

# RELIGION, ETHICS AND SOCIOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS

## PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CHALLENGES

Proceedings of the 2024 International Conference of  
The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

APAS

### Editors

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**Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, PhD**

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Proceedings of the 2024 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) held at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

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## **DEDICATION**

To all Promoters of African Studies

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## PREFACE

This book, *Religion, Ethics and Socio-political Dynamics: Perspectives on Contemporary African Challenges*, is a vital contribution to the discourse on the complex interrelations between religion, ethics, and socio-political realities in Africa. It is a direct outcome of the 2024 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, from May 22 to 25, 2024. The conference, under the theme "African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future," was generously sponsored by the Emmanuel Kanu Educational Foundation.

Africa, with its rich cultural and religious diversity, faces unique challenges and opportunities as it seeks to assert its place in a rapidly changing global landscape. The theme of the conference encapsulated this dual focus: honouring and understanding African heritage while exploring pathways to sustainable development. This book delves into how religion and ethics intersect with socio-political dynamics to shape the African experience and how these forces can be harnessed to address contemporary challenges.

The contributions in this volume cover a wide range of topics, from the role of religion in peace building and governance to the ethical considerations in policy-making and social justice. The discussions are rooted in the African context but are framed in ways that resonate with global concerns, emphasizing the continent's potential to contribute meaningfully to global discourse on sustainability, justice, and development.

This book is one of the three volumes that emerged from the conference, each focusing on different yet interconnected aspects of African life and thought. In this book, readers will find thought-provoking analysis and proposals that challenge conventional perspectives and offer fresh insights into the pressing issues facing Africa today.

I am deeply grateful to all the scholars who contributed their work to this volume. Their dedication and scholarship have enriched this book and, I hope, will inspire continued dialogue and action. It is my sincere hope that this book will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, students, and all those engaged in the ongoing effort to address the sociopolitical challenges facing Africa today.

**Professor Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI**

*President, Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)*

*26<sup>th</sup> August, 2024*

**THE ETHICS AND SOCIOLOGY OF FOOD IN BIBLICAL CONTEXT:  
MORAL LESSONS FOR CONTEMPORARY FOOD  
CULTURE AND RELATIONS**

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**Executive Summary**

*The importance of a rational approach to the nature of food cannot be over emphasized. The act of eating forms an integral part of human existence and culture. We cannot continue to exercise the habitual ontological activity of eating without creating time to reflect over the philosophical and anthropological densities of food. Thus, this paper presents the idea of food from the biblical renditions as its subject matter. The aim of this study is to harness the lessons, morals, values and food pathways exemplified in the biblical era and delineate them for contemporary relevance in cultures and relations for food studies. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to academic understanding of food in a world besieged with food insecurity, hunger, malnutrition, health –dietary deficiencies and food shortage, waste and crisis from a philosophical and socio- religious perspective. Again, studies of food from religious perspective are scant and this work as well adds to literatures on food from religious perspectives. Our methodology is hermeneutics and prescriptive analysis. Hermeneutics offers us the opportunity to presents the Biblical food scenarios as they were, as well as interpret them with the aim to harness their contemporary values in today's food studies. Whereas prescriptive analysis will help us draw, develop and recommend the lessons from these biblical renditions that are useful to contemporary food cultures, relations and policies.*

**Keywords:** Bible, Food, Food insecurity, Sociology, Ethics, Values, Virtues, Relations, Religion,

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& Justin Arinze EGBE

## **Introduction**

Food crisis, malnutrition, hunger, famine and food shortage have been in the history of humankind. A sociological exemplar is presented in the biblical account (Holy Bible, 2020). This account presents the experiences and sufferings of a people besieged by food insecurity, crisis, food abundance and a supernatural intervention. The rationale of this study is from the fact that a historical study on food in the contemporary society shows that food and food systems have been a world issue (Osuji, 2022, Osuji, 2021: 46; Kaplan, 2012). The problems food crisis and insecurity create are global issues. This opens invitations for all to study food and know how to tackle the food crisis from a multi-disciplinary perspective. From academic perspectives, the study of food is complex. This is because food belongs to disciplines like agriculture, food science technology and economics. Food also belongs to cultural studies since the historical evolution of food is cultural (Mbamalu, 2009: 100-109). Food studies are also complex because food is in compound relations with manufacturing distribution and consumption. Food also has to do with health, global warning, climatic conditions and diet even entertainment. The media have a lot to do with food than academics; making the idea of food more secular and popular for the world. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to explore the various ways food has been conceived in the bible, analyze it and delineate the contemporary lessons for food cultures and relations. This discussion from the biblical rendition of will enable us understand their “ideology and philosophy of food;” as this will help comparatively ameliorate the contemporary food (ideological) crisis in the world today.

The methodology of this research is hermeneutics and prescriptive analysis. Hermeneutics helps in digging deep into the biblical notions of food; interpret the scenarios that gave rise to such ideas of food, delineate them and explore their contexts. It provides tools for sourcing rich data from the biblical presentations of food. One benefit of hermeneutics analysis is that it is with profound, detailed and understanding of the scenarios that warrant food ideology, conceptualizations and philosophy in the biblical era. This will enable an even and unbiased analysis of the idea of food given each presentation from the bible. More so with prescriptive analysis, we will be able to draw the required lessons and prescribed them for contemporary food cultures, habits, ideologies and relations. The scope of this work is on the Christian analysis of food as presented in the bible. Thus, the bible is our primary literature; however secondary sources of data are from journals, books, monographs and internet sources on food and biblical interpretations of food. The need for secondary source is to help us deepen the ideology of food, and the challenges it posits on humanity. Materials on food, food crisis, as well as books and journal articles on philosophy of food and religious perceptions of food will be used. The justification of the study stems from the connection between food and religion, which is often less discussed in the academic

world. There are many reasons behind that. Many scholars might assume that food habits and practices in religions is superstitious, irrational, rituals or secret of a particular sect which does not require much intellectual and mental effort. Religions add different values (moral, behavioural and spiritual) to different people while food adds value to peoples' health, wellbeing and religious practices. Food is required in some religious activities, making food an inevitable substance in religious practices. Religions have its main theme which is God, his worship while food enhances humans and their religious practices. Thus, this paper articulates the sociological and ethics of food in biblical contexts. The central theme is on food and the subject matter here is the biblical presentation of food. This essay is structured into five sections. The first part is this introduction which is followed by conceptual clarification. The third part will discuss on the idea of food in biblical renditions as well as Christian religion and philosophy. This is followed by the lessons, learnt from the biblical food culture and context, after which conclusion and recommendation follows.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

Clarifying the concepts used for this research helps remove ambiguities and clumsy understanding to food studies. Thus, such words like bible, food, religion and philosophy will be clarified. We begin with the bible. The holy bible is the scriptural book of Christians. It comprises of three major parts; the Old Testament, the Apocrypha books and the New Testament. It consists of sixty-six books, consisting of chapters and verses. The bible in this research is seen as a primary source book consisting of a historical analysis of the sociological experiences food played in the lives of people in the biblical era. Though, there are many definitions of religion, the Latin *religio* and the Greek *theosebeia* indicate the religion which binds us to God. Thus, religion is man's ability to bind himself back to God (Amaku, 2010: 25). Here, it has to do with human's effort to find meanings of his life by worship of ultimate source of his being. This is to say that religion binds us to the one omnipotent God (*religetnos religio uni omnipoteti Deo*). We shall conceive religion and its relationship with food here. The roles food plays in religion will be discussed in this research.

Philosophy came from two-word *philos* (meaning love) and *Sophia* (meaning wisdom). Putting the two together it means love of wisdom. It is the study of the most general and abstract features of the world and categorises with the following; think, mind, matter, reason, proof, think (Jimoh, 2021: 23). Philosophy approaches the world with enquiry. Philosophy is an activity, referred to as philosophizing. It is an activity we undertake to seek understanding of fundamental truths about humanity, the world, and what we do. Philosophy in its pristine nature as a critical and reflective enterprise engages the existential challenges confronting man and the society in which he lives (Offor, 2021: 4). Philosophy is used here as reflective and critical thinking about the

concepts and principles surrounding food, food culture, hunger, starvation, malnutrition, food (abundance, shortage and crisis). This helps us to organize our survival experiences in the world. Philosophy in this study is used in two senses; first it is used as training in rationality, as well as a critique of ideology by engaging the concrete problems food raise today and in the biblical presentations. Second, it is a search for the guide of food cultures and ethics: Critical tools of philosophy will be utilized to correct the prevailing wrong assumptions about the requirements for world food ideological development.

Food has no definite definition. To understand the idea of food, we move to speculative philosophy, this ensures our claims and belief and ideals on food do not rest on confusion. The idea of food emanated from natural reason. In the state of nature, humans have to device means of sustaining themselves by looking for what is edible and what is not edible. This accounts for why what is food is differently conceived. This makes what is food and food stuff to be bound in location. We can say that the idea of food is cultural. Osuji (2021) notes that human food culture sprang from interactions between people and climate, nature and other competing species: It is the cultural society that determines what food is; what is permissible to eat, how and when particular things are consumed. Food has social meaning and significance. Cultures are known in the course of the food they eat, this is why we can say Igbo foods, Yoruba delicacies, Italian food and lots more. In cities and metropolis, food stuffs are stalled according to cultures (Osuji, 2021: 50). The food stuff you sell is needed and bought by people bound by that food orientation and culture. Food has been conceived in many ways. This means that food can be acknowledge as a common good which sustains human survival. Food is the edible object hungry people eats to satisfy their appetite. It is one of the basic human needs to quench the physical sensations of hungry generated by physiological reactions.

Food has been anthropocentrically, metaphysically and theocentrically conceived (Osuji, 2021). This means that food is multidimensional; it ranges from human involvement and understanding to that which is beyond humans. One has to be careful in choosing a particular definition of food because the definition adopted can influence human relations to food. Osuji (2021:50) opines that a particular definition of food can have a big effect on health, environment and economy. Food is also seen in terms of its nutritional functions. The idea of balanced diet, enables the conception of food as composed of naturally possessing nutrients needed to enhance bodily metabolism (growth, sustain, repair of vital life processes). In summary, food is seen as nutrition, nature, culture, social good, desideratum and aesthetic object (Kaplan, 2012: 4-5).

Food can also be defined as spiritually. This is because food is central to religious traditions of the world (Kaplan, 2012: 5). This Biblical study of food shows the

centrality of food in religion. The biblical context prescribes which food should be eaten and which to be avoided. Kaplan (2012: 4) says; Religions assign significance to food production, preparation and consumption; and they assign regimentation with moral conduct and spiritual salvation. Food in this model has metaphysical (nonmaterial) dimension that is realized only in religious practice. This spiritual dimension of food connects us to religious communities and to the supernatural when consumed appropriately. Food has in the biblical renditions lots of connection, to the supernatural, human, natural and environmental connection. Food also provides a guide to human conduct. Food as we shall see is also a service to humanity when we see it as object of charity (for the poor) and hospitality. Food is inseparable from humans and so its challenges. This is discussed next subsection.

### **Food and its Problematic in Contemporary Human Experience**

Access to food becomes a world issue down the history. ‘Historical moments that provide occasions to re-think about food and human existence and experiences on food are many. The year 2020 is one of the historical moments that the world experienced pandemic arising from corona virus (corona virus). This gave rise to government measures that included lockdowns, movement restrictions and policies’ (Osuji, 2023: 41). In 1981, economist Amartya Sen (1981) began his essay *Poverty and Famines*, with the argument: “Starvation is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough food to eat.” This book presents a concern for food as a global problem. Mexico was not the only country to experience riots due to spiking food prices in 2007 to 2008, known as Mexican Tortilla Crisis.<sup>1</sup> In Bangladesh, which declared itself food self-sufficient in 2002 experienced riots where dozens of protesters and police officers were injured in Dhaka Karl, 2015: 3). Haiti experienced food riots that took the lives of five people in various protests (The Trumpet, 2008). Most development institutions, world leaders, and academics view the crisis as both a supply and demand problem. Their argument is simple; the solutions are not reached. They tell us demand is increasing dramatically due to rising populations and changing appetites as billions of people in China, India, and other rapidly developing nations enter the middle class. In order to meet this demand, they argue, world food supply must double. Unfortunately, global climate change, water shortages, desertification, and slowed technological advancements threaten our ability to supply enough food to meet this demand.

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Mexico in early 2007 experienced a 67% rise in corn prices, which drove up the price of tortillas and limited community access to 10,000 year food staple. This led to protest by the first week of February 2007 where over 70,000 protesters marched through Mexico City, taunting the President and demanding relief from the soaring prices. President Calderon responded by freezing prices of more than 150 consumer staples including Corn, coffee, sardines, and tuna until the end of December 2008.

Averagely, the *Guardian* reported riots in fifteen countries while the *New York Times* and the World Bank both reported food riots in thirty (Cribb, 2010). The 2008 food crisis riots in Burkina Faso shut down three major cities and threatened the stability of its government on February 22, 2008 (IRIN news, 2008). The UN Integrated Regional Information Network reported “at least a dozen protestors were wounded during several hours of clashes with police on 31 March 2008” in Ivory Coast (IRIN news, 2008). In some countries, these protests turned deadly. In Egypt, days of protests led to multiple deaths. NBC news reports “Egypt's prime minister rushed to contain an explosive situation in a northern industrial city rocked by two days of deadly riots over high prices and low wages, some of the worst economic unrest here in 30 years” (Msnbc.com, 2008). The social unrest NBC News is referring to were the 1977 Bread Riots, which, as the name tells, were also about food.

The year 2020 and 2021 were years Africans and the rest of the world including US, experienced hunger due to the governmental policies and restrictions caused by Covid-19 pandemic lock-down (Osuji, 2021: 52, Human Right Watch, 2021, Worlds Bank, 2012). The Latin American suffered hunger as a result of Covid-19 lock-down in 2020. These years were the years food prices were on the high side. There are speculations that this will continue in the coming years. Food insecurity and crisis have been experienced worldwide over the years (Okenye, 2021: 39-46). Food insecurity has been a part of human history. Many countries are facing growing levels of acute food insecurity, reversing years of development gains. Around 118 million more people were facing chronic hunger in 2020 than in 2019. Using a different indicator that tracks year-round access to adequate food, nearly 2.37 billion people (or 30% of the global population) lacked access to adequate food in 2020 that is, a rise of 320 million in just one year. COVID-19 is estimated to have dramatically increased the number of people facing acute food insecurity in 2020-2021 (World Bank, 2021). UN World Food Programme (WFP) executive director David Beasley announced “we are once again sliding toward the brink of the abyss” and warned of “famines of biblical proportion” and a near doubling of people experiencing crisis levels of hunger from 135 million to 270 million as a result of pandemic. Covid-19 has made the hungry hungrier and the poor poorer (Sova, 2021).

Food is one of basic necessities of life amidst others. The human species needs food for survival and to sustain continuity. This is why the problems posed by absence of food are now basic human existential problems. These problems include hunger, malnutrition, health, diet, starvation, food unavailability and insecurity. Discussions on food, more so, come with the paradoxes of modern food and agriculture systems such as abundance of food, unequal distribution of resources and access to food in market systems, commodification and de-commodification of food and natural resources, the limited availability of natural resources for human consumption and the continuing

economic “growth mania” (Karl, 2015:1). There are also the risks which for food production and consumption generated under conditions of global social and environmental change. This requires knowledge synthesis, critical analysis and the practical significance of the philosophy of food for searching solutions to food and resource problems (Osuji, 2017: 89).

The World Bank Group and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) offer similar solutions to the coming food crisis. Their rhetoric follows three main themes: increase production, increase efficiency, and increase domination of nature. The UNFAO’s 2014 report, *Economic analysis of supply and demand for food up to 2030*, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization argues: “With the world’s population expected to reach 8.2 billion people by 2030, and with 842 million people estimated as having been undernourished in the period 2011-13, food supply will present a growing challenge in the next two decades” (UNFAO, 2014) The solution that the UNFAO presents is to increase food supply to meet growing demands such as aging populations, urbanization, and changing consumer preferences as billions enter the middleclass. The FAO argues that food supply “will need to both increase and become more efficient if it is to grow within the constraints presented by the availability of natural resources and existing technology” (UNFAO, 2014: iv). The 2007-08 food crises were a global phenomenon with world food prices spiking 80% on average, according to the UNFAO (2021). Thus, while world leaders, agriculturist, development institutions, academics, and reporters debate the causes of the 2007-08 crises, they overwhelmingly agree on two simple conclusions: It will not be the last food crisis; it will not be the worst food crisis. The implications of these conclusions are colossal. Future crises will bring much social unrest, destabilizing governments and threatening regional and global security. What should be done? Cribb explains this as follows:

To sum it all up, the challenge facing the world’s 1.8 billion women and men who grow our food is to double their output of food using far less water, less land, less energy, and less fertilizer. They must accomplish this on low and uncertain returns, with less new technology available, amid more red tape, economic disincentives, and corrupted markets, and in the teeth of spreading drought. Achieving this will require something not far short of a miracle (Cribb, 2010: 13).

There is more to do in other solve the problems food creates in the contemporary world. One way of doing this is by looking at existing histories. This study will undertake the study of culture in the biblical eras. Necessary lessons will be analyzed for contemporary usage in food relations and culture.

## **The Idea of Food in Biblical History, Christian Philosophy and Religion**

The bible describes many foods, drinks and different stories of feasting, eating and religious practices. Many of the contemporary known healthy food featured in the biblical renditions and classification of diet. They are water, olives (oil), pomegranates, grapes, goat milk, raw honey, meat (including lamb, birds etc.) and bitter herbs. Food in the bible can be categorized into fruits, seeds, spices, vegetables, grains, fish, fowl, meats drinks, and many more. Seasonings, spices and herbs in bible context were used as flavors on food preparation. Such food includes bread, cake, soups, and meat. They also fed on vegetables and legumes such as beans (2 Samuel, 17::28; Ezekiel 4:9), cucumbers (Numbers1:15) gourds (2 Kings4:39), leeks (Numbers, 11:5), lentils (Genesis 25:34; 2Samuel 17:28; Ezekiel 4:9), and onions (Numbers11:5). Grains were principal staple food in the bible era. Such grains include barley (Deuteronomy 8:8; Ezekiel 4:9), corn (Matthew 12:1), wheat (Ezra6:9, Deuteronomy 8:8) millet and spelt (Ezekiel 4:9). They fed on fish as another principal food (Matthew 15:36, John 21:11-13). Fowls were also part of the biblical diet. These fowls include partridge (1Samuel 26:20; Jeremiah 17:11), pigeon (Genesis 15:9, Leviticus 12:8), quail (Psalm, 105: 40) and dove (levinticus12:8). Animals were part of biblical menu. The book of Leviticus differentiated between approved animals for consumption and unclean animals not meant for consumptions. Animals for consumption (clean animals) must have cloven and chew cord including calf (Proverbs 16:17; Luke 15:23), goat (Genesis 27:9) lamb (2 Samuel 12:4), oxen (1kings 19::21) sheep (Deuteronomy 14:4) and venison (Genesis 27:7). Other sources of nutrition in the bible were fresh raw products from cows, sheep goats and fowls. Such products include butter (proverbs 30:33) cheese (2 Samuel 17:29; Job 10:10), curds (Isaiah 7:15, milk (Exodus 33:3. Job 10:10, Judges 5:25), eggs (Job 6:6, Luke 11:12), grape (Numbers 6:3), raw honey (Genesis 43:11; Exodus33:3, Deuteronomy 8:8, Judges 14:8-9), olive oil (Ezra 8:9, Deuteronomy 8:8), vinegar (Ruth 2:14, John 2: 1-10). The bible acknowledges food varieties, many food pathways and systems, their multiple uses and different symbolizations.

From another perspective, the ideology of food eluded the founding fathers of the church, Christian apologist and philosophers, despite the rich food scenarios the bible presents. The idea of food in Christian philosophy and religion has been given a lower place in history. Food is not considered as worthy sfor mental contemplation in Christian academics, religious studies and Christian philosophy. Again, the holy bible is written within patriarchal setting where food and its preparation where exclusively women affair and so was considered as a gendered issue not worthy of mental exercise, (Proverb 30; Osuji, 2017). This is basically because of the teachings of the primacy of the soul over the human body. The idea of God, His name and Proof of his existence dominated the discussions of Christian scholars in the Middle Ages (Itanrin, *et al*, 2019). This teaching is popular among the medieval scholars who advocated for the

nurturing of the soul through abstinence from food and suffering of the human body as a motivation towards achieving holiness and eternal life.

The Christian philosophers, theologians and scholars of the medieval era did not regard food as object of intellectual exercise. This was probably seen from their influence from the works of Plato and Aristotle. Platonic and Aristotelian thoughts dominated the thinking and postulations of the middle age philosophers and theologians; the polarity on the conception of food arises.<sup>2</sup> In the mist of sufficient and surplus food, medieval Christians stress on renunciation for perfection in spiritual growth to gain salvation. The difference between these Christian scholars and Greek thinkers is that while the Greek fasted to gain wisdom, the medieval thinkers practiced asceticism to gain salvation in God. The popular maximum of this era is “nothing in excess,” which means a little bit of everything, which included food for the well-being of the body as well as its survival. Among the Christians, the importance of moderation in ordinary life, especially in food and sex, were stressed. An approximately frugal diet was considered sufficient to cover the unavoidable needs of the believers, him-self or her-self to the more important business of attending to spiritual matters. Thus, everything should be consumed in small proportion considered only for practical living. This makes the study of food in medieval Christian era and the writing of these thinkers on food scant and less rational.

The Christian theologians and philosophers also wrote less on food. The writing of St. Thomas Aquinas on food was centered on the ‘Eucharist.’ Aquinas did not regard food as worthy of mental speculation but he recognized food as a requirement for bodily nourishment where he writes; “In the bodily order a person must first be born and thereafter he requires steady nourishment as living as life last” (Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, IIIa, qn73, art 1; Gleen, 1999: 37). Thus, Christianity took ascetic life from ancient civilization as their dominant ideology. This, they believed is the ideal way of attaining perfection since they are engrossed on the salvation of their souls and union with God. So, they exercised self-controlled, especially on food and sex in order to be united to God through salvation. Thus, depriving the body from almost any nourishment was the safest way to attain a full development of the soul and a perfect knowledge of God. Thus, “when Christianity took over the ancient philosophical and religious ways of thinking and became the dominant ideology, the ideal of perfection focused on salvation and union with God. In order to attain this divine union, which recalled the

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<sup>2</sup>Here, the medieval era was advanced in food production more than Greek classical era (it was an era where meat was widely eaten, this era also advocated a shift from animal products to grains and vegetables). There was also good use of spices, sauces and high level of food preservation technologies. But the scholars of this era did not see food as worthy of mental exercise; they continued the contempt for food inherited from the influences of classical Greek thought.

original perfection before sin, all passions should be controlled, especially sex and food” (Camps- Gaset and Grau, 2021: 83). In the Western tradition, the ideal of perfection has changed throughout history up to the present, from ancient philosophy to spiritual salvation, purity or even aesthetic excellence, all of which are subjective concepts of perfection only to be attained by individuals through despising material food, sometimes to the point of starvation (Camps- Gaset and Grau, 2021: 84). The idea of food, its significances in religion, culture and relations and philosophy was poorly developed and did not enter the writings of Christian theologians, philosophers as well as their academic ideologies while food orientations, philosophy and practices were well exhibited in the bible. We now expose the place of food in the bible.

