



BEYOND TRIBE AND TONGUE: NATION-BUILDING AND DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Historically, lack of tolerance among politicians and their refusal to obey the rule of law and fair play in government have caused political unrest in Nigeria, thereby engulfing political instability across the nation. This paper, therefore, took a prognostic view of the continuing crisis of democratic challenges in Nigeria. Methodologically, it relies on secondary sources of data. The paper argues that, beyond tribe and tongue, ethnicity has fundamentally shaped the paths of nation-building, as well as the ideas and philosophies of political players in both military and civilian governments. Furthermore, democracy has encouraged some people's culture of impunity by applying the theory of prebendalism. Political disagreements are believed to have contributed to some of the violence that has occurred. The paper then suggests that the ethnic division afflicting the Nigerian system can be mostly explained by colonialism and its capitalist ideology foundations, as well as by the transplantation of the same kinds of features to Nigerian bourgeoisie components. The study exposed that sectional attitudes as well as ethnic bias match the evil ethnic structures produced by colonialism and the current trend of terrorism and security breaches destroying various geopolitical zones, particularly the northeastern region of Nigeria under the former Jonathan and Buhari administrations. Therefore, the main focus of the paper is to explore the recurrent cycle of defective political and ethical conflicts, aiming to identify their nature, shape, causes, and suggested remedies to enhance governance and address the challenges facing Nigerian democracy.

Keywords: Democracy, ethnic diversity, nation-building, political challenges, tribe, and tongue

1.0 Introduction

The political history of Nigeria could potentially be summed up as a running chronicle of conflicts, violence, and corruption linked to the failure of social groupings and the government to transcend the flashpoints of religion and ethnicity. Political, social, and economic policies create religious, communal, ethnic, and resource disputes. In the last years, these disputes have been somewhat common. One classic

example is the ongoing crisis in Jos, a plateau state of north-central Nigeria, where indiscriminate killings between the local people and immigrants are frequent and conflicts between them are prevalent. The area, which was once peaceful, is now experiencing constant turmoil. Many years after Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, the political entity known as Nigeria has struggled to develop and sustain



itself as a nation-state (Erunke, 2012). It is therefore clear from the foregoing that the initial imperial structures of colonialism and all the philosophies they hold or proclaim are a mere political albatross that has literally derailed the process of socio-economic, political, and cultural survival of the Nigerian state.

In Nigeria, political parties have been unable to function as truly national parties. This is because of the constraints imposed by such primordial factors as ethnicity, regionalism, and religion such that political parties in Nigeria have been ethnically and sectionally based. In Nigeria, the appeal to primordial sentiments appears to be the basis for all the other forms of subvention of democratic processes. This is because leadership is characterized by men of dual personalities caused by the "traditional versus modernity clash" that emerges as a result of colonial experience, which is coupled with our ethnocentric dispositions that have made it necessary for tribalist tendencies to emerge in our partisan politics and acts of governance. Another dimension apart from the socio-cultural one is that of religion (Bello & Lyoha, 1997). Nigerians see this issue as political, not personal. For instance, there was the alleged membership of Nigeria in the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC).

There are constitutional provisions that have been designed to eliminate or minimize the appeals to primordial sentiment. Thus, in the 1979 constitution of Nigeria, there was provision for the secular character of the Nigerian state. In the same constitution, political parties wishing to register to contest elections must have a national outlook. Though most of the parties of the Second Republic were national in outlook, they were ethno-regional in character. Religion was politicized in the sharing of positions

within the parties. For instance, when the president of Nigeria is a Muslim, his vice president is expected to be a Christian; when the president is from the north, the vice president should be from the south (east, west, and south parts of Nigeria). This appeal and play with primordial sentiments in acts of governance were realized by James Oluleye as a federal commissioner during the mass purge of the civil service when he replied to a letter from the chief of staff, Supreme Headquarters. He wrote thus:

Federalism is a compromised way of living together. This serves as the linchpin for balancing various levels of government. This implies clan balancing at the local government level, ethnic balancing at the state government level, and tribal balancing at the federal level. Upsetting this balance at various levels can cause disaffection for government, as it may reflect a dangerous imbalance. The point made by the general is that in governing, one is always compelled to appeal to the primordial sentiment, especially if one is interested in a continued stay in office.

