

Comparing Early Post-Independence Nigeria with the Contemporary Nigerian Economy: Structural Transformation, Institutions and Welfare, 1960–2025: A Critical Historical-comparative study with statistical analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study compares Nigeria's early post-independence political economy, defined principally as 1960–1980, with the contemporary democratic and reform economy, defined as 1999–2025, while using 1981–1998 as a bridging period for statistical tests. The title is conceptually refined because contemporary Nigeria is itself post-independence; the valid comparison is therefore between phases of the same post-colonial trajectory rather than between 'post-independence' and a separate contemporary condition. The article adopts a critical historical-comparative design, combining national accounts, public-finance and sectoral data from the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) with World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Maddison Project and archival evidence. Descriptive statistics, compound growth rates, sector-share decomposition, Welch's unequal-variance t-test and the Mann–Whitney test are employed. CBN constant-price data show that mean annual real GDP growth increased from 1.30 per cent in 1982–1998 to 4.85 per cent in 1999–2023; the difference is statistically significant (Welch $t = -2.41$, $p = .023$; Mann–Whitney $p = .014$). Yet the central finding is a transformation paradox: output, services, communications, finance and market depth expanded substantially, while productive employment, manufacturing capability, food security and mass welfare lagged. The share of services in constant-price GDP rose from 27.8 per cent in 1981 to 56.2 per cent in 2023, but manufacturing fell from 29.9 to 8.8 per cent, suggesting service-led diversification without full industrial deepening. Oil's direct GDP share declined, and oil revenue fell to 29.4 per cent of federally collected revenue in 2023, but petroleum remained disproportionately important to exports, foreign exchange, fiscal expectations and political bargaining. The study concludes that Nigeria has achieved scale expansion and sectoral reallocation, but not a sufficiently productivity-enhancing, employment-rich and institutionally embedded structural transformation.

Keywords: Nigeria; post-independence economy; structural transformation; oil dependence; institutions; economic diversification; inclusive growth; political economy

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Nigeria entered independence on 1 October 1960 with a regionally differentiated but commercially significant agrarian economy. Cocoa in the West, groundnuts and cotton in the North, and palm produce in the East generated foreign exchange, supported marketing-board revenues and financed regional infrastructure and education. A World Bank appraisal of the economy at independence reported that three leading commodities generated 55 per cent of domestic exports in 1960, while palm oil, rubber, timber, cotton and tin supplied a further 31 per cent (World Bank, 1961). The structure was narrow and colonial in orientation, but it contained domestically rooted production networks, export knowledge and fiscal links between production and government revenue.

The discovery and commercialisation of petroleum changed the scale, geography and political logic of

accumulation. In the 1970s, two international oil-price shocks generated revenues that were unprecedented relative to the administrative capacity of the state. Agriculture's share of GDP and exports declined, imports rose, the exchange rate appreciated in real terms, and public investment shifted towards capital-intensive projects. By 1980, oil supplied approximately 96 per cent of export earnings, while agriculture's export share had fallen from about 70 per cent to roughly 2 per cent (World Bank, 1989). This was not simply a sectoral substitution. It altered the social contract: governments could finance expenditure from externally generated rents rather than broad domestic taxation, weakening the accountability link between citizens, production and public revenue.

Contemporary Nigeria is vastly larger and more complex. Its population rose from about 45 million in 1960 to more than 230 million by the mid-2020s, while telecommunications, banking, entertainment, digital platforms and urban services became major sources of value added. The 2025 GDP rebasing further enlarged measured output by updating the base year from 2010 to 2019 and capturing newer activities. However, poverty remained widespread, food prices rose sharply, productive wage employment was limited, power and logistics costs constrained firms, and per-capita growth was persistently weaker than aggregate growth. The research problem is therefore not whether Nigeria has grown, but why six decades of scale expansion have not produced commensurate productivity, economic complexity, fiscal capacity and welfare.

The study challenges two simplistic narratives. The first romanticises the 1960s as an agricultural golden age, overlooking low yields, weak industrial capability, regional inequality and dependence on a small commodity basket. The second equates contemporary GDP diversification with developmental transformation, overlooking the difference between a large non-oil sector and a sophisticated, export-capable, high-productivity economy. The analysis therefore distinguishes sectoral diversification, export diversification, fiscal diversification, employment transformation and welfare conversion. These dimensions can move in different directions, and Nigeria's experience demonstrates that they often have.

OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The general objective is to compare the structure, performance, institutions and welfare consequences of Nigeria's early and contemporary post-independence economies. The comparison treats 1960–1980 as the foundational and oil-transition phase, 1981–1998 as the crisis, adjustment and military interregnum, and 1999–2025 as the contemporary democratic phase. This periodisation prevents the analytical error of treating six and a half decades as a homogeneous 'post-independence' block.

The specific objectives are: to reconstruct the productive and export structure inherited at independence; quantify changes in aggregate growth and volatility; examine shifts among agriculture, industry and services; assess whether declining oil shares in GDP have reduced fiscal and external vulnerability; compare the capacity of each period to translate growth into employment and welfare; and identify institutional mechanisms that explain persistence and change.

The study asks five questions. First, how did the productive, export and fiscal structures of early post-independence Nigeria differ from those of contemporary Nigeria? Second, did average real GDP growth and volatility improve after the restoration of civilian rule in 1999? Third, does the rise of services represent productivity-enhancing structural transformation or predominantly low-productivity informal reallocation? Fourth, has the economy escaped petroleum dependence when oil's direct contribution to GDP is distinguished from its role in exports, public revenue and foreign exchange? Fifth, which institutional continuities explain why a larger and more diversified economy still produces weak per-capita and welfare outcomes?

Four null hypotheses guide the empirical component. H01 states that there is no statistically significant difference in mean annual real GDP growth between 1982–1998 and 1999–2023. H02 states that there is no substantive difference in sectoral composition between the oil-boom endpoint and the contemporary economy. H03 states that oil dependence has not changed materially once GDP, revenue, exports and foreign exchange are considered jointly. H04 states that aggregate expansion in the contemporary period has translated proportionately into improved labour-market security and poverty reduction. H01 is tested statistically; H02 and H03 are assessed through sector and revenue decompositions; H04 is evaluated through triangulation because comparable annual welfare series do not extend reliably to 1960.

LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS AND THE OIL TRANSITION

Nigeria's post-independence economic trajectory is best understood not as a simple transition from agriculture to oil, but as a shift from one externally exposed production regime to another. At independence, export agriculture generated foreign exchange, fiscal revenues and employment, but colonial infrastructure evacuated commodities rather than integrating domestic production (Hopkins, 1973; Ekundare, 1973). The First National Development Plan (1962–1968) sought to address these inherited constraints through infrastructure, industrialisation and human-capital formation. Political instability and civil war weakened implementation, while post-war reconstruction coincided with the 1970s oil boom. The resulting terms-of-trade windfall expanded public expenditure, imports and state-led investment, but weak project appraisal, maintenance deficits and administrative limitations reduced the productivity of capital accumulation (Bevan, Collier and Gunning, 1999). This shift established the central paradox examined here: Nigeria became increasingly diversified domestically while remaining structurally dependent on petroleum for foreign exchange, fiscal expectations and macroeconomic stability.