### **An Expository Analysis of Food Uses in Biblical Context**

Food is used in many contexts to show that it is beyond the nutritional and anthropological densities of human. Food was expressed in varieties of ways in the bible; as objects (of consumption, worship, trade and economics) weapon of war, objects of wealth, reward, miracle, as well as unusual and supernatural outcome from God in the bible. Food depicts and portrays the fall of man Genesis (3: 6: 22). Food is used as a means for betrayed. It is also used in the bible as a means of trade or exchange of birthright in the story of Esau and Jacob. Thus, inheritance of Esau was transferred to Jacob by means of well-prepared food. Food was also portrayed as an inheritance where the land God promised the Israeli was to flourish, milk, food and honey.

Food is used in supernatural scenarios in the bible. Such instances include as fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life (Genesis 3:6, 22). It also depicts supernatural relations and divine provisions. We see this in God’s provision of manner and quell, water from the rock (Exodus 16: 31-35) and as gold dust (Exodus 32:19-20). Food was used in Supernatural relation and covenant in Israeli’s feast of Passover and Christ’s Last supper. We see food in covenantal issues with God between Cain and Abel. It was because of the food sacrifice that Abel gave to God that God fought for him, God accepted Abel. Cain gave God animals that are not worthwhile and good. God refuses his sacrifices. More so, Solomon became the wisest king in the world after offering God a thousand ram in a night. God gave him wisdom as reward. Food was used in other supernatural illustration and visions, proverbial expressions in the bible including human flesh (Deuteronomy 28:53-57), two-sided scroll of lamentation (Ezekiel 2: 8; 3:3), bread baked over human excrement (Ezekiel 4: 10-17), Angel cake (1kings19: 3-9), animal diet of grass (Daniel 4:33), bread and meat from ravens (1kings17: 1-6), we live these discussions for theological studies. A delineation of food pathways in the bible is what this research concentrates on.

Food is part of God's miracle: the story of Genesis (21:14-19) and Numbers (20:11) portrays miraculous provision of bread and water in the deserts. It is the result of miracles provision of flour and oil (1Kings 17:10-18; 2Kings4:1-7). Food is the result of the miraculous provision in the form of locust (Mark 1:6). The turning of water into wine by Jesus in the New Testament is also a miraculous provision of a necessary food in time. Fish and loaves of bread was miraculously multiplied to feed the hungry crowd that came to hear the gospel of Christ eat in Matthew (14: 13-21; Matthew 15: 32-39; Mark 6: 30-44; Mark 8: 1-13, Luke 9: 10-17, John 6: 1-15, 2 Kings 4: 42-4). The idea of miracle is another instance of the food used in the supernatural way. Food was also source of spiritual strength to Saul and Elijah in the bible. It shows Saul encounter a warning on killing animals and what to feed on. Saul has been culturally schooled on what is food and what is not. This means cultures have no final say on what is food. It only shows variations.

Food was used as instrument of hospitality where Abraham fed his visitors not knowing that they were Angels. Christ feed 5,000 and 7, 000 men at different occasions. Food and bodily treatment were discussed in the books of Esther and Daniel. There are also food laws in the book of Isaiah and his visions of food, as well as Saints Paul and Peter's writings on food. The bible shows that God gave man food to eat, (Genesis 1,2) where he said, "I have given man the birds of the air, the animals in the sea, and all creeping things on earth to feed from". This shows that God has given humans the totality of nature to feed from.

### **Lessons from the Contemporary Interpretation of Biblical Food Presentation**

There are lessons from these biblical scenarios on food relevant for contemporary food studies, relations and culture. Food is central to national development, individual uses and the economy in many ways. We shall discuss these lessons now:

*Food Ethics:* This brings out the morals behind food consumption. The bible teaches what should be eaten in a meal and what should not be eaten; it also teaches food presentation, instructing the etiquette and manners as well as food presentation methods before Him, in his temples and during feasts. All these suggest food ethics. Food ethics is required in other to be please God. One needs to exercise self-discipline over food. The bible condemns gluttony (Deuteronomy 21: 20, 1 John 2: 15-17). Thus food, wines, and other pleasurable things are to be consumed with moderation (Genesis 1:29, Ecclesiastes 9; 1Timothy 4: 4-5).

The bible also teaches *food virtues*. We see it demonstrated in the *Bible* where Abraham entertained visitors. Jesus Christ himself used food as a show of hospitality where he feed five thousand and seven thousand men at different instance because he had

sympathy on them. This is a show of food virtue called hospitality. Another virtue here is containment: This, we see in the instruction where they were asked to only take what will make due for each day when the manna falls (Exodus 16). Those that disobeyed experience food wastage, where it soiled and was thrown away. Containment is a good virtue to control human's appetite for food. It also goes with self-discipline. There is need to exercise self-discipline in whatever we do more importantly on our appetite and food ways. Again, obedience to food instructions is necessary both to the manufacturers and consumers. Food producing companies should pay attention to how long their products stay before they get expired. It is essential to inform their consumers too. While consumers should obey the instructions on the food labels in order not to eat what they are not supposed to.

*Food, Integrity and Manners:* This is another lesson from the biblical presentation of food. One has to exercise manners in the sight of food. Food presentations call for integrity in attitude, also there is need to know why we eat food given to us by others. We see this in the story of Esau and Jacob where food was given in exchange of birthright and wealth. The need to exercise self-control when hungry, this becomes a good virtue called endurance.

*Sources of food:* The question of source of food from the bible is from nature. God gave food from human through nature in forms of plants, animals and even water bodies. God assures human that he will give them food (psalm 136: 13, Matthew 6:25). We see this in the story of creation. Also, abundance of food is as well spiritual; this is seen in God's promise of prosperity in material things including food (Deuteronomy, 28). In Genesis (1:29), God taught a formula of making food available through seeds. He also gave nature as sources of food to humans (Genesis 9:3, Exodus 16:12). The lesson here is that food availability should not be left in the hands the poor or citizens alone. There is need for authorities and agencies to ensure they contribute to food production. Seed researchers are encouraged here. The availability of viable seed of nutritional plants should be prioritized by seed agencies. This will ensure that hunger and starvation is put to a standstill.

*Food and (divine) provision:* We live in the world where food insecurity is one of the problems the human race is facing. We always have the poor among us, this means there are questions on food availability and accessibility. For instance, who should be responsible for feeding the poor? Is it Government? These poor live on divine provision not on government provision. As human, living on divine provision could mean living in probability. The need for inclusive policy to eradicate hunger is a great challenge we should clamour for the government to do the needful. Again, food has been given to humanity in nature in form of plants, animals, fishes and the rest. It is humans' creativity to domesticate the ones that is more nutritious, making them more surplus

for human conception. From biblical excavation, one can see that God laid emphasis in good food and nutrition. Gods is telling us that good meal or balanced diet is good for human physiological, spiritual, emotional and health wellness.

*Food is seen as a political weapon.* The story of Joseph in Genesis shows how food is used as a tool to control the world. Food is used as political weapon: (especially in slavery and food is tool to conquer the world (Genesis 26). Food was also used in another political sense where the Amorites and other nations brought food to Gideon and Joshua in order to avert wars against them. Today cities are besieged with starvation in order to conquer them in times of war. We see this in Nigerian - Biafra war where food was used as weapon of war. Another important lesson here is that people migrate in search of food. Migration is a critical factor in the world today. People migrate in search of food and good life. A nation that feeds its citizens well will not have the citizens leave in search of food to other nations. This should be integrated in national policies, to make food available for her citizens; in other words, food sovereignty should be a priority in nation building.

*Food and Human Health:* The lesson here is for us to be conscious of what we eat. It is not all that nature provides are edible. Some are poisonous for humans while others are edible and medicinal. Food can also be object of trade. We see many instances where food is used as exchange of material things and immaterial things (birth right). Food can be a medium of exchange as well. Food values can also be seen in these instances. Food has lots of value. It is for human good. It is a call for responsibility; an ideal instance of one's duty to oneself and others. The bible also discussed about people eating highly unusual food.

*Food and Nutritional Plan:* The *Bible* also developed nutritional plans, where the people of Israeli used religious languages that legalizes food, milk, fruit, honey and bread, making then needful for human nutritional wellbeing (Ecclesiastes 9:7)

*Food as Medicine;* St. Paul instructs Timothy to take wine in small portions so as to relieve himself of stomach ache. Here food is used as healing agent.

*Food in Religious doctrines and foundation of faith:* We see the place of food in religious worship. God, himself commanded the people of the biblical era the kind of food and animal they will use in this temple, and the species they need for their uses. Food is used in different levels of offering for different purposes in the house of God as recorded in Leviticus. In the New Testament, Christ demonstrated a covenant of remembrance by offering us "last supper." He commanded that this should be done always in remembrance of him. Food is also used in sacrifice, religious covenant, as a show of religious dedication, thanksgiving to God and many other rites and rituals.

*Different conceptions of food and food symbolization:* The study of the biblical presentations of food has sprung different conceptualizations of food. Thus, *Food as Spiritual Nourishment:* Thomas Aquinas recognized food as a form of special spiritual nourishment required by a child of God. This nourishment is called the Holy Eucharist (Gleen, 1999: 378). The matter of this Holy Eucharist is bread and wine (Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, IIIa, qn 74, art 1-8). He writes that no tangible amount of bread and wine is either too small or too large for valid use in conferring the Holy Eucharist. How can physical food (bread and wine) be used for special spiritual nourishment? Thomas Aquinas answers through *transubstantiation*. He explains that the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are not merely dissolved or disintegrated either gradually or instantaneously, neither is those substances annihilated. They are changed into the body and blood of Christ (Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, IIIa, qn 75, art 3). The whole substance of the bread is by divine power, changed into the whole substance of the body of Christ. And the whole substance of wine is by divine power changed into the blood of Christ (Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, IIIa, qn 75, art 4). The accidents of bread and wine (such as size, colour, shape, taste) remain after the change. This is called transubstantiation: an instantaneous change (Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, IIIa, qn 75, art 7; Gleen, 1999: 368).

We talk about food symbolization when food is used to symbolize another thing. Bread stands for not just what it is butte symbol of God's life- sustaining provision. Jesus described himself as the bread of life and living water (John 6:35). This means that He is the true source of spiritual life; the bread he represents never perishes but a source of eternal life (John 6:27; John 4:37). Food is seen as supernatural task of Jesus who saw the will of God as his food (John 4:34) He was of the view that man shall not live by bread alone (Matthew 4:4). There are other necessary and genuine endeavours to engage on rather than food. Actions and wills can be understood as food when they fulfil purpose. Matthew (5:6) captures the acts of goods as life fulfilling food.

*Food Aesthetics:* Foods are also used in human bodily treatment. This seen in the Babylonian culture where food is used as aesthetic tools for beauty and bodily treatment and well-being as presented in the book of Esther and Daniel (Daniel, 1:12; Esther 1). They observed a diet of only vegetables. Today vegetarianism is a movement, personal life style, healthy living and religious doctrine. Here, people were fed with the primary intention of making them look beautiful and more attractive. Here food is seen as an instrument of body preservation. We see in social media where foods are prescribed for body treatment as well. This means that food serves an aesthetic value apart from its nutritional functions.

*Food laws:* From biblical studies pork meat is condemned for Jews and early Christians. There are contentions on the legality of pork meat, even in its used as a sacrificial animal on the altar. Medically pork meat and swine are to be found full of worms that are contagious and antithetical to human physiological development. Hence one can deduct from the foregoing that pork is not just condemned for scarified but it is for the wellbeing of man. Another instance of this is seen in fish consumption (Leviticus 11:9). Only fish and /or sea food that have fins and scales was approved for consumption. Shellfish was prohibited. Today, fishes such as tuna, salmon, cod, red snapper and many others are high in protein and healthy omega fats which can help reduce inflammation, lower blood pressure and provide many other health benefits (Mary. 2020). Also, blood of animals and meat scarified to idols were forbidden. This goes a long way to buttress the blood as a major specimen in dictating disease. Animals scarified to idols do not pass the hygiene test; they have been contaminated in the process of such acts. Obedience to food laws is necessary in the bible (Chukwuezie, 2012: 78) for human survival. The way food preparation is handled matters. Food hygiene should top the objectives of food companies.

*Food security, economics and sustainability:* The book of *Genesis* also provided an account of food security in the mist of famine. The Egyptians through the instructions of Joseph to Pharaoh were engaged in food preservations to conquer hunger and famine that lasted for seven years. This means that they had food produced in surplus and had good food preservation technology to achieve that. This is a lesson to fight hunger in the world. There is need for advanced safe food technology to fight hunger and save wasted food in some parts of the world. With this in mind, food producing countries can export food to hunger and famine infested countries to save humanity, as well as improve their economies. Governments, policy makers and food institutes should work hard to ensure the development of sustainable food security programmes as exemplified in the bible. In this, food preservative technology is necessary to ensure preservation of food as long as seven years as seen in Egypt-food bible story.

*Food and Social Relations:* Food is another way we nourish our social relations. Food is an instrument of hospitality used by Abraham feed his visitors not knowing that they were Angels. We saw in the Biblical instances where food was used as a show of human relations; kings celebrate with food. Food relates human and humans, food and God, food and supernatural, food and worship.

*Food and Leadership:* Food creates leadership-followership problems. Hungry people do not obey their leaders. We see a biblical instance where followers of Moses refused his leadership because they were hungry and thirsty. This is lesson for leaders; food provision and serenity affect followership-leadership relations.

*Food as object of reward and charity:* Food is used as reward for true worshippers of God (Isaiah 1:19). Food can be as object of appreciation.

*Human and God relationship;* with food; we see instances where there is feast of Passover and others. Food is used to build supernatural relations through food sacrifices, food offerings, and covenant. We see this in the contemporary churches where Christians celebrate harvest. This is a season where they handover to God bounties of food, animal, fruits and vegetables in the worship of God and the acknowledgement of God as the lord of harvest through food and fruit dedication. Food is relevant in the development and growth of man and God relationship cum the advancement of the ministry of God. Jesus Christ also used food to nourish his social relations: He fed 5,000 and 7, 000 men at different occasions in the bible. He turned water to wine in a wedding where many keep asking for more. He also celebrated the feast of Passover (with bread and wine) where He told his disciples that this is his blood and flesh of the new covenant, given to them and many. This, he instituted as a feast to be done in order to renew his relationship with them and others who will join the faith. We see similar things in some of our cultures where food is used to nourish human social gatherings. This means that food is a necessary tool to maintain and cherish ourselves: a virtue and habit which we must learn to keep.

*Contributions to Food and dietary knowledge, food science and Epistemology:* Seasoning spices and herbs were used extensively in the bible as food flavours, and digestive enhancers. This is seen in the use of coriander (Exodus, 16:31; Numbers 11:17), the seed of cilantro is till this contemporary time a major anti-oxidant with natural cleansing effects (Fairchild, 2020). Other spices like garlic (Numbers 11:15) mint (Matthew, 13:31) Rue (Luke 11:42) Dill (Matthew 23: 23) Cinnamon (Exodus 30: 20; Revelation 18:13), anise (Matthew 23:23), mustard (Matthew 13:31) and salt (Ezra 6:9; Job 6:60) are food spices that provide medicinal and healthy living in our times. Lots of food companies are teaching about the good bodily regulatory power of garlic and mint. That they were richly fed with vegetables and legumes implies that they understood the high impact of these stuffs with nutrition, fibre and protein. These food path ways and culture are also good in these contemporary times. Food played significant sociological roles in the bible as well as in the contemporary society today. It is an integral part of humanity from health, to wealth, economics, peaceful co-existence; food is an inseparable factor.

## **Recommendations**

There are lots of lessons from this study. Food ethics should be applied to all in order to live a healthy life. The Joseph's ideology of seven years food preservation in Egypt to fight hunger and famine is worth cutting from for contemporary food relations. Food

technologists and scientists should work on safe food preservation of seven years to avoid food wastage. This study recommends a multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and intercultural study of food. This will engender more integrated evaluations of food values and laws to support humanity and societal development. Food is a social good a rethinking of food should generate new ideologies that will sustain viable contemporary food culture that will stand against the continuous problem food insecurity and unavailability rises to humanity. By this, a universal practical food laws, ethics and values will be reached: This will enhance government of nation's ideologies and perspectives to enrich their food policy formulations.

## Conclusion

This study is a tour into the food presentations in the biblical context. It revealed that food is guided by ethical and sociological factors. To fight hunger in the contemporary work today there is need to stop food wastage as the teachings in the biblical presentations of manner. There is need to exercise food virtues of hospitality, temperance and manners. This paper is a constant reminder that we own ourselves a responsibility of feeding ourselves and those entrusted in our case. It also brings out other conceptions of food such as food as miracle, spiritual, divine which shows that the conception of food is beyond the nutritious status. Food indeed is a social good, obtained in nature, conceptualized in (biblical) cultures as a gift from God.

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## **OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD: NONVIOLENCE AS A NEW TESTAMENT MODEL FOR PEACEBUILDING IN NIGERIA**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Nigeria faces significant challenges related to violence, conflict, and social unrest, often stemming from ethnic, religious, and political differences. The escalation of violence and its consequences pose severe threats to the stability, development, and overall well-being of the nation. Traditional approaches to conflict resolution and peace-building have often been inadequate in addressing these deep-rooted issues. In light of these challenges, there is a need to explore alternative models of peace-building that are rooted in nonviolence and draw inspiration from the principles outlined in the New Testament. This article adopted a theological method in this research. The study examines the theoretical foundations of nonviolence as espoused in the New Testament scriptures and analyzes its relevance to contemporary peace-building efforts. By delving into the principles of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation advocated in the New Testament, the paper presents a compelling argument for the adoption of nonviolence as a practical and ethical framework for peace-building in Nigeria. In conclusion, this paper asserts that embracing the New Testament model of nonviolence can significantly contribute to transforming the culture of violence in Nigeria and beyond Africa. The findings of this research provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars working in the field of peace-building, offering a roadmap for cultivating enduring peace in regions afflicted by conflict and violence.*

**Keywords:** Nonviolence, Peace-building, Model, Overcoming Evil with Good

### **Introduction**

Nigeria's history is marred by episodes of violence, ranging from inter-ethnic clashes to religious tensions and insurgencies. The nation has grappled with issues such as communal conflicts, terrorism, and ethno-religious violence, all of which have posed

significant challenges to its social fabric and economic development. Traditional peace-building methods have often proven insufficient, necessitating a fresh perspective grounded in timeless ethical principles.

Peace building is a critical endeavour in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa, which has faced numerous conflicts and violence over the years. Nigeria has experienced a long history of conflict, from colonial struggles to post-independence conflicts, ethnic strife, and civil wars. Many peace-building efforts have been made, often employing conventional approaches that have not always yielded lasting results (Sharp 65). The recurring waves of violence in Nigeria underscore the urgent need for a transformative approach to peace-building.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and applying New Testament nonviolent teachings to foster peace and reconciliation in Nigeria, addressing both immediate conflicts and underlying structural issues. This study aims to explore the concept of nonviolence as a model of peace-building in Nigeria, drawing inspiration from the principles found in the New Testament. It delves into the potential of nonviolent strategies to address and overcome the multifaceted challenges of conflict, injustice, and violence in Nigeria. Addressing these is crucial for advancing our understanding of how nonviolence, as a New Testament model of peace-building, can be effectively applied in Nigeria context. By doing so, we can contribute to the development of innovative and biblical sensitive approaches to peace-building that promote lasting peace, reconciliation, and social justice in Nigeria. Examining nonviolence through the lens of the New Testament offers a fresh perspective on addressing these challenges.

### **Conceptual Clarifications of Terms**

**Nonviolence:** The term, “nonviolence,” according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the practice of refusing to respond to anything with violence; it is also the avoidance or abstention from violence as a matter of principle (1). A situation in which someone avoids fighting or using physical force, especially when trying to make political change. When you protest peacefully or work for social changes without resorting to violence, that's nonviolence. The goal of nonviolence is to promote justice, equality, and social harmony while respecting the dignity and humanity of all individuals.

**Peace-building:** Peace-building refers to the process of establishing sustainable peace and addressing the root causes of conflict in post-conflict societies. It involves a range of activities, strategies, and measures designed to strengthen and solidify peace in order to prevent the recurrence of violence. Peace-building efforts aim to promote social

cohesion, economic development, good governance, and respect for human rights. This multidimensional approach is essential for creating a stable environment where people can live peacefully and prosper (Smith 321). The goal is to foster an atmosphere of trust and cooperation, enabling communities to move away from a history of violence and build a foundation for lasting peace.

*Model:* A model can also be a person or thing regarded as an excellent example of a particular quality. For instance, a role model is someone who serves as an example to others, especially in terms of behaviour or achievements (All Nation Dictionary 437).

*Overcoming Evil with Good:* One of the most well-known references to this principle is found in the New Testament, especially, in the book of Romans 12:21 (NIV). "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." This verse encourages individuals to resist the temptation to retaliate against evil or wrongdoing and instead respond with goodness and positive actions. The idea is that responding to hatred or injustice with love, forgiveness, and kindness can ultimately lead to positive change and transformation.

## **Overview of Violence in Nigeria History**

Nigeria, a country located in West Africa, has a complex history marked by various forms of violence. From pre-colonial conflicts to post-independence struggles, Nigeria has experienced ethnic, religious, and political violence. The roots of this violence are complex, involving ethnic, religious, political, and economic dimensions that have evolved over centuries. Before the arrival of European colonial powers in the late 19th century, Nigeria was made up of several powerful kingdoms and empires, the Hausa-Fulani states in the North, the Yoruba kingdoms in the southwest, and the Igbo societies in the southeast. These kingdoms were often in competition with one another and engaged in warfare to expand their territories or protect their interests (Dafer 43). Trade also played a significant role in pre-colonial Nigeria, with different regions specializing in various goods and commodities. The control of trade routes and access to valuable resources often led to conflicts between neighbouring communities and kingdoms. Additionally, there were social and cultural differences among the various ethnic groups, which sometimes escalated into conflicts. Religious differences, such as those between followers of indigenous African religions and those who later embraced Islam or Christianity, also contributed to tensions and conflicts in pre-colonial Nigeria.

In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960. However, the country faced significant challenges in integrating its diverse population. Ethnic and regional tensions between groups like the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa-Fulani escalated, culminating in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) when the south eastern region

attempted to secede as the Republic of Biafra. This war, according to Heerten and Moses, resulted in a massive loss of life and had lasting social and political impacts (169).

