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**ASSESSING THE PREVALENCE OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY**

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Abstract

Uncertainty in politics is a social fact. The nation's unity and peaceful coexistence are constantly threatened by political instability, which is a common occurrence in politics. The sense of social unfairness and discrimination by the general public, coupled with the government's inability to address the issues that most people encounter, leads to political instability. Thus, a breakdown of political instability, together with its causes and national ramifications, is investigated in this research. Despite major national leadership efforts to lower its occurrence, it nevertheless affects even the most developed countries in the world. This study examines the prevalence of political instability in modern society using critical analysis approaches. However, a thorough understanding of the characteristics, causes, and sources of political instability is necessary in order to solve the issue. This is the main aim of



this work. Thus, the study examines the characteristics and fundamental causes of political instability in contemporary society.

Keywords: Political Instability, Politics, Good Governance, National Unity

Introduction

A common phenomenon that continues to dominate the political scene in many countries is political instability. The natural tendency of a government to collapse due to escalating tensions or disagreements between various political factions that can occasionally degenerate into violence is known as political instability. In addition to causing political instability, a sudden change in government or policy can increase the likelihood of future instability. Political stability and economic prosperity are intimately related. Every political system, including democratic ones, has its weaknesses. An unstable political climate can cause uncertainty that slows down investment in the country in question and slows down the rate of economic growth. Political instability and the fall of governments can result from poor economic performance. Political instability can hinder development through repression and unfavorable change and lead to social, ethnic, or national disintegration. It may also result in increased foreign influence or interference.

Corruption and significant changes can also lead to instability and ultimately the peaceful or violent overthrow of a government, regardless of internal political struggle. This could be slow or rapid, with the ability to bring about change rapidly. Major, erratic upheavals in many of the world's former stable regimes can seriously disrupt daily life and result in insufficient security, which encourages the rise of terrorism and serious criminal activity in today's societies. This can also happen fast in the age of social media and technology, which can accelerate the emergence of dangerous circumstances in countries and regions that were previously believed to be safe.

In addition to endangering the safety of anyone caught in these areas, this can also negatively impact transportation connections through and around the violent or disrupted area. For instance, Nigeria, often known as the "giant of Africa," has seen and still experiences many unstable periods of violence and strife.

Political instability spread throughout the country due to rivalry and mistrust between various ethnic groups, making the process of breaking through the political power corridor violent and contentious. Nigeria is still affected by the unfair and oppressive systems left behind by the previous colonial rulers, which date back to the pre-independence era. The inevitable results are weak state institutions and a never-ending struggle for political supremacy. The welfare of the general public and the advancement of the country as a whole are frequently sacrificed in the process. Despite the nation's wealth of natural and human resources, this is still the case. Nigeria attained independence in 1960, but the nation has struggled to establish political stability and progress. This must have something to do with the nation's unstable political and social environment, which is seen in the high rates of poverty, corruption, poor planning and execution, and general lack of discipline in society. Political unrest has been a major issue that has shook Nigeria with violence during a decade's time of independence and in the years following the civil war, which began in 1967 and ended in 1970. Several incidents of sporadic violence and counterattacks by other regions have occurred due to Nigeria's geopolitical situation. The root causes of violence in the country routinely lead to



unpredictable negative outcomes, including as bombings, the deaths of innocent people, and political instability that destabilizes already vulnerable regions. None of this would have occurred if the nation hadn't been gripped by the fear and danger that have pervaded it thus far.

A Discussion of Political Instability

It is necessary to understand political instability in order to understand political stability, which is the opposite of political instability. As a result, we examined other people's conceptions of political stability and concluded that it is the consistency of a government and its activities meant to fulfill its obligations to the people. Political stability comprises social peace, good governance (i.e., the pursuit of the common good), and national security. It also promotes social, economic, and political progress. According to the preceding definition of political stability, we define political instability as the lack of the aforementioned. The uncertainty of a government and its acts meant to fulfill its duty to the public in a way that undermines its fundamental ideals can thus be defined as political instability. According to Unah, political instability is also known as the phenomena of change itself, which is characterized as frequent social change, particularly when that change upsets the established political order (Unah, 1995: 106). One form of social instability is political instability. In light of the aforementioned, a politically unstable society is best described by the Hobbesian hypothetical state of nature, in which people act whenever, however, and however they wish.

