

## Nigeria's Problems

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### ABSTRACT

Nigeria as a country is facing a myriad of problems which are militating against its development among the comity of nations. According to the Nigeria citizens survey in 2020, some of the most important problems facing Nigeria today that the government should address are crime and security, unemployment, electricity access, and infrastructure and roads quality. Other challenges of the country also include violence, separatist agitations, abuses by Armed Islamists, accountability for serious crimes, freedom of expression, media, and association, etc. To many Nigerians, instead of the these problems to dissipate, they have continued to escalate at an alarming rate from the time of Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister between 1960 and 1966, to the incumbent President Bola Tinubu, who was sworn in on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2023. This paper presents some of the problems confronting Nigeria and the way forward.

**KEYWORDS:** *Boko Haram, Separatist agitations, Armed Islamists, Poverty, Regionalism*

### INTRODUCTION

With the 2023 presidential election over, the president would need to fix the problems of dwindling economy, high cost of living, insecurity, poverty cum hardship, poor infrastructure, unemployment, fuel price hike, inflation, tribal and religious divisions, among others. The high cost of living and other economic issues have combined to worsen the current situation to increase the country's poverty level, which according to the National Bureau of Statistics, stands at 133 million Nigerians that are multi-dimensionally poor out of over 200 million citizens [1]. There is also the issue of corruption in government, compounding the country's woes before the present government, further impoverishing the masses. Some of the cases of corruption have been resolved but while some others are inconclusive. The institutions to fight corruption such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) are just like barking dogs that cannot bite. Another woe is that of insecurity, with increasing level of kidnapping, armed robbery, rape, and other social vices. The educational sector is also faced with a lot of problems, among

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which are incessant strike and the increase in tuition fees in tertiary institutions. Workers are facing nonpayment of their increments, non promotion as at when due, and a host of others.

According to Paul A. Adekunte, et al., 2023, the history of corruption in Nigeria dates back to 1954 as was reported by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) 2007, when Late Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe was accused by the Chief Whip of the then Eastern Region House of Assembly of using his position to transfer government funds to support the African Continental Bank, in which he allegedly had a substantial personal interest [2, 3], this tantamount to corruption.

The expectations of Nigerians from the present government of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is high, and he should endeavor not to fail the masses of this great nation. There are about 52.2 million young people within the age bracket of 18 – 35 which is about 28% of Nigeria's total population and more than the entire populations of Ghana and Benin Republic put together. These young and resourceful people are largely being marginalized from

governance in the country. The country is ripe to engage the youths to participate in politics (political participation) and good governance, as this will help promote political development, enhance human capital and improve transparency. Nigeria's governance ranking, according to Nairaland Forum, a Nigerian website, declined between 2016 and 2021, in which Nigeria ranked 30<sup>th</sup> on the continent – data obtained from the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Governance covers a wide range of issues, which include security, the rule of law, participation, rights and inclusion, economic opportunity, human development, and public perception. Currently, Nigeria ranks 143 out of 163 countries globally in the Global Peace Index [4].

### CURRENT SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria known as Africa's most populous country, the largest economy and most notable democracy, as well as a bellwether for the continent. The little achievement in its democratic development is currently under the threat of weakening economy, rising insecurity, coupled with deepening distrust in government and its institutions. Nigeria's federal system gives the governors great responsibilities in addressing the issues driving the country's multiple conflicts, farmer-herder violence, deepening regional divides, armed banditry, and Boko Haram insurgency. The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) brings together state governors, national policymakers, and civic leaders to design and implement inclusive policies that mitigate violence and strengthen community-oriented security. The institute also engages a variety of influential figures, empowers citizens and uses its expertise and convening power to inform Nigeria policy in the United States, the region and around the world. Some of the recent works of USIP include [5]:

- Nigeria working group on peace-building and governance: Since 2016, this working group has fostered relationships between citizens, policymakers and national and international figures to ensure that a diverse array of voices impact decision-making processes. The working group is regularly invited by state and national policymakers to provide recommendations on a range of issues, from inclusive governance and electoral violence to communal conflicts between pastoralists and farming communities.
- Network of Nigerian Facilitators (NNF): This is a group of professional peace mediators who are trained by USIP to resolve local conflicts through nonviolent means across several states throughout the country. NNF dialogues focus on strengthening community-security sector

relationships and mitigating inter-communal, pastoralist-farmer and election-related violence, which has been in operation since 2019.