Due to the enormous crude oil riches in Nigeria, the determination and distribution of the country's resources depend mostly on primordial feelings or ethnicity. Since the late 1950s, when oil was discovered in the Otubagi area in the then Okolobiri district of old River State (present Bayelsa State), various discordant and unacceptable behaviors have played out, especially among the political elite representing either major or minor ethnic nationalities. In the same line,



ethnic considerations have mostly become criteria for evaluation of group participation in government, distribution of luxurious political positions, federal character principles for Nigerian peoples, the right to live either permanently or temporarily, religious conflicts, mass demonstrations, and the necessity to curry favors with particular individuals or groups in order to have free access to the Aso Rock House (Erunke, 2012).

These processes create a fundamental contradiction: political elites, who hold the power to modify the system, are often its main beneficiaries and are hence not inclined to undermine its foundations (Campbell & Page, 2023). The absence of modifications to lower expenses or redistribute fairly compounded this insecurity. Even in the face of credibility and capacity problems, civil society organizations (CSOs) can mobilize democratic transformation and reorient the state towards the public benefit (Okoye, 2023). The ethnic question has given the national government various difficulties regarding its legitimacy and ability to lead appropriately for the objectives of nation-building. Osumah and Okor (2009) contend that the mobilization of ethnic passion and solidarity for the sake of acquiring or preserving significance has exacerbated anxiety, mistrust, fear of dominance, and overt violence. The main objective of this study is to interrogate how ethnicity and ethnic political formation undermine the process of nation-building in a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria and how these elements influence the nation's attempts to unite and develop beyond tribe and tongue.

1. Theoretical Framework

Geertz's (1963) idea of primordial sentiments is one that results from the "givens," more particularly, the presumed "given" of human social life. "Givenness" involves direct

contiguity and familial links, as well as being born into a specific community, religion, or culture; it also includes the mother language and the sharing of similar social behaviors. Geertz claims that humans perceive the congruencies of blood, speech, beliefs, attitudes, and customs to be inexpressible and simultaneously overwhelming. One is connected to one's kinsman, neighbors, or fellow believer not merely as a result of personal attachment, practical necessity, or mutual interest, but in considerable measure by virtue of some absolute relevance assigned to the very bond itself.

According to Nein (2018), a country possesses five distinguishing characteristics: a common language, social conventions, moral beliefs, interpersonal relationships, culinary traditions, and personality traits. Members of this group are connected to a particular location, their terrestrial home, and possess a common lineage, familial ties, intermarriage, or kinship, all of which contribute to the group's unique identity and, consequently, character. They possess shared knowledge of their origins and evolutionary trajectory, which fosters a sense of belonging among them. Nation-building refers to the process of defining, developing, and structuring a national identity through official authority. The objective of nation-building is to unify diverse segments of the people behind the state, rendering it a stable, functioning, and enduring political entity. Rokkan (1978) posits that traditional pre-modern European nations included tiny, insular communities characterized by remote, simplistic, and provincial cultures at the societal foundation. Central to these republics was an impersonal governmental framework, primarily tasked with revenue and law enforcement. The endeavor to establish the nation united individuals from both the lower



and upper echelons, fostering intimate bonds among them.

Primordial sentiments have different power and form than personal ones; the power and shape of fundamental feelings vary. However, as Geertz noted, there are certain connections deduced from a feeling of inherent, nearly spiritual affinity rather than from interpersonal interaction, and these links exist in every community and at every given time including Nigeria. Their irrational foundation shapes the character of humans. These lifetime bonds can damage civic society and, under some circumstances, cause clashes with other human loyalties as well as other problems. The common language utilized reflects the basic ideas of daily life. This is often done by individuals seeking to define or justify the nature of their relationships. What Coleman has termed the regionalization of nationalism is what sets Nigerian political life as it has developed from World War II apart. In Nigeria, the last years of colonial rule saw increased tension between various ethnic groups, unlike in many other new countries where different groups came together to oppose colonial rule. After 1946, the struggle for independence focused more on setting boundaries, creating capitals, and sharing power to manage these growing ethnic tensions rather than just fighting against foreign control. Following 1946, the Nigerian fight for freedom was more about establishing boundaries, building capitals, and distributing powers in such a way as to moderate and control growing ethno-regional tensions prior to the loss of that authority than it was about rejecting foreign power.