Another common kind of violent conflict that has intensified over time in Nigeria is religious violence. Religious identities are usually classified into three, Christian, Muslim, and African Traditional Religion (ATR). It is however, Christianity and Islam that are politically explosive when it comes to crisis in Nigeria, partly because of their susceptibility to formal and social structures and tendencies to spill over from their initial theatres into other localities, states, or even regions of federation, Ethno-religious clashes have proven to be the most violent instance of inter-group crisis in Nigeria (Dafer 79).

Nigeria has experienced numerous religious conflicts, primarily between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south. These conflicts have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and displacement of communities. Factors such as religious intolerance, political manipulation, land and socioeconomic disparities have contributed to these tensions.

Nigeria has faced periods of political unrest and military coups since gaining independence. Additionally, the Niger Delta region has been a hotspot for militancy due to grievances over oil revenue distribution and environmental degradation caused by oil exploration. According to Abdu et al, violent conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta has existed for almost 50 years. It is driven by the struggle among local communities, multinational oil companies, and the Nigerian state for control over oil revenues derived from this resource rich territory (20).

Unfortunately, violence has evolved over time in Nigeria from civil wars, military coups and the Niger Delta conflict to a new generation of threats. The Boko Haram insurgency is one of the most significant challenges in recent years, an extremist Islamist group founded in the early 2000s. This group has carried out numerous attacks, including bombings, kidnappings, and massacres, primarily in north-eastern Nigeria. The group's activities have resulted in the displacement of millions of people and a humanitarian crisis in the region. Iyekekpolo notes that diverse public location like markets, schools, religious worship places, motor parks, police stations; military barracks have been hit by suicide attacks linked to Boko Haram (1).

John ChiwuzulumOdozi and Ruth Uwaifo Oyelere asserted that, in the last 20 years another kind of conflict has emerged and is referred to by some as farmers-herdsmen conflict. The Fulanis are the herders, who want access to land for their cattle. Deaths arising from this kind of conflict are concentrated in the North central geopolitical zone,

with highest intensity of conflicts in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Plateau. This growing conflict has led to the death of a significant number of people (8). These clashes have resulted in significant casualties and displacement of communities. Efforts to address these issues has been ongoing, but finding lasting solutions requires addressing deep-rooted social, economic, and political challenges. It's important to note that this overview provides a broad perspective, and there are many more specific incidents and nuances within Nigeria's history of violence.

### **Contemporary Challenges to Peace-building in Nigeria**

Nigeria faces a myriad of contemporary challenges in its pursuit of sustainable peace - building. The persistence of ethnic and religious conflicts, political instability, economic disparities, and the proliferation of armed groups significantly hamper peace efforts. Despite various initiatives by the government and international organizations, these issues remain deeply entrenched, necessitating a multi-faceted and inclusive approach to peace-building. The study discussed some of the key challenges to peace-building in Nigeria.

*Ethnic and Religious Conflict:* The Human Right Watch (HRW) observes that, Nigeria is ethnically and religiously diverse, and tensions between different ethnic and religious groups have often resulted in violent conflicts. The ongoing clashes between farmers and herders, particularly in states like Benue, Plateau, and Kaduna, have claimed numerous lives and displaced communities (Human Rights Watch 2).

*Boko Haram Insurgency:* According to Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Boko Haram terrorist group, based mainly in north-eastern Nigeria, has been responsible for numerous attacks, bombings, and kidnappings, causing widespread fear and displacement. The group's activities have affected not only Nigeria but also neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (10). The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has displaced over 3.3 million people, the highest in Africa (Dafer 98).

*Corruption and Governance Issues:* Corruption within the Nigerian government and institutions remains a significant challenge, affecting the effective delivery of public services and eroding public trust. Weak governance structures have hindered efforts to address various social and economic issues, leading to dissatisfaction among the population (Agbiboa 23).

*Economic Instability and Unemployment:* Nigeria faces economic challenges, including high unemployment rates, particularly among the youth. Economic instability and lack of job opportunities have contributed to social unrest and, in some cases, involvement in criminal activities and violence (World Bank 15).

*Denial of Basis Civic and Human Rights:* Closely related to poverty is the denial of basic and human rights, which push some people to carry arms in a bid to fight for their rights but subsequently are cajoled into religious crisis by their uncontrolled mind and sensory modalities. Human right denial is worldwide phenomenon. This is confirmed by the rate of genocide experienced in most countries of the world. In the early 1990s, for example, such atrocities rocked countries like South Africa, Somalia, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Rwanda (Dafer 93). The inequitable distribution of political and economic power in the Niger Delta is the root cause of the agitations and rise of militancy, seeking for increased revenue allocation to better the lives of their people, the Niger Delta region being the reservoir of funds feeding the entire country with its oil wealth.

### **Nonviolence in the New Testament as a viable Peace-building Model**

Nonviolence is a central theme in the New Testament. It is primarily associated with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and Early Christian communities, who emphasized love, forgiveness, and non-resistance to evil. Here are some key passages and concepts related to nonviolence in the New Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus delivers some of his most famous teachings, including the Beatitudes and the command to love one's enemies. In Matthew 5:38-39 (NIV), he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." Walter Wink, in his book "Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way," argues that Jesus' teachings in the New Testament present a radical approach to nonviolence. Wink highlights the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), particularly the instructions to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, and love one's enemies, as core elements of Jesus' nonviolent ethic. He interprets these actions not as passive submission but as active, nonviolent resistance that exposes the injustice of the oppressor (40).

John Howard Yoder, in "The Politics of Jesus," emphasizes that Jesus' life and teachings offer a political model grounded in nonviolence. Yoder argues that Jesus' refusal to resort to violence, even in the face of death, exemplifies a commitment to peace that should be emulated by Christian communities. He views the early church's practice of nonviolence as a continuation of Jesus' teachings and a practical approach to peace-building (120).

Glen Stassen, in "Just Peace-making: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace," integrates Jesus' teachings with practical strategies for peace-building. Stassen identifies ten practices that align with Jesus' nonviolent principles, such as conflict resolution, human rights advocacy, and promoting sustainable development. He argues that these practices are essential for creating a just and peaceful society (32)

Richard Hays, in "The Moral Vision of the New Testament," explores the ethical implications of New Testament teachings, including the call to nonviolence. Hays argues that the New Testament consistently advocates for nonviolent responses to conflict, citing passages like Romans 12:17-21 and 1 Peter 3:9. He suggests that the early Christian communities' adherence to nonviolence serves as a powerful model for contemporary peace-building efforts (121).

Stanley Hauerwas, in works such as "The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics," discusses the importance of nonviolence as a defining characteristic of Christian ethics. Hauerwas emphasizes that the church should be a community of peace, embodying the nonviolent teachings of Jesus. He argues that nonviolence is not only a moral imperative but also a practical means of witnessing to the world (211). These scholars collectively argue that the New Testament provides a robust framework for nonviolent action and peace-building, grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus. Their works explore how these principles can be applied in contemporary contexts to address conflict and promote justice.

### **The Relevance of New Testament Principles to Contemporary Peace-building**

The New Testament contains a wealth of teachings and principles that can be relevant to contemporary peace-building efforts. While the New Testament primarily focuses on matters of faith and spirituality, its underlying values and messages can be applied to the pursuit of peace and reconciliation in today's world. Here are some ways in which New Testament principles can be relevant to contemporary peace-building.

*Love and Forgiveness:* The New Testament emphasizes the importance of love and forgiveness. In Matthew 5:44-45, Jesus teaches, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." This principle encourages individuals and communities to overcome hatred and bitterness, essential components of conflict resolution and reconciliation (Wink 41).

*Peace-making:* In the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:9), Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." This verse highlights the value of actively working for peace and reconciliation, which is central to peace-building efforts (Ibid).

*Justice and Mercy:* The New Testament promotes the idea of balancing justice with mercy. Micah 6:8 encourages believers to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God." Striking a balance between justice and forgiveness is crucial in resolving conflicts and promoting lasting peace.

*Reconciliation:* The New Testament underscores the importance of reconciliation among individuals and communities. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, the apostle Paul writes,

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." This ministry of reconciliation can serve as a model for contemporary peace-building initiatives.

*Community and Unity:* The New Testament emphasizes the unity of believers in the body of Christ. In Ephesians 4:3, Paul urges believers to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Promoting unity and cooperation among diverse groups is vital in peace-building efforts.

*Servant Leadership:* Jesus's example of servant leadership, as seen in his washing of the disciples' feet (John 13), can inspire leaders to prioritize the well-being of their communities and work toward peace and reconciliation.

New Testament principles offer timeless wisdom that is highly relevant to contemporary peace-building. Love, forgiveness, nonviolence, justice, and community are essential components for resolving conflicts and fostering lasting peace. By integrating these principles, modern peace-building efforts can address the deep-seated issues that underlie conflicts and promote a more just and harmonious world.

### **Recommendations for Implementation of Nonviolence Model for Peace-building in Nigeria**

Overcoming evil with good through nonviolence is a powerful and transformative approach to peace-building, inspired by the New Testament teachings. Applying this model in a context like Nigeria, which has faced various forms of violence and conflict, requires a strategic and holistic approach. Implementing these recommendations requires a collaborative effort involving government institutions, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and the wider community. By embracing the New Testament model of nonviolence, Nigeria can foster a culture of peace, understanding, and reconciliation, overcoming evil with good in the process.

Here are some recommendations on how to implement nonviolence as a New Testament model of peace-building in Nigeria.

*Promote Interfaith Dialogue:* Encourage dialogue among different religious communities in Nigeria. Create platforms where people from different faiths can come together to understand each other's perspectives, fostering mutual respect and tolerance.

*Education and Awareness:* Promote education about nonviolence, conflict resolution, and peace-building within local communities. Work with schools, religious institutions, and community centres to incorporate teachings of nonviolence into the curriculum and religious education.

*Community Empowerment:* Empower local communities by providing them with resources, skills, and opportunities for economic development. Addressing poverty and inequality can significantly reduce the potential for conflict, as people are less likely to resort to violence when their basic needs are met.

*Leadership and Role Models:* Support and promote leaders who advocate for nonviolence and peaceful coexistence. Highlight their stories and the positive impact they have on their communities, showcasing them as role models for others to follow.

*Conflict Resolution Workshops:* Organize workshops and training sessions on conflict resolution and nonviolent communication. Equip community leaders, teachers, and youth with the skills to manage conflicts peacefully and constructively.

*Media Literacy and Responsible Reporting:* Work with media organizations to promote responsible reporting and accurate representation of different communities. Encourage media literacy programs to help the public critically analyse the information they receive and reduce the spread of hate speech.

## Conclusion

"Overcoming Evil with Good" underscores the importance of embracing nonviolence as a guiding principle for peace-building in Nigeria. By drawing from the New Testament model of peace and reconciliation, individuals and communities can work together to overcome evil and build a more just, harmonious, and peaceful society. Through collective efforts rooted in love and understanding, Nigeria can move towards a future where nonviolence prevails, and conflicts are resolved through dialogue, empathy, and compassion. By embracing the principles of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, this study explores the possibility of overcoming evil with good and paving the way for a more peaceful and harmonious Nigerian society.

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## **INNOCENT I. ASOUZU'S THEORY OF BEING AND THE ONE-MANY PROBLEM IN ONTOLOGY: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Innocent I. Asouzu, while delving into the realm of ontology, identified a crucial issue within the Western philosophical framework and African ontological expressions - the prevalence of an exclusivist and elitist mentality. Asouzu posits that the practical significance of ontology can be revitalized by redefining or re-articulating it through the lens of complementarity/ibuanyidanda. In his endeavor to introduce a fresh complementary ontology, Asouzu primarily focused on "What is being?" while overlooking the inquiry into "Why do beings exist rather than nothing?" This narrow approach limits the explanatory capacity of his ontology in elucidating the essence of being within a multifaceted reality. Asouzu asserts that existence entails being in a complementary connection with other absent elements. Yet, he fails to acknowledge that this manner of defining being assumes the very concept it aims to establish, namely, complementarity. Furthermore, by emphasizing the ultimate purpose (i.e., fulfilling a missing element of reality) as the sole criterion for existence, Asouzu understates the structure and organization of intelligible reality, which enables/affords relationality. This study uses analytic and evaluative methods to explicate Asouzu's theory of being. It argues that Asouzu's innovative complementary ontology could enhance its explanatory efficacy by addressing these issues.*

**Keywords:** Asouzu, Being, Complementarity, Ibuanyidanda, Ontology,

### **Introduction**

The quest to understand the nature of being and its constituent elements has engaged philosophers in various epochs and philosophical traditions. This is because understanding being will set the pace for erecting philosophical, scientific, and

technological epistemic superstructure that provides the lenses used in understanding and interpreting the world. This shows that ontology which is the branch of general metaphysics has practical relevance. Innocent I. Asouzu has shown great courage and genius in venturing into the herculean task of showing how ontology can have practical relevance.

As an African Philosopher, Asouzu observed that the way philosophy, and particularly ontology, has been done both in Africa and the West has created a lot of problems that are left unsolved. He pointed to what he called the 'exclusivist', 'polarizing' and 'bifurcating' mindset, that views reality as ultimately or fundamentally made up of independent entities. To be precise, he presents Aristotle's insistence on the subsistent nature of substance and the dependent nature of accidents as an example of this way of viewing reality. This exclusivist mindset sees reality as made up of disparate entities opposing each other. One is tempted to query whether any entity or part of reality can be alone or independent of the whole of reality.

According to Asouzu, we should show concern about this way of thinking because of its effect on our being in the world. The state of things, within the socio-political frame today, seems to be playing out of the consequences of this narrow-mindedness as we attempt to understand and engage with reality. This is the mindset that privileges one aspect of reality over the other, in regards to having an authentic ontological status, and leads to the socio-political 'war' between presumed or artificial or pseudo-opposites. Moreover, this mindset or way of attending to reality gives some form of legitimacy to any attempt to negate a presumed opposite in search of ontological relevance.

In the bid to address this problem, Asouzu proposed a 'new complementary ontology,' as a way of viewing reality that resolves the problem of the ultimate bifurcation of reality. With the complementary mindset, opposites are not seen as fundamentally mutually exclusive, but ultimately mutually complementary. He opines that this would give philosophy/ontology a human face or existential relevance.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, he referred to his work as an attempt to propose '...a noetic propaedeutic or the pre-pedagogy of the mind or human reason itself as the condition of possibility for all rational and ethical discourses, and for authentic human action.'<sup>2</sup> This gives his work an indispensable pedagogic relevance as it emphasizes re-educating the mind to see reality in a new, but more proper way.

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<sup>1</sup> Innocent I. Asouzu, "'Ibuanyidanda' and the Philosophy of Essence," *Filosofia Theoretica* 1, no. 1 (2011): 106.

<sup>2</sup> Innocent I. Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda: New Complementary Ontology; Beyond World-Immanentism, Ethnocentric Reduction and Impositions* (Zurich: Lit Verlag GmbH & Co. KG Wien, 2007), 80-85.

This paper observes that Asouzu in his attempt to do ontology, engaged for the most part with the question, ‘What is being?’; while saying little or nothing in regards to the question ‘Why are there beings rather than nothing?’ This raises the question ‘Why is being essentially complementary and relational?’ Following this observation, this paper explores the unanswered questions and unresolved problems that rear their heads due to Asouzu’s neglect; for example, the one-many problem. It shall further explore the possibility of a rational reconstruction of Asouzu’s new complementary ontology so that it answers these questions and broadens its explanatory power.

## The Concept of Being

The concept of being as the subject matter of ontology developed from Greek presocratic philosophy, precisely from the work of Parmenides’, *On Nature*. It is necessary to understand the way this term is used in philosophical discourse to do proper ontology and philosophy in general. Heidegger did great in his analysis of this concept when he pointed out that the concept of being is used to mean two things in classical ontology, namely, in regards to the indeterminate *one* or ground of all that is, and in regards to the determinates, intelligible beings that share the same ground of existence.<sup>3</sup> Eric Perl agrees with this analysis of the concept when he said:

The term ‘being,’ ... is used to translate Greek ὄν or τὸ ὄν, the present participle of the verb ‘to be.’ Corresponding to German Seiend (not Sein!) and (philosophical) French étant, it thus signifies that-which-is: either, according to context, the whole of reality, all that is taken together as one whole (as in the first question); or a thing-that-is, as in the expression ‘a being’ (as, in the plural, in the second question).<sup>4</sup>

Thomas Aquinas before Heidegger posited that the idea of the ground of being is being only analogically, since, if it were a being it would be contradictory to call it the ground of being.<sup>5</sup> Hence, he said the concept of being is used for the ground of being only analogically, which is equivalent to the English phrase ‘existence itself’ or (ipsum esse).<sup>6</sup> The Latin *esse* is the infinitive form of the verb *to be*. Eric Perl, commenting on Aquinas, highlights his usage of the verb to be. He points to the fact that *esse* does not mean a thing that is’ or ‘that which is,’ as in the case of the present participle of the verb *to be*, that is, *ens* (or ὄν or τὸ ὄν as its Greek equivalent), but rather it is the act in

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<sup>3</sup> Jussi Backman, “Being Itself and the Being of Beings: Reading Aristotle’s Critique of Parmenides (Physics 1.3) after Metaphysics,” *Epoche: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (2018): 271-175, <https://doi.org/10.5840/epoche20171220103>.

<sup>4</sup> Eric D. Perl, *Thinking Being: Introduction to Metaphysics in the Classical Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Perl, *Thinking Being*, 152-158.

<sup>6</sup> Perl, *Thinking Being*, 152-158.

virtue of which a thing is a being (ōv or ens).<sup>7</sup> In other words, *esse* in existential usage 'signifies the act of existing (actus essendi)'.<sup>8</sup>

There is also an emphasis made to view *being* as an analogical concept. Everything that exists has a being, however, the 'to be' by which they are '...differs according to a higher or a lesser degree of perfection.'<sup>9</sup> For example, when we say things have goodness in them, we only mean they all have goodness in different degrees or proportions. Nonetheless, the concept of being remains an enigma within philosophy due to its indeterminate and determinate horizon that sometimes seems apprehensible and sometimes evaporates to nothing. The next section will explicate Asouzu's theory of being.

### **An Analysis of Asouzu's Theory of Being: A Criticism of Substance Metaphysics**

Asouzu was not satisfied with the current theory of being or the way ontology is being done, which is done within the horizon of substance metaphysics or what he called the philosophy of essence. Substance metaphysics sees being as essentially having a fixed substance that exists independently. Therefore, a substance is the 'kpim' that underlies entities in the cosmos. More so, substances are seen as opposed to their accidents. This motivated his criticism of Aristotelian Substance Metaphysics and emphasized the need to do ontology in a way that restores its relevance and practicality, as against the abstract and abstruse way of doing ontology that has historically characterized the study of ontology. Additionally, his primary aim is to ground human relationships on a sound ontological paradigm that will afford harmony and peaceful co-existence.

According to him, the sole purpose that underlies his engagement with ontology was '...to regain ontology from the preceding conditions of its relevance, both to science or rational inquiry and to human existential situations.'<sup>10</sup> This would give philosophy/ontology a human face or existential relevance, he claimed.<sup>11</sup> He believed that with the proper complementary mindset and horizon for an articulation of being, humans would be in control of all their ambivalent existential situations, and overcome any form of unintended ethno-centric/ethno-philosophic commitment. He referred to his work as an attempt to propose '...a noetic propaedeutic or the pre-pedagogy of the

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<sup>7</sup> Perl, *Thinking Being*, 153.

<sup>8</sup> Perl, *Thinking Being*, 153.

<sup>9</sup> Cajetan Thomas De Vio, *The Analogy of Names and the Concept of Being*, trans. Edward A. Bushinski and Henry J. Koren (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1953), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Asouzu, "'Ibuanyidanda' and the Philosophy of Essence," 106.

mind or human reason itself as the condition of possibility for all rational and ethical discourses, and for authentic human action.’<sup>12</sup>

Asouzu criticized Aristotle’s articulation of being as essentially polarized, exclusivist, non-complementary, and elitist.<sup>13</sup> This criticism follows all metaphysics formulated within the same ambience of bifurcation that is typical of all substance metaphysics or philosophy of essence. Asouzu observed that Aristotle’s definition of being, in his metaphysics, as a substance that has the capacity of independence or subsistence to accidents is a fundamental bifurcation of being.<sup>14</sup> He believes Aristotle’s presentation of being is reminiscent of Plato’s, especially his elitist approach to interpersonal relationships. He identified one of Aristotle’s major objectives as an attempt to show the superiority of Metaphysics over the other sciences. And by analogy, it shows the difference between the wise (who study Metaphysics) and the unwise (who do not study Metaphysics), where the wise are destined to rule the unwise. This way of presenting the relationship between the wise and the unwise appears to be in tandem with Plato’s elitist philosophy that borders on the philosopher king.<sup>15</sup>

For Asouzu despite Aristotle’s criticism of Plato, his presentation of reality is in line with the same elitist, discriminative mindset that undergirds Plato’s thought:

With this approach, Aristotle merely cements Plato’s Idea of the Philosopher king but gives it a folk ideological scientific connotation and forcefulness. He pursues this idea consistently with such intensity that Plato’s idealism turns out to be no match to the polarizing antagonistic type of dualism, which he unfortunately understands as realism.<sup>16</sup>

He believes Aristotle has sacrificed principle at the altar of ideology due to the utilitarian interests that undergird his thought, despite his main motive which was scientific. The path or mindset he emphasized through his metaphysics has become constitutive of how science is done today. This exclusivist mindset factors as a major cause of ethnocentrism in the West.<sup>17</sup> Although Asouzu believes that the mental attitude of most African thought systems is within the ambience of complementarity,<sup>18</sup> yet, most articulation of being by African philosophers is done with an exclusivist mindset

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<sup>12</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 80-85.

<sup>13</sup> Innocent I. Asouzu, “Fidelity to Western Metaphysics: A Challenge to Authentic African Existence,” *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 5, no. 1 (2016): 3.

<sup>14</sup> Asouzu, “‘Ibuanyidanda’ and the Philosophy of Essence,” 83-85.

<sup>15</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 141-144.

<sup>16</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 145.

<sup>17</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 145-146.

<sup>18</sup> Innocent Asouzu, “The Complementary Comprehensive Noetic Alternative,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 2 (2016): 34.

that is typical of an Aristotelian Metaphysics.<sup>19</sup> African philosophers have not learned to rid themselves of the exclusivist and polarizing mindset; this is manifest in the ethnocentric commitment that characterizes their articulation of African ontology:

Over and above all, it rests on the ethnocentric inspired assumption that there is a way of thinking that is congenial to all traditional African societies; an assumption that induces the mind to see Africans only from the perspective of a collective either for good or for worst, but more often for worst.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, there appears to be a reduction of ontology to the worldview of a people.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, it can be said that '...all cases of world immanent pre-deterministic concomitant ontologism...' is exemplified by African Metaphysics.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, to surmount this reductionist and exclusivist mindset that characterizes the way ontology is done within and beyond African Philosophy, Asouzu proposes *ibuanyidanda* ontology.