- Working with state governments and peace-building institutions: USIP helps governors and state peace-building institutions to establish inclusive, cooperative strategies that prevent and resolve violent conflicts; ensure that policies focus on citizens' needs; stem the potential for all forms of violence; and allow communities to play meaningful roles in the transition process.
- Strengthening local security: Through USIP's ongoing Justice and Security Dialogue project, citizens at the local level collectively identify security challenges and organize dialogues that bring together internally displaced communities and police in Northeast Nigeria to develop practical and concrete solutions to address security concerns, build trust and foster accountability.
- Informed policy through research: The USIP conducts research on governance and security to better advise Nigerian policymakers in their response to these challenges.
- Convening stakeholders: USIP convenes government officials, partners and civic leaders at its U.S. headquarters and Nigeria country office for candid conversations that foster collaboration and inform policy and program priorities. The USIP in 2019 hosted eminent US and Nigerian civic leaders and government officials for a roundtable to explore the state of Nigerian governance 20 years into its democratic transition. In 2020, the USIP also hosted discussions with the Nigerian ministers of foreign affairs and humanitarian affairs and senior US policymakers. While throughout the pandemic, USIP convened a series of virtual roundtables with Nigerian federal and state policymakers and key stakeholders to examine COVID-19's impact on security and governance.
- Expanding the institute's field work: USIP in 2020 officially established a country office in Abuja, which is to allow the impactful operations of the institute, broaden its regional scope, and sustain its direct action for peace in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a regionally dominant and keystone state. The recently concluded democratic elections in Nigeria, if allowed to survive and deliver the dividend of democracy, as observed by some analysts, would revitalize the hopes of democratic reformers in other countries. With a host of serious challenges facing the country, if the leadership can get it right this time

around, this would alter the country's trajectory for the better, allowing its youthful, creative and entrepreneurial energy to be harnessed for the good of all, but if otherwise, would not augur well for the future [6].

### **CORRUPTION**

Since independence, Nigeria has lost hundreds of billions of United States dollars due to corruption and its Corruption Perception Index score has worsened since 2016 [7]. The low focus on corruption was as a result of the failure of Buhari's anti-corruption war, which was central to his 2015 campaign [8]. Some other major issues such as insecurity and poverty have taken the centre stage, corruption is still a pervasive policy problem [9]. Past and present leaders in Nigeria, whether living or dead don't have any clean record with respect to corruption. In his platform, Abubakar identified corruption as a "major problem" that "denies millions of people their fundamental freedoms and human rights" before vowing to enact "institutional reforms of anti-corruption agencies" to strengthen them along with creating a "comprehensive National Anti-corruption Strategy" [10]. However, Tinubu's manifesto noted fighting corruption as a benefit of its civil service and judicial reforms [11, 12].

The report by Kunle Sanni in 2023, mentioned that Buhari has famously remarked during his 2015 campaigns in acknowledging the threat that corruption poses to the country saying that "corruption will kill Nigeria if Nigeria does not kill corruption." In a similar vein, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has said that "corruption affects all aspects of public life, continues to undermine the social, economic and political development of the country and is a major obstacle to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals." Buhari in his eight years in the saddle has brought little improvement in the level of corruption, as evidenced in the United States Department of States' 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices in Nigeria, which stated that there was still massive, widespread and pervasive corruption at all levels of government. This was attributed to lack of consistent implementation of the relevant laws against corrupt practices in public offices. During the later years of Mr Buhari's administration, Nigeria had an unimpressive ranking on the Transparency International (TI's) annual Corruption Perception Index (CPI), a tool for assessing the prevalence of corruption in countries, as Nigeria came 150<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries in the latest 2022 ranking.