Theoretical Framework: Structural Transformation, Rentierism and Institutions

Classical structural-transformation theory associates development with movement from low-productivity agriculture towards higher-productivity manufacturing and modern services (Lewis, 1954; Kuznets, 1966). Yet sectoral movement is not inherently developmental. McMillan, Rodrik and Verduzco-Gallo (2014) show that structural change raises productivity only when labour enters more productive activities. This distinction is crucial for Nigeria, where telecommunications, finance and digital services coexist with low-productivity retail, transport and informal self-employment. A declining agricultural share or rising service share therefore cannot, by itself, demonstrate successful transformation.

Dutch-disease theory provides a complementary mechanism. Petroleum inflows increase domestic demand, encourage exchange-rate appreciation and weaken tradable sectors through altered relative prices. In Nigeria, these pressures were reinforced by import licensing, public-sector wage expansion and exchange-rate arrangements that favoured imports. Gelb (1987) accordingly linked Nigeria's macroeconomic conditions closely to petroleum prices. Similar mechanisms appear elsewhere in Africa. Zambia's dependence on copper repeatedly exposed fiscal revenues, foreign exchange and growth to price cycles, while Angola's oil-centred economy has remained highly sensitive to petroleum receipts and weak non-oil growth. These cases indicate that Dutch disease is not merely an exchange-rate phenomenon, but a wider problem of productive incentives, investment allocation and tradable-sector capability. Zambia's continuing dependence on copper and Angola's continuing dependence on oil illustrate this wider structural vulnerability.

Resource-curse and rentier-state theories shift attention from the commodity itself to the institutions governing rents. Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2013) argue that Nigeria's weak long-run performance is better explained by oil's effects on institutional quality than by resource abundance per se. Joseph's (1987) concept of prebendalism further explains how public office becomes a mechanism for distributing state-controlled resources. In a federation financed heavily through centrally pooled oil revenues, political competition may consequently focus more on access to transfers than on building locally taxed productive economies.

Comparative African experience strengthens this institutional interpretation. Botswana's diamond economy is widely treated as a partial exception because credible institutions, fiscal restraint and public investment allowed mineral wealth to support sustained development (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson, 2003). Yet Botswana also demonstrates the limits of institutional success: good governance reduced the destructive effects of mineral rents without eliminating export concentration. Angola presents a contrasting configuration, where oil wealth historically reinforced a centralised political economy, weak accountability and limited diversification (Amundsen, 2014). Ghana occupies an intermediate position. Its Petroleum Revenue Management Act established explicit rules and greater transparency, yet formal fiscal architecture has not automatically produced expenditure discipline or broad-based industrial transformation. Institutions therefore condition resource outcomes, but institutional quality must be disaggregated into transparency, fiscal discipline, bureaucratic capability, enforcement and productive-state capacity.

Contemporary Diversification and the Limits of GDP-Based Narratives

Nigeria's contemporary economy is often described as diversified because the non-oil sector contributes most real GDP. This is statistically correct but analytically insufficient. GDP composition identifies where domestic value added is produced; it does not identify the sources of export earnings, foreign-exchange liquidity, government financing or vulnerability to external shocks. The study therefore distinguishes production diversification from export, fiscal, financial and employment diversification. A country can possess a large non-resource domestic economy while remaining externally dependent on one commodity.

The 2014 and 2025 GDP rebasing exercises further complicate interpretation. Rebasing improves statistical coverage by incorporating sectors such as telecommunications, entertainment and digital services that were previously underweighted. However, measurement improvement should not be confused with structural transformation. As Jerven (2013) argues, African national accounts are constructed estimates shaped by survey coverage, base years and statistical capacity. Apparent changes in sectoral composition can therefore reflect both real transformation and improved measurement.

Cross-country comparison reinforces this caution. Botswana achieved high income and institutional stability yet remains heavily dependent on diamonds for exports. Angola has a sizeable non-oil economy in GDP terms but continues to rely overwhelmingly on oil for merchandise exports and public revenue. Zambia has expanded non-mining activities while copper remains central to external earnings. Ghana, despite stronger petroleum-governance institutions than many established oil exporters, still faces the challenge of converting resource revenues into diversified productive capacity. Nigeria's international relevance lies precisely in this divergence between domestic output diversification and external-resource dependence.

The composition of services also matters. Nigeria's telecommunications, fintech, financial services and creative industries represent areas of technological upgrading and potentially tradable capability. By contrast, much employment remains concentrated in informal, low-capital services. If labour exits agriculture because of insecurity, weak farm productivity or declining rural opportunities and enters urban survival activities with similar productivity, structural change may be statistically visible but economically shallow. The relevant benchmark is therefore productivity, scalability, wage capacity, technological learning and exportability.

Governance, Federalism and State Capacity

Nigeria's institutional structure is better understood as heterogeneous and unevenly effective rather than uniformly weak. Significant organisational and regulatory capabilities have emerged in areas such as public debt management, telecommunications regulation, monetary and payments infrastructure, and aspects of revenue administration. For example, the institutionalisation of the Debt Management Office has strengthened the coordination and strategic management of public debt, while the Central Bank of Nigeria's successive payment-system frameworks have facilitated the expansion and regulation of electronic and digital payments (CBN, 2022; DMO, 2022). Similarly, the Nigerian Communications Commission has developed relatively established licensing, regulatory and market-monitoring arrangements for the telecommunications sector. In contrast, institutional performance in electricity provision, security, education, healthcare and infrastructure maintenance remains substantially more uneven, illustrating the coexistence of pockets of administrative capability with persistent weaknesses in public-service delivery (World Bank, 2013).

This institutional heterogeneity is theoretically important. North (1990) conceptualises institutions as the formal and informal rules that structure incentives, constrain behaviour and reduce uncertainty. However, the Nigerian experience demonstrates that the proliferation of formal institutions does not necessarily produce predictable implementation or credible enforcement. Development strategies, exchange-rate arrangements, procurement frameworks, fiscal rules and petroleum-sector legislation have undergone repeated reforms, while discretionary implementation, political bargaining and patronage have remained influential. The distinction between formal institutional design and effective institutional enforcement is therefore critical. This interpretation is consistent with Mehlum et al. (2006), who argue that resource abundance does not generate uniformly adverse outcomes; rather, its developmental consequences depend substantially on whether institutions channel rents towards

productive activity or rent appropriation. More broadly, van der Ploeg (2011) demonstrates that natural-resource abundance can constitute either a blessing or a constraint depending on the quality of institutions, macroeconomic management and the capacity to transform rents into productive assets.