### **Ibuanyidanda: The Legitimate Horizon for Conceptualizing Being**

*Ibuanyidanda* ontology is essentially a sequel of a prior work developed by Asouzu as the proper and legitimate ambience or horizon for the articulation and conceptualization of being. In his work *Method and Principle of Complementary Reflection: in and beyond African Philosophy*, Asouzu developed the complementary mode of reflection as his unique presentation of what the traditional African anonymous Igbo philosophers reflected on. Essential to this complementary ambience for legitimate reflection is the principle of complementary reflection, which has a dyad variant, and the imperative of complementary reflection. These dyad variant addresses both the metaphysical and practical dimensions of the complementary principle. Understanding this principle is indispensable for an adequate comprehension of Asouzu's notion of being.

'The principle of integration' which is the metaphysical variant of the principle of complementarity states that 'anything that exists serves a missing link of reality within the framework of the totality.' On the other hand, the 'principle of progressive transformation' which is the practical variant is thus formulated, 'all forms of human action aim towards the joy of being.'<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, while the metaphysical variant portrays the metaphysical implications of the principle of complementary reflection, the practical variant addresses the practical relevance of the principle.<sup>24</sup> This dyad way

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<sup>19</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 180.

<sup>20</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 180-181.

<sup>21</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 207.

<sup>22</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 306.

<sup>24</sup> Innocent I. Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection: In and Beyond African Philosophy* (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2004), 273.

of presenting the principle of complementary reflection is itself in consonance with the idea of complementarity developed by Asouzu. The two variants should be viewed as complementary aspects of the same principle, with neither conceived independently of the other.

The imperative of complementary reflection formulated thus, ‘allow the limitation of being to be the cause of your joy’,<sup>25</sup> is indispensable for a proper understanding of the principle of complementary reflection. The imperative is Asouzu’s way of enunciating the forceful nature of the practicality of the principle of complementarity. The principle necessarily calls us to action as represented in the imperative. Thus, we could say that for Asouzu if our being is legitimately realized through complementarity, then it is ‘good’ for us to consciously seek this complementarity that harmoniously orients our being. The imperative appears to be the moral or ethical call of being to all existents to seek harmony in the joy of being. This explains why Asouzu believes that a truly ethical act should not be only good, but the act must be a source of joy for the actor.<sup>26</sup>

To foster a more comprehensive understanding of the principle and imperative of complementarity, there is a need to clarify certain salient concepts, namely, missing link, joy of being (*jide ka iji*), and limitation of being. Since ‘missing link’ shall be discussed elsewhere, this section shall consider only ‘the joy of being’ and ‘the limitation of being.’

The notion of the *limitation of being* is derivable from the fact that being expresses itself as missing links in a relationship of complementarity. The fragmentation of being as missing links is an expression of limits whose actualization is dependent on the whole of being, which sets an ambience for complementarity between various limits, boundaries, identities, or missing links. Essentially, the limitation of being refers to the insufficiency of all missing links as existents that can transcend their limitation through complementarity within the framework of the whole.<sup>27</sup>

The *joy of being* cannot be meaningfully and fully articulated without a proper understanding of the limitations of being.<sup>28</sup> Within the context of the limitation of being as missing links ‘...the joy of being is experienced as the ultimate end determining, defining and driving all missing links of reality.’<sup>29</sup> The joy of being can be understood as that ultimate purpose which is the principle of the determination of all missing links as different identities, and also the principle that drives human action. Taking its

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<sup>25</sup> Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, 273.

<sup>26</sup> Innocent I. Asouzu, “Complementary Ethics,” *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 3 (2016): 109.

<sup>27</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 308.

<sup>28</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 308.

<sup>29</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 307.

implications further, the joy of being is the ultimate principle of the perfection and harmony of being. With these clarifications made above the stage is set for a proper understanding of the principle and imperative of complementarity. Although the concept of missing links is the missing piece yet to be investigated, what has been said suffices for understanding the notion of complementarity as founded on the principle and imperative of complementarity.

Complementary reflection as articulated by Asouzu is an approach to reality that emphasizes the unity of opposites and the harmony of fragments. It sets an ambience for understanding being in all its modes and self-expression in history, and in its essential complementary relationality, in a dynamic and future referential manner. It also emphasizes the fact that all the units/existents in being are in a mutually complementary relationship, which is necessary for their attunement with *being*, and their internal directedness towards the *joy of being*. Complementarity is the only condition for the joy, perfection, and harmony of being which appears to be the ultimate end of all existents in their limitations.<sup>30</sup>

### Beings as Missing Links

The concept of *missing links* is unique to Asouzu and essential to his ontology. A good grasp of beings as *missing links* sets the proper stage for understanding Asouzu's theory of being. As promised in the previous section, the idea of beings as missing links will be discussed in this section as the final piece for understanding the necessary ambience for comprehending and articulating being in its essential relationality. The idea of 'missing link' was uniquely and originally developed by Innocent Asouzu in his attempt to define being (*ens* or *ὄν*), when he said, '...being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality.'<sup>31</sup> His new complementary ontology essentially expresses itself as missing links of reality, which are in a mutually complementary relationship within the context of the whole. However, what then are missing links? Asouzu defines missing links as:

...diverse units that make up an entity within the framework of the whole and as they are complementarily related. They are all the imaginable, fragments, units, components, and combinations that enter into our understanding of any aspect of our world. They are also all the units and combinations necessary in the conceptualization of an entity or the whole. Thus, missing links are, for example, thoughts and the thoughts of thoughts. They are diverse modes of manifestation of being in history. They are categories and the categories of categories. They are the units and the units of units, entities and the entities of entities, things and the things of things. They are ideas and the ideas of ideas, etc. as these can be

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<sup>30</sup> Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, 47.

<sup>31</sup> Asouzu, "'Ibuanyidanda' and the Philosophy of Essence," 103.

abstracted and related to each other as conditions of possibility of their perfectibility in a harmonious systemic manner.<sup>32</sup>

The emphasis here on the fragmentation of beings as missing links is hard to miss. This fragmentation is clearly emphasized by Asouzu in his claim that fragmentation is one of the transcendent categories of unity of consciousness.<sup>33</sup> In this vein, the proper way to understand Asouzu's missing links is in the sense of the fragmentation of beings into missing links which are necessarily in a complementary relationship within the context of the whole. At this point, it is hard to read Asouzu's discourse on missing links and not get the sense that identities or entities are legitimately grounded in being, by being parts or aspects of reality.

Missing links are insufficient in themselves, yet, find their joy in that insufficiency – “allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy.”<sup>34</sup> This is the proper path to true self-transcendence and authentic self-actualization. Without this interdependence that is the ground for growth/development and meaning, human life would be meaningless. Beings as missing links express the condition for a true and meaningful existence, as all missing links, in kind and differences, participate in a mutually complementary relationship as they seek harmony in the whole or the joy of being.<sup>35</sup> In this vein, the concept of missing links shows the necessity of relations and context in speaking about beings.

However, missing links are not static but are in a dynamic process of integration, within the context of the whole. The future preferentiality, historicity, and relativity of missing links set the compass for viewing its essential dynamism.<sup>36</sup> For the fact that being is conceived as that which has a head and tail-end (*ihe di, nwere isi na odu*), the multidimensionality of being in its dynamism is expressed.<sup>37</sup> The head which is *most important* and the tail-end which is *important* are in a dynamic complementary relationship, towards the joy of being. This is a type of levelled ontology that emphasizes every aspect of a being (essential and accidental qualities) at the level of individual entities and the level of the whole of reality.

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<sup>32</sup> Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, 277-278.

<sup>33</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 323.

<sup>34</sup> Asouzu, *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection*, 273.

<sup>35</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 267.

<sup>36</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 273-274.

<sup>37</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 273-274.

## The Noetic Foundation and Pedagogic Relevance of Ibuanyidanda Ontology

The principle of complementarity, outlined by Asouzu, is presented not only as an explanation for how reality works but also how the mind should work to be in harmony with the state of things. The emphasis is made by Asouzu that the practical relevance of the principles of complementarity depends on how it transforms the human mind to see reality as it truly is. In essence, the human mind must see the world in a complementary way to fully have that internal directedness towards the joy of being, in its essential relationality.<sup>38</sup> Asouzu believes most human problems arise due to the way we attend to reality or the type of mindset with which we view reality or issues at stake. If we do not appropriate our attention to seeing reality in its fundamental dynamism towards harmony or the joy of being, we would only disconnect ourselves from our legitimate ground, which is essential for our internal directedness toward the joy of being. A further consequence is that most of our human problems would remain unresolved. He called this complementary mindset in the Igbo language *obi/mmuo eziokwu* (harmonizing faculty). This mindset is responsible for the being and meaning of all human action and volition.<sup>39</sup>

What Asouzu is proposing here is that the human mind is essential to the way human action unfolds in human history. In other words, the way we attend to the world informs how we act in it. Furthermore, the way we see the world informs how we articulate it in ontology. Ontology fundamentally is a reflection of how we see the world or the type of mindset with which we attend to the world.<sup>40</sup> This aligns with his criticism of Aristotelian substance metaphysics which is the product of an exclusivist, polarizing, and elitist mindset. Hence, the ultimate counsel is to re-train the mind to attend to reality in its intrinsic mutual complementary relationship of all missing links of reality. This is necessary if the mind would be in control of all its existential ambivalences (*ima-onwe-onye*).<sup>41</sup> Through this control and mindfulness of human ambivalence, human action would be better informed by a proper context. It is at this point that one can see Asouzu directing metaphysics to practical relevance. By articulating being in a way that emphasizes seeing being in its essential relationality, Asouzu's ontology reflects an enterprise of pedagogic relevance. Nevertheless, let's explore how his theory of being can be extrapolated in the domain of the one-many problem in Ontology. The next section will discuss this theme further.

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<sup>38</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 312-313.

<sup>39</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 313-314.

<sup>40</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 314.

<sup>41</sup> Asouzu, "'Ibuanyidanda' and the Philosophy of Essence," 108, 112.

## Asouzu and the One-Many Problem In Ontology

The one-many problem in Western thought finds its origin in the arguments of two ancient Greek philosophers, namely, Heraclitus and Parmenides. While Heraclitus claimed that Being is many and is characterized by endless activity, Parmenides claims Being is one and static (unchanging).<sup>42</sup> This raises the question, how is being one yet many simultaneously? For James Blachowicz the one-many problem started metaphysical discourse and reflections.<sup>43</sup> He also warns against taking metaphysical unity and diversity, discussed in the one-many problem, for numerical unity and diversity. The problem ‘...fundamentally was whether reality was one or many in kind; that is, it was the homogeneity or heterogeneity of physical reality that was the principal issue.’<sup>44</sup> It shall not be taken for granted that Asouzu intended to do ontology in the proper sense of what it means.<sup>45</sup> This means we ought to ask how he attends to and responds to the one-many problem within the *ibuanyidanda* ontology. One strategy utilized by Asouzu was avoiding defining being by recourse to any particular physical property as did the early Ionian philosophers; instead, he claimed that everything that exists in their kinds is fundamentally missing links in mutual complementary relationships.<sup>46</sup> This means that while he acknowledged that being is many, yet, they all serve missing links of reality without any real hierarchical formation.

Missing links should be understood as the fundamental function/purpose of beings in ensuring the joy/harmony of being. It lives out the structure and organization of beings in them-selves, as these afford relationality. This approach to defining being as functions is unique to Asouzu and not the approach metaphysicians generally take. However, is he justified in doing this, and does his approach answer the one-many problem? For Asouzu to answer the one-many problem, he needs to answer the questions: (a) what is the nature of difference? (b) Is difference essential to entities/things or is it just the manifestation of one thing? How about being more particular with our questions? Does anything cease to exist if everything is just a missing link? If ‘being’ is a ‘missing link’, ‘non-being’ is ‘not being a missing link’. How then can one explain the fact that a human being who dies ceases to exist if despite his death he is still a missing link? It is adequate to think in this way since Asouzu gives being missing links as the only condition for anything to be, hence, things cease to exist only when they are no longer missing links, which he claimed was almost impossible.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> James Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism and the History of Being: Relation as Ontological Ground* (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2023), 19.

<sup>43</sup> James Blachowicz, *Essential Difference: Toward a Metaphysics of Emergence* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>44</sup> Blachowicz, *Essential Difference*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 251.

<sup>46</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 266-267.

<sup>47</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 12.

This seems to be the same as saying nothing ever ceases to exist, hence, real change is an illusion. Asouzu does not say anything about what constitutes difference in being; he assumes differentiation and individuation to be the same thing.<sup>48</sup> For sure he is justified in postulating the relationality of being; however, he failed to respond to the one-many problem of being. This is because the mere definition of being as missing links (ultimate functions) does not explain how entities are structured or organized to be anything at all. This takes us back to emphasizing the pedagogic relevance of Asouzu's work; this is the real value of his work in ontology.

### **The Problem of Grounding Being**

If we take being to be fundamentally relational in a complementary way as Asouzu observed, then we are left with the inescapable ontological problem, 'Why is being essentially complementary?' What we get from Asouzu is that missing links are in mutual complementary relations because being is essentially relational. But this is just a circular argument and does not answer the why question. Let us remember that for Asouzu, '...being is that on account of which anything that exists serves a missing link of reality.'<sup>49</sup> This means that being is what makes relations possible. However, being as that which is bounded must be grounded or afforded by that which is beyond being. In this light, the one-many ontological interactions are before being since it is pure relations and the only condition for anything to be.

For more clarity let us go back to being. Being, as 'that which is' in its original denotation, is essentially bounded, determinate, and definite; which means that the ultimate explanation for being is beyond being, to the unbounded, indeterminate, and indefinite. That which is determinate and bounded should not be understood as that which is static.

As has been noted earlier, Asouzu does not respond to the one-many problem rather he assumes that things are different and the same in a fundamental way. The one-many problem is inseparable from the problem of grounding being; hence, it is only natural that failing to investigate the one-many problem in being would lead to avoiding the question of grounding being entirely. To be able to answer the one-many problem, he ought to explain how being as intrinsically relational can express itself as entities that are essentially different, since if everything in being were integrated, there would not be multiplicity, intelligibility, and differences. In this scenario, one would not be able to differentiate between a book and a table, consciousness and intelligence would be impossible. Therefore, being needs to be grounded for it to effectively answer the one-many problem.

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<sup>48</sup> Asouzu, *Ibuanyidanda*, 263-264.

<sup>49</sup> Asouzu, "'Ibuanyidanda' and the Philosophy of Essence," 103.

## Pure Relations as the Ground of Being: Towards the Metaphysics of Affordance

Asouzu ought to provide the ground for relationality but he provided a framework for mutual interdependence and interconnectedness of different entities towards the joy of being. However, it is very pertinent to ground relationality on a sound ontological fitting. James Filler in his book, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being: Relation as Ontological Ground* attempted a rational reconstruction of the Neoplatonic tradition's postulation of the *One* as the ground of being. He proposed that the *One* of Plotinus should be viewed as pure relations. Filler asked the question, are relations prior to the relata or vice versa? One should take note that postulating the priority of relata over relations makes things necessarily independent. Following this observation, he outlined the consequences of postulating the priority of the relata over the relations:

If we understand relation as primarily grounded in the relata, and these relata are independently existing substances, then the notion of relationship itself becomes difficult. Where does the relation reside? It cannot reside in either entity independent of the other or else the other becomes an unnecessary participant in the relation. If that which gives rise to the relationship, whatever the relationship might be, resides in one particular entity, then no other entities are necessary for the relationship.<sup>50</sup>

This appears to be the move made by Aristotle. By postulating the priority of relata over relations he made things independent and raised the problem of the possibility of relationality. But if things are fundamentally relational and not isolated, the only option for an explanation is to postulate the priority of relations over relata. In essence, it is pure relations that ground being, and without which there would be nothing.<sup>51</sup> However, Filler believes we need to do more to justify the postulation of the priority of relation over relata. There is a need to attend to the philosophical problem that the ancient philosophers engaged within metaphysics, namely, the one-many problem:<sup>52</sup>

Being cannot be a simple unity and neither can it be multiplicity without unity. The One cannot exist without the Many and the Many cannot be without the One. This entails that entities existing independently in themselves cannot be. One by itself cannot exist. But neither can two since two are simply two independently existing unrelated entities. Unless there is a relation between the two, which as we have seen must be a third element that does not arise from either of the two entities by itself, two independently existing entities are no different than a single independently existing entity, and so just as one cannot be many, neither can two (since two independent entities are ultimately no different than one entity). So true multiplicity only arises in the relation between

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<sup>50</sup> Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being*, 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being*, 11-12.

<sup>52</sup> Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being*, 13.

two things, and thus, it is ultimately the case that to exist independently is to not exist at all.<sup>53</sup>

It is hard to miss the emphasis that it is the convergence of both unity and multiplicity that affords relationality and being. John Vervaeke has a unique way of postulating this, he says the relationality of being is manifest in the convergence of the phenomena of the one-ing and the many-ing simultaneously. In other words, emanation and emergence converge at the structural functional organization of a thing, and this essentially creates the affordance for relationality.<sup>54</sup> If we can say that being is fundamentally intelligible then we afford a relation among all of being, since intelligibility is fundamentally relational. The trajectory set by the postulation of the priority of pure relations as the ground of being appears to have a similar goal to Asouzu's complementary ontology, namely, to resolve the problems that arise due to a substance or essentialist metaphysics. However, there is a ground for contrast between Asouzu's complementary ontology and the ontology that postulates the relationality of the ground of being.

When Asouzu postulates being as missing links in mutual complementary relationship, he is not, claiming the priority of relations over relata, although we can see it as a move towards that kind of conclusion. Rather, Asouzu presents relations as between missing links and not ontologically prior to them. It is instructive to note that, for Asouzu being (relata) is that on which account of everything that exists serves a missing link of reality. However, from Filler's argument above it is clear that we cannot claim the relationality in being without grounding the relata in relations, or emphasizing the priority of relations to relata. Thus, unlike complementary ontology, to postulate the ground of being as pure relations is to see the ground of being as that which affords the relationality in being.

Therefore, it is pure relations that afford relationality between and among entities and that open the possibilities for interaction, perception, or cognition. For example, a chair affords sitting, a door affords opening and closing, a keyboard affords typing, and a hill affords climbing or to slide<sup>55</sup>. Beings are not only missing links that are in service of

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<sup>53</sup> Filler, *Heidegger, Neoplatonism, and the History of Being*, 13-14.

<sup>54</sup> John Vervaeke, Bishop Macimus and Archimandrite Patapios, "Emergence and Emanation," (Saint Photios Orthodox Theological Seminary Podcast, published July 31, 2023), accessed April 15, 2024, <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=guDd2MXvp2U&t=3047s&pp=ygUWZW1hbmF0aW9uIGFuZCBlbWFnZW5jZQ%3D%3D>.

<sup>55</sup> Don Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things*, Revised and Expanded Edition (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 11.

mutual complementation towards totality, comprehensibility, and universality but they are the result of the affordances created by pure relations or the convergence of the 'one' and the 'many'. This underscores the fact that both the structure, organization and the functions of an entity converge to make that entity what it is and can become.

## Conclusion

The paper has demonstrated the fact that Asouzu's theory only answers one of the fundamental questions that inform ontology, while he fails to give an account of the second question. He was apt to articulate being from the horizon of interrelatedness, interconnectedness, and interdependence. This is because entities do not exist in isolation but as missing links that are in the service of complementation. This means that *to be* is to be a missing link. With this submission, Asouzu aptly answers what it means to be which he captures in the idea of Ibuanyidanda and its principles of Complementarity.

However, the question of the one-many problem he was absent in this regard. Therefore, to harness the explanatory efficacy of Asouzu's theory there is a need to extend his theory to capture the complexity and complications that this problem poses to philosophers. This entails that if relationality is what characterizes what it means *to be*, then what affords relationality? This paper proposes pure relations as the one that affords relationality. Pure relations are not exclusive from relationality, it is only prior to it. This is because the structure, organization and function of an entity are in mutual service of complementation which affords them to relate with other entities.

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**PROTRACTED BOKO HARAM TERRORISTS' VIOLENCE AND  
FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO COUNTER-TERRORISM EFFORTS BY  
THE NIGERIAN STATE: BETWEEN OPTIMISM AND DESPAIR**

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**Executive Summary**

*The resolve to subjugate Boko Haram terrorism and restore social order in the northeast and Nigeria as a whole is at the top of the wish list of the Nigerian state. However, the spiralling nature of the asymmetric conflict and the gruesome records of atrocities perpetrated by the terrorist group have not only intensified the apprehension regarding the dynamic trend of its violence and attendant realities, but also cast a scepticism on the effectiveness of the counter terrorism efforts of the Nigerian state. This paper examines the consequences of the heinous activities of the Boko Haram terrorists and the efforts of the Nigerian state in combating terrorism in the northeast Nigeria. It further discusses the obstacles associated with the substantial financial expenditure on counter terrorism operations and also examines how Sambisa Forest militates against the concerted efforts to end the menace. This article argues that while there are few glimpses of optimism, the despair seems to be much more as a result of many debilitating factors such as corruption, secrecy in military spending among other things. The article concludes that a comprehensive cum effective strategy to combat terrorism in the interest of peace and meaningful development in the northern Nigeria requires a balance between both the military and the civilian procedures. The article recommends among other things the need to address the root causes of terrorism while government also improves accountability of the funds dedicated to the counter-terrorism operations.*

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Counter- terrorism, Protracted, Terrorism, Violence,

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& Justin Arinze EGBE

## **Introduction**

The global landscape is engulfed with armed conflicts and violence arising from internal wars, interstate wars and terrorism, which have manifold negative impacts on the sustainability of both domestic and international peace (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2004). Many empirical evidences substantiate the prevalence of political violence across the world, as there is a manifestation of one variant of violent conflict or the other in different countries and every continent of the world (Osaghae, 2005; Irene, 2023; PRIO, 2024). Violence, which is the hallmark of terrorism, manifests through the harm inflicted on people by restriction of freedom, various forms of assault and killing of persons as well as destruction of valuable property (Girvertz, 1974). The instrument of terrorism are varied and the propensities for terrorism are wide-ranging, but the fact is that terrorism revolves around the adoption of threat of violence as a strategy of achieving particular aims with a view to inducing fear in the victims in a ruthless manner without any regard for or conformity to humanitarian norms (Kegley and Wittkopf, 2004). The recent and current experiences also pose a serious challenge to human security at national, regional and international levels (Kegley and Wittkopf, *ibid*). This threat seems to dominate the polity in developing countries domiciled in Asia, Middle East and Africa.