The stagnancy of the points Nigeria recorded this year as commented by the Civil Society Legislative

Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), which is Nigerian chapter of TI, said that the pardon granted two former governors serving jail terms for corruption by former president, Mr Buhari, based on the grounds of age and ill-health, in the person of Joshua Dariye of Plateau State (serving 10 years' imprisonment for 1.126 billion naira fraud) and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State (serving a 12-year jail sentence for diverting 1.64 billion naira) in 2022 "is a major setback in the efforts for the country's fight against corruption," declared Auwal Rafsanjani, the CISLAC Executive Director [13].

### **POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Political violence in Nigeria is a trade mark by which Nigeria is well identified with as collaborated by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), the Nigeria Election Violence Tracker, an interactive resource created in partnership with the Nigeria-based Centre for Democracy and Development (CDC). The three patterns of election violence identified were: the impact of violence between party supporters and against candidates; attacks on Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices and staff; and the involvement of regional outfits and criminal gangs. Every four years as election approaches, there is always the surge in violent events involving political parties followed by insecurity, which has been since 1999 and most often along ethnic and sectarian lines, leading to multiple rounds of revenge killings and even destructions to properties. The magnitude of electoral unrest was recorded at its highest in 2011 when clashes between supporters of the then-ruling PDP and the Congress for Progressive Changed – which later merged into APC – claimed an estimated 800 lives following the election of President Goodluck Jonathan [14]. Also, some few hundreds were reported to have died during the 2015 and 2019 elections that followed [15].

Despite the peace accord before the 2023 polls, candidates and leaders of the 18 political parties agreed in September 2022 and signed a peace accord committing to a peaceful campaign. According to the leader of the National Peace Committee, the accord calls on all parties to refrain from using "violence, incitement and personal insults" against opponents, which has marred electoral campaigns in recent years [16]. This has always been a lip service to the so-called peace accord since the politicians and the state agents have often been held responsible for promoting hate speech against rival candidates and ethnic and religious communities [17]. The mobilization of armed militias, gangs, and state security forces at the behest of local elites is intended



to depress voter turnout and maximize vote shares in key battleground constituencies [18, 20].

### **THE ECONOMY**

It is observed that the years ahead of the election would be extremely difficult for the national economy as a result of debilitating recessions, high inflation, decelerating economic growth, and increasing unemployment. This is coupled with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has resulted to skyrocketed food prices and millions of people are projected to fall into poverty if the trends persist. The country is also at risk of losing its frontier market status due to shortage in United States dollars cum poor economic situation leading to fears to further social unrest [21]. Buhari has repeatedly claimed that his administration has improved the nation, some analysts have blamed his economic policies for compounding the crisis as massive borrowing plus underwhelming revenue led total debt payment to exceed government's revenue by mid-2022 [22, 23].

### **ETHNIC IDENTITY**

Political questions on identity are said to be based on region and religion, as ethnicity plays a major role in elections since 1983 with the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria i.e. the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba. Bad enough, the Igbo as one of the largest three ethnicities has never produced an elected president. Civil Society Organizations and opposing campaigns intensely rebuked Atiku Abubakar for stocking ethnic divisions in his campaign in an October speech where he said that "northerners did not need Yoruba or Igbo candidates" – which violates Section 97 of the Electoral Act 2022, which led to fears of ethnic-based electoral violence [24].

### **INFRASTRUCTURE**

Nigeria is facing serious infrastructural problems across the nation such as lack of modern urban public transportation system, deteriorated highway network due to lack/absence of maintenance, often used as election campaigns. The investment and expanded transportation projects embarked upon by the then Buhari government, such as the Lagos-Kano Standard Gauge Railway and the Nnamdi Azikwe International Airport rehabilitation, was just like a drop of water in the ocean. His second term in office 2019-2023, witnessed continued failures in providing basic access to electricity due to multiple massive power grid collapses in 2022 [25, 26]. Despite the billions of naira spent on other new infrastructure projects like the Lekki Deep Sea Port and gas pipelines have proven fruitful as more projects begin operations regardless of setbacks and delays [27]. However, later

reporting reiterated that the nation could not afford the debts incurred for projects with little guarantee of proper maintenance [28, 29].