The era was characterized less by a revolt aimed at expelling the British and more by intense negotiations in London and Lagos to get an agreement among the Yoruba, Ibo, and Hausa-Fulani about their departure. The

organization has transformed into a radically federal entity, consisting of four robust component regions—the North, the South, the East, and the West—each with its own capital, parliament, cabinet, high court, and budget, as detailed in the 1999 constitution as amended. In addition to these local strongholds, the federal government of Lagos facilitated the typical two-versus-one coalition politics that characterized a three-participant scenario. From these dynamic processes, authoritative leadership was intended to emerge, therefore addressing the central void in the system.

Under the government's Swiss-clock system, it was unclear who would replace her. The distinct triangular pattern of primordial identification became increasingly clear throughout ancient Nigeria as tribal groupings gradually changed into regional languages and, in the Muslim North, religious connections. Consequently, the regionalization of nationalism in Nigeria led to the establishment of a party system and constitutional framework. This enabled the temporary coexistence of several hundred prehistoric tribes, ranging from about six million Hausa to tribal remnants counting in the hundreds, all inside quite safe surroundings. It virtually rendered the country completely devoid of leaders.

The paper anchored its argument on the sectionalism and prebendalism philosophy of primordial sentiments (Osaighae 2001). He represents the public exhibition of support or opposition towards people in power within the awareness of a country. These problems arise from hatred, mistrust, insecurity, social and political upheaval, inadequate support for perceived "foreigners" in governmental affairs, and other fundamental emotions. Notwithstanding one's perspective on basic principles, Nigeria has undergone political upheavals defined by notable ethnic



dynamics, including competitiveness for resources and backing as well as the initiation of deliberate violence and verbal confrontations, since 1960.

This clearly affects Nigerian democracy's direction forward. The current question is how ethnocentrism and the resulting moral politics can influence institutional democracy. Nigeria achieved self-governance, as is widely known, through the application of civic democracy. Shortly after Nigeria gained its independence, three recently founded political parties each focused on a different area and gave tribal or ethnic relations top priority. Chief Obafemi

Awolowo led in the West; Dr. Azikiwe presided over the NPC in the North and the Action Group (AG) in the East. In the Northern area, the late Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello oversaw the NCNC and NPC. This apparently simple backdrop set the stage for Nigeria's first attempt at democracy. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 clearly demonstrate the level of ethnic groups' involvement in voting behaviors in Nigeria. Ethnic identification bolstered pecuniary interests, which in turn weakened national security and our standard of life as a society and thus gave rise to ethnic consciousness.

Table 1: Ethnic Association in the Majority and the Minority Ethnic Groups

Majority Ethnic Group Association	Minority Ethnic Group Association
northern People's Congress (Hausa: Jam'iyyar Mutanen Arewa).	o State Union
scendants of Oduduwa (Yoruba: Egbe Omo Oduduwa).	m Progressive Union
o State Union	iddle Belt Forum
northern Elements Progressive Union.	v People's League
oduwa People's Congress	na Union
ewa People's Congress	in Youth League
sociation of the Igbo Assembly (Igbo: Ohaneze ndi Igbo).	r Progressive Union
	gbema National Congress
	v National Congress
	m of Ikewe Ethnic Nationality (Ikwere: Ogbako Ikwere)

Source: Adapted from Okolo & Itu, 2022.

Table 1.2: Ethnic Voting Behaviors for the 1979 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

Ethnic Groups	States	Election Results (x)	Preferred Party
Yoruba	Ogun	92.6	UPN
	Ondo	93.5	UPN
	Oyo	85.5	UPN
	Lagos	82.3	UPN
Ibo	Anambra	83.0	NPP
	Imo	96.7	NPP
Hausa/Fulani	Bauchi	92.2	NPN + PRP + GNPP
	Benue	75.3	NPN + PRP + GNPP
	Borno	95.7	NPN + PRP + GNPP
	Kaduna	89.3	NPN + PRP + GNPP
	Kano	97.8	NPN + PRP + GNPP
	Niger	95.1	NPN + PRP + GNPP



Source: Adapted from Okolo & Itu, 2022.

The 1979 presidential election results make the ethnicity-based party preferences quite evident. In Yoruba states, the UPN was dominated by Yoruba; in Igboland, by Igbo; and in the ethnic enclaves of Hausa and Fulani, by NPN, PRP, and GNPP. The strongest votes were given for these groups (William, Lynne & Kathryn, 2012). See Table 3 for a similar tendency in the 1983 presidential elections.