Due to the terrible conditions in the natural world, there is continuously conflict and the uncertainty that goes along with it. This state of affairs affects every facet of society; hence, life is brief, harsh, and disagreeable. At their core, political stability and instability are concepts related to politics. These concepts, however, become philosophical and socio-political when philosophy illuminates politics. Philosophy has its roots in man. He is simultaneously the one who creates civil society and the one who receives it. Philosophy and society are therefore closely related. The reason for this is that "All human transactions, be they intellectual or practical, take place within the matrix of society, within a social context." [Unah, 2002: 10]. When men coexist, they interact, resolve conflicts, and make concessions that benefit both the individual and society at large. However, societal discord can sometimes lead to the total upheaval of society. Two philosophical explanations for such social discontent or political instability are (1) the essence of man and (2) the dynamic nature of society.

The Idea of Man as a Being

The philosophical examination of the nature of man continues to be an intriguing subject. While some thinkers think that man is inherently good, others think that he is selfish and wicked. But for some, he was a cross between the two. According to Thomas Hobbes, a society can only be freed from the state of nature- which is political instability and anarchy- if it is ruled by an all-powerful entity like the Leviathan. This is predicated upon Hobbes' contention that the essence of man's imaginary state of nature is his character. One way to summarize Hobbes' view of man is as follows: According to Hobbes, man is inherently self-centered and is motivated to act by his passions, appetites, and desires rather than by his intellect or reason. This type of war is characterized by an unending struggle between all people, primarily motivated by rivalry, insecurity, and a desire for glory, rather than an



organized combat. There is neither law nor justice. Man has a brief, harsh, unpleasant, and poor life (Appadorai, 1968: 22).

Appadorai's interpretation of human nature probably drew some inspiration from Hobbes. According to his argument, two realities generally arise from the observation of man's existence around us: first, every man wants to behave and think as he pleases, but second, he cannot have his own way because he is a part of society. Two men collide when their desires diverge. As a result, the government has to control how different elements of society interact with one another (3). John Locke and J.J. Rousseau see nature as a condition of dread, but they are different from Hobbes in that they do not view it as a state of conflict. Focusing on a single aspect of mankind is not feasible. Disregard the opposition. Throughout history, humanity has demonstrated itself to be both a sensible and a ferocious entity. The understanding that he is the main cause of political instability is based on human nature. This study agrees with existentialists, who hold that humans are products of their surroundings and need to find purpose in their lives. In nearly every case, he is put in a situation that only he can deal with. Recognizing the emptiness within himself, man makes every effort to purge himself of all impediments. According to J.P. Sartre, the constant struggle between people and nature intensifies into a pervasive uneasiness that he attributes to nothingness. Nothingness captures the folly of life and the emptiness of man. It inspires him to put in the effort to close the gaps in his life and get out of the different situations he finds himself in. Unah asserts that "being human is the origin of every form of instability" (Unah, 1995: 105) in light of the previously described.

The Strength of Society

Considering that society is made up of and run by individual men, if men are dynamic, then society must also be. Society gives the results or expressions of man's rationality concrete forms. Philosophers, especially social philosophers, have attempted to change their own worldviews by putting out ideas aimed at establishing society ideals. A society's life endeavor, as well as that of individual personalities in a sense, is made up of social organizations, national groups, and other human communities, according to Ogundowole (1991).