According to Dasuki, he revealed that "security" was just a slush fund for politicians, and that for Nigeria to earn the respect as the "military powerhouse of Africa," it must secure its borders and protect its people. The healthcare system is in a state of comatose and nothing to write home about as more Nigerians are killed, not exactly by infections. The country's health system is sick, and how can a sickly system cure the sick? The health infrastructure spending is less than 1% of the budget. All Nigerians need to have access to quality healthcare, through health insurance plan, a sense of dedication and proper remuneration for our medical workforce with huge investment in health [30], as shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3.

Furthermore is the unstable or epileptic power challenges of which many cities and communities in Nigeria lack access to stable power supply, according to Ogunode, Dahir, Yahaya & Jegede (2021) [31]; and as reported by Punch (2022) that Nigeria has the lowest access to electricity globally, with about 92 million persons out of the total population of 200 million people in Nigeria are lacking access to power [32].

### **INSECURITY SITUATION**

With the deteriorating security nationwide: the terrorists in the northeast; in the northwest is the deadly bandit conflict plus terrorist expansion; the north central with herder-farmer and interethnic conflicts/more terrorist expansion; the Niger Delta are the pirates and illegal oil bunkering gangs; and South East is with the violent separatist movement [33-35]. Regional crises, continued proliferation of kidnapping/mob violence along with an epidemic of security force brutality have affected the entire country and have led to increasing reliance on vigilantes and public anger at the perceived indifference of the administration [36-39]. During the primaries and election campaigns of the various political parties, there were violent attacks witnessed by the presidential aspirants and of which the three major contestants stated the steps they would adopt in their manifestos. For Tinubu, he is a long time advocate for state police; while Peter Obi said he would focus on security force cooperation, look at the economy, and as well focus on reversing the loss of jobs; and Atiku mentioned job creation and boosting the police number [40]. Concrete and workable plans are needed, for it is when peace or security is ensured that development can take place.

## EDUCATION

There are lots of challenges facing the education system in Nigeria. According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), there are about 20 million out-of-school children in 2022 and with issues on early childhood education and primary school attendance, especially among girls and in the North. There is the impact of insecurity on schools and four university strikes, the nine-month long and the eight-month long 2020 and 2022 Academic Staff Union of Universities strikes respectively. The rising insecurity in 2021 and 2022, as well as the mass kidnappings of schoolchildren and preemptive school closures for safety has made education dangerous while the government-ASUU dispute and the union's ensuing strike led to mass protests as activists criticized the alleged indifference of the Buhari administration [41, 42]. Nigeria has consistently failed in the implementation of UNESCO's recommended percentage to developing countries to invest 15% to 20% of their yearly budget on education, as shown in Figure 4. For example, in 2022 this sector got 1.29 trillion naira (7.9%) out of 16.39 trillion naira; 771.5 billion naira (5.68%) out of 13.58 trillion naira in 2021; and 671.07 billion naira (6.7%) out of 10.33 trillion naira in 2020 [43]. In the midst of the nations' educational woes, the three forefront political parties made mention of how they would tackle these problems in their agenda.

## NATIONAL UNITY

The 2022 Africa Polling Institute (API) Social Cohesion Survey polls showed low levels of affinity for the nation and high dissatisfaction with the status quo, with reports that vast majority of citizens feel connected to their Nigerian identity, but while vast majority also fear for Nigeria unity [44, 45]. In order to maintain the unity of the country, the government should ensure a "government of national unity" under "true federalism" with equal opportunity for all.

## RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Nigeria is a country of religious diversity, just as ethnicity, and therefore people have very strong affinity for their religious inclinations, which affects their choices in politics in terms of which political candidate/party to vote for during elections. The two main dominant religions are Christianity and Islam. The last election saw Tinubu picked Shettima as his vice-president – which was seen as a Muslim-Muslim ticket, and was intensely opposed by many Nigerians, particularly many Christians/civil organizations, but there was argument that qualification should take precedence over religious affiliation [46]. Another dangerous dimension is the lackadaisical, lack of political will and plans to combat religious

violence/intolerance – the case of Deborah Samuel Yakubu (a Christian university student) who was lynched by a mob in Sokoto (on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022) after she was accused of blaspheming prophet Muhammad. This barbaric action was condemned by the President Buhari, Osinbajo, civil society, religious groups, serving national leaders, and while those arrested were freed by the court, revealing the level of lawlessness in the nation [47].

## SOCIAL POLICY

Social policy is concerned with the ways societies across the world meet human needs for security, education, work, health and wellbeing. This has to do with how states and societies respond to global challenges of social, demographic and economic change, and of poverty, migration and globalization. It analyses the different roles of: national governments, the family, civil society, the market, and international organizations in providing services and support across the life course from childhood to old age. These services and support are in the area of child and family support, schooling and education, housing and neighbourhood renewal, income maintenance and poverty reduction, unemployment support and training, pensions, health and social care. Social policy aims to identify and find ways of reducing inequalities in access to services and support between social groups defined by socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, migration status, gender, sexual orientation, disability and age, and between countries [48].

Policy debates on the social position of women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups took a prominent stand before the election. In 2022, there was initial legislative rejection of constitutional amendments mandating women seats in the legislature. With the partial rescinding of the rejection by the parliamentary leadership later, there was a wave of pro-equality protests across the nation in March 2022 as a show of force from women's rights organizations [49].

## REGIONAL IDENTITY

"Regionalism" is a political ideology that favors a region of a country to be more important than the whole. It is related to the ideology of sectionalism and while the region that is the focus of regionalism is often referred to as the "home region." For regional identity to be held, one must have a strong and deeply rooted sense of local identity, a belief that the local geographic region and the community that lives in it are important and unique. The second is that one must desire for the autonomy of that people and region, which may mean complete independence, or that the region has economic or political free reign while still

being considered a part of a larger political state. Local identity is considered the most important part of regionalism. The consequences of regionalism can be positive and negative [50].

Some of the positive impacts of regionalism are [51]:

- Encourages local development that can lead to better infrastructure, increased employment opportunities, and improved living standards for the people in those areas.
- Preserves cultural heritage.
- Fosters diversity.
- Encourages innovation and creativity that would result to economic growth and increased competitiveness in the global marketplace.
- Promotes democratic participation i.e. through which local communities can have greater say in decision-making processes. This will lead to increased trust by the citizens in the government, reduce feelings of marginalization and exclusion among the people living in the region.

The negative impacts of regionalism are:

- Fragmentation of the nation.
- Conflict and violence which could lead to protests, riots and even armed conflicts due to regions competing for resources or political power.
- Economic disparities.
- Political instability.
- Loss of cultural diversity.
- Hindrance to national development.

The pundits in the Nigeria polity, have observed that the regional power-sharing “federal character” principle was disregarded and lopsided by the Buhari administration to the glare of all, which has led some analysts to worry for a political system that normalizes regional exclusion [52]. Subsequent administrations in the country must opt for inclusiveness in governance to enhance peace and political stability.

### **BAD LEADERSHIP**

Political parties and their delegates are the causes of serious harm to Nigeria because they present to Nigerians bad leaders as a result of corrupt practices of vote-buying. As stipulated in legislation by Section 84 of the Electoral Act 2022, each political party must use the process of consensus, direct, or indirect primary elections to select their party’s flag bearer. The political parties and their delegates misrepresent the will of their constituencies by selling their votes to the highest bidders, thereby presenting corrupt/bad leadership for Nigerians to choose one. In Nigeria, indirect primaries were adopted by major political parties, with the process alleged to be full of vote-buying, where delegates were paid in US dollars. For

instance, the All Progressives Congress (APC) aspirant, Rotimi Amaechi, stated that delegates who voted at the APC primary were bribed to influence the outcome of the convention. Mallam Lanre Issa-Onilu, APC’s National Publicity Secretary, accused the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) of deploying \$111 million to buy votes. Senator Ali Ndume accused the PDP of introducing vote-buying in Nigeria’s electoral system. As a result of this, many of the best candidates lost as they could not afford to buy their delegates, and those with integrity and were determined to never buy delegates, lost to the highest bidders. Insecurity in Nigeria can be tied to bad leadership and corruption.

