000 per night, and the other at Jonathan's hotel for \$3,000 per night. It was also reported that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) delegation that accompanied the Minister of Petroleum Resources actually rented ten limousines in New York for seven officials at a daily cost of \$1,800 per day (www.saharareporters.com).

The operators of the Nigerian state always make huge budgetary allocations to fund their comfort and luxury. A few examples would suffice. In the 2012 budget proposals, a few of the items listed for the Presidency included:

- (i) Two hundred and eighty million naira for two bulletproof Mercedes Benz Saloon 600E Guard at one hundred and forty million each;
- (ii) Over three hundred and fifty-six million and seven hundred thousand naira for new vehicles in the presidential fleet;

- (iii) Five Mercedes Benz 350 (semi plain/partial bulletproof) at twenty million naira each, ten jeeps (assorted – Range Rovers, Prado and Landcruiser) at ten million naira each, and accessories for these vehicles at the cost of twenty-five million naira;
- (iv) Over fifty-seven million and four hundred thousand naira to upgrade facilities at the Presidential Villa;
- (v) One hundred and twenty-seven million and five hundred thousand naira to overhaul power generating sets;
- (vi) Over five hundred and twelve million and three hundred thousand naira to refurbish the family wing of the main residence;
- (vii) Over three hundred and eighty-five million and three hundred thousand naira for land reclamation at the State House Medical Centre;
- (viii) Over one hundred and one million and six hundred thousand naira for the rehabilitation of transformer substation in the Villa;
- (ix) Over ninety-seven million and nine hundred thousand naira to extend State House car parks; etc (Fakoya, 2012).

For 2012 alone, the sum of one billion, three hundred and five million, two hundred and ninety-two thousand, and fifty naira (N1,305,292,050) was set aside in the budget only for refreshments, meals and other miscellaneous expenses in the State House. This humongous amount was even described as “grossly insufficient” by Emmanuel Ogbile, the (then) State House Permanent Secretary when he addressed some members of the Nigerian Senate (Ojiabor, 2012). Namadi Sambo, Nigeria’s Vice-President was also a major beneficiary of the 2012 budget proposals. A huge sum of three billion naira (about twenty million U.S. dollars) was provided just for the Vice-President’s office stationaries and local and foreign trips (Abdallah, 2012). The table below contains a few of Vice-President Sambo’s other benefits in Nigeria’s budgets from 2011 to 2014.

Table 1: Costs of Furniture and Household Items Upgrade for Nigeria's Vice-President, 2011-2014

| S/N | YEAR | ITEM | AMOUNT (₦) |
|-----|------|---|--------------------|
| | 2011 | | |
| 1 | | Acquisition, upgrading and furnishing of VP's guest house at Aguda | 400 million |
| 2 | | Extension of VP lounge at Aguda house and furnishing of Aguda house | 500 million |
| | 2012 | | |
| 1 | | Purchase of household equipment and materials for VP's residence | 112 million |
| 2 | | Acquisition, upgrading and furnishing of VP's guest house at Aguda | 230 million |
| 3 | | Extension of VP lounge at Aguda House and furnishing of Aguda House | 207.1million |
| 4 | | Installation of UPS (Uninterrupted Power Supply) facilities at the VP's residence | 202 million |
| | 2013 | | |
| 1 | | Furnishing of the VP's new guest house at 41 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro | 170.7 million |
| 2 | | Furnishing of ancillary offices at Aguda House and VP's new residence | 75.7 million |
| 3 | | Landscaping of VP's new residence | 25.9 million |
| 4 | | Remodelling of VP's new guest house at 41 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro | 120 million |
| | 2014 | | |
| 1 | | Remodelling of the VP's new guest house at 41 Yakubu Gowon Crescent, Asokoro | 115 million |
| 2 | | Purchase of household and kitchen equipment for VP's residence | 8million |
| | | Grand Total | 2.17billion |

Source: culled from Ekott (2013)

In 2013, a whopping sum of 7.476billion naira was budgeted for Nigeria's State House as overhead cost. Out of this amount, the President's foreign trips alone were to gulp 1.3billion naira (Josiah, 2013: 3).

Also in 2013, the Presidency planned to spend over two billion, eight hundred million naira to “rehabilitate and repair” presidential buildings for the President, Vice-President and their aids. Moreover, the Presidency estimated to spend seven hundred and thirty-three million, eight hundred and ninety-three thousand, nine hundred naira (N733,892,900) on refreshments and meals, foodstuff and catering materials supplied for both the President and Vice President (Ogunwale and Chiejina, 2012:1).