Collaboration between real people—both the led and the leaders—is necessary to fulfill assigned societal obligations. Because society is a collection of individuals, this is true. Together, these ideas provide the ontological notion of society as interpersonal relationships. According to Unah, the fundamental original meaning of society is to exist in a social setting and connect with others. Nonetheless, it became important to guide and regulate human interaction due to the disputes and friction that naturally accompany this type of unfettered participation (Unah, 2002: 11). The difficulty of balancing individual and collective interests can occasionally impede the attainment of social harmony. Conflict and disagreement lead to change, which is a natural part of society from the beginning. This is because, even though man gives up some of his liberties and rights to society, he still retains those that are essential and unalienable. Thus, even members of the ruling class may disagree about what the societal tasks of a given era are, and the completion of the assigned tasks may not follow the expected pattern, even in cases where the ruling class agrees. These are things he refuses to part with. Plato insisted that either ruler become philosophers or philosophers become rulers because of his perspective of the nature of man and how it relates to society. It is only possible for a just



society to be run by qualified individuals. Many academics, including Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Marx, acknowledged the influence that human nature had on society.

The Historical Root Causes of Political Instability

The economic conditions of society are empirically reflected in political instability. They stand for man's unique reaction to the state's acceptance or rejection of his giving up some of his rights, freedoms, and sovereignty. These factors are often linked to the way an individual or group feels that they are not being treated fairly. As a result, these are either individual or group reactions to the government's policies and programs- or lack thereof. Under the following four topics, we will discuss these issues: Economic, racial, ineffective governance, and tenacity in office

Political Instability's Economic Implications

A man's economy is his second most significant concern after his life and health. Man needs to be able to protect his life and health as much as is humanly possible, which calls for a strong economy. The fact that most men would stop at nothing to increase their financial status should therefore not be surprising. Nonetheless, the state is granted some of a man's economic rights for the simple reason that if everyone had complete autonomy to follow their own financial interests, society would collapse into anarchy. To guarantee that everyone has the opportunity to realize their full potential, the government must regulate citizens' economic activity. Economic crises either eventually cause or have the potential to cause political instability when there is economic inequality and/or economic mismanagement. When he addressed the United Nations Security Council on July 20, 2002. The Permanent Representative of France to the European Union, Ambassador Jean David Levitte, asserts that "economic and social development is the first aspect of conflict prevention" (Levitte: 2000). He said that "Poverty leads to frustration and revolts which may degenerate into conflicts." According to Freedom House Incorporated, income inequality directly contributes to political instability. It claims that "income inequality ultimately leads to instability, which in turn causes slow or negative growth, and, ultimately, weaker democracy" (Freedom House, 2000). Beyond economic disparities, the concept of economic crisis also includes a terrible economic situation caused by the government's economic policies—or lack thereof. Ineffective economic management and the government's inability to control the economy can also lead to political instability. Political instability and recent changes in administration in Argentina, Brazil, and Indonesia have been primarily caused by this. It goes without saying that the working class in Marx and Engels' Western Europe made a substantial contribution to the formation of the two philosophical and economic cornerstones of Marxism: dialectical materialism and historical materialism.

Effects of Cultural Discrimination

Political instability is often the result of cultural discrimination in multiethnic societies, even in some of the most developed societies of today. In the UK, for example, the conditions that led to the formation of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) have not completely vanished. In less developed societies, ethnic competition for state resources frequently makes social discrimination worse. For Caprioli and Trumbore, this means taking on the risk of political instability. A situation where social norms and policies perpetuate economic and political inequality- a society that discriminates against some of its members without cause (Gledisch, 2003: 7). Additionally, they agree with Van Evera's (8) perspective that "the risk of wars



increases with the severity with which nationalities oppress minorities living in their states." Ethnic differences in access to political and economic resources have an effect on political stability in such societies. Ethnic discrimination has often led to political instability in countries such as Burundi, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Sudan.

Inadequate Governance

In a democratic political system founded on the rule of law, good governance is the capacity of a government to effectively manage the state's resources in order to meet the fundamental needs of the people and allow them to reach their full potential (Abati, 2000: 4). Consequently, the following measures of effective governance have been established by the Africa Leadership Forum: 1. a genuine improvement in the welfare and standard of living of citizens; 2. sound economic management; 3. fair play, justice, and equity in government programs and initiatives; 5. fundamental human rights and the rule of law; 6. Less politicization of the public sector; 7. Public approval of political leadership through democratic channels; 8. Accountability and transparency; 9. Public law and order; 10. Discipline; 11. Implementing prudent foreign policy; and 12. Political stability (Somorin: 2001:1). Upholding the aforementioned helps the state accomplish its objectives. However, its absence suggests bad leadership, which may lead to revolutions and conflicts and ultimately political instability.