In Africa, the complexity of factors such as historical, cultural, political, economic relation, external actors etc. account for violence as a systemic variable. That is, violence is a product of the interplay of congeries of forces in a socio-political system (Osaghae, 2005). From the 1970s hitherto, the enduring image of Africa has been of a continent of conflict and violence perennially on the verge of survival. Africa thus embodies an assemblage of nations that are prone to violence and terrorism arising mostly from conflictual socio-political and economic settings, where force and conflict make the everyday life of its inhabitants (Idowu, 2005). The historical context of violence is central to explaining present-day conflicts in Africa, as most historical and anthropological accounts paint a largely violent past in most parts of the continent (Osaghae, 2005). Africa has the weakest economy and many poverty-ridden states in the world and because of the prevalent structural problems, is vulnerable to many social, economic, political and environmental crises. The failure of a government to carry out its conventional obligation for the citizen leads to disappointment, grievances and the quest for power to influence change. This has been the cause of different radical movements in the annals of history (Forest, 2014). One recent radical movement which has become a global threat is the Boko Haram.

Boko Haram is a radical Islamic terrorist' organization predominantly operational in Nigeria (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). The terror incidents masterminded by the Islamist group are so intense that combating the threat has become the topmost political agenda

in the country at the expense of socio - economic undercurrents such as poverty, lack of basic and health facilities, unemployment which have been identified as partly responsible for the emergence of this menace (Adesoji, 2010; Okafor, 2011). This paper examined the consequences of the heinous activities of the Boko Haram terrorists and the efforts of the Nigerian state in combating terrorism in the northeast Nigeria. It further discussed the obstacles associated with the substantial financial expenditure on counter terrorism operations. As well as the prospects and despairs of the government efforts. This article contended that while there are few glimpses of optimism, the despair seems to be much more as a result of many debilitating factors such as corruption, secrecy in military spending among other things.

### **Extremism and Boko Haram in The Northern Region: An Overview**

In the late 1970s, the gradual downward spiral of the economic condition began to dampen the hearts of many people leading to the emergence of dissenting groups in Nigeria. One of such groups was Maitasine movement under the leadership of Muhammadu Marwa who exploited the growing economic disparities between the rich and the poor to incite the poor citizens of the rural communities in northern Nigeria to believe that their misery was occasioned by the intrusion of foreign Western culture. He gave many inciting lectures against the rich elites and the government and eventually had many disciples. Maitasine commenced series of violent attacks at Kano in December 1980, which was subdued by the military and claimed Marwa's life. Boko Haram has a historical connection with Maitasine uprisings in the 1980s and this reveals its strong opposition to Western civilization. Two years later, Maitasine riots resurfaced in Maiduguri, Borno state (operational base of Boko Haram) and the Nigerian security forces crushed the last Maitasine riot in 1985. Nevertheless, the northern Nigeria experienced several ethno-religious conflicts such as Zango-Kataf which were repressed by the military government between 1985 and 1999 (Komolafe, 2013).

Boko Haram, which simply refers to the prohibition of Western education, is an extremist Islamists terrorist group prominent in Northeast Nigeria that further extends its influences to Cameroon, Chad and Niger republic. The group whose official name is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad" meaning "people who are devoted to the spread of the prophet's teachings and Jihad" began in 2002. The group gained significant recognition under the leadership of Muhammed Yusuf who was a young Islamic cleric that influenced and incited his followers to oppose Western education vehemently through his teachings. Boko Haram cannot be regarded as an integrated, monolithic group because there are different factions within the movement that differ about strategies and sometimes contend against each other for attention and membership. They however share the same belief that the northern region was an

Islamic society before the advent of colonialism with western civilization that is diametrically opposed to the tenets of Islam (Forest, *ibid*). Thus, this extremist group not only desires the establishment of an Islamic state and introduction of Sharia Law in Nigeria but also contends with any economic and socio-political activity perceived to have western influence or involvement.

Besides, Boko Haram terrorists also wish to replace the modern political system in the Nigerian state with the ancient Muslim caliphate system similar to the famous Sokoto Caliphate in the pre-colonial period (Gebremichael et. al., 2018). These ideologies have remained the driving force for Boko Haram, but the group has evolved its tactics over the years despite the government efforts to curtail its heinous activities (Komolafe, 2013). The ideological basis of Boko Haram is parallel to other terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), Al Shabaab, Ansauru, Hezbollah, the Islamic State, and others, whose cause is established on and propelled by Islamic fundamentalism. The members of such groups constitute threats to the general public, particularly in circumstances where their target is a secular nation that favours the co-existence of many religious traditions (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Thus, Boko Haram and its most dangerous faction - the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) - have persistently remained the chief security concern as a result of gruesome records of horrors and atrocities perpetrated majorly within the Nigerian state. The movement that began purely as an insurgency later transformed into a full-blown terrorists' movement responsible for a large number of deaths and wanton destruction of property. Boko Haram assumed international dimension through its successful alliance with *Al Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb making it not only a regional menace but also a threat to global community (Knoechelmann, 2014).

The initial headquarters of Boko Haram group was located in Borno state's capital-Maiduguri, in the northeast region of Nigeria where it carried out several attacks that prompted the intervention of the nation's armed forces whose operation culminated in the seizure of the group headquarters and the demise of its leader in July 2009. These led to the escalation of the crisis as this group was forced out of Maiduguri and members fled to rural villages and particularly Sambisa Forest, which provide safe haven for them. The group under the new leadership of Abubakar Shekau vowed to avenge the murder of its leader by the Nigeria security forces, declared allegiance to al Qaeda in 2010 and began terrorism on a full scale (Albert, 2017; Gebremichael et. al., 2018). Boko Haram has progressively employed unselective violence towards the actualization of its social reform agenda while there have been indigenous, national and transnational efforts to subdue the movement (Serrano and Pieri, 2014).

Since the death of Mallam Yusuf and the internationalization of Boko Haram, the group has unleashed violence against the Nigerian State. On 26 August 2011, the United

Nations edifice in Abuja was attacked by this radical group through a suicide bomber which occasioned the death of 23 people and left several other innocent individuals seriously wounded (WHO, 2021; United Nations, 2022). On 14 April 2014, this ruthless group kidnapped over 250 girls of the Government Secondary school located in a small Christian town of Chibok in Borno state. Since 2009, this group destabilized the northeastern region of Nigeria, which has now spiralled to other parts of the country particularly including the nations' federal capital territory-Abuja. The attacks of this group have led to food insecurity, mass displacement of innocent people (many of whom are children) from their homes, loss of property, poor access to sanitation and clean water, malnutrition and exponential increase of schoolchildren in the Northeastern Nigeria that is generally believed as the epicentre of terrorists' activities (Raji, et. al., 2021).

Throughout 2014, the terrorist group successfully seized huge number of territories in Northeastern Nigeria that is more or less the size of Belgium (Reuters, 2015 and 2016; Sahara Reporters, 2021). In the same year 2014, Boko Haram exterminated almost 7,000 people to become one of the most lethal terrorist groups in the world (Hendrix, 2015; United States House Hearing-114 Congress, 2016). Besides, Boko Haram launched massive attacks on daily basis against the security forces, education institutions, Christians, churches, media personnel as well as Muslims they perceived not to be sympathetic to their cause. The extension of its atrocious activities into Chad, Niger and Cameroon, which are countries sharing boundary with Nigeria has posed a critical regional security challenge ever since (Gebremichael et. al., 2018). Recent statistics clearly reveals that Book Haram terrorists' group has exterminated more than 35,000 people while over 2.3 million people have suffered from displacement and property worth more than ₦16 billion have been destroyed since its inception (Raji, 2021; Statista, 2022). Worryingly, there appears to be a linkage between the terrorist group and armed bandits. In fact, the two seems to have worked together at various levels and stages.

This unwholesome development provoked the backing and concerted efforts of the African Union (AU) for the resuscitation and deployment of a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a united multinational armed forces consisting of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria with headquarters in N'Djamena-the capital of Chad, mandated to subjugate terrorists' activities in the sub region (Gebremichael et. al., *ibid*). Owing to the seemingly incapability of the armed forces to effectually get rid of the terrorists' activities in the northeast, vigilante groups also came together and formed the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in 2013 in order to complement the efforts of the armed forces to fight Boko Haram and shield the local communities against attacks. Members of this the Civilian Joint Task Force assisted the Nigerian security forces by fighting alongside with them to avert the capture of Maiduguri by Boko Haram in 2014

(Gebremichael et. al. *ibid*). However, since the eviction of these terrorists from Maiduguri, there has been an upsurge in suicide attacks in the northern Nigeria. Actually, the group is an expression of a broad socio-economic underdevelopment as well as political illegitimacy and both the historical narratives and modern grievances have propelled members to uphold its ideology. This is because political and socio-economic provocations are largely prevalent in the Northern Nigeria than other parts of the country and Boko Haram, like other religious terrorist groups across the world, refer to local conditions to justify its ideology and pursue the agenda of establishing an Islamic state (Forest, 2014). The impenetrability of the group has also come from its refuge in the infamous Sambisa Forest.

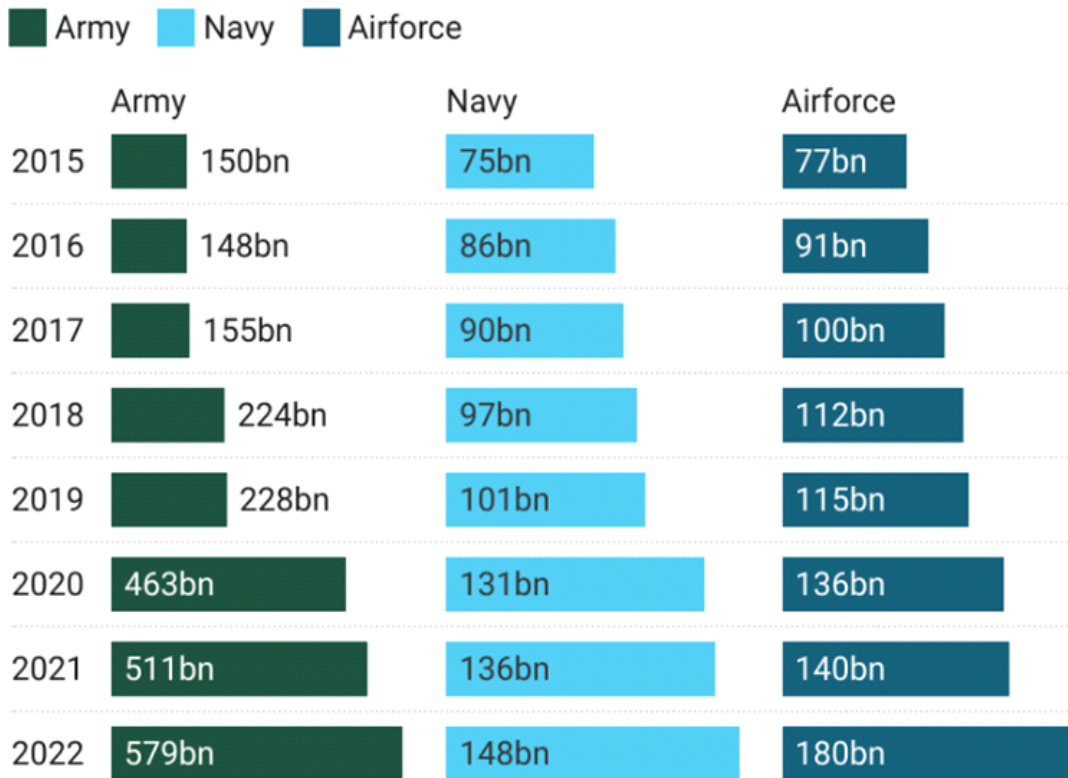
The extremely vast Sambisa Forest is the refuge of terrorists in the northeast region of Nigeria and it plays a prominent role in the protraction of Boko Haram violence and the obstructions recorded by the national and regional armed forces in their counter terrorism operations. The forest was established as a game reserve in the present-day Borno state by the colonial government in the 1950s because of its unique vegetation and concentration of animals. It was found to be the best endowed habitat for animals in the northern Guinea/Sudan Savannah. The Federal government in the 1970s gazetted the forest and the Sambisa Forest reserve was commissioned by the then military administrator of Borno state in person of Muhammed Buba Marwa for the promotion of tourism, conservation and academic research in the early 1990s (Kayode, 2014; Albert, 2017). However, the poor commitment towards the realization of the intended purposes of Sambisa Forest reserve for almost a decade led to its hijack by some armed groups that were using the forest as their hideout (Hendrix, 2015; Albert, 2017).

### **Evaluation of Government's Spending on Counter Terrorism**

The massive security threat of Boko Haram led to the resolve by the Nigerian government to wage counter terrorism war against this extremist group. However, despite the deployment of large security forces to the northern region coupled with the allocation of 20% of the country's budget for defence sector by President Jonathan led administration in 2014 with a view to combating terrorism, there was rather an upsurge in violent activities of this notorious group (Udo, 2014, Forest, 2014). It is noteworthy that Nigerian state spent \$2.42bn and \$1.62bn on the military in 2013 and 2017 respectively. Between 2010 and 2017, Nigerian government allocated over 6.7 trillion naira to the security sector in order to strengthen its capacity for counter terrorism operations. Apart from the above allocation, federal government borrowed an extra budgetary allocation of the sum of 1 billion dollars to finance counter terrorism operations. There was also a release of \$21 million for the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 2015 (Ogbonnaya, 2020). In 2018, US\$1 billion was apportioned to the Nigeria Army from the Excess Crude Oil Account for the procurement of weapons

and security equipment to strengthen the war against Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeastern region (Anadolu, 2017). Being an effective member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), Nigeria was also aided with \$10.6 million value of training, equipment and advisory support for counter terrorism efforts between 2017 and 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 2022).

**Figure 1:** *Budget Allocation to Nigerian Army, navy and Air Force, (2015-2022)*



*Oyedeji (2022)*

Among the Sub-Saharan African states, Nigeria occupies the first position on the list of countries with the highest defence spending at \$5.8 billion in 2022. The report of World Bank discloses the amazing rise in the budget of Nigeria’s defence by 262% within the space of five years. In 2016, the approved defence budget was \$1.72 billion, the budget for 2017 was \$1.62 billion, the allocation for military spending for 2018 was \$2.04 billion, the military budget for 2019 was \$1.86, the budget for 2020 was \$2.57 billion in 2020 and the Nigerian state massively enlarged its military expenditure to \$4.5 billion in 2021. This data shows that Nigeria has expended more than \$19.9 billion between 2016 and 2022 to boost its military and security architectures arising from the recurrence of domestic violence across the country particularly in the northern region

(Babatunde-Lawal, 2022). Besides, the allocation of Nigerian state defence in 2022 budget was 15%, which is remarkably higher than the combination of allotments to health (7%) and education sectors (5%) (Ogbonnaya, 2022). The country's defence budget for 2023 was N1.383 trillion while the 2024 budget for defence alone is N1647 trillion, about 5.7% of the entire 2024 budget. In addition to that, N455 billion allocated for the Nigeria Police in 2021, N559 billion in 2022 and N838 in 2023. In 2024, the police budget is N969.6 billion (PLAC, 2024).

The Nigerian state seriousness to counter terrorism war in the Northeast sub region is evident in the fact that it is the only financial contributor to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) activities (NAN, 2016). The federal government also allocated another N500 million for the prosecution of Boko Haram suspects and other criminal cases in the 2022 budget apart from the N300 million earlier voted for the prosecution of “on-going” cases, some of which are Boko Haram related (Ejekwonyilo, 2022). However, in spite of government counter-terrorism expenditure and efforts, the growing and daunting incidence of terrorism continues to be worrisome because it increases the level of insecurity and under-development. The vulnerability of the Nigerian state to terrorist attacks thwarts political stability, hinders economic growth and frustrates government efforts towards the attainment of rapid industrialization (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Terrorism has not only had a significant negative impact on economic growth and investment but also altered the composition of government expenditure, with the defence component of government expenditure rising in comparison with other expenditure items (Chuku et al, 2017).

Despite this heavy financial commitment, the Nigerian state is yet to overcome terrorism. The Nigerian government earmarked N1 trillion in the 2023 budget approved by the National Assembly to finance the on-going war against terrorism and banditry across the nation (Sahara reporters, 2022). The Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) also confirmed that the counter-terrorism war by the Nigerian state has gulped over 6 trillion naira between 2008 and 2021 (Omolaoye, 2021). The concerted efforts and financial responsibility of the government to counter terrorism operations by the security forces over the years have managed to yield negligible results as the country is still ranked as one of the state's most affected by terrorism on the Global Terrorism Index (Ogbonnaya, 2020). Peace seems not to be the horizon but an illusion in the Northeast. In its 12th years of operation in the northeast, Boko Haram has killed several thousands of people and its displacement of over 2 million people has led to an upsurge in the number of Nigerian refugees in neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Erezi, 2022).

Truly, the success of the military in driving terrorists' groups out of major cities led to sharp reduction of hostilities and insecurity of lives and property in the major city

centres from late 2015 to first quarter of 2018. However, Nigeria's strategic efforts to checkmate the group has not been efficacious but rather assist the group to quickly transmute into frightening international force (Forest, *ibid*). The month of December, 2019 recorded the execution 11 abducted Christians by ISWAP to revenge the killing of Islamic state leader Abu Bakar al Baghdadi by the United States Forces. In January 2020, the group killed Lawan Andimi - the Chairman of the Adamawa State Chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). It also abducted some University teachers in Yola and carried out several premeditated attacks in Borno State. The terrorists relocated to rural and remote areas where they constantly attack vulnerable villages, military facilities and government infrastructures ever since (Duerksen, 2021). Both Gubio and Jere Local Government Areas of Borno State experienced outrageous abduction as well as the killing of hundreds of their residents between June and November 2020 while many people met their sudden death during the series of rocket attacks, which put Maiduguri city in disarray between December 4 and 23, 2021 (Ogbonnaya, 2020, GOV.UK, 2022).

Although terrorism remains a serious threat in sub-Sahara Africa as it accounts for 48% of total global death from terrorism, the counter insurgency efforts in Nigeria decreased Boko Haram's activities as only 64 attacks was attributed to the organization in 2021. The fall in deaths from Boko Haram terrorism by 92% from 2,131 in 2015 to 178 in 2021 contributed to Nigeria recording the second largest decline in deaths from terrorism in 2021 with the number falling by 47% to 448. Therefore, Nigeria has now been placed in the sixth position from the fourth position it consistently maintained since 2017. It is to be noted that the Boko Haram's decline coincides with the death of the group leader, Abubakar Shekau who committed suicide during a skirmish with ISWAP in May 2021 (Global Terrorism Index, 2022). However, the spate of terrorism is not abated in 2022 as a number of cruel attacks were recorded in Ondo state, Kogi state, Niger state and Abuja- the Federal Capital Territory. On June 5, 2022, not less than 40 Christians were exterminated in a Catholic church while observing a mass service in Owo, Ondo state (World Report, 2023). In July 2022, the Kuje prison in Abuja was bombed and many prisoners including some arrested Boko Haram members escaped, some policemen were killed in Suleja, Niger state while improvised explosive devices (IEDs) attacks and bomb attacks were conducted at different locations in Kogi State in April and December, 2022 (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

Apart from the encumbrances of Sambisa Forest, corruption is another major factor militating against the counter-terrorism efforts in Nigeria. The funds for counter terrorism are not judiciously utilized and the operations are less effective. This is because substantial portion of the fund allocated for counter-terrorism operations are embezzled by conflict entrepreneurs among the top officials in the military and the security sector. This position is justified by the allegations levelled against both the

office of the National Security Adviser regarding the diversion of \$2.1 billion earmarked for the procurement of weapons and the office of the Chief of Defence Staff for another 3.9 billion scandals in 2015. Besides, there was a discovery of \$43 million cash meant for undercover operations by the National Intelligence Agency in a secluded residence in Lagos in 2017 while the \$1 billion from the Excess Crude Oil Account allocated to the Nigeria army for arms procurement was declared missing in 2018. The clandestine nature of military expenditure, which necessitates the exemption of military spending from audit exercise due to its sensitive nature, gives room for misappropriation of allocations for counter terrorism operations (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

### **Between Optimism and Despair**

It is disheartening that the Nigerian state witnessed a tragic level of insecurity in recent time owing to terrorist attacks in different places, in spite of its investment on counter terrorism over the years (World Report, 2023). However, considering the doggedness and financial commitments of the Nigerian government to end the menace, there seems to be some glimpses of optimism for the restoration of social order in the northern region. The reviewed National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST), the Policy Framework and the National Action Plan to checkmate violent extremism have continued to improve the governmental capacity to counter the upsurge of terrorism thereby raising a ray of hope (Edokpa, 2021). The tenacity of the security forces to get rid of terrorists in the region have yielded some positive results as they have not only arrested several terrorists but also succeeded in exterminating many members of this dangerous groups, including a good number of Boko Haram/ISWAP diehard commanders (Sanusi, 2022; Abubakar, 2023). Another success recorded by the military operations was the mass surrender (more than 82,000 so far) of Boko Haram terrorists and their families to the troops of Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK) in the Northeast (Sahara Reporters, 2023). The laying down of arms by the surrendered ex-combatants was not unconnected with the demise of Boko Haram leader- Abubakar Shekau who died in a clash with ISWAP on May 19, 2021, coupled with the continued hostility between the two factions ever since (Momoh, 2023; Abubakar, 2023; Obiezu, 2022).

In its concerted efforts to eradicate terrorism and curtail the scourge of insecurity, the Nigerian state successfully established new structures and institutions. Some of the initiatives are the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light weapons (NCCSALW) and enactment of some legislations including the Terrorism Prevention Act 2013 (Amendment) for the prosecution of captured perpetrators of terrorism (Edokpa, *ibid*). Between 2019 and 2022, more than 4,000 arrested terrorists had been prosecuted and those who were convicted are serving various jail terms while others are awaiting trials (Iroanusi, 2020; Abu-bashal, 2021; Nwezeh, 2023). Besides, a non-kinetic approach called Operation Safe Corridor (OPSC) was also established in

September 2015 which encourages willing and repentant Boko Haram and ISWAP members to surrender and undertake a structured de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. This initiative has reportedly graduated more than 3500 surrendered ex-combatants who have been reintegrated into the society (Sahara, Reporters, 2023).

However, despite the exertions of the government in ensuring adequate financial provision for arms procurement and logistic supplies, conflict entrepreneurs in the security sector engage in false procurement deals and other illegal extra military activities at the expense of the nation's security. It is pathetic that equipment shortfalls, poor weapons and logistic supplies were the reasons adduced by the military spokesperson for the death of almost 200 soldiers in a Boko Haram ambush and attack on 157 Task Force Battalion in Metele, Borno State. It has been argued that except the Nigerian government check corruption in the top echelon of the military and thwarts the activities of conflict magnates that undermine security operations, it may be difficult to adequately counter terrorism. This is because violent extremism will continue to thrive in the region and the battle against terrorism will be an endless one. Thus, there is need to reinforce both legal and institutional structures to contend with corrupt practices in the security sector that frustrate counter terrorism efforts (Ogbonnaya, 2022).