Fiscal federalism adds another institutional dimension to Nigeria's resource dependence. Oil and major non-oil revenues are substantially pooled through the Federation Account and redistributed among the federal, state and local governments through constitutionally defined arrangements (IMF, 2017). This mechanism performs an important equalisation function within a territorially and economically diverse federation, but it can simultaneously weaken the relationship between local taxation, governmental accountability and public-service provision. Where subnational governments depend heavily on centrally distributed revenues rather than internally generated revenue, political incentives to expand local tax bases and strengthen the fiscal contract between citizens and governments may be reduced. Consequently, the developmental value of increasing non-oil taxation cannot be judged solely by the quantity of revenue collected. Its significance also depends upon whether revenue mobilisation strengthens transparency, expenditure accountability and visible improvements in public services. Recent improvements in state-level internally generated revenue and fiscal-management systems demonstrate that stronger subnational fiscal capacity is possible, although implementation continues to vary considerably across states.

The wider African experience further challenges deterministic interpretations of the resource curse. Resource abundance does not generate a single developmental pathway because its effects are mediated by institutional quality, fiscal discipline, political settlements, linkage formation and the productive capabilities of non-resource sectors (Mehlum et al., 2006; van der Ploeg, 2011). Botswana provides the clearest regional counterexample to a deterministic resource-curse interpretation. Diamond revenues were accompanied by comparatively disciplined macroeconomic management, accumulation of financial reserves and institutions capable of converting a substantial proportion of mineral rents into infrastructure and social investment (Sarraf and Jiwaji, 2001). This does not imply that Botswana has completely escaped resource dependence; rather, it demonstrates that effective institutions can substantially modify its consequences.

Ghana illustrates a different institutional trajectory. The development of statutory petroleum-revenue arrangements, including stabilisation and heritage mechanisms, represents an explicit attempt to institutionalise transparency, intergenerational saving and expenditure discipline. Nevertheless, statutory rules alone have not eliminated fiscal pressures, debt accumulation or political incentives to expand expenditure. Ackah et al. (2020), for example, find that Ghana's petroleum revenues did not automatically produce stronger fiscal discipline, demonstrating the limits of formal revenue-management institutions when broader fiscal incentives remain weak.

Zambia, meanwhile, illustrates the enduring vulnerability associated with dependence on a productive but externally exposed mineral sector. Copper remains central to exports, investment and macroeconomic performance, making the economy highly sensitive to commodity-price movements and external financing conditions. The Zambian case therefore demonstrates that a resource sector can remain productive and internationally competitive while the wider economy continues to experience fiscal, debt and external-sector vulnerability (IMF, 2023). Angola presents a more concentrated variant of resource dependence. Despite periods of rapid growth and subsequent diversification initiatives, the economy has remained heavily dependent on petroleum for exports and public revenue, limiting resilience to oil-price shocks and constraining employment-intensive structural transformation (World Bank, 2018).

Nigeria combines elements of these experiences without reproducing any of them completely. It possesses a considerably more diversified domestic productive structure than Angola, but has historically lacked Botswana's degree of mineral-rent discipline. Its petroleum sector is older and institutionally denser than Ghana's, yet its size, federal structure and political economy make revenue management considerably more complex. Like Zambia, Nigeria remains vulnerable to movements in international commodity markets despite substantial non-resource production. The comparison therefore reinforces an important analytical distinction: sectoral diversification of GDP does not necessarily constitute structural escape from resource dependence. An economy may produce an increasingly diverse range of goods and services while remaining dependent on a narrow commodity base for exports, government revenues and foreign-exchange liquidity.

Research Gap and Analytical Contribution

The study addresses a significant gap arising from the fragmented treatment of Nigeria's resource dependence within the existing literature. Previous analyses frequently examine discrete transitions, including agriculture versus petroleum, military versus civilian governance, or pre- versus post-structural-adjustment performance. Such periodisations are valuable but may obscure the interaction between structural transformation, institutions and different forms of resource dependence. This study therefore develops a more integrated analytical framework encompassing productive structure, economic growth, export concentration, fiscal dependence, foreign-exchange generation, demographic pressure, employment transformation, welfare conversion and statistical comparability.

A central contribution is the distinction between five dimensions of diversification: production, export, fiscal, financial/foreign-exchange and employment diversification. This multidimensional approach prevents diversification from being inferred simply from the declining petroleum share of GDP. Indeed, IMF analysis has cautioned that apparent reductions in Nigeria's fiscal dependence on petroleum have sometimes reflected declining oil revenues rather than sufficiently strong expansion of sustainable non-oil revenue mobilisation (IMF, 2021). Nigeria has progressed most clearly in production diversification, with services, telecommunications, finance, trade and other non-oil activities becoming increasingly significant components of output. Progress in fiscal diversification has been more partial, while export and foreign-exchange diversification remain substantially weaker. Employment transformation is similarly incomplete because expansion in non-oil output has not consistently generated sufficient quantities of high-productivity, secure employment. The analytical problem is therefore not simply whether Nigeria has diversified, but which dimensions of diversification have occurred, to what extent, and whether they have reduced the economy's underlying exposure to petroleum-related shocks.

The study's second contribution is its historically phased and comparative design. Nigeria is examined across the agrarian-export economy of the 1960s; the petroleum-rent expansion of the 1970s; prolonged adjustment and institutional restructuring; reform-led growth during 1999–2014; weaker growth and recurrent recessionary pressures during 2015–2022; and the disruptive macroeconomic reform phase beginning in 2023. The post-2023 period is particularly important because exchange-rate liberalisation, fuel-subsidy reform and changes in monetary and fiscal management represent attempts to address distortions accumulated under earlier policy regimes. Comparison with Botswana, Ghana, Zambia and Angola demonstrates that resource dependence has no predetermined African outcome. Instead, the developmental effects of natural wealth are mediated by institutional credibility, fiscal rules, political incentives, domestic productive linkages, human-capital formation and the capacity of non-resource sectors to achieve internationally competitive productivity.

Finally, the study contributes through methodological reflexivity. Long-run Nigerian economic data are affected by changes in national-accounting methods, GDP rebasing, labour-force definitions, survey methodologies and poverty-measurement frameworks. The major rebasing of national accounts, for example, altered the measured size and sectoral composition of the economy, while subsequent revisions to the Nigeria Labour Force Survey changed important definitions underlying employment and unemployment estimates. Direct comparison of indicators across methodological regimes can therefore generate misleading conclusions unless definitional and measurement discontinuities are explicitly recognised.

Rather than treating these discontinuities as statistical inconveniences, the study incorporates them into the interpretation of structural change. Its central contribution is consequently not to demonstrate that petroleum is inherently a curse, but to explain why Nigeria's substantial diversification of domestic production has not generated equivalent diversification in exports, foreign-exchange earnings, productive employment and welfare outcomes. This reframing moves the analysis beyond a binary resource-curse thesis towards a multidimensional explanation of incomplete structural transformation. In doing so, the study strengthens its international relevance by locating Nigeria within the wider African political economy of resource dependence while retaining the institutional, demographic and historical particularities that distinguish the Nigerian development experience.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses a critical historical-comparative research design with quantitative and qualitative components. Historical comparison is appropriate because the dependent outcomes—growth, structural transformation, fiscal capacity and welfare—are produced by sequences of policy choices, shocks and institutional changes rather than by a single contemporaneous treatment. The unit of analysis is the Nigerian national economy, observed across three phases: foundational transition (1960–1980), adjustment and military crisis (1981–1998), and contemporary democratic economy (1999–2025).