Obstinacy of Office

One modern sociopolitical source of political instability is public office holders' obstinacy, often known as the sit-tight syndrome. When leaders maintain their positions of authority in the face of blatant examples of bad administration, the conflict between the ruling class and the ruled is intensified. Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Cameroon, Togo, Algeria, Haiti, Zimbabwe, and Nigeria are just a handful of the many societies that have suffered significantly as a result of this condition. According to Babarinsa, the syndrome is common in African governments, which is perhaps why African leaders "always find it difficult to go on retirement because they regard political office as traditional stool from which there is no exit except to God's headquarters" (Babarinsa: 2005: 5).

Ayittey Goerge is intrigued by this issue. Ayittey (1993) asserts that in order to prevent war scenarios and the sit-tight syndrome in Africa, unbiased, competent security services, journalistic freedom, and totally independent electoral commissions are necessary. Lack of the aforementioned components usually results in conflict between individuals who favor overthrowing the current order and establishing a new one and those who hold positions of power in the outmoded order and their supporters. The resulting conflict typically brings down the office holders as the previous system collapses. Winning such a battle brings only temporary satisfaction to the state and its citizens, as the newly elected officials immediately start making plans to maintain their position of authority. As a result, the unstable situation continues and more hostilities arise. The study's section on political instability has covered the contributing factors. Political instability often has a negative effect on states and the individuals and institutions that exist within them. Political instability's effect on the economy and society Political instability impedes a state's economic and political progress and makes its citizens poor. Socio-political instability creates a climate of uncertainty. Politically unstable states invest more in their police and military, frequently at the price of their inhabitants' welfare. This often leads to increased volatility. Additionally, the economy suffers from capital flight triggered by political upheaval. Political instability generally



results in afflicted cultures becoming less economically and politically active. These societies are hence known as the least developed.

An Overview of the Factors Contributing to Political instability in Nigeria

In Nigeria, internal factors are typically the main cause of political instability. One example is the political class's loose adherence to the fundamental principles of democracy and constitutionalism (Kew, 2006). Harriman (2006) claims that this type of environment has resulted in institutional deterioration, blatant corruption, abuse of power, intolerance of political opposition, and manipulation of the electoral process, all of which are against the principles of governance, which require social interaction between the ruled and the ruled in a political community (Adejumobi, 2004). Due to the incapacity of the political class to sustain efficient administration, there have been multiple military interventions in national politics since January 15, 1966. Despite their professional obligation to keep the peace, they interfered in politics rather than utilizing the armed forces to protect the country's territorial integrity. The country's political structure is unstable, as seen by the unhealthy and intense power battles between the political elite and the military hierarchy, as well as between soldiers and civilians.

Egbon (2001) pointed out that,

any state's political structure becomes unstable when the armed forces become involved, which in turn causes economic collapse and is essentially a result of the state's leadership issues. Politicians in Nigeria frequently cause political instability because they view politics as a business where they can make money. This is because of their greed for power. He went on to say, "The problem with Nigerians is that they go into politics when they want money." Therefore, the politicians would embezzle the funds that could have been used for the nation's progress. Despite having a big domestic market, a wealth of natural resources, and a significant amount of human capital.

The impunity of the masterminds who agitate, organize, finance, and even arm the riots is another factor contributing to the country's persistent violence and the ensuing political instability. They are never prosecuted or tried in any court, even if they are convicted and sentenced to long prison terms. Some of society's most fortunate and powerful individuals are the ones who incite violent conflicts. They are perceived as untouchables by some, and their followers also hold this view. Many of these sponsors return to plan further rounds of violence and bloodshed since they have never been held responsible for their heinous deeds.