Lee Kuan Yew, the celebrated father of modern Singapore, in his discussion on leadership, wrote in his book: “From Third World to First: The Singapore Story, 1965 – 2000,” “we need good people to have good government.” Hence, no matter how good the system of government may be, bad leaders will bring harm to their people [53, 54].

### **CONCLUSION**

Some of the identified problems of the country as enumerated above, would require our urgent and collective desire to proffer solutions to them. Nigeria should take a cue from the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, India, and a host of other countries that were formerly third world countries but have been transformed through leadership focus to be among the developed nations today, despite their own peculiar challenges. Our challenges as a nation are surmountable if we can refocus, have dedicated/pragmatic leadership, and dedicated followership, etc. Unemployment, corruption, kidnapping and other social vices should be properly addressed by the government. The judicial system must be independent and corruption must be fought to a standstill at all levels of governance.

The Nigeria government should increase budgetary allocation to the education sector (in line with the UNESCO recommendation for developing countries to invest 15% to 20% of their yearly budget on education) to boost human capital skills (i.e. human capital development) that drive a knowledge-based economy, and as well subsidize learning to make it affordable to everyone etc.

The government must address the power needs of the country, making electricity supply stable and accessible to help boost the economy, coupled with massive infrastructural development.

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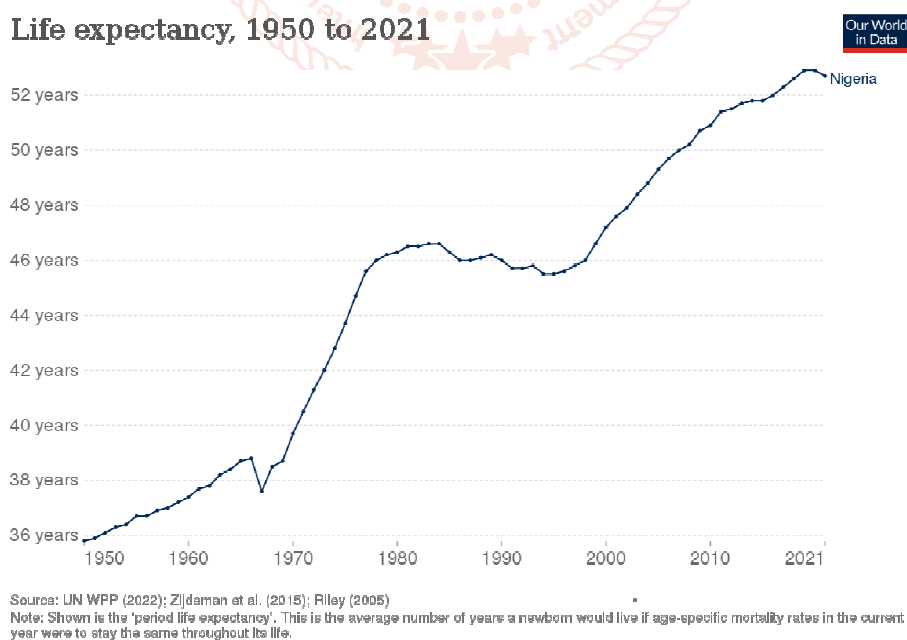
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**Figure 1. Kano governor vows to equip dilapidated Muhammed Wase teaching hospital.**



**Figure 2. Life expectancy**  
**Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life\\_Expectancy\\_in\\_Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_Expectancy_in_Nigeria)**



**Figure 3. Bad roads in Nigeria.**



**Figure 4. Dilapidated school.**