Table 1.3: Ethnic Voting Behavior for the 1983 Presidential Elections in Nigeria

Ethnic Group	States	Election Results (x)	Preferred Party
Yoruba	Ogun	95.0	UPN
	Ondo	77.3	UPN
	Oyo	60.0	UPN
	Lagos	83.4	UPN
Ibo	Anambra	58.0	NPN
	Imo	67.0	NPN
Hausa-Fulani	Bauchi	85.0	NPN
	Kaduna	60.0	NPN
	Niger	65.2	NPN
	Sokoto	92.0	NPN

Source: Adapted from Okolo & Itu, 2022.

Increasingly common in Western countries, crimes including murder and vandalism mirror the ambitions of these ethnic leaders to achieve political power inside their countries. A vicious military takeover claimed the first republic in 1966. Ethnic nationalism and primal emotions have seriously hampered Nigeria's democratic process, thereby endangering the institutionalization of democracy in the country on a constant basis. Banbangida (2002) names several negative effects resulting from ethnic strife. These include significant loss of people and resources during violent conflicts; a decline in the economy and political system; risks to

96.5

NPN + PRP + GNPP

personal safety and property; a drop in investments from local and foreign sources because of money leaving the country and less trust in the economy; and growing social divides between different ethnic groups, characterized by ongoing mistrust and hostility.

2. Methodology

The study employs a qualitative research style that utilizes a thematic approach. The analysis draws upon a wide range of secondary qualitative data sources, including government documents, policy statements (e.g., Nigeria's National Security Strategy), academic literature, and journal articles on Nigerian governance and political economy. It also relied on credible media reporting, electoral violence, and security lapses.

3. Nation-Building in Plural Societies: Strategies for Cohesion

Men and women with vision and determination, not historical accidents, create most of the countries that make up modern civilization. Thus, rather than chance, purposeful statecraft produces nation-building. Nation-building is always a dynamic process in continuous need of nurturing and reinvention. Since every country is always confronting fresh obstacles, nation-building never ends, and outstanding nation-builders never rest (Ibrahim, 2008). Nigerians are thus rightfully worried about nation-building, as it is a necessary component of contemporary society. The key appears to be three distinct yet interconnected processes:

Development of a harmonious philosophy.

An ideology that gives the group's "national" self-interpretation validity and rationalizing power is a basic requirement for building a "nation." If the people in a community mostly identify with particular tribes, ethnic groups, or religions, it will be difficult for them to



unite as a "nation." Even if those groups live in different countries or states yet share the same ethnicity, religion, or language, a uniting ideology must be sufficiently strong to persuade members of subgroups—or sub-national entities—that they possess a significant and meaningful commonality that distinguishes them from other groups. It is not necessary for a uniting ideology to eclipse prior ideologies and identities. "Nationalist" is merely one of numerous possible uniting ideas or identities; others cover religion, language, ethnicity, and citizenship, among other things.

Establishment of a cohesive community. An ideology that gives the group's "national" self-interpretation validity and rationalizing power is a basic requirement for building "a nation." "If people in a community mostly identify with particular tribes, ethnic groups, or religions, it will be difficult for them to unite as a "nation." Even if those groups live in different countries or states yet share the same ethnicity, religion, or language, a uniting ideology must be sufficiently strong to persuade members of subgroups—or sub-national entities—that they possess a significant and meaningful commonality that distinguishes them from other groups. It is not necessary for a uniting ideology to eclipse prior ideologies and identities. "Nationalist" is merely one of numerous possible uniting ideas or identities; others cover religion, language, ethnicity, and citizenship, among other things.

Creation of a functioning state apparatus. Building a nation and combining a community are two distinct activities. Inside this framework, one may also create a "nation-state." Still, these two processes, identifying oneself and merging into one's community, have to be in line with this state-building process. The statements clearly indicate that nation-building necessitates

various vital components. Establishing a political body fit for a geographical area where people have a similar identity and follow a common code of ethics comes first (Ibrahim, 2008). Second, the political entity is represented by its institutions, bureaucracy, economy, judiciary, colleges, civil service, and civil society organizations.

Building a nation, therefore, most crucially, is about forging a common future, a shared sense of purpose, and a shared vision of belonging for all its people. Therefore, building a nation is mostly about threading the concrete and intangible strands that define and serve a political entity. The concept of modernism remains a functional ideology, despite globalization and the rapid worldwide movement of people and ideas. In the current present days, creating the foundation for the institutions and objectives of the shared society takes greatest importance.