Additionally, the police and other security agencies lack crisis management training, and during violent outbursts, the rioters are often described as "too tough" for the inexperienced and inexperienced police to control, despite the fact that they are often well-prepared and possess sophisticated weapons. Conflicts also persist in Nigeria because the government has never heeded the advice of the judiciary and other inquiry bodies regarding violence and civil disobedience, which frequently leads to political instability in the country. Nigeria is a multiethnic state, so when many ethnic groups feel their goals and desires cannot be met at the same time, war and political instability will ensue. Therefore, when there is unequal access to political power and control over natural resources, as was the case during the Nigerian civil war, Niger-Delta militant uprisings, and ongoing Boko Haram insurgencies, among other instances, it makes sense that there would be political instability, opposition



controversy, and unrest. It is clear from the above that Nigerian politics have always been the opposite of those in developed countries, and Nigerian politicians in particular still uphold antiquated principles such as violence, tribalism, avarice, political corruption, broken promises, and intimidation.

Political instability can manifest itself in a number of ways, including fraud, embezzlement and misuse of public funds, inflation in contract awards, a lack of accountability and transparency in governance, and disparity in wealth distribution. Nigerians' lives are clearly impacted by political upheaval, which causes economic distortion, corruption, and underdevelopment.

Political Instability's Effects on Contemporary Nigerian Society

The nation as a whole is affected and impacted by political instability in significant ways. Given the prevalence of violent conflicts that have continuously led to political instability for over 64 years, Nigeria could do much better. Some of the ramifications in Nigeria include the following: First, the Nigerian state has not made adequate use of its natural and human resources, which has left Nigeria permanently stuck with poverty, hunger, and other indicators of an economic downturn; second, there will always be casualties from political unrest; there have been many deaths in Nigeria due to violent upheavals. For instance, about two million people died during the 1967–1970 Nigerian Civil War, and several other smaller crises in the country, including the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, have also resulted in deaths. The death toll has an effect on the country's economy because of the impact on the young workforce; hundreds of foreigners and oil workers have perished in the brutal wars in the Niger Delta, and government revenue generation is negatively impacted, especially during periods of industrial unrest. The country would have lost a significant amount of money as a result of these strikes. Moreover, political instability might discourage more foreign investment in the country. Nigeria's persistent violent conflicts have also hindered the growth and flow of foreign investment. Due of Nigeria's shaky economy, no foreign investor will be persuaded to invest there. Nigeria's overall climate of peace, security, and stability would attract foreign tourists, despite the fact that political upheaval and instability may discourage foreign businessmen from making investments there (Ajayi, 2004). Nonetheless, the country's political, religious, and sectarian conflict has led to yet another wave of refugees and internally displaced people. The people who lived in the war-torn areas had to leave and seek safety in other states, cities, or other countries. Internally displaced people and refugees not only affect the economies of their host nations, but they also put more demand on the social services that are available to them by bringing strangers into their new communities.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to clarify the concept of political instability. Extensive research was also done on its causes and origins. Intellectual works and socio-political aspects served as our sources for them. According to the philosophical source, humans are dynamic creatures that shift between egocentrism and altruism. Man's nature is reflected in the dynamics of his endeavor, society, since it becomes difficult to combine the interests of different groups and individuals to achieve the common good after writing the book and living in the world. Political and socioeconomic factors have influenced how people react to government activities. It is inherently human nature for people to strive to maximize their enjoyment and



minimize their own pain. We think that political instability hinders the growth of the state and its people because of the impact it has on society, individuals, and organizations. Therefore, there will need to be a coordinated effort by all citizens of the country to end all forms of political instability if the majority of the aforementioned recommendations are implemented in order to support national economic development and ensure accountability and transparency in government operations.

In light of the findings of the study, it is recommended that political leaders ensure that all of their actions are open and accountable, particularly when it comes to financial matters. In order to fight corruption in all spheres of national life, citizens—political leaders in particular and public servants—must have the requisite determination. Politicians need a basic reorientation with respect to society values. Political education should be taught at all educational levels in the country and included in the curriculum. Anywhere in the country, law enforcement personnel must be prepared to act swiftly and forcefully in the event that law and order is compromised. Finally, laws prohibiting vandalism, thuggery, and hooliganism ought to be passed by the National Assembly and applied uniformly to everyone.

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