In the 2014 budget proposals, the State House is expected to spend a total of eight billion, seven hundred and thirty-nine million, three hundred and seven thousand, and six hundred and twenty-five naira (N8,739,307,625) as total expenditure. Out of this, over two billion naira shall be spent on trips, while meals would gulp over six hundred and ninety-two million naira. Two wild animals for the State House Zoo and car trackers for presidential ground fleet are expected to gulp over thirty-four million naira (Chiejina and Ofikhenua, 2013: 4; Adetayo, 2012: 2).

The above pattern of lopsided resource allocation is also reproduced at the State and local government levels of governance in Nigeria. Just one year’s example would amplify this point. In 2008, the allocation to Government (State) House was far greater than total allocation for health and education in Akwa Ibom State. Similarly, the allocation to health and education combined was roughly equal that to Government House in Delta State. In Bayelsa State, the allocation to Government House was greater than that to education. While in Rivers State, the budgetary allocation to Government House was nearly equal to what was allocated to education (Luqman, 2012: 435). The four states mentioned are all in South-South Nigeria and they are the biggest oil-producing states in the country.

While describing Nigerian public officials as “the real armed robbers of Nigeria”, Rudolf Okonkwo (2013) reports that in 2013, a presidential committee on public service reforms discovered that top government officials in Nigeria take home 1.126trillion naira a year in salaries and allowances – out of a national budget of 4.9trillion naira. These public officers make up just 0.013% of Nigeria’s population. They include, in Okonkwo’s view, 108 Senators each of whom makes over \$1.7m a year. That alone is \$183.4million (28 billion naira). Then each of the 360 members of the House of Representatives takes home over \$1.2million which amounts to \$432million (65billion naira).

Again, each of the 36 governors collects an average of 200 million naira a month just as security vote, which amounts to 87billion naira on security votes alone every year. As Okonkwo (2013) puts it, add our 38 ministers and ministers of state, 100 plus heads of federal and state agencies, over 432 state commissioners, 774 local government areas chairmen or caretakers, almost 10,000 councillors, and you will understand where the 1.126trillion naira goes.

All the foregoing statistics – which represent just a tip of the iceberg – show how criminally egocentric and insensitive Nigerian rulers are – especially when it is remembered that over 70% of Nigerians live in misery and crippling poverty. As a leading Nigerian newspaper puts it, many Nigerian villages, communities and towns today cut a miserable picture of neglect and abandonment, having very poor infrastructure or none at all. Most of the roads in the countryside are impassable and that is where most of the populace reside. It is the same with the basic amenities of life: there are very few hospitals, which, in most cases, have no drugs and personnel, electricity is lacking or is epileptic, there is a lack of potable water and access to schooling is limited (**The Punch**, January 30, 2013: 21).

The above dreary picture clearly depicts how a country hugely endowed with material and human resources is being systematically plundered and ruined by its rulers. Obviously, Nigeria desperately needs a Jose Mujica.

D. Conclusion

The point has to be made that most of those who have been at the helms of affairs in Nigeria since independence in 1960 have been guided primarily by their selfish interests. Our data in this essay mostly concerns the current regime of President Goodluck Jonathan; this is so because it is our view that this regime is a continuation of the previous ones – although the situation in Nigeria has worsened alarmingly under this government. Moreover, the constraints of time and space do not permit the analysis of many regimes in an essay such as this.

From the preceding passages, it is obvious that Nigeria has been very unlucky in terms of the quality of the people who have piloted its affairs since independence. We agree with the view that in Nigeria, leadership has almost become synonymous with success in plundering the national wealth; this accounts for why, in spite of the uninterrupted flow of petroleum, Nigerians still live like animals, roaming the jungle in herds, feeding from garbage dumps, drinking from infested springs and sleeping under bridges; and what is clear from Nigeria's historical experience is that a few individuals have arbitrarily tried to animalize the majority, thereby losing their own humanity and rationality in the process (Nwankwo, 1989: 118-119).

Indeed, Nigeria is akin to a conquered and an occupied territory run by "pirates in power" (Davidson, 1992: 243). Governance in Nigeria is an incredibly fraudulent enterprise of the occupiers, run by the occupiers, and for the occupiers. In this system, the majority of the Nigerian people do not matter.

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