4. Nexus of Beyond Tribe, Tongue, and Nation Building

According to Mezieobi (2014), there would inevitably be an increase in diversity pertaining to the numerous ethnic groups in Nigeria, since there are 619 of them. Disparities in mother-tongue and dialectal usage, religious beliefs and practices, political leanings, and family tree research all contribute to the widening gap between people, leading to potential conflicts and misunderstandings among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Nigeria, some people refer to us as the "Giant of Africa," therefore reflecting our national value, which this presents as an inscription's viewpoint. Nigeria is considered a giant only by virtue of our enormous population and oil wealth, not because of the nature of our national institutions and principles. Actually, though, a nation's greatness must be earned and is



not decided only by its population or degree of natural resource wealth. Though they have the highest populations in the world, China and India are only now starting to be significant worldwide actors. Conversely, Japan has minimal natural resources but has long been able to become a major worldwide economic force (Erondy and Obasi 2000).

Using war, genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other brutal methods to integrate, homogenize cultures, and establish state institutions, nation-building has sometimes been quite a nasty process. These practices were once acceptable, but not in the 21st century. These days, humanitarian concerns and respect for world stability should encompass choices like these. Modern society defines national greatness mostly in terms of abilities, diligence, production, and competitiveness. Without regard for the hard work and inventiveness of its people, one cannot define a nation as great only because it owns a nuclear weapon. Every serious patriot and politician has come to realize since Adam Smith that the wealth of a nation is determined by the output and diligence of its people rather than the riches and opulence of its leaders (Ibrahim, 2008). Five primary nation-building issues beset Nigeria:

- These are the challenges of our past.
- The challenge of social-economic inequality.
- The obstacles of a fitting constitutional settlement.
- It's hard creating institutions for development and
- Democracy and being a leader come with their own set of challenges.

Over the year Nigeria has seen some achievements in our pursuit of nation-building, including keeping the country together in the face of severe obstacles. Still,

these obstacles prevent us from reaching our capacities. Let's discuss these difficulties now.

The residual consequences of colonial authority pose significant challenges for Nigeria's efforts to establish a national identity. As a legacy of colonial power, land tenure, local government administration, education, and the court system in northern and southern Nigeria differ from one another. North and South Nigeria each had their own administrative structure, unlike other major British colonies like Sudan and India, which just had one. But looks aside, a shared transit system and money truly linked these two nations. The legacy of colonial rule has made nation-building in Nigeria more difficult and fraught with difficulties. Colonial control in Nigeria used the divide-and-rule tactic, which resulted in the country's southern and northern areas having different land tenure systems, local government structures, educational frameworks, and legal systems. For the common citizen, a vital part of developing a nation is reducing economic and social inequality. However, such progress has mostly not happened in Nigeria due to religious and ethnic tension (Abutudu, 2022).

Secondly, during the 1950s and 1960s, many Nigerian elites received their education and developed their worldview in local institutions. Very few of them knew who lived in their neighborhood. In this setting, prejudice and fear thrived. As passionately as they battled the British colonialists, Nigerian nationalists from across the nation fought each other during decolonization. In contrast to South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Nigeria has never had a charismatic leader galvanize the populace. Rather, there was a distinct group of top elites from every region. Regionalism has significantly hindered the country's



progress due to its past. Still, it is noteworthy that the founders of our country tried to address this problem by supporting federalism and a policy of unity in variety. However, Nigerian federalism has not been solidified around generally accepted ideas and views; hence, this issue of dividing historical heritage keeps undermining our attempts at nation-building. A modern expression of this heritage is the separation of “indigenes” from “settlers.”

The ethnicization of Nigeria is not a priority for the nation's political elite. Independence is teeming with individuals from several ethnic groups, resulting in ethnocentrism and influencing the political ruling elite. Despite the necessity for nation-building, national integration, and shared identity, the political elite remains steadfast in its self-serving ethnic interests. This rendered beneficial governance, effective public administration, and public goods in Nigeria obsolete, terminating the essential element of unwavering patriotism and the commitment to nation-building and national integration (Agbibo, 2023).