The current realities in the nation attest to the fact that the end of the conflict is not yet in sight as the expected triumph over Boko Haram terrorism still hangs between optimism and despair. This is because the cessation of violent extremism being experienced in the northern Nigeria requires total dislodgement of the terrorists from the Sambisa Forest that provides a safe haven and operational headquarters for them, stoppage of corrupt practices in the security sector and more importantly, the removal of the underlying causes of the protracted violence. The truth is that, until the factors militating against the success of counter terrorism efforts are decisively dealt with, the unbidden but incessant terrorists' violent activities would not be eradicated but might rather grow worse.

Furthermore, the Boko Haram terrorists cannot be successfully eliminated through the adoption of adversarial conflict management strategies alone. It is to be recalled that the emancipation of 103 out of over 250 school girls was not through the military intervention but the product of the negotiation between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government facilitated by the International Committee for Red Cross (Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). The financial commitments to military counter terrorism operations alone cannot eradicate terrorism because the success of military operations is not the panacea to its causal factors ranging from bad governance, corruption, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and inaccessibility to adequate social amenities and

infrastructure as well as basic support services in the region (Ibegbu, 2009, Ajah, et al, 2020). Thus, there is need for an extensive approach to combating terrorism in Nigeria while the weaknesses of Boko Haram ideology and activities must be understood and considered as part of the strategy (Forest, 2012).

### **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

The most reasonable and enduring solution to this protracted domestic terrorism that would lead to the stoppage of unwarranted financial wastage by the Nigerian state is a systematic riddance of its underlying causes. It is pathetic that the failure of the government to address the root causes of terrorism has degenerated to banditry in the Northeast and north central Nigeria, which has become another serious security challenge like Boko Haram to the polity (Ogbonnaya, 2020, PLAC, 2024). The history of religious conflicts in Nigeria shows that apart from the purported religious propensities, there are some underlying factors that prompted the conflicts. The problematic political and socio-economic situations in Nigeria have contributed immensely to the persistence of religious crisis in the country. The sustained structural problems such as corruption, poverty, unemployment, hunger and lack of infrastructural facilities will continue to promote the cause of Boko Haram terrorists' violence. It has been discovered that there are many supporters of Boko Haram ideology, grievances and its actions, and until the socio-economic challenges which are the causal factors are dealt with, the ideology will continue to appeal to frustrated young minds and may be difficult to get rid of it (Forest, 2012, PLAC, 2024).

Thus, the superlative strategy for the Nigerian government to defeat Boko Haram is to be financially committed to the counter terrorism military operations and simultaneously address squarely the socio-economic and political challenges that are the root causes of the lingering terrorism in the north-eastern region (Komolafe, 2003). In fact, if the Nigerian government through the security forces were to defeat and end Boko Haram terrorism without proffering a lasting panacea to the socio-economic grievances, there would be no guarantee of a long-term security and sustainable peace in the region as another rebellious group would emerge to take its place. Therefore, the hope of restoring both economic and socio-political stability in the northern Nigeria lies on the government readiness to address the underlying causes of the violence, which serve not only as persuasive mechanisms for terrorism but also as an impetus for the frustrated individuals who are incited and swayed to join the vicious movement.

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## **NIGERIAN POLITICS OF ZONING: QUESTIONS FOR DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Nigerian political history has survived many stages of development ranging from democratic to military phases. The present democratic dispensation which started from 1999 is characterized by the process of 'power rotation within the geopolitical zones' of Nigeria called 'zoning'. Though zoning system is a political party affair, it was for*

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*the purposes of all-inclusiveness and deepening of democratic principles in the Nigerian society that the zoning system was initiated. But the challenge as observed today is that zoning has reinforced a style of politicking characterized by ethnicity and religious bigotry in the system and in the consciousness of Nigerians. By this, it has reinstated mediocrity and production of incapable leaders in the Nigerian polity. In addition to this, the question is: has zoning truly saved democracy in Nigeria? Has it actually succeeded in ensuring all-inclusive government? When there is a change of power from one party to another, what is the fate of justice in zoning system? It is based on this that the paper defends the thesis that zoning has encouraged, among Nigerians and in Nigerian politics, political injustice hence non-inclusiveness and high consciousness of ethnicity and religious bigotry than nationalism and patriotism. However, the expectation from this paper is an exposition of the rudiments and initial aims behind zoning ideology and how it could have been the best political mannerism to ensure justice and all-inclusiveness for a new born democratic, multicultural and religious society like Nigeria. It will by extension show the consequences of the failure to explore the democratic rudiments of zoning which today explain why and how the Nigerian politics has become characterized by ethnicity and religious dominance. The paper shall adopt analytic and comparative methods in this discussion.*

**Keywords:** Nigeria, Politics, Zoning, Justice, Democracy, Religious Bigotry, Multi-cultural

## **Introduction**

Since the emergence of the Nigerian state and political emancipation from colonization, Nigerian political history has passed through democratic and military leaderships concomitantly. However, beginning from 1999 till date, democratic leadership albeit only captured in principle has sustained. It is in an attempt to reflect the democratic tenet of participation, given that the Nigerian polity is a conglomerate of diverse culture and religion and in view of the uncertainties and fear of terror experienced by her past tribalist military regimes, that a system known as Zoning, and aimed at ensuring an all-inclusive leadership, was introduced. This system was to guarantee that political power and leadership rotate among the Six (6) geo-political zones of the country and to instil the principles of democracy in the minds of Nigerians beyond mere acceptance to living it. At this, the possible questions that follow are: what is the initial rationale behind zoning and how has that initiative been sustained in the Nigerian polity together? What gains have Nigerians drawn from zoning. How democratic is the system and is it even a Nigerian constitutional matter? It is an attempt to address these raised research question that this paper maintains the view that zoning system which provides an enabling ground for inclusiveness should have been a better option to drive Nigerian

democratic leadership but unfortunately, it has turned to a way through which politics of bitterness, dominance, ethnicity and religious bigotry has been played in Nigeria. In taking up this discussion, the paper will adopt analytic and comparative methods to not only analyze the Nigerian political trajectory, but also to compare the Nigerian democratic system to other democratic practices so as to ascertain the level of good in the Nigerian politicking labelled 'democracy'. This paper holds high expectations to include: 1. The exposition of the style of politicking practised in Nigeria under the cloak of democracy. 2. To show how, instead of the expected good from the system of zoning, it has ironically bred a sort of politics characterized by high, irrational, unjustifiable and uncontrollable consciousness of ethnic dominance and religious bigotry which have engulfed Nigeria with human extortion and all acts of inhumanity.

The paper is put in sections to bear an abstract that presents a brief summary of the paper; an introduction that contains a bit more elaboration of the abstract; after this comes a section that interrogates zoning as a Nigerian peculiar political ideology. Another section dialoguing with democracy as a global political system follows. Following this is a section discussing zoning as a political ingredient to the Nigerian brand of democracy and then how the two features of Nigerian polity feature justice. Finally, a section of evaluation and conclusion comes. It is imperative to state that this was first presented at the conference of Association of Philosophy Professionals of Nigeria (APPON) held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (30<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> December 2022), at the General Studies (GS) Building. Critical interrogations of the paper by scholars at the conference must be recognized as they helped to strengthen the paper thus far.

### **Zoning as a Nigerian Peculiar Political Ideology**

As the name implies, Zoning refers to the act of sharing turn by turn within a set of zones of an entity. In Nigeria, it refers to the sharing of political power within a set of geopolitical zones of the country. It is a style of power shifting from one to zone to another within an agreed period or political tenure. That is to say that if one zone produces a candidate who will come into power to lead the country on behalf of his/her zones-men within a stipulated period, say one or two consecutive tenures in accordance with the codes of the Nigerian constitution, then every zone that make up the country will go the same process. The moral perspective of such practice as equity and justice demand is that, even if its fault has become too obvious on the rotational process, it ought to go round all the zones before dropping the system.

Nigeria as a political entity is primarily divided into two major parts (protectorates): the Northern hemisphere and the Southern hemisphere. Subdividing these two protectorates leads to the geopolitical zones: from the Northern protectorate, the country counts the North-East (N/E), North-West (N/W) and North-Central (N/C).

From the Southern protectorate the country counts the South-East (S/E), South-West (S/W) and South-South (S/S). Giving more analysis about the nationalities of the country, starting from the Northern hemisphere, the country counts two major nationalities which are the Hausa Nation and the Fulani Nation. Of course, in addition to these are other minor tribal nationalities like the Tiv, Jukun, Nupe and other very minor one like the Kabba, Gwari, and others. From the Southern hemisphere, the country counts two major nationalities which the Igbo Nation and the Yoruba Nation. Again, adding to these are other minor tribal nationalities like the Ijaw, Urhobo, Itsekiri, among others. One significant point here is that always, in all the Easts and Wests of the two hemispheres respectively, reside the major nationalities; while in the Central and South of the two hemispheres respectively, reside the minor tribal nationalities.

A point necessary to be put straight here is that, if it were not because of jihadism (a religious reformation propagation based on conquest and imposition of the conqueror's religious culture on the conquered which the Hausa Nation experienced from the Fulani), the Fulani Nation would not have been a Nigerian nation today. The emergence of Fulani in the geographical entity called Nigerian was through a 15<sup>th</sup> century Senegalese immigrant scholar from Futa-Toro in the Toronkawa clan, called Muhammad Fodiye who was to become the father of the Islamic jihadist, preacher, reformer and conqueror of the Hausa Nation, Uthman dan Fodio.<sup>1</sup> Islam in Nigeria has always grown by the force of the sword and on the 'conquest and take over' orientation; and to seal this Islamic struggle in Nigeria, Dan Fodio conquered the then Gobir State and its capital city, Alkalawa, and from there, through the force of the sword, expanded to the other pure/real Hausa States (Hausa Bakwai) and to the other impure/unreal Hausa States some of whose Kingdoms dated from even the 11<sup>th</sup> century during the reigns of some Kings like Gunguma, and then institutionalized Islam therein, through imposition. To sustain the structure and in allegiance to the ancestors, the Fulani Nation, the Caliphate and Emirate till today in Nigeria still maintain this ancestral institutionalized structure that no Hausa National can become the Sultan or Emir of any Islamic caliphate and/or emirate in whose land of nationality these caliphates and/or emirates are located. The caliphate in Sokoto is headed by the Sultan, a socio-politico and religious position Dan Fodio assumed until his death and the Emirate in Kano is of same socio-politico and religious position but headed by his son and these two cities take a place of pride in the Northern socio-politico and religious affairs. Thus, the Fulani nation is not originally and indigenously a Nation within the region called Nigeria today, but by the virtue of religious conquest, has become a Nigerian Nation.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.britanica.com> Usman dan Fodio/Fulani leader- *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed on 13/06/2022

However, in all today, a total of six geopolitical zones are the subdivisions into which the two protectorates are broken. The States and their capitals in the *North-Eastern* (N/E) zone include Adamawa (Yola), Bauchi (Bauchi), Borno (Maiduguri) Gombe (Gombe), Taraba (Jalingo) and Yobe (Damaturu). Those of the *North-West* (N/W) include Jigawa (Dutse), Kaduna (Kaduna), Kano (Kano), Katsina (Katsina), Kebbi (Birnin Kebbi), Sokoto (Sokoto) and Zamfara (Gusau). Those of the *North-Central* (N/C) include Benue (Makurdi), Niger (Minna), Nasarawa (Lafia), Plateau (Jos), Kogi (Lokoja) and Kwara (Ilorin). Those of the *South-East* (S/E) include Abia (Umuahia), Anambra (Awka), Ebonyi (Abakaliki), Enugu (Enugu) and Imo (Owerri). Those of the *South-West* (S/W) include Ekiti (Ado-Ekiti), Lagos (Ikeja), Ogun (Abeokuta), Ondo (Akure), Osun (Osogbo) and Oyo (Ibadan). Finally, those of the *South-South* (S/S) include Akwaibom (Uyo), Bayelsa (Yanegoa), Cross-river (Calabar), Delta (Asaba), Edo (Benin) and Rivers (Port-Harcourt). Applying the principle of justice and equity in the balkanization of Nigeria into geopolitical zones, it is seen that the N/E has six States, the N/W has seven States, and the N/C has six States. But it must be noted that the *capital city* (Abuja) which possesses 95% features of a State is located in the N/C; and by this, invariably, making the geopolitical zone a seven States-structure. The S/E has five States, the S/W has six States and the S/S has six States. Observably, it is seen that the N/W is the most *beneficiary* of marginalization while the S/E is the most *victim* of marginalization. Significantly, the N/W geopolitical zone is where The Hague (Caliphate and Emirate) of Islam is located in Nigeria. Does this send any signal about Fulani/Islamic domination of the Hausa indigenes and their traditional religion? However, ironically, the amalgamation of the different nations into a political entity called Nigeria and again dividing it into Northern and Southern protectorates was a helpful initial step towards the actualization of ethnic nationality dominance. It also nurtured too-consciousness of ethnicity, religious superiority and orientation of ‘conquer-and-rule’ and the ideology that Nigeria is for the most powerful and domineering nation, and those with the pre-orientation and pre-disposition with the idea that they are born, destined to rule have exploited the further division. Also, the further division into geopolitical zones makes the ideology more glaring and easier for and through the Islamic jihadism. Zoning on its own have served as the fuel that is added to a blazing fire– fire of higher and uncontrollable ethnicity consciousness, religious dominance through jihadism whose effects are at the apex today in Nigeria as the question of Nigeria-Fulanzation *cum* Islamization agenda is on every lip of Nigerians, Africans and indeed the world at large. The swim in the realm of this created consciousness is the why behind tribal domination of the 90% of the sectors in the country. Appointments in Nigeria from 2015 lead to the exposure of this fact.

Since the political independence of Nigeria in the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1960, the Nigerian polity has never been stable with a particular system of government as democracy and

military leadership kept interfering till the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1999 when democracy finally surfaced and sustained for 23 years now. After all the politicking strategies of political parties that participated in the 1999 general election, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) which won the election, after all the calculations zoned the presidential leadership to the then South-Western aspirant in the person of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, from Ogun State precisely, and that of his vice to the then North-Eastern aspirant in the person of Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, from Adamawa State. Other positions of leadership in the party were zoned too, however, the eight years of two consecutive tenures (four years each) were completed by these individuals. During the 2007 general election, the party then zoned presidency to the North-West aspirant in the person of Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, from Katsina State precisely and then zoned the vice to the South-South aspirant in the person of Dr. Goodluck Jonathan from Bayelsa State. However, the death of the president, Alhaji Yar'Adua on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 2010 scuttled the process. At this, it became a constitutional matter that the vice would complete the tenure, and that made it just a tenure to the North. Upon completion, the party zoned it again to the South during the 2011 general election, which went to the South-South aspirant, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, and then his vice to the North-Western aspirant in the person of Mohammed Namadi Sambo from Kaduna State precisely. Eventually they won. Then came the 2015 general election and the South went for a second tenure through the South-Southern aspirant, Dr. Jonathan and his North-Western vice Mohammed Namadi Sambo. But unfortunately, they lost to another political party, APC— All Progressives Congress's North-Western aspirant, in the person of Muhammadu Buhari from Katsina State and his South-Western vice, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo from Lagos State precisely. These people are at the verge of completion of their two tenures (8 years, i.e, 4 years each tenure). Following the zoning trending in the political parties under which the leadership of governance in Nigeria has operated, the featuring parties are the PDP and the APC. For the 2023 general elections, the two prominent political parties have done their primaries in which delegates from all the 36 States including Abuja the capital city would gather to conduct an intra-party election for the party's flag bearers. The PDP has filled a presidential aspirant, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar from Adamawa State, North-East geopolitical zone and his deputy in the person of Ifeanyi Okowa immediate past Executive Governor of Delta State, South-South geopolitical zone. The APC has equally done it, and a South-Western aspirant in the person of Alhaji Ahmed Asiwaju Bola Tinubu from Lagos State, South-West and his deputy, Kashim Mustapha Shettima, former Executive Governor of Borno State and senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from Borno Central Senatorial District, North-East, emerged. Today, Mr. Tinubu and Mr. Shettima both of whom with identity, education, moral and character questions, are the president and vice president of Nigeria respectively.

From this brief history of the Nigerian political zoning system, it is observable that political powers have rotated between the major two protectorates into which the country is divided. But is it all-inclusive by reaching to all the six geopolitical zones into which the two protectorates are broken? If yes, then the next question is whether every component zone enjoyed the power to an equal tenure like the others. But if no, then which geopolitical zones are remaining? From the Northern hemisphere, for the presidency, the West completed a total of 11 years, and for the vice presidency, the East and the West completed a total of 14 years, 9 (and still counting till 2027 under Shettima's vice-presidency) and 5 years respectively. From the Southern hemisphere, for the presidency, the West and South have completed a total of 14 years, 9 (and still counting till 2027 under Tinubu's presidency) and 5 years respectively. For the vice presidency, the West and South completed a total of 11 years, 8 and 3 years respectively. From this statistic, in both the presidency and vice, only the Central zone has not, at least, featured at all for both the presidency and the vice in the Northern hemisphere, let alone talking about tenure equality. From the Southern hemisphere, only the East as well has not featured at all for both the presidency and vice, let alone talking about tenure equality. Following the Nigerian slang that 'at all at all, na him worse pass', the principles of equity and justice lament heavily for the sidelining and marginalization of the North-Central and South-Eastern zones from feeling whether positive or negative, the act of ascending to both the Nigerian presidency and vice through zoning. It is a sole responsibility of equity and justice to evaluate the extent of justice and democracy inhered in zoning and how all the geopolitical zones of both the Northern and Southern hemispheres have tasted its rudiments.

But why the initiative of zoning in the first place? Does it mean that Nigerians do not know how other versions of democratic leadership in the world are managed? What is the peculiarity of zoning and what rationale is behind it? To adequately answer these all-important questions is to point out certain factors in the political history of the country.

First, Nigeria is a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic society, and in this consciousness, there are intense doubts of even the possibility of co-existence among the peoples of the amalgamated Nations and other minor tribal nations that make up the political entity called Nigeria. Even the blended Nigerians themselves, even the so tagged 'founding fathers' or 'nationalists' never believed they would co-habit the geographical entity peacefully, and this fear was clearly expressed by even the so tagged 'founding father' of the country. The inherent point is patriotism and allegiance to the component nations, instead of the Nigerian nationhood. Suffice it then to say that "where the component parts of the nation are divergent and of different cultural backgrounds, loyalty to the immediate subgroup or tribe may interfere or even

appropriate the loyalty due to the larger nation.” By this, the whole finds it difficult as the parts will triumph in gaining patriotic position in the minds of the people; however, some have taken to the religion of the prophet (Mohammed) as the only possible factor of unification. From the first Federal Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, it is said:

Since 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their background, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite... Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country<sup>2</sup>

For him, the entity Nigeria is a British product, hence an imposition of nationhood on different nations amalgamated through the colonial supremacy. And even sounding more personal and surprised at the deceived Nigerian peoples to believe they are now one political entity and could exist as such, Sir Bello says: “Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one, particularly some of the press people. This is wrong. I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside the Chamber.<sup>3</sup> He concluded by blending the Southerners ‘invaders’ and that nothing possibly can unite the two hemispheres except by the religion of the prophet (Mohammed). It is still in this realm of consciousness that Awolowo describes the country as a mere geographical expression, hence there is no a people like Nigerians as could be said of many European countries, and consequently, the Nigerians are bound to identity crisis. “Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are English, Welsh or French. The word “Nigeria” is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.”<sup>4</sup> This heterogeneity of Nigerians leads to identity crisis among Nigerians. It has equally paved escaping roots for crime perpetrators.<sup>5</sup> This informs Madiebo’s assertion that owing to the effectiveness of the heterogeneity, “the federation of Nigeria, as it exists today, has never really been one homogenous country, for its widely different people and tribes are yet to find any basis for their unity.”<sup>6</sup> And from Gowon in conclusion to this point, it is written that “putting

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<sup>2</sup>www.thisdaylive.com edited 28/2/2020

<sup>3</sup> James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (1958), 361

<sup>4</sup> Obafemi Awolowo, *The Path to Nigeria’s Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), 47-8

<sup>5</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and George O. Abah, “The Role of Philosophy in Insecurity and Good Governance in Nigeria,” *Sociology Study*, 10, no. 6, (Nov-Dec 2020). 288-97. <https://doi:10.17265/2159-5526/2020.06.004>

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Madiebo, *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran Civil War* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1980), 3

all considerations to test-political, economic as well as social- the base for unity is not there or is so badly wrote [sic], not once, but several times.”<sup>7</sup>

Second, following the facticity of cultural and background heterogeneity among the blended Nigerians, even if it becomes possible that the amalgamated nations would exist as one political entity, there is this intense fear of one nation dominating and taking over the national management in all spheres of endeavour to include economy, agriculture, education, commerce, technology, labour and employment, and the provision of other social amenities without which Nigerians humanly find it difficult to live. Put differently, there is fear of tribal dominance over the national affairs of the country. It is in the reality of this that today, tribal patriotism and allegiance prevail over the national versions. Stressing this, Nze puts it this way:

Nigeria as it is today is essentially an anarchic society where the cult of narrow mindedness, ethnicism and brute individualism has ousted all unifying national forces... Nigeria today threatens to be a mere geographical entity where patriotism has been completely isolated. Ethno-politics has permeated our politics... our government is ethno-government... admission to the Universities is ethnically worked out; our military is ethno-military; Our social and economic administrations are ethnically compromised<sup>8</sup>

Today, ethnic consciousness has overpowered national consciousness. The domination of these sectors in Nigeria from 2015 till date under the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari is a manifest. But that is no surprise for tribal allegiance has always prevailed in honour of the tribal forefathers who have earnestly admonished the growing generation never to keep in vain, their labours, just as was reiterated by Sir. Ahmadu Bello, the then Sultan of Sokoto thus:

The new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather Uthman Dan Fodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We use the minorities in the north as willing tools and the South as a conquered territory and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Joseph N. Agbo, “Hundred Years of Britain’s Nigeria: A Historico Philosophical Analysis of the Idea of a “Non Negotiable” Unity,” edited by Martin F. Asiegbu and Jerry C. Chukwuokolo, *Nigeria, Hundred Years After: Issues and Perspectives in Philosophical Discourse* (Enugu: Jones Communications Publishers, 2016), 48

<sup>8</sup> Bernard C. Nze, *Patriotism: A cultural emanation*. (Onitsha: Veritas Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1994), 10-11

<sup>9</sup> Benilily, ‘Sir Ahmadu Bello’s Statement’ made in *The Parrot Newspaper* on October 12<sup>th</sup> 1960, Days after Independence. Accessed from