The quantitative dataset combines the CBN Statistical Bulletin's annual GDP series at 2010 constant basic prices for 1981–2023, sectoral value added, and federal public-finance series; NBS quarterly and annual GDP reports; World Development Indicators; the Maddison Project Database for long-run income comparisons; NBS labour-force and multidimensional-poverty reports; and IMF and World Bank macroeconomic assessments. Archival World Bank reports are used for 1960s export composition and the 1970s oil transition. Source priority is given to official producers, with peer-reviewed literature used for theory and causal interpretation.

Real GDP growth is calculated as $100[(\text{GDPT}/\text{GDPT}-1)-1]$. Period performance is summarised using the arithmetic mean, median, standard deviation, range, coefficient of variation and compound annual growth rate. Sector shares are calculated as sectoral constant-price value added divided by aggregate GDP at constant basic prices. Fiscal oil dependence is oil revenue divided by total federally collected revenue. The statistical test compares annual real GDP growth in 1982–1998 and 1999–2023. Welch's t-test is preferred to the pooled-variance test because period variances and sample sizes differ; the Mann–Whitney test provides a distribution-free robustness check.

The qualitative analysis applies process tracing to five mechanisms: oil-rent formation; Dutch-disease relative-price effects; fiscal federalism and distributive politics; institutional reform and enforcement; and demographic dilution of aggregate growth. Evidence is evaluated through congruence rather than deterministic causality: a mechanism is considered persuasive when its predicted sequence is observed and supported across independent sources.

Operationalisation, Reliability and Limitations

'Economic transformation' is operationalised as simultaneous improvement in productivity, sectoral sophistication, employment quality, export complexity, fiscal capacity and welfare. A mere change in sector shares is classified as structural reallocation, not necessarily transformation. 'Oil dependence' is treated as a vector with four indicators: oil share of GDP, exports, government revenue and foreign-exchange availability. This avoids the binary claim that Nigeria is either oil-dependent or diversified.

Reliability is strengthened through source triangulation and reproducible calculations. The CBN tables identify NBS as the source of national accounts, while World Bank and IMF reports provide externally reviewed interpretation. Selected results are recalculated directly from the downloaded CBN workbooks. The article reports both parametric and non-parametric tests and separates statistical significance from substantive and causal significance.

Three limitations are material. First, the constant-price CBN series begins in 1981, so the formal growth test does not directly compare 1960–1980 with 1999–2023. The early phase is reconstructed through archival statistics and literature, while 1982–1998 serves as the nearest internally consistent pre-democratic comparator. Second, rebasing changes sector weights and backcast estimates. The 2010-base series is internally consistent to 2023, but latest 2019-base figures should not be spliced mechanically without a concordance. Third, poverty and labour indicators are not historically comparable. Nigeria's revised labour-force methodology follows newer International Labour Organization standards, producing lower headline unemployment than the older approach; this is a definitional break, not evidence that job insecurity disappeared.

A fourth limitation is endogeneity. Democracy, oil prices, reforms, conflict, technology and global conditions

changed together. The t-test identifies a difference in period means but cannot attribute the difference to civilian rule. A causal estimate would require a credible counterfactual, such as a synthetic-control design using comparable oil exporters, and harmonised covariates. The present study therefore uses statistical tests as descriptive evidence within a historically grounded explanatory framework.

DATA ANALYSIS: AGGREGATE GROWTH AND VOLATILITY

The CBN constant-price series shows that real GDP at 2010 basic prices increased from ₦19.55 trillion in 1981 to ₦76.68 trillion in 2023, a 3.92-fold expansion. The path was not linear. The 1980s combined oil-price collapse, foreign-exchange scarcity, debt stress and structural adjustment. Real GDP growth averaged only 1.30 per cent in 1982–1998, with a standard deviation of 5.25 percentage points. The minimum was –10.93 per cent and the maximum 11.78 per cent, indicating high volatility around a weak trend.

In 1999–2023, mean annual growth rose to 4.85 per cent and the median to 5.31 per cent, while standard deviation fell to 3.71 points. The compound annual growth rate was 4.79 per cent, compared with 1.17 per cent in 1982–1998. Welch’s test rejects H_0 at the 5 per cent level ($t = -2.41$, $p = .023$), and the Mann–Whitney test reaches the same conclusion ($U = 116$, $p = .014$). The improvement is economically meaningful: post-1999 growth was faster and less volatile relative to its mean.

However, the democratic-period average masks deceleration. Growth was particularly strong in the 2000s, supported by oil prices, debt relief, banking and telecommunications reform, urban demand and services. From 2015, oil-price weakness, production disruptions, policy uncertainty and foreign-exchange controls contributed to recession in 2016. The pandemic produced another contraction in 2020. Recovery thereafter remained too slow to generate rapid per-capita gains. The IMF’s 2025 assessment described growth as steady but too low per person, with inflation and rising poverty limiting the distribution of benefits.

The latest full-year and high-frequency evidence suggests moderate acceleration rather than a return to the 2000s boom. The World Bank estimated 3.9 per cent year-on-year growth in the first half of 2025 and projected 4.2 per cent for 2025. NBS reported 3.89 per cent growth in the first quarter of 2026. These rates exceed recent population growth only modestly and therefore cannot, without productivity and distributional change, deliver rapid convergence.