Campbell and Page (2023) argued that, thirdly, developing a country depends on fostering a feeling of shared citizenship in great part. How can we claim to be ordinary people when Yenagoa's quality of living is far greater than Ilorin's? or Abuja. Stated differently, when does the risk of mother death rise for the Gusau woman compared to the Ibadan woman? Developed countries try to create a basis of social and economic rights that every person of their country must enjoy by growing their economy and offering equal opportunity for all or by building social welfare safety nets. Lack of respect for their socioeconomic rights drives those affected to live on the periphery of society. Thus, a common objective of modern nation-building in Western European countries is to minimize

the degree to which some groups are "socially excluded," or denied fundamental economic and social rights. The practice of these rights differs greatly throughout Nigeria, and many people lack access to appropriate education and healthcare. Both the government and its associated agencies make the people generally uncaring. Second, given our society's extreme division along socioeconomic levels, there is a general mistrust and anxiety.

Fourthly, the function of development institutions is one of the toughest obstacles to national progress. The strength of the pertinent national institutions determines whether or not countries can effectively control their social and political conflicts or sustain economic development without generating enormous disparity. Establishing rules, selecting technically and ethically competent people to understand and carry out the objectives of the organization, and ensuring that the institution inspires public trust through openness, justice, and consistency are three basic elements of institutional development. Any organization, especially those in the public sector, should judge its performance based on these criteria. This emphasizes the relative value of operating a well-established institution compared to a well-functioning machine. Therefore, Nigeria must establish or enhance institutions that will enable the country to achieve its objectives of democratic governance and sustainable development through the following measures (Campbell & Page, 2021).

(a) Institution for promoting honesty and transparency

By "institutions that fight corruption," it refers to establishments such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), the ICPC, and the courts. These bodies aim to create a symphony of values



that condemns the abuse of public position for personal gain, therefore going beyond simple application and enforcement of policies. Three recently established organizations, like EFCC, the ICPC, and the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), are trying to encourage integrity in government. The ICPC's job is to educate the public and raise awareness about corruption, enforce laws related to this, and review public sector systems and policies to reduce the chances of corruption. Conversely, the EFCC bears responsibilities for the fight against financial fraud, 419 crimes, and fund laundering for terrorism. Still, the public is also beginning to feel that the ICPC and EFCC have overlapping roles. Those who know the statutes building the ICPC and EFCC, however, contend that the concept of economic crime, which includes corruption, is where there is the most overlap. The anti-corruption agencies have gained some level of public trust through their efforts. This defines the functions in a way that the public can easily comprehend; it will significantly increase public trust.

(b)Institutions for public service delivery

Delivery of public services mostly depends on the civil service as a tool and system. Civil service support is found in federal, state, and local government policies as well as helps or controls the private sector and offers management leadership to public sector organizations. The three most crucial elements influencing the capacity of the Nigerian civil service to perform its statutory duties are a modernized office infrastructure, attractive salaries and benefits, and the ability to attract and retain highly skilled personnel. The federal civil service reforms, aided by the Service Compact (SERICOM) with Nigerians, have rightfully focused on enhancing compensation and benefits,

increasing the number of personnel labelled as professionals, and strengthening public services. A lot of work is still ahead before the office infrastructure of the civil service aligns with that of many emerging nations. Furthermore, it is debatable whether the new pay scale has improved the lives of general government employees. While a high salary motivates one to work harder and demonstrate more dedication to public service, it does not guard one from fraud and corruption.

(c)The Judicial Institutions

A market economy cannot exist without the judiciary; hence, every democracy depends on it as well. The court not only settles disputes involving private sector companies but also resolves conflicts among various branches of government, between individuals and their government, and among individuals themselves. Some of the above-described characteristics are even more pertinent since the importance of excellent institutions to national stability and economic development makes them indispensable. Institutions should guarantee these elements to build public confidence by using qualified people with the required moral fiber and technical knowledge to grasp and apply organizational rules and practices.

It is just as difficult to implement systems that promote long-term democracy and efficient governance. The three main components of institutional development are establishing rules, hiring individuals who possess the right combination of technical expertise and moral integrity to understand and adhere to those rules while advancing the organization's objectives, and ensuring that the institution fosters public trust through consistency, fairness, and transparency. Nigeria has to strengthen or create its institutions if it wants to achieve its national goals of sustainable development and



democratic governance. All of the above is related to leadership, which is a crucial part of establishing a nation and includes the important personal qualities of a great leader, such as being competent, honest, and loyal (Nein, 2025).