The “we” here referred to his Fulani kith and kins whose progenitor was Dan Fodio who promulgated religious violence and inhumanity through Islamism in the belief in Jihad. After all, the Fulani nation have been disoriented under Islamism that it is their destiny and birth right to rule and own Nigeria, and no Fulani nationalist have never hidden in declaring this. Having found the truth and likening his position to that of Sir Bello, Ojukwu notes that “Nigeria never was and can never be a united country. The very nature of Nigeria inevitably gave rise to political power groups, goaded by sectional rather than national interest... Nigeria was not united, the Nigerians knew it.”<sup>10</sup> Little wonder why the then Sultan of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello in expressing his perception of Nigeria has this to say: “North for the Northerners, East for the Easterners and West for the Westerners.”<sup>11</sup> Drawing insight from this reality of an ethnic dominance over all others, Offor writes that “If the truth must be told, Nigeria is not one and can never be one, unless political power remains in the North and bureaucratic officialdom to the Yoruba in perpetuity.”<sup>12</sup> It is after judging these expressions in every possible scale that this paper doubts the truism of Obasanjo’s subtle ‘national’ statement that reads: “Our first sacred duty is the preservation of the co-operate entity of Nigeria with different identities being recognized and preserved.”<sup>13</sup>

Third, there is the factor of sudden emergence of the country. Put differently, the nations that forced through the polished grammar (amalgamation) were never consulted to negotiate if they could exist as one political entity. To find peace in such an environment is an impossibility following the peoples’ heterogeneity in cultural, tradition, religion, backgrounds generally. Reiterating this, Nze writes:

where a nation happens to be forged from quasi-independent and divergent nations with different historical-cultural ancestry, as in Nigeria, the development of a national character and nation-building become a challenge... that the success or failure of the task of nation building has a lot of implications for the future existence of the country<sup>14</sup>

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<https://www.nairaland.com/1977382/sir-ahmadu-bellos-statement-made-2/10/2018>

<sup>10</sup> Chukwuemeka O. Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 1, 5; Cf. Agbo, “Hundred Years,” 48

<sup>11</sup> Nze, *Patriotism*, 7

<sup>12</sup> Anthony I. A. Offor, *Legends of nationalism* (Enugu: Silmark Publisher Limited, 2015), 3

<sup>13</sup> General, Olusegun Obasanjo, *The Guardian*, 9(5745), (1993)

<sup>14</sup> Nze, *Patriotism*, 4

Thus, the emergence of Nigerian is an imposition of nationhood or country-hood on different nations (countries). Thus, following this no-consensus leading to the emergence of the country, a quasi-independence, the nations which have found themselves into such speechless situation that has already weakened them to swiftly swim into action for rejection of such merge, the peoples resorted to patch the nationhood of their country. Hence the people have been forced to form a country, and following the superiority of the colonizers and the meagre level of formal form of literacy among them, they decided to take their future into their hands and began to give meaning to the situation in which they have been thrown. This describes Nigeria as a country of 'patch-patch' even in the reality and impossibility of peaceful co-existence of the nations. This point is a central feature of the national anthem and pledge. Nze notes this no-consent from the nations and writes that

there was no referendum; the people were never given the opportunity to indicate whether or not they wanted to be unified. The amalgamation was (totally) rather a heterogeneous device fashioned by the merchants of civilization who were fired with anxiety to serve colonial economic and administrative interests<sup>15</sup>

Crowder notes this point and puts it this way that "in the case of Nigeria however, union was so sudden, and included such widely differing groups of peoples that not only the British who created it, but the inhabitants themselves have, often doubted whether it could survive as a political entity.<sup>16</sup> These are factual as long as the existence of Nigeria as a political entity remains and they have been issues of high concern. "These are facts which all the "peoples- supposed different countries" blended "Nigerians" know well."<sup>17</sup> These issues here are as important as any national issue because if Nigeria cannot find these, then there will be no genuine patriotism for "a common language and cultural unity had become an essential part of republican articulation of nationality". Thus, a "common culture therefore, becomes a strong defining feature of national identity; for without this common outlook, the oneness of the nation or its existence as a unit serving collective interests, would be jeopardized."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 16

<sup>16</sup> Michael Crowder, *The story of Nigeria*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), cited in Oguejiofo C. P. Ezeanya, *Tribe and tongue in Nigeria*. Enugu: Professor's Press, 2010), 28

<sup>17</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, "A Critical Approach to the Problem of Nigerian and the Struggle for Nation Building," *Sociology Study*, 10, no. 5, (Sept-Oct 2020), 241. <https://doi:10.17265/2159-5526/2020.05.005>

<sup>18</sup> Nze, *Patriotism*, 3

Fourth, another point of importance is the fear, tremble and shock experienced from military regime. The people have become too weighed down by the whims and caprices of the executive personnel piloting the affairs of the country under military rule. Thus, to ensure its never-return to the national political domain, the people accepted democracy under any form with the hope for future amends regarding the people's rights and public participation provided military regime is gone final and never returned. So, in whatever form/brand with whatever feature, be it zoning system the intended democracy could be found practised provided military regime never return and military operations in the activity of securing the State are subjected and guided by constitution, then the people were eager, willing and ready to accepted such democratic rule. These four among other possible reasons were the rationale behind featuring the brand of Nigerian democracy with zoning system. However democratic the zoning system could be, it is thus necessary to interrogate the concept of democracy from a more perspective of global practice and scholarship.

Broadly, zoning takes two phases: inter-zoning and intra-zoning. Inter-zoning is a wider range of zoning between two or more geopolitical components of the country. From the uppermost level, it occurs when zoning is between the North and South hemispheres. At a bit lower level, it could occur when, for instance, the Southern protectorate zones a political power to may be the East or West or Central components. It could also occur among various political parties, and equally when the political zones a particular position to a certain geopolitical component. But the intra-zoning peculiarly exists in State level. Above the State, it can also occur when a particular geopolitical zone tries to be democratic to the core by ensuring turn by turn, that every State comprising that zone gets a taste of that same position. Before a cycle is reached in such zoning situation, it may take centuries depending the political tenure involved. But the final point is to make every unit composite of the whole entity to feel what it takes to belonging to a particular political entity making up the bigger one under which it exists in. Even in a State, intra-zoning could still exist when a particular position rotates round all the senatorial districts of the Sate as typicalized in senatorial state intra-zoning in each Nigerian State. Some positions in the State it goes round through zoning to all the Local Government Areas of a particular State or even in a Local Government Area, it rotates round all the Councils that make up that particular Local Government Area or even the Wards that make the particular Council or the Communities/Towns constituting a political Ward, or the Villages making up the Community/Town, and in that order, could go to the Village level or Clan or Family and singularly down to each individual constituting a particular Family.

It must be noted that the Nigerian political democratic system of zoning is a party affair, precisely the People's Democratic Party (PDP) as the first party that gained power after

the uncertainty of Nigerian political leadership since 1960 that has been interfered and truncated between military regime and democratic leadership. So, as a party affair, the PDP takes the glory of its initiative and practice, and inscribing it into its constitution. It was the first party to reinstate and inculcate the system or culture into the party affair to ensure the steadiness of democracy and its stronghold in the Nigerian polity and ensure military never returned again, zoning became a PDP constitutional affair. It became not just a mere political style adopted by PDP but to be applied in the democratic process of the country. It is based on this constitutional status of the system that it became a perversion of justice and equity to deny a component geopolitical zone the right to taste the political power as other parts have tasted, hence turn-by-turn system. But seeing its underlining aim which is all about peace, right observation, bringing to the door steps of every geopolitical zone, the sense of belongingness and democracy at the root level, other parties adopted the same structure. Another possible reason behind other parties adopting same structure is to also inhere same structure to tactically counter the ruling party (PDP) and win them out from power, because aspirants into the party maybe afraid of domination if it does not take such structure so that all will be included actively in the system.

But comparatively, the Nigerian constitution never called it ‘zoning’ but has reinstated a very similar structure seeing the level of divergences among the peoples of Nigeria and the possibility of ethnic domination. In this foresight, the Nigerian constitution in chapter 2 and section 14 subsections 3 reemphasized the necessity for rotation of power among the geopolitical components, or tribes (nations) that make up Nigeria as a political entity to ensure unity, justice and equity. The PDP constitution in its article 7 made it clear that the party governs on the principles of zoning as a fundamental structure which helped the party, and the re-instalment of democratic spirit in Nigeria and to reinvigorate the party and deep-root it in Nigeria so as ensure the no-return of military rule. The All-Progressives Congress (APC) specifically emphasizes the necessity to promote and foster the unity and political stability of Nigeria which is attainable (as captured in Article 7 of its Aims and Objective) through the development of economic policies that guarantee public participation in the control of the major means of production, distribution and exchange. Succinctly, it is deducible that APC seeks to enthrone unity by promoting all-inclusiveness via the introduction of policies that encourage participation. This perhaps explains why items vii and viii of the referred Aims and Objective seek to “observe Affirmative Action in all elective and appointive positions and ensure that youths, women and persons living with disabilities (PLWD) are properly represented across all party organs and government” and “to promote and protect the interest of farmers, workers...” Critically, it is unreasonable to quickly refute the claim that permitting participation would engender a sense of inclusiveness and by extension unity, however, given that the nature of inclusiveness

mull-over by APC only has bearing on the working, the gender, the youth and the physically challenged demographic distribution of the Nigerian citizenry, it does not translate to what national unity especially as advanced in this context portrays. National unity connotes 'unity of nations' attainable through the practice of inclusiveness among the different nations that constitute the Nigerian State. Beyond concentration on the workers, the youths and the physically challenged, it is meant to produce a feeling of sense of belonging among the geographic segments and the demographic distribution of the different ethno-tribal groups and regions that make up the Nigerian multicultural State. Suffice it therefore to distinguish between the concept of a nation and a state. A Nation is constitutive of group of people of ethno-tribal affinity and cultural consanguinity while a State which best describes the Nigerian polity, is characterized by people of not necessarily common descent, occupying a territory, and possessing a government that helps protect its sovereignty. A Nation is natural in view of the fact that it is ontologically given; but a State on the other hand is artificial, given that it is a product of contract between people of possibly different nations. Membership of a State is by choice, implying that its members reserve the right to opt out when deemed necessary. Seceding results in the disintegration of the states, hence the need to forestall integration by engendering national unity through the promotion of inclusiveness among its constituting nations— the ethno-tribal demography and not merely its gender, working, age and youthful demographic distribution. Now the question is: how real and possible is the realization of this 'national unity' without all-inclusiveness in the democratic system through a structure that would allow every component to actively participate, and equally in the leadership of the country under the party? Will there be national unity when one nation or geopolitical zone produces the national leadership? Or does it imply that only the domineering nation has the capable hand to pilot the leadership affairs of the country? Another question bordering on this is: is the APC not subjected to domesticate the working principle of the Nigerian constitution which bears on power shifting to every component geopolitical zone that make up the country? If the country's constitution proposes a power shifting among all the tribal components of the country, political parties which form the platform that produces leaders that pilot the affairs of the nation should see it as a duty to enshrine the principles that will foster the national unity of the Nigerian state. They must see it as very necessary, obligatory and constitutionally binding to obey the principle of power rotation as gateway to actualizing inclusiveness which is indispensable to the actualization of Nigerian national unity.

## The Concept of Democracy as a Global Practice<sup>19</sup>

The term ‘Democracy’ etymologically is Greek: *Demos* meaning ‘people’ and *Kratia* meaning ‘rule/government’, hence, democracy means the ‘people’s rule/government’. However, as a common term, it is always simply defined in line with the Lincolnian thought: ‘government of the people, by the people and for the people’. The prepositions- ‘of’, ‘by’ and ‘for’ imply that it is all the peoples. Put differently to mean a government indigenous to the people, managed by the indigenous people and for their own good. For the Igbo (the freedom-seeking-man) it is all about *ochichi onye kwuo uche ya* (a government where everybody comes out to freely say his/her mind). Significantly, ‘saying’ your mind in democracy refers to one of the central characteristics of democracy upon which every other stand and that is ‘popular participation’. A democrat participates in the decision-making time like electioneering, civic responsibility, social or community service, meaningfully contributing ideally, when necessary, etc. Remarkably, it must not be forgotten that in democracy, ‘saying your mind’ is not the problem, for the minority will always have their say, but the majority will always have their way in democracy. This is a reference to the democratic hallmark of number or popular opinion which counts greatly in the people’s popular participation and social service and decision-making time. Another vital point of note in the Igbo concept of democracy is that every democratic process is direct. This is in the very opposite of the western concept where there is indirect or representative democracy where there is democracy after democracy. Put it to imply that the western classical engagement with democracy is that after the direct comes the indirect/representative democracy where democratic powers to decide is left with the few products of the direct democratic engagement. This is a brand of partial democracy. However, making a scholarly review on democracy as a political concept, it is observed that Mayo takes a stand that seemingly aligns with the Igbo concept of democracy. He writes that democracy is the “direct control or making of political decision by the assembled citizens, political equality of all citizens: the liberties including the freedom to oppose and the taking of decisions by majority vote. The citizen had no master, no autocrat to rule it.”<sup>20</sup> This conveys the fact that democracy is a participatory government even though the indirect version where the vast interests of the citizens are now represented by certain elected few people from among the people has prevailed

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<sup>19</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and Leo C. Ozoemena, “Restructuring, Ethnic Agitation and the Survival of Democracy in Nigeria,” edited by Alloy S. Ihuah, Anthony Idachaba and Mark I. Shenge, *Philosophy, Security and the Challenges of Development in Africa: Issues, Problems and Prospects* (Nigeria: Eagle Press, 2019), 217-37

<sup>20</sup> Henry B. Mayo, *Introduction to Democratic Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960) 41

because all can no longer be contained in an assembly to discuss certain issues and take certain decisions affecting them like in the olden days village assembly when and where democracy was open to all and all participated in self. In another version of definition, it has been termed the government of the ‘majority carries the vote’. But the fundamental question to be asked in the spirit of democracy is: who are the majority? What is the rationale/motive behind being or forming the majority? What is the reasonability in their political-majority-activities? These are democratically fundamental because according to Popper:

The theory of democracy is not based on upon the principle that the majority should rule; rather the various equalitarian methods of democratic control such as general elections and representative government are to be considered as no more than well tried and in the presence of a widespread traditional distrust of Tyranny, always open to improvement and even providing methods for their own improvement<sup>21</sup>

The implication here is that it is not enough to see democracy as the majority rule, but that it must recognize periodic elections and the equality of all people, which now enquire into the rationale, ‘whyness’ and ‘howness’ behind ‘forming the majority’. Again, another observable inseparable fact about democracy is that freedom (a universal destiny) is a rudiment of a sincere democracy. As significant as it is, Justice Oputa says that

when we talk of freedom, it should not be confined merely to emancipation from arbitrary restraint of authority... when we talk of freedom... we will definitely include freedom from want and dependence... poverty and destitution... illiteracy and ignorance so that everyone, irrespective of accident of birth, or possession of wealth, may have equal opportunity for economic gain, for self-advancement and self-fulfilment<sup>22</sup>

Human freedom especially in a democracy should be holistic so as to enhance vigorously self-realization and advancement in every sphere of human endeavours. Nwabueze observing the ‘naturalness’, fundamentality and inseparability of freedom from man, analyses the concept of democracy thus:

Liberty is basic and essential to democracy because it is natural to man... Democracy does indisputably require that basic human rights should be... granted to all on the basis of equality. The principle is predicated upon on

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<sup>21</sup> Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies, Vol. II High tide of Prophecy*, (5<sup>th</sup> ed.) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 132

<sup>22</sup> Chukwudifu Oputa, “Democracy: What is all about?” *Democracy and the Law, Vol. II* (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Justice, 1999), 41

our common human nature which consists of body, soul and mind for everybody... The fact of a common human nature therefore gives to everyone equal claim to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, including freedom to receive and impart ideas and information, freedom of association and movement<sup>23</sup>

Freedom is a product of nature, and that is why for the existentialists, like Sartre, it is identical with the facticity of existence. That presupposes the fact that existence precedes essence and so, no positive law should brag being the 'giver' of freedom to man for it inheres in existence. Thus, here lies a fundamental obligation of the man-made laws to therefore protect, with all the available means, this nature-bestowed-gift (freedom) on man and other creatures. Here again portrays a moral and ethical obligation on man to be humane, protective and never to infringe on man's natural-gift for it proceeds from his existence. In reiterating this fact of obligation on man in regards to the protection of freedom, Dipo posits:

Freedom in all its ramifications cannot be enjoyed except the state initiates certain social prerequisites which will aid the fruition of negative freedom... People do not become free simply because they have choice. A starving and an uneducated man will hardly be concerned with his freedom because of poverty and ignorance and thus they cannot be said to be free as those who are rich... to be free to do X includes within its meaning to be able to have the means and to have power to do X<sup>24</sup>

What is here deducible again is that the authority has a lot to do for citizens to be able to enjoy their freedom. There must be conducive environments as requirements, starting from educating the people, ensuring good and purely democratic governance, upgrading the economy, ensuring a peaceful society and making the standard of living for the people to be affordable, for the people to enjoy freedom as well as democracy. So, if there is no good environment to enhance the enjoyment of the dividends of democracy by the people, therefore, there is no democracy in practicality. All these will necessitate the citizens' realization of who they are and their freedom and making good use of it and then using the necessary potentialities in it to upgrade their lives and give them meaning. At this point, if this observation of human freedom and respect for human consent/volition is the case having proceeded inseparably from human nature and not status/qualities, as Locke opines, then

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<sup>23</sup> Ben Nwabueze, "A Constitutional Democracy and Democratic Constitution," *Democracy and the Law, Vol. 11* (Lagos: Federal Ministry of Justice, 1999), 71

<sup>24</sup> Trele Dipo, "The Concept of Liberty," edited by Felix A. Adeigbo, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy* (Ibadan: Claverianum Press, 1991), 71

no one can be put out of his estate and subjected to the political power of another without his consent. And thus that which begins and actually constitutes any political society is nothing but the consent of any number of freemen capable of majority, to unite and incorporate into such a society. And this is that, and that only which did or could give beginning to any lawful government in the world<sup>25</sup>

This shows the necessity of human consent in a democratic society. Without consent of the whole involved individuals especially as it concerns democracy, there is no real democracy. This concept of consent is a reference to the conscious participation of the people in a democratic process. Generally, it could be drawn, the features of democracy without which one could say that there is no real democracy in a process. In a democratic setting, the first feature is the people. The 'people' here is not in an oligarchic form, but from a point of view of majority through whom popular participation/opinion emerge. Following this comes the second feature which is the recognition that it is within these people that power lies. Any power that does not lie with the people contextually described above in a democratic dispensation is no real democracy in practicality. The third feature is the recognition of the people's (popular) opinion as an outcome of their popular participation. By doing this, their consent is seen and accepted and the power instituted by this consent/power must recognize the people as its real source. The fourth point is a periodical change of power. This must be recognized. By this, all-inclusiveness of every component of the democratic body is recognized as important as every other. The fifth feature is not only the existence but also functionality and supremacy recognition of the constitution. The constitution inheres the modalities at which democracy works which include the sense of division and separation of power, the rule of law, provisions for human rights, the sense of checks and balances, division and operations of the constitutional authorities, et. This will help curtail inhumanity, free exhibition of the animalism of human nature and exploitation as well as hope for posterity through punishment on offenders' violence-bent citizens. The sixth feature is the recognition of human freedom and those unalienable rights bestowed on man by nature. The reality of this makes life worth living which explains why the existentialists like Sartre for instance, would identify existence with freedom. The seventh and last feature in this paper is the activeness of the representative as modernity has necessitated it. The trend in modern democratic dispensation incorporates the brand of indirect/representative democracy where from the direct participation; the people elect delegates who would carry out the indirect version on their behalf. But then, this brand of democracy poses a huge question of the

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<sup>25</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning the Original Extent and End of Civil Government* in *Great Books of the Western World*, 33, edited by Adler J. Mortimer (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Incorporated, 1990), 54

reality of popularity/majority feature of democracy, justice and the drive to ensure good for the people and not just for the delegates as the Nigerian practice shows the very opposite. However, having analyzed this idea thus, the paper will engage democracy and zoning and how they possibly feature justice and equity in the Nigerian practice.

### **The Concept of Democracy in Dialogue with Zoning to Feature Equity and Justice**

The leading questions in this section include: one, how democratic is zoning? Two, how has zoning provided the sense of equity and justice in the Nigerian polity? Comparatively, both democracy and zoning aim at one thing: to ensure all-inclusiveness in the national polity that no component nation/part making up the whole of the country is left behind in the political management of national affairs. Democracy could be described as highly competitive comparable to zoning. This is because in its objective perspective, it engages the whole population of the country in quote. But when it is by zoning system, the whole country has willingly bestowed the power to produce a capable hand to pilot the affairs of the country on one nation/component (geopolitical zone) making up the Nigerian federation. Thus, the zoning system is more relaxed, less heated than when democracy throws such opportunities open to the whole population of the country. At a certain level of comfort, the component to which the country has zoned power, will go inside itself, scrutinize aspirants and bring out the best among the better to rule the country and uniquely set a good record track to even beat every administration piloted by every other component. It is a democratic power given in a platter of gold as it is left for a zone to meet and from within send out its identity and level of IQ which will play out in the personality of the produced candidate. The produced candidate from this perspective ontologically becomes the mirror to view what the zone has and or can produce. The produced candidate becomes the zone and its identity and whatever happens during the person's administration whether glorious or blaming, is attributed to the zone and its people and becomes its national identity. So, zoning is in principle, in tandem with the tenets of democracy. This is not to argue that even though zoning falls in line with democratic principles, it has no inherent disadvantages of its own when in practice. With the zoning system, the political importance of every component zone is recognized, is made to have the sense of belonging, and taste of the leadership of the country. By this, equality and justice prevail, happiness, joy and fulfilment and healthy politicking propagated, the sense of political unity and strength reinstated and takes the atmosphere.