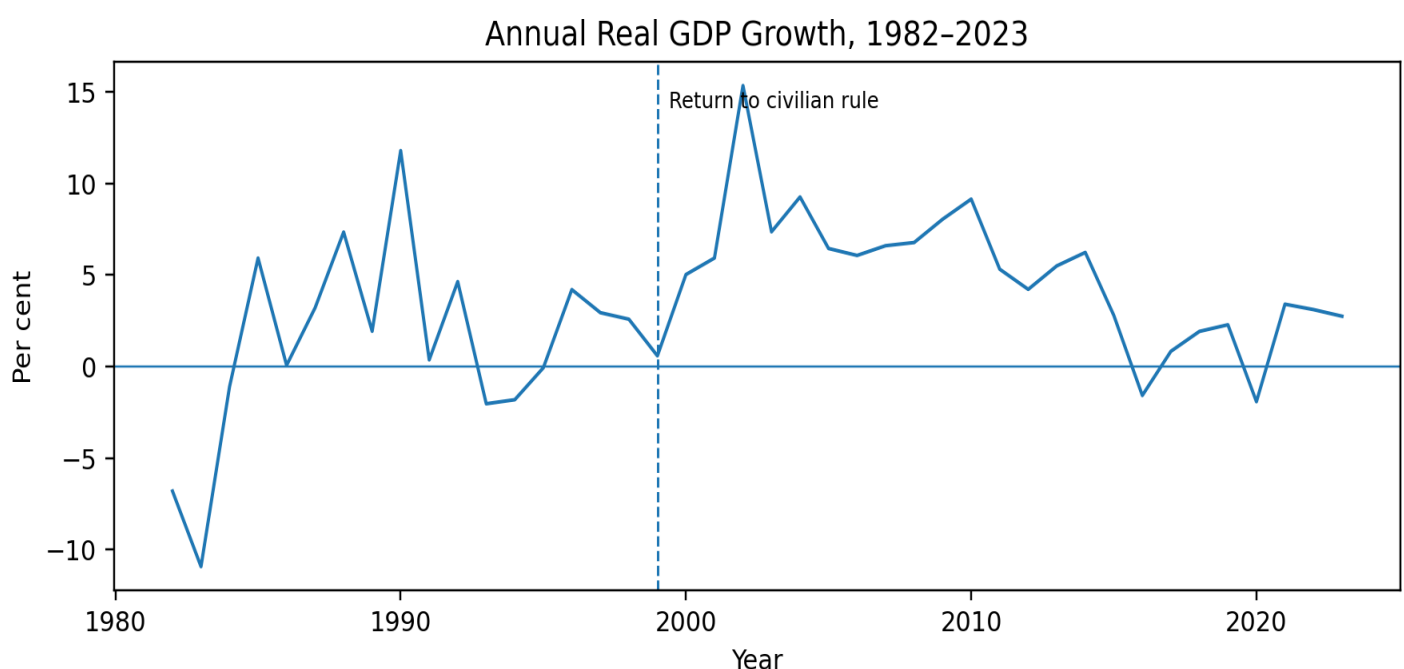


Figure 1. Annual real GDP growth calculated from CBN Statistical Bulletin data, 1982–2023.

Statistical Comparison and Interpretation

Indicator	1982–1998	1999–2023	Interpretation
Observations	17	25	Annual real GDP growth rates
Mean growth	1.30%	4.85%	Higher in the democratic period
Median growth	1.92%	5.31%	Improvement not driven only by outliers
Standard deviation	5.25 pp	3.71 pp	Lower absolute volatility
Coefficient of variation	4.03	0.76	Much lower volatility relative to mean
Minimum	−10.93%	−1.92%	Shallower worst annual contraction
Maximum	11.78%	15.33%	Strong rebound/high-growth episodes
CAGR	1.17%	4.79%	Substantially faster cumulative expansion

Table. Comparative indicators compiled and calculated by the author from CBN, NBS, World Bank and IMF sources.

Welch’s test and the rank-based robustness test reject equality of the period distributions, but the finding must be read carefully. The 1982–1998 period begins after the early oil boom and contains the consequences of macroeconomic overextension, external debt and adjustment. The 1999–2023 period begins near a low base and includes favourable oil cycles, debt cancellation and technological liberalisation. The test therefore establishes a period difference, not a pure institutional treatment effect.

A more important question is the quality of growth. The 2000s combined high output growth with rapid telecommunications diffusion and financial deepening, but also rising import dependence and limited industrial employment. The post-2015 slowdown revealed that much of the earlier expansion was vulnerable to oil-linked foreign exchange and public spending. The 2023 reforms sought to remove the fuel subsidy, unify exchange rates and restore monetary control. These actions addressed real distortions, but their sequencing imposed large short-run real-income costs because social protection, public transport, food logistics and credibility were insufficient.

The null hypothesis is thus rejected statistically, while the broader developmental hypothesis remains conditional. Contemporary Nigeria grows faster than the adjustment-era economy, but the threshold for success has risen because the population is larger, urban systems are congested and citizen expectations are higher. Growth must now be evaluated against per-capita income, job creation, learning, decarbonisation and resilience rather than against the stagnation of the 1980s and 1990s.

Structural Change: From Oil-Industrial Dominance to Services

The sector decomposition reveals a dramatic reversal. At 2010 constant basic prices, industry represented 60.1 per cent of GDP in 1981, services 27.8 per cent and agriculture 12.1 per cent. By 2023, services represented 56.2 per cent, agriculture 25.2 per cent and industry 18.6 per cent. The 1981 structure captures the endpoint of the oil boom and the high measured weight of petroleum and manufacturing in the backcast series; it should not be misread as evidence of a mature industrial economy.

Within industry, manufacturing fell from 29.9 per cent of real GDP in 1981 to 8.8 per cent in 2023, while crude petroleum and natural gas fell from 25.5 to 5.4 per cent. Some of this reflects relative growth elsewhere, but it also records deindustrialisation in textiles, assembly and other tradables. High energy costs, exchange-rate instability, imported inputs, weak transport links, policy reversals and limited technological capability constrained scale. The result is not the conventional path from agriculture to manufacturing and then advanced services; it is a movement from oil-heavy industry towards a mixed service and informal economy.

The strongest positive structural change is information and communication, whose share rose from 1.4 per cent in 1981 to 17.3 per cent in 2023. Telecommunications liberalisation after 2001 reduced communication costs, created new firms and enabled digital finance, media, logistics and commerce. Finance and insurance rose from 1.4 to 5.0 per cent. These sectors demonstrate that credible regulation, competition, infrastructure investment and entrepreneurial capability can generate rapid transformation.

Nevertheless, services-led growth is not automatically inclusive. High-productivity digital and financial firms employ fewer workers directly than agriculture and informal trade. Their wider benefits depend on diffusion to farms, manufacturers and small enterprises. Nigeria's structural challenge is therefore to turn digital capability into economy-wide productivity: electronic land records, interoperable payments, logistics platforms, agricultural extension, credit information, customs modernisation and reliable public data.

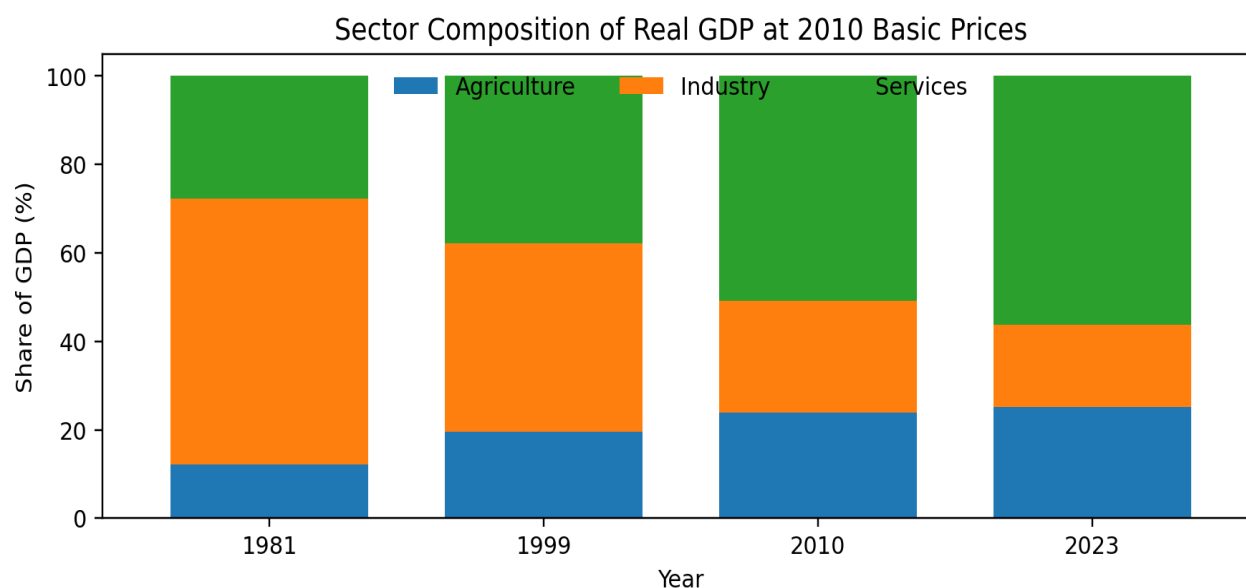


Figure 2. Sector shares calculated from CBN GDP at 2010 constant basic prices.