Particularly on divisive issues such as politics, the nation's highest court, the Supreme Court, has attracted much popular confidence and appreciation recently for its sage rulings. As Nigeria's democratic process develops gradually, leaders have come to give legal remedies top priority above local frenzy among their followers and loyalists, therefore fostering public faith in the courts. Conflicts of interest, particularly in electoral courts and subsequently in judicial courts, should not be involved in the resolution of election-related conflicts. Violence during elections has pulled at the social fabric of several African nations. In Nigeria's past, there has also been a tremendous deal of meaningless bloodshed. Nigerians increasingly realize that turning to violence in electoral conflicts is useless, mostly due to the logical verdicts our courts have delivered many times. Still, the court has no authority to recognize the results or guarantee that the election is fair and free. Not depending just on opinions about violence from electoral tribunals or courts will help define democracy.

(d) Institutions for Economic Governance

A market economy like Nigeria's cannot function without certain institutions in place. There must be a body with the power to regulate the monetary and financial system (the central bank), distribute funds to organizations and individuals (the banking and stock exchange sectors), protect businesses from financial risks (the insurance industry), guarantee a certain amount of protection for bank depositors (up to a certain

limit), enforce legal obligations (the courts), and collect taxes (the fiscal authorities). In terms of effectiveness, our national systems of economic governance differ somewhat. Still, changes in the financial industry have helped people have more trust in banks, including ours specifically, and we have been able to grow into other areas of the region. A fundamental issue in public policy is how to guarantee fair development that everyone gains from growth and wealth. Nigeria has made little progress in advancing fair development policies. Two main resources for sharing are the affordability of medical treatment and the housing scheme for the populace.

According to Agbiboa (2023), the current predicament in Nigeria is a result of ineffective government, according to renowned novelist Chinua Achebe. When it comes to establishing a nation, there are two main ways in which leadership may help. Honesty, ethics, dedication, and competence are the bedrock qualities of great leaders. Secondly, a unified elite ought to be goal-oriented, ambitious, and have a shared vision for the future. There is much to be desired when one considers our recruiting policies and the outcomes attained by our leaders over the years. Leaders should not identify with a tiny subset of their voters and behave in line with that. Nigeria cannot have leaders who lack even knowledge of the political and financial issues facing their country, let alone the capability of offering long-term solutions to the nation. Nigeria needs leaders who prioritize justice over the suppression of dissent. Individuals who profess support for a cause while undermining it are unwelcome. Those who adhere to and respect the law merit their positions. Leaders who prioritize personal interests over their national and constitutional duties are unfit for leadership. To achieve our goal of nation-building, we



need leaders who are dedicated to upholding the rule of law. Such leaders must embody tolerance and fairness within a democratic framework, demonstrate competence and integrity, and possess the foresight to transcend the superficial allure of power. They seek leaders who inspire through actions rather than mere rhetoric, who maintain honesty without resorting to deceit, and who can foster a Nigeria superior to its current state.

5. Democracy in Distress: Unpacking Nigeria's Democratic Crisis

A crisis occurs whenever society encounters a pivotal moment, whether positive or negative. Consequently, a democratic crisis would mark a pivotal moment in the democratic evolution of a society. Osaghae (2001) argues that such a crisis might lead to either the continuation or reversal of democratic ideals such as liberty, independence, civil and political rights, a free press, constitutional law, respect for the law, and freedom from tyranny.

Given the present social and political environment of Africa, social, economic, environmental, and cultural rights have to be given top priority at this point of development. Democracy cannot mean anything to someone who is impoverished, illiterate, unemployed, and famished. Environmental and other injustices deny people the resources they need to survive, even in poverty. Still, the African state is a big participant, even if efforts to minimize it are there. The attraction of the elite as a method of acquiring wealth probably drives them to do whatever it takes to get, unite, and keep political influence. The overinflated situation prioritizes strength above all else. Therefore, political leadership is mostly responsible for the absence of democracy and progress in Nigeria. Following independence, the quality of political leadership in Nigeria

has significantly declined. Their political and economic management has been dishonest and ineffective, as they have placed more emphasis on distribution than on production. In 1984, Achebe summed up the challenge as a leadership one. Given the nature of the leaders of the nation, it should not surprise anyone that human security is under danger. The political elite is likely experiencing a lack of discipline and unity, which is impeding their ability to create social and economic stability (Okibe, 2022).