But the Nigerian zoning system and the question of equity and justice has not come into accomplishment. Zoning in Nigeria would have been the best political mannerism to address the issue of multiple nature of Nigeria in terms of culture, tribe, tradition, religion, etc. By zoning, every tribe and religion and culture would have been given an opportunity to prove its richness in whatever good from whichever face it could have

provided the country with. Unfortunately these good political qualities of zoning never materialized in Nigeria because of many factors to include greed, over consciousness of tribe, shallow mindedness following the level of literacy in Nigerians, the Nigerian understanding of politics and democratic system as all about ‘who gets what, when, when and how’ and number respectively, religious fanaticism and the zeal to be led by religious orientation to dominate the country and generally, what Francis Bacon identifies as the ‘idols’. From the little zoning practice, it is clear how the North-Central and South-Eastern geopolitical zones of the country suffer marginalization *cum* political dominance. Practically, the three individuals who led Nigeria for 23 years now at least, not from the time of independence, under the capacity of the presidency are all of Fulani nation extraction and from two States (Katsina and Adamawa) out of the nineteen States plus the capital city (Abuja) in the Northern hemisphere. Same scenario was the reality from 1960 till 1999. Such history is same with all the Northern governorship leadership, Sultans and Emirs. Fulani rule themselves and rule you too, you never rule them. Coming to the Southern protectorate, justice cries at the level of marginalization in zoning perpetuated against the South-Eastern zone. Zoning starting from the South, justice and equity demand that in the 2023 general election, the PDP should zone the presidency to the zone, even if the party would decide to do away with the system after the forthcoming 2023 general election. But just as it has been a typical style of Nigerian politicking, the characteristic is that the table can be shaken and shifted at any time because of greed and impatience. So, zoning has not achieved the expected products which include justice and equity.

### **Evaluation and Conclusion**

The paper has tried to make a presentation based on the Nigerian system of politicking and style of governance. It is an exposure of the Nigerian polity and the Nigerian political mannerism which, as a factor anyways, proceeds from their conceptualization of politics and the democratic style of zoning through which politics is played in Nigeria. It has equally interrogated the Nigerian political mannerism of zoning, and expositoryly enunciated the inherent positive outcomes of the zoning system as the differing peculiarity of the Nigerian brand of democracy. It has further interacted with the enquiry into how democratic is the zoning system and how the system has produced justice and equity across every component nation described as geopolitical zones that make up the country. By the exposition, it is seen that the zoning brand of democracy as practised in Nigeria has its unique shortfalls as to the fulfilment of realizing justice and equity in every geopolitical zone of the country. But there are some factors to be considered as being behind the zoning shortfalls towards the realizability of justice and equity.

What criteria guide the zoning principle—elderliness among the zones (if it could be detected) or population or according to the alphabetical order of the names of the zones or number of States in each zone or number of nationalists or number of political elites or intellectualists from zones? Let it be assumed that a party initiated and started the practice of zoning and continued in the principle and another party comes to bridge the flow thereby winning it out from power, just as typicalized in the Nigerian situation. Is it morally (or legally perhaps) justifiable for the new party emerged in power to continue in the old structure of zoning of the lost party? What would now become the political fate of the zone left to experience the equity and justice in the zoning process which has been distorted? It must be expected that even if the new party in power embarks on zoning, there is a possibility that the remaining zone would queue till it gets to its time while seeing others grabbing opportunities twice. And if the flow gets distorted again, the zone will keep waiting till ad infinitum. Perhaps, the zone ought to wait till the initial party wins back power. What if the question is reshuffled to read: must the initial party win back power with an individual from the zone so as to continue in the old zoning structure to ensure equity and justice? Knowing what value is number in the Nigerian polity, the party may go back to use a zone that has number influence but has utilized its own zoning time to lead the country. The possibility of such a situation is there knowing that strategically, using the remaining zone practically may make it impossible for the party to win the election. At this, it calls for necessity for the party to re-strategize so as to win back power.

From another angle, what if any attempt of using a zone makes it difficult for a party to keep losing in election knowing the value of number in Nigerian polity? What of a situation where a particular zone loses, will the zone be given another chance and support to win and lead its own tenure? What if it becomes impossible winning back the power with same zone? At this, the zone will be kept aside for another zone with numerical strength to win back. What could be deduced from these series of questions is that zones and precisely individuals are bound to embark of political parties' prostitution knowing that for Nigerians, after number, another available characteristic of politics is interest. The consciousness of the fact that all are not in the same political party, and so reduces the chances of a particular party to maintain a clear flow of zoning as it loses the numerical strength by which it can win power, should guide the Nigerian political awareness. When a political party loses, cross-carpeting, defection from the lost party to the ruling party becomes the order, and when this prevails, to maintain its initial zoning structure becomes highly difficult following the emanation of possible factors arising from the points enumerated here as they relate to zoning in the Nigerian polity.

It has been pointed out above that zoning system allows a zone to look inside to sieve out a capable candidate, bets among the better. Multiplicity of number of humans and human participation and of course, the political parties into which they would belong, characterizes democracy. Thus, it becomes a duty for every candidate to bring out the best. Among a people, political parties struggle for the best. The implication is that one who is better and is rejected for the best candidate is bound to become the best for another party to be taken as the best. And who is the best in a real sense of the term? What if the party considered best candidate does not wish to contest in the capacity or the time the party wants him/her to?

On a general evaluation, zoning system deters the core of democracy. It inheres the sense of disenfranchisement of zones and individuals of a country. It affects the reality and core practicality of democracy following its limitation of political power to a set of individual. By this, it has encouraged nationality domination over other nations that make up the country as a whole. It has reinvigorated the consciousness of ethnicity and invariably disunity among a people of a country as typalized in the Nigerian situation.

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## **FREEDOM AND LAW IN ST. THOMAS AQUINAS' PHILOSOPHY**

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### **Executive Summary**

*This research delves into the intricate relationship between freedom and law as expounded in the philosophical framework of St. Thomas Aquinas. Grounded in Aquinas' synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology, the study elucidates his conception of freedom as aligned with rationality and the pursuit of the good. Aquinas' multi-layered understanding of law, encompassing the eternal, divine, natural, and human dimensions, forms the backdrop for analyzing the harmonious interplay between freedom and law. Contrary to viewing law as a constraint on freedom, Aquinas argues for their mutual enrichment, positing that adherence to just laws foster individual flourishing and societal well-being. Drawing on key works such as the *Summa Theologica* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, supplemented by scholarly interpretations by Gilson, Pieper, and Davies, this research contributes to a deeper comprehension of Aquinas' ethical and political thought, offering insights into the nature of moral agency and the pursuit of the common good.*

### **Introduction**

In the rich tapestry of medieval philosophy, few figures loom as large as St. Thomas Aquinas. Central to Aquinas' philosophical inquiry is the profound relationship between freedom and law, which he explores with depth and nuance. This introduction sets the stage for our exploration of Aquinas' thought, outlining the significance of freedom and law within his philosophical framework. At the heart of Aquinas' philosophy lies a synthesis of Aristotelian ethics and Christian theology, a harmonization of reason and revelation. For Aquinas, the pursuit of truth is not a solitary endeavor but a communal journey guided by the light of reason and divine

revelation. In this context, the concepts of freedom and law emerge as crucial elements in understanding human nature, moral agency, and social order. Aquinas' conception of freedom transcends mere autonomy, emphasizing the alignment of human will with rationality and the pursuit of the good. True freedom, according to Aquinas, is found in the pursuit of virtuous action, rooted in the natural inclination of rational beings towards their ultimate end—union with God. This understanding of freedom as harmonious with reason lays the foundation for Aquinas' exploration of the role of law in guiding human conduct. In Aquinas' philosophical schema, law serves as a rational directive for human action, reflecting the eternal law—divine reason governing the universe. He delineates four types of law: eternal, divine, natural, and human, each playing a distinct role in guiding human behaviour towards its proper end. Contrary to viewing law as a constraint on freedom, Aquinas contends that adherence to just laws is conducive to individual flourishing and societal harmony.

This research seeks to delve into Aquinas' profound insights into the dynamic interplay between freedom and law, examining how his philosophical synthesis offers a compelling framework for ethical inquiry and social cohesion. By exploring key texts such as the *Summa Theological* and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, supplemented by scholarly interpretations, we aim to elucidate Aquinas' conception of freedom and law and its implications for moral agency and the common good.

In the following sections, we will delve deeper into Aquinas' philosophy, exploring the nuances of freedom and law, and their implications for moral and social order. Through this exploration, we hope to glean valuable insights into the enduring relevance of Aquinas' thought for contemporary ethical and political discourse.

This research endeavours to explore how St. Thomas Aquinas reconciles the concepts of freedom and law within his philosophical framework, shedding light on their intricate relationship and implications for moral and social order. St. Thomas Aquinas, a towering figure in medieval philosophy, synthesized the philosophical heritage of Aristotle with Christian theology, offering profound insights into ethics, metaphysics, and political theory. Central to his thought are the notions of freedom and law, which he approached with depth and nuance.

### **Freedom in Aquinas' Philosophy**

Aquinas conceives of freedom not as mere autonomy but as the capacity to act in accordance with reason and will. He posits that true freedom is found in the pursuit of the good, grounded in the natural inclination of rational beings towards their ultimate end, which is God. In the philosophical framework of St. Thomas Aquinas, freedom is not merely conceived as the ability to choose among alternative courses of action but as the capacity to act in accordance with reason and will. Aquinas' understanding of

freedom is deeply rooted in his teleological view of human nature, wherein freedom finds its fulfilment in the pursuit of the ultimate good—union with God.

*Teleological Understanding of Freedom:* For Aquinas, freedom is intricately linked to the telos, or ultimate end, of human existence, which is the beatific vision—perfect union with God. True freedom, therefore, consists in the ability of rational beings to choose actions that lead them closer to this ultimate end. In this sense, freedom is not an end in itself but a means to realizing one's inherent purpose and flourishing as a human being.

*Alignment with Reason:* Aquinas emphasizes the rationality of human freedom, asserting that true freedom is exercised when the will is directed by reason towards the good. Unlike a purely voluntarist conception of freedom, which divorces the will from reason, Aquinas maintains that freedom finds its fullest expression when the will is guided by right reason, enabling individuals to discern and pursue what is truly good and virtuous.

*Natural Inclination towards the Good:* Central to Aquinas' understanding of freedom is the concept of natural inclination—the innate tendency of rational beings to seek the good. Aquinas argues that human beings, by virtue of their rational nature, are naturally inclined towards the good, which is ultimately grounded in the divine. Thus, freedom is not an arbitrary exercise of the will but a harmonious alignment with the natural inclinations of human nature towards the good.

*Freedom and Moral Responsibility:* Aquinas acknowledges that freedom entails moral responsibility—the capacity to choose between good and evil and to be held accountable for one's actions. While individuals possess the freedom to choose, they are also bound by moral norms derived from divine and natural law. Thus, freedom is not a license to do as one pleases but a call to exercise moral agency in accordance with objective moral principles.

*Freedom and Grace:* Despite his emphasis on the rationality of freedom, Aquinas also recognizes the role of divine grace in perfecting human freedom. Grace, for Aquinas, elevates and perfects human nature, enabling individuals to freely choose the good and attain their ultimate end. In this way, freedom is not solely a product of human effort but is infused and sustained by divine grace.

In summary, Thomas Aquinas' philosophy offers a robust understanding of freedom as grounded in reason, aligned with the natural inclination towards the good, and oriented towards the ultimate end of human existence. Far from being a license for arbitrary action, freedom, for Aquinas, is inseparable from moral responsibility and finds its fulfillment in the pursuit of virtue and the attainment of union with God.

## **Law in Aquinas' Philosophy**

For Aquinas, law serves as a rational directive for human conduct, derived from the eternal law—divine reason governing the universe. He delineates four types of law: eternal, divine, natural, and human, each playing a distinct role in guiding human action towards its proper end. In St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophical framework, law serves as a rational directive for human conduct, reflecting the eternal order established by divine reason. Aquinas delineates four types of law—eternal, divine, natural, and human—each playing a distinct role in guiding human behavior towards its proper end. Understanding Aquinas' conception of law is essential for grasping the relationship between human freedom and moral order within his philosophical system.

*Eternal Law:* At the foundation of Aquinas' understanding of law lies the concept of eternal law, which is the divine reason governing the universe. Eternal law encompasses the divine plan and providence that governs all creation, guiding both natural processes and moral actions. As the highest expression of divine wisdom, eternal law serves as the ultimate standard of morality and order, providing the blueprint for all other forms of law.

*Divine Law:* Divine law consists of those precepts revealed by God to humanity through sacred scripture and divine revelation. For Aquinas, divine law supplements and reinforces natural law, providing additional guidance for human conduct in matters beyond the scope of natural reason. Divine law includes the moral teachings found in religious texts such as the Bible and the teachings of the Church, which serve as authoritative guides for moral behavior and spiritual development.

*Natural Law:* Natural law, according to Aquinas, is the participation of rational creatures in the eternal law through their rational nature. It is the inherent moral order inscribed in human nature, accessible to reason and discernible through reflection on the fundamental principles of human flourishing. Natural law consists of universal principles of morality, such as the preservation of life, pursuit of knowledge, and promotion of social harmony, which are binding on all rational beings by virtue of their rational nature.

*Human Law:* Human law encompasses the legal norms and regulations established by human authorities for the governance of civil society. Derived from natural law and guided by prudence, human law aims to promote justice, order, and the common good within a particular community or political entity. While human law is subject to change and variability depending on historical and cultural contexts, it must ultimately conform to the principles of natural and divine law to be considered valid and just.

Through his delineation of these four types of law, Aquinas seeks to articulate a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between divine, natural,

and human authority, and the moral obligations incumbent upon individuals within society. Law, in Aquinas' philosophy, serves as a means of harmonizing human freedom with moral order, guiding individuals towards the attainment of their ultimate end—union with God—and the flourishing of the common good.

### **Relationship between Freedom and Law in Thomas Aquinas' Philosophy:**

Contrary to the notion of law as a constraint on freedom, Aquinas argues that true freedom is realized through adherence to divine and natural law. He contends that obedience to just laws foster individual flourishing and promotes the common good, aligning human will with the divine will.

In the philosophical system of St. Thomas Aquinas, the relationship between freedom and law is one of mutual enrichment rather than opposition. Aquinas seeks to reconcile the exercise of human freedom with the necessity of moral order and guidance provided by various forms of law—eternal, divine, natural, and human. Understanding this relationship is crucial for grasping Aquinas' conception of moral agency, virtue, and the pursuit of the common good.

*Harmony of Freedom and Law:* Contrary to viewing law as a constraint on freedom, Aquinas posits that true freedom is realized through adherence to just laws derived from divine and natural sources. He maintains that the laws established by divine reason—eternal law—provide the rational framework within which human freedom can flourish. Far from being arbitrary impositions, these laws reflect the inherent order and purpose of the universe, guiding human conduct towards its proper end.

*Guidance for Moral Action:* Law, according to Aquinas, serves as a rational directive for human conduct, providing guidance and norms that orient individuals towards the pursuit of the good. While freedom enables individuals to choose among various courses of action, law assists in discerning and selecting those actions that are in accordance with reason and conducive to human flourishing. Thus, law acts as a safeguard against the misuse of freedom and ensures that individual choices align with objective moral principles.

*Moral Responsibility and Accountability:* Aquinas emphasizes that freedom entails moral responsibility—the capacity to choose between good and evil and to be held accountable for one's actions. While individuals possess the freedom to choose, they are also bound by moral norms derived from divine and natural law. The existence of law, therefore, serves to reinforce the moral accountability of human agents, reminding them of their obligation to act in accordance with the dictates of reason and the divine will.

*Promotion of the Common Good:* Aquinas contends that obedience to just laws foster individual flourishing and promotes the common good within society. By adhering to laws grounded in natural and divine principles, individuals contribute to the

establishment of a harmonious social order characterized by justice, peace, and the well-being of all members. Thus, the relationship between freedom and law is not one of coercion but of mutual benefit, wherein the exercise of freedom is directed towards the common good.

In summary, Thomas Aquinas' philosophy elucidates a harmonious relationship between freedom and law, wherein freedom finds its fulfilment in adherence to just laws derived from divine reason and natural order. Rather than impeding freedom, law serves as a guide and safeguard, enabling individuals to exercise their moral agency in accordance with objective moral principles and contributing to the establishment of a virtuous and flourishing society.

### **Implications for Moral Agency**

Aquinas' synthesis of freedom and law underscores the importance of moral agency in human actions. By exercising reason and will in conformity with objective moral norms, individuals become virtuous agents capable of realizing their full potential and contributing to a harmonious society.

### **Conclusion**

St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophy offers profound insights into the dynamic relationship between freedom and law, emphasizing their mutual enrichment rather than opposition. By embracing a teleological understanding of freedom and recognizing the role of law in guiding human conduct, Aquinas provides a compelling framework for ethical inquiry and social cohesion. In the philosophical oeuvre of St. Thomas Aquinas, the interplay between freedom and law emerges as a central theme, offering profound insights into the nature of moral agency, virtue, and social order. Through his synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology, Aquinas articulates a vision of freedom that is deeply rooted in reason, aligned with the pursuit of the good, and oriented towards the ultimate end of human existence—union with God. Contrary to viewing law as a constraint on freedom, Aquinas contends that true freedom is realized through adherence to just laws derived from divine and natural sources. Rather than impeding individual autonomy, these laws serve as rational directives for human conduct, guiding individuals towards virtuous action and the attainment of the common good. Far from being arbitrary impositions, law reflects the inherent order and purpose of the universe, providing the framework within which human freedom can flourish.

Furthermore, Aquinas emphasizes the moral responsibility and accountability that accompany freedom, highlighting the importance of obedience to objective moral norms derived from divine and natural law. By exercising their freedom in accordance

with these norms, individuals contribute to the establishment of a harmonious social order characterized by justice, peace, and the flourishing of all members.

In conclusion, Thomas Aquinas' philosophy offers a compelling framework for understanding the dynamic relationship between freedom and law, wherein freedom finds its fulfilment in adherence to just laws grounded in reason and divine order. Through his nuanced exploration of this relationship, Aquinas provides invaluable insights into the nature of human flourishing, moral agency, and the pursuit of the common good, which continue to resonate in contemporary ethical and political discourse. As we reflect on Aquinas' enduring legacy, we are reminded of the profound wisdom contained within his philosophical synthesis, which continues to inspire and challenge us in our quest for a more just and virtuous society.

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## **RELIGION AND SECULARIZATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE**

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### **Executive Summary**

*As humans, we acknowledge that our senses are not adequate for expressing our innermost feelings and aspirations. This is because; there is a dimension of human identity that cannot be expressed empirically. That is the essence of religiosity, spirituality or sacredness. There was a time when religiosity took centre stage in the cultures of Europe and North America. Later, a new deity called Reason, with its sister called Technology entered the cultural stage. The whirlwinds of technology and progress without ado swept aside religiosity, and secularity became the norm. However, the story is not the same in Africa as Africans have continued to hold religiosity tenaciously despite the influence of science and technology. Africa is the Theatre in which the Drama of competing religions is played. Africans are both the Actors and the Audience in their own Drama, cheered by onlookers and bystanders who from time to time toss tokens of appreciation or disdain. In the meantime, Africans wear the garbs of Europe and North America, speak their languages, and play their music while dancing their dances. But African religiosity has remained intact. The Third Millennium has begun with Africans taking religion seriously, while elsewhere technology and progress took centre stage. This paper analyzes the possibility of Africa becoming secular societies or maintaining the current religious tempo in the nearest future.*

**Keywords:** Africa, Philosophy, Secularization, Religion

**Editors:** Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, Jude I. ONEBUNNE, Ogochukwu A. OKPOKWASIL  
& Justin Arinze EGBE

## **Introduction**

Religion for centuries has been a very important aspect in uniting people across different cultures. This is because of the common beliefs that people in a given culture hold. It has also been very instrumental in enhancing the buildup and retention of morals in the society. In the course of evolution especially during industrialization as well as civilization of many nations in the world, religion has experienced many challenges that have led to changes in many religious aspects. As a result, religion holds different forms and different meanings from one generation to the other. Mueller (2013) noted that the enlightenment era, which gave birth to industrialized *cum* secularized societies, initiated ideas which attacked religion and its exalted position in the affairs of society. This led to the supposed dethronement of religion and subsequent secularization of societies. Hence, modern liberal democracies emerged and introduced the principle of separation of state and religion, in which religion was thought to have exhausted its usefulness and could be conveniently relegated into antiquity (Mueller 2013; Wallace 2013). However, the story is not the same in Africa as Africans have continued to hold religiosity tenaciously despite the influence of science and technology. Africa is the Theatre in which the Drama of competing religions is played. Africans are both the Actors and the Audience in their own Drama, cheered by onlookers and bystanders who from time to time toss tokens of appreciation or disdain. In the meantime, Africans wear the garbs of Europe and North America, speak their languages, and play their music while dancing their dances. But African religiosity has remained intact. The Third Millennium has begun with Africans taking religion seriously, while elsewhere technology and progress took centre stage. This paper analyzes the possibility of Africa becoming secular societies or maintaining the current religious tempo in the nearest future.

## **Conceptualizing Religion and Secularization**

### *Religion*

Religion, which is a matter of belief and practice, is a universal social phenomenon which seriously concerns almost every living man. The term has been defined differently by scholars depending on their orientation and perception. Hence Religion has no generally accepted definition. However, religion is generally understood by many as a belief in the Supernatural power or the Supreme Being and their relationship with the nature that surrounds them. Hick (1994) defined religion as the human recognition of super human controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship. According to Agha (2012), “religion is the conscious or unconscious belief in spiritual being and elements (forces of nature) with powers” (p. 21). Also, religion according to Bouquet (1941) is a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent,

the absolute or simply God. One of the most popular definitions of religion is that of Durkheim (1915). He defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community and all those who adhere to them. All these definitions point to the issue of beliefs. Religion can therefore be defined as belief, recognition and worship of the existence of a deity or deities and divine involvement in the universe and human life.

### *Secularization*

The term ‘secularization’ denotes a process by which (gradually or rapidly, unintendedly or intentionally) the ‘religious’ gives way to the ‘secular’. Secularization occurs when religious values and beliefs are recouped with non-religious values and beliefs. Nweke (2021) sees secularization as the transformation of a society from close religious value identification towards non-religious values and secular organizations. This implies that as societies progress, particularly through modernization and rationalization, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance.

### **Importance of Religion in the Society**

Religion is a fundamental part of human dignity. For many adherents, it is far more than a mere lifestyle choice; it is the deepest part of who they are. To violate a person’s religious freedom or require them to act against their religious beliefs or practices violates the very core of that person’s being (Taylor, 1995). Sociological studies have shown positive benefits of religious affiliation for school performance, positive family life, well-being and contribution to community life (Schludermann, et al, 2000; Clark, 1998; Perry, 1998; and Baetz et al, 2006). Religions also provide for rites of passage such as marking birth, marriage and death.

Religions generally promote ethical, law-abiding behaviour in their adherents. Religious adherents strive to obey the law and respect the authority of the state. Religion thereby fosters “moral self-government” according to Sullivan (1994). Kelsay and Twiss (1994) argue that “Cooperation, sharing, and altruism can all be related to the sense of identity that religious traditions provide.” Religious institutions are the source of humanitarian work in so many countries. Religious adherents provide much of the funding as well as volunteer labour for providing humanitarian assistance. Therefore, if religious adherence is valued and accommodated, the benefits that accrue to society are well-behaved citizens that contribute to the well-being of society. But if religious adherence is denigrated or shut out from public life, society will not only lose the benefits derived from religious adherents but also likely face a backlash from religious adherents.