Oil Dependence: Declining GDP Share, Persistent Systemic Power

Oil dependence has changed form. In the CBN public-finance series, oil supplied 64.4 per cent of federally collected revenue in 1981, 76.3 per cent in 1999 and 85.8 per cent in 2005. The share subsequently fell to 55.4 per cent in 2015, 47.4 per cent in 2020 and 29.4 per cent in 2023. In 2023, federally collected revenue was ₦19.25 trillion, comprising ₦5.66 trillion oil and ₦13.59 trillion non-oil revenue. This is a genuine fiscal shift, supported by value-added tax, company income tax, customs and administrative improvements.

However, three cautions qualify the conclusion. First, nominal revenue shares are influenced by oil-price cycles, production losses, exchange rates and classification. A low oil share can reflect oil-sector weakness rather than successful non-oil development. Second, petroleum remains central to merchandise exports and autonomous foreign-exchange supply. When oil receipts fall, exchange-rate pressure raises the domestic cost of imported fuel, machinery, medicine and food. Third, public expectations and federation transfers remain linked to hydrocarbon receipts, making oil politically more important than its GDP share suggests.

The relevant verdict on H03 is therefore mixed. Nigeria has reduced direct production and revenue concentration, but has not fully diversified the external account. The economy is 'non-oil' in domestic value added yet still oil-conditioned in macroeconomic liquidity. This explains why shocks to a sector contributing a small share of GDP can trigger economy-wide currency, inflation and fiscal effects.

The Petroleum Industry Act 2021 reorganised governance, fiscal terms and host-community arrangements, while local-content policy expanded Nigerian participation in services. Yet refinery underperformance, crude theft, pipeline insecurity, opaque quasi-fiscal costs and delayed remittances historically reduced the public return on resources. The strategic objective should not be to abandon oil abruptly, but to maximise transparent rents during the transition and invest them in power, human capital, transport, climate resilience and tradable capabilities.

Inflation, Exchange Rates and the Changing Macroeconomic Regime

Early post-independence macroeconomic management operated under a fixed exchange-rate environment, shallow financial markets and stronger administrative controls. The oil boom relaxed external constraints, but

rapid public spending generated inflation and imports. When oil prices weakened, the overvalued currency and import-licensing system became unsustainable. The 1986 Structural Adjustment Programme devalued the naira, liberalised some markets and sought export diversification, but adjustment occurred amid weak safety nets and limited supply response.

Contemporary Nigeria has deeper markets but also greater price and exchange-rate transmission. Multiple exchange rates and central-bank financing of deficits accumulated distortions before 2023. Exchange-rate unification and reduced subsidy financing addressed arbitrage and fiscal leakage, but the naira depreciation passed rapidly into prices because production and consumption depend heavily on imported inputs. Monetary tightening cannot by itself resolve food inflation driven by insecurity, transport costs, climate shocks and low agricultural productivity.

The 2025 CPI rebasing illustrates the statistical challenge. NBS replaced the 2009 reference structure with 2023 expenditure weights and a 2024 price base, expanding the basket to 934 product varieties under COICOP 2018. The new series better reflects current consumption, but annual rates around the break should not be compared mechanically with the old series. The World Bank projected average inflation of 23.8 per cent in 2025 and reported that annualised month-on-month food inflation remained 25.3 per cent in August despite broader disinflation.

Macroeconomic stabilisation is necessary but politically durable only when households experience real gains. Reform credibility depends on visible use of savings, transparent revenue reporting, predictable rules and compensation targeted through reliable registries. The unspoken lesson is that technically correct prices can still fail politically when citizens distrust the state's commitment to convert sacrifices into services. Early Nigeria suffered from administrative scarcity; contemporary Nigeria suffers additionally from a credibility scarcity created by repeated reform reversals.

Labour, Poverty, Demography and Welfare Conversion

The welfare comparison is constrained by non-comparable surveys, but available evidence is stark. The 2022 Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index estimated that 63 per cent of Nigerians—about 133 million people—were multidimensionally poor. Deprivation was spatially unequal: 65 per cent of poor people lived in the North, and state poverty incidence ranged from 27 per cent in Ondo to 91 per cent in Sokoto (NBS, 2022). The World Bank estimated that more than 60 per cent lived below the national poverty line in 2025, while the IMF reported that approximately 27 million people were food insecure in late 2025.

Labour statistics require particular caution. Under the revised ILO-aligned methodology, Nigeria's headline unemployment rate fell to low single digits, but only 16 per cent of workers were in wage employment in the first quarter of 2024. The coexistence of low measured unemployment and widespread poverty reflects the definition of employment: even limited market work can classify a person as employed. In an economy without comprehensive unemployment insurance, people cannot afford open unemployment and instead enter low-productivity self-employment. Labour underutilisation, hours, earnings, informality and job security are therefore more informative than the headline rate alone.

Demography magnifies the challenge. Population increased from roughly 45 million in 1960 to about 233 million in 2024 according to World Bank estimates. This creates a large market and potential demographic dividend, but also requires millions of new jobs, school places, homes and infrastructure connections annually. Aggregate GDP can quadruple while living standards improve slowly if population rises at a similar scale. The contemporary economy is richer in technology and total output, but must spread capital across far more people.

There has nevertheless been real social progress over six decades: greater urbanisation, wider schooling, lower child mortality, expanded tertiary education, mobile connectivity and broader access to financial services. The correct conclusion is not that nothing improved. It is that Nigeria's capabilities and aspirations grew faster than the state's ability to deliver reliable universal services and productive employment. H04 is therefore rejected as a proportionality claim: output expansion has not translated proportionately into secure work and poverty reduction.