Poverty is a major factor in the country's social, political, and economic problems. Poverty is diametrically opposed to the basic values and principles of democracy. People get furious and sometimes aggressive when they are destitute despite having enough to eat. Such behavior limits the people's ability to make their own decisions and be involved in the process. Both their self-assurance and their ability to demand accountability from their representatives in government have declined. But corruption feeds and aggravates social poverty. It has rendered civilian power unstable and slowed the spread of democratic achievements. According to Punch Newspaper (July 7, 2024), it claims that any nation striving to build and enhance democracy and good governance has a great challenge from corruption. As this shows, democracy cannot be expected to flourish on a politically unstable basis. Corruption operates as a destroyer, seriously tarnishing the fundamental beliefs and values of democracy.

Another issue is that ethno-religious elements are a main reason for the sociopolitical unrest in the nation. As seen by the current sectarian strife and the different ethnic group aspirations for the presidency, tribal and religious conflicts still separate the nation (Victor, 2002). Each ethnic group in Nigeria seems to have a different economic fate



depending on faith, interest, culture, language, degree of desire, etc. They also make it more difficult to develop a shared identity, which in turn makes achieving sufficient democracy much more challenging. All these factors contribute to the extreme social disparity in Nigeria, which includes violations of civil and human rights, restricted freedom of expression, a lack of social security, and a lack of distributive justice.

Equally, another obstacle to Nigerian democratic consolidation is political godfatherism. Political kings and gladiators play on the system to mesmerize their crowned political stewards in the system. Ogundiya (2010) claims that godfatherism is an expression of the inherent violence and corruption in Nigeria's political structure. Neglecting the state's corporate character, they manage state resources and policies. Actually, their actions hinder the democratic process of candidates from elected offices, therefore aggravating the fundamental democratic ideals in society and making the emergence of real democracy a difficult task. (Awuudu, 2012)

The stability of Nigeria's government is crucial to the country's efforts to solidify its democracy. These include the northern Nigerian election-related violence in 2011, the continual unrest in Jos, a city that was once a haven of peace and tourism, and the sectarian carnage perpetrated by Boko Haram. The X-ray of these disruptions clearly shows that our democracy is under serious stress. Dauda and Avidime (2007) argue that the current state of national security significantly hinders the growth of democracy. They suggest that the difficult environment for foreign investment, along with poor leadership and political instability, is a major problem. Kwasan (2013) states, "The tense security situation across the

country makes pointless any efforts to justify the continuation of our democratic experiment." To maintain the current administration's grip on power, even with significant public dissent, a range of measures have been implemented.

6. Conclusion/Recommendations

The paper emphasizes primal emotions, nation-building, and the ongoing democratic problem. The nation has been looking for democracy that works since gaining its freedom. What this means should be of immense relevance to all peace-loving Nigerians. The idea of democracy is one that people argue over. Finding methods to modify liberal democracy to fit the heterogeneity of the nation is the way ahead. One very important problem exposed in the paper is that capitalist ideas and philosophy help explain a lot of the ethnic concerns raised in Nigeria. Thus, given ethnic conflict and rivalry for limited resources, the inclination to dominate and keep accumulating the resource base of the Nigerian state long after the colonial rulers have left strengthens itself. The study employs a qualitative research style that utilizes a thematic approach. The analysis draws upon a wide range of secondary qualitative data sources, including government documents, policy statements (e.g., Nigeria's National Security Strategy), academic literature, and journal articles on Nigerian governance and political economy. It also relied on credible media reporting, electoral violence, and security lapses. Still, the current wave of ethnic conflict in Nigeria serves as evidence of the system's depravity, which struggles to maintain national cohesion, relevance, and integration in all their aspects.

The finding of the study shows increasing violence; it is deeply concerning to see it as the primary factor undermining constitutional



democracy across Africa, including Nigeria. Social disintegration, which endangers the human rights and liberties upon which democracies are based, could be the most significant challenge to democracies today. The Nigerian security system tends to be more reactive than proactive, often waiting for a crisis to occur before hastily addressing it. The strategy may have been effective in the past, but we can't solve today's challenges with solutions from yesterday. Moreover, the problem that has occasionally threatened the Nigerian state's very survival cannot be solved by a straightforward political and economic transformation of the country, as it also requires addressing deep-rooted issues such as corruption, social inequality, and regional tensions that contribute to instability.

Enthroning real democracy based on the people's cultural values, which comprise what has been defined as the universal principles of democracy, is the first significant step towards resolving the chronic problem of crisis and conflict inside the Nigerian state. Encouragement of social justice, equity, distributive justice, and good government should come from here. This will lower political discontent, tension, and unnecessary rivalry for space, thus fostering a proper democracy in the twenty-first century and forward.

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