Comparative Political Economy: Continuities and Discontinuities

Dimension	Early post-independence, 1960–1980	Contemporary economy, 1999–2025
Productive base	Agriculture initially dominant; rapid shift to oil and state projects	Services dominant; digital and finance growth; weak manufacturing depth
Exports/FX	Agricultural exports replaced by petroleum, reaching extreme concentration	Oil share of GDP lower, but hydrocarbons still central to exports and FX
Fiscal system	Marketing-board and customs revenue, then oil-rent centralisation	Broader non-oil taxation, but transfers and petroleum expectations remain important
Institutions	Thin post-colonial bureaucracy; regional competition; military centralisation	Denser formal institutions and democracy, but uneven enforcement and patronage
Labour	Rural agricultural majority and small formal sector	Urbanising, highly informal service economy; limited wage employment
Technology	Low infrastructure and industrial capability	Mobile, digital and creative capability alongside power and logistics constraints
Welfare constraint	Low initial human development and civil-war disruption	Higher capabilities, but population scale, inflation, poverty and insecurity dilute gains

Table. Comparative indicators compiled and calculated by the author from CBN, NBS, World Bank and IMF sources.

The strongest continuity is the weak relationship between political revenue and broad domestic productivity. In the 1960s, regional governments had stronger incentives to support export commodities because revenue was tied more closely to production. Oil centralisation weakened this link. Contemporary tax reforms are beginning to rebuild it, but the accountability effect depends on whether citizens can observe what taxes finance.

The strongest discontinuity is technological and institutional density. Nigeria now possesses capital markets, electronic payments, modern banking, telecom networks, private universities, digital identification initiatives, a larger professional class and globally connected entrepreneurs. These assets make reform more feasible than in 1960. Yet they also coexist with fragmented electricity, insecurity and congested cities, showing that private adaptation can advance while public systems lag.

A second continuity is ambitious planning without disciplined execution. Early development plans and oil-boom megaprojects often exceeded implementation capacity. Contemporary plans are more data-rich and consultative, but budgets remain weakly connected to plans, projects are spread thinly, and maintenance is neglected. The central state-capacity problem is not absence of ideas; it is selection, sequencing, implementation and credible closure of non-performing programmes.

FINDINGS

First, Nigeria has experienced substantial aggregate expansion and a statistically significant improvement in growth performance relative to the 1982–1998 crisis period. Mean growth increased by 3.55 percentage points, while relative volatility declined. This provides evidence against the claim that the contemporary economy is merely a larger version of the adjustment-era economy. However, the strength of this conclusion would be reinforced by additional robustness and sensitivity tests, including alternative period specifications, exclusion of extreme growth years, and comparison across different measures of macroeconomic performance.

Second, the economy underwent major sectoral reallocation but incomplete structural transformation. Services became dominant, particularly communications, finance, trade and other urban activities. At the same time, the declining share of manufacturing and the persistence of informal employment suggest that labour did not consistently shift towards high-productivity tradable sectors. Nigeria therefore diversified away from the direct contribution of oil to GDP without developing sufficient industrial complexity. Sensitivity analysis using alternative indicators of structural transformation, such as manufacturing value added, labour productivity and employment composition, would further test the robustness of this interpretation.

Third, petroleum dependence became multidimensional rather than disappearing. Fiscal dependence on oil declined markedly by 2023, while the non-oil sector accounts for the majority of GDP. Nevertheless, petroleum remains systemically important to exports, foreign-exchange earnings, federation revenues and investor confidence. Claims of diversification based solely on the oil share of GDP are therefore potentially misleading. The finding is more robust when diversification is assessed across multiple dimensions, including fiscal revenues, exports, foreign exchange and productive capacity, rather than through GDP composition alone.

Fourth, democratic continuity and institutional development appear to have improved policy capability, transparency and opportunities for private-sector participation, but they did not eliminate rent distribution, short policy horizons or uneven enforcement. Democracy should therefore be understood as an accountability infrastructure rather than a sufficient development strategy. The higher growth performance observed after 1999 is consistent with institutional improvement, but causal interpretation requires caution. Institutional reform and economic performance may be endogenous: stronger institutions can promote growth, while improved growth and fiscal capacity can themselves strengthen institutions and reform implementation. Reverse causality omitted variables and simultaneous policy changes therefore limit any direct attribution of post-1999 economic performance to democratic governance alone. Further testing using lagged institutional variables, alternative institutional measures or instrumental-variable approaches would strengthen causal inference.

Fifth, demographic expansion and persistent inflation weakened the translation of macroeconomic growth into improvements in household welfare. Nigeria's large domestic market remains an important economic asset, but rapid population growth simultaneously creates substantial annual requirements for employment, infrastructure and public services. High poverty and food insecurity indicate that improvements in aggregate economic indicators have not consistently translated into household recovery. This finding should also be interpreted across alternative welfare indicators, including real income per capita, employment, consumption, poverty incidence and food-price trends, to ensure that conclusions are not dependent on any single measure. A reform cannot be considered fully successful where improvements in fiscal or macroeconomic balances coexist with sustained deterioration in real household purchasing power.

Sixth, Nigeria's central development challenge is not simply insufficient diversification in the broad statistical sense, but limited diffusion of productivity across sectors. High-performing activities remain weakly connected to agriculture, manufacturing and employment-intensive production. The empirical results therefore support a shift in policy emphasis from aggregate 'non-oil GDP growth' towards tradable-sector productivity, employment intensity and stronger domestic linkages. Nevertheless, this conclusion should be subjected to further robustness analysis using alternative productivity, employment and sectoral-linkage measures to establish whether the observed pattern persists across different specifications and time periods.

CONCLUSION

The comparison reveals neither uninterrupted decline nor decisive transformation. Early post-independence Nigeria inherited an agrarian export economy with stronger production–revenue links but limited industrial and human capability. The 1970s oil boom expanded fiscal space and infrastructure while displacing agriculture, concentrating exports and encouraging a distributive political economy. The crises of the 1980s and 1990s exposed the fragility of that model.

Contemporary Nigeria is larger, more urban, technologically connected and institutionally elaborate. It grows faster than during the adjustment and late-military period, has a broader tax base, and produces most value added outside oil. Telecommunications, finance and creative industries are genuine achievements. Yet the economy has not completed the transition to high-productivity, employment-intensive and export-diverse production. Manufacturing remains shallow, the external account is oil-conditioned, food systems are weak, and public services do not match the scale of population and output.

The core paradox is that Nigeria transformed its economic surface more than its accumulation regime. The visible sectors changed—from cocoa and groundnuts, to crude oil, to telecommunications, finance and urban services—but public finance and political competition still often reward access to rents more than cumulative capability building. The policy task is not to recreate 1960s agriculture or preserve petroleum dependence. It is to reconstruct

the link among production, taxation, accountability and public investment under contemporary technological and demographic conditions.

The study therefore concludes that contemporary Nigeria is economically superior to early post-independence Nigeria in scale, diversity of activity, technology and formal institutional capacity, but not proportionately superior in productivity, employment security or mass welfare. Developmental success requires converting islands of capability into nationwide systems and transforming revenue into reliable public goods.

RECOMMENDATIONS: PRODUCTIVE TRANSFORMATION AND MACROECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS

Short-Term Priorities: 0–2 Years

First, establish a focused tradable-productivity strategy.

Government should replace broad diversification targets with a limited number of export-capable value chains, including agro-processing, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, garments, business services, digital products and selected minerals. Sector selection should be based on demonstrated productive capabilities, export potential, market access and identifiable input constraints. Public support should be conditional on measurable improvements in exports, productivity, workforce training and domestic supplier development, with clearly defined sunset clauses to prevent permanent protection or rent seeking.

Second, address food inflation as an immediate structural and national-security priority.

Policy should focus on rural security, storage, transport bottlenecks, seed quality, extension services and regional food trade. Monetary tightening may contribute to inflation control, but it should complement rather than substitute for measures addressing supply constraints. The principal objective should be to lower unit food-production and distribution costs, reduce post-harvest losses and improve market access rather than rely on recurrent import restrictions.

Third, maintain exchange-rate flexibility while limiting inflationary pass-through.

The authorities should avoid a return to administratively cheap foreign exchange arrangements that encourage shortages, queues and arbitrage. Immediate priorities should include transparent reserve management, improved export-repatriation procedures, tighter constraints on monetary financing of fiscal deficits and measures to improve foreign-exchange market liquidity. Exchange-rate reform should be accompanied by targeted measures to protect vulnerable households from sharp increases in essential imported costs.

Fourth, establish a credible social contract for difficult economic reforms.

Major price, subsidy and exchange-rate reforms should be preceded by distributional-impact assessments, clear public communication and automatically triggered compensation for vulnerable households. Social registers should be regularly updated and independently audited. Government should also provide transparent evidence showing how fiscal savings are converted into observable improvements in public services and household welfare. Effective sequencing is essential to reform durability in a low-trust political economy.

Fifth, strengthen policy delivery and accountability.

Each administration should identify a limited number of cross-government policy missions with named responsible officials, measurable baselines, quarterly milestones and independent evaluation arrangements. Programmes that repeatedly fail agreed performance tests should be redesigned, consolidated or terminated. Nigeria's challenge is not the absence of development plans, but the proliferation of simultaneous commitments without sufficient implementation discipline.

Medium-Term Priorities: 3–5 Years

Sixth, develop an electricity and logistics compact around productive clusters.

Rather than waiting for universal improvements in national infrastructure, government should prioritise high-potential industrial and agricultural corridors through embedded generation, dedicated industrial feeders, transmission improvements, port digitisation, rail connectivity and systematic road maintenance. Electricity tariffs should reflect efficient costs, while enforceable service-quality standards and transparent subsidies should protect vulnerable consumers.

Seventh, deepen fiscal diversification through a credible tax–service bargain.

Tax administration should broaden the compliance base, simplify obligations for small and medium-sized enterprises, improve federal–state information sharing and reduce discretionary exemptions. However, higher revenue mobilisation should be visibly connected to improvements in education, primary healthcare, transport, security and essential infrastructure. Expanding taxation without demonstrable improvements in public services risks increasing informality, avoidance and public distrust.

Eighth, make employment quality a central measure of economic performance.

National policy dashboards should move beyond GDP growth and headline unemployment to include indicators such as real median earnings, formal wage employment, underemployment, labour productivity, firm survival and youth transitions into sustainable work. Technical colleges, apprenticeships and employer-designed qualifications should increasingly be financed according to verified employment, earnings and progression outcomes.

Ninth, extend digital transformation beyond leading sectors to the wider productive economy. Interoperable digital identity, payments, credit information, e-invoicing, customs and land-registration systems should be used to reduce transaction costs for farmers, small businesses and emerging firms. Competition policy should prevent dominant digital platforms from converting early advantages into barriers to entry. Public procurement should also support Nigerian digital firms while requiring appropriate standards for cybersecurity, interoperability, privacy and data protection.

Tenth, strengthen fiscal federalism by linking transfers more closely to responsibility and performance.

Federation transfers should retain an equalisation function while progressively incorporating incentives related to internally generated revenue, education and health outcomes, audited financial statements and infrastructure maintenance. States demonstrating adequate institutional capacity and accountability should receive greater policy flexibility. Local governments should also benefit from transparent funding arrangements accompanied by enforceable audit requirements and mechanisms for citizen oversight.

Long-Term Priorities: Beyond 5 Years

Eleventh, institutionalise the conversion of oil and mineral rents into productive national assets.

Nigeria should establish a durable rules-based framework requiring the publication of production, lifting, subsidy, tax and transfer data in accessible, machine-readable formats. Sovereign wealth and stabilisation mechanisms should be strengthened, with a predetermined proportion of exceptional resource revenues allocated to infrastructure maintenance, human-capital development and long-term investment. Borrowing against uncertain future petroleum income should be subject to stringent legislative scrutiny and full public disclosure.

Twelfth, deepen domestic productive linkages and reduce imported-input dependence.

Over the longer term, industrial policy should aim to connect high-performing sectors with agriculture, manufacturing and domestic supply chains. Policies should encourage local input development, supplier upgrading, research collaboration, standards certification and technology transfer. The objective should not be

import substitution at any cost, but the development of internationally competitive domestic capabilities capable of supplying both Nigerian and export markets.

Thirteenth, strengthen agricultural productivity through sustained structural investment.

Longer-term agricultural reform should include irrigation expansion, cold-chain infrastructure, feeder-road networks, modernised land-registration systems, agricultural research and improved access to finance and insurance. These measures should complement improvements in rural security and market integration to raise productivity and reduce the persistent transmission of domestic supply shocks into food inflation.

Fourteenth, modernise the national statistical architecture.

The National Bureau of Statistics and Central Bank of Nigeria should improve comparability across changing statistical frameworks by publishing concordance tables for the 2010- and 2019-base GDP series, backcasting major economic aggregates where technically feasible and documenting revisions transparently. Labour-market and poverty publications should provide clear methodological bridges between previous and revised definitions. Open application programming interfaces and reproducible datasets would strengthen policy evaluation, while an independent statistical council could reinforce methodological integrity and the reliability of publication schedules.

Implementation Principle

The sequencing of these recommendations is critical. Short-term measures should concentrate on macroeconomic stabilisation, food security, reform credibility and implementation discipline. Medium-term policy should build the infrastructure, fiscal capacity, employment systems and digital foundations required for productive transformation. Long-term reforms should institutionalise resource management, deepen productive capabilities and strengthen the statistical and institutional foundations of economic governance.

These horizons should not be interpreted as rigid stages. Preparatory work for medium- and long-term reforms should begin immediately, but implementation intensity and resource allocation should reflect institutional capacity and policy urgency. Progress should be assessed against clearly defined indicators rather than the number of policies announced.

Finally, the manuscript should undergo a comprehensive language and presentation review before publication. British English should be applied consistently throughout, including spelling, punctuation and economic terminology. Headings, numbering, tables, figures and statistical notation should follow a uniform format. All in-text citations should also be cross-checked against the reference list to confirm authorship, publication dates and bibliographic completeness, while every reference-list entry should correspond to a source cited in the manuscript. These editorial checks will improve clarity, readability, methodological transparency and the overall scholarly quality of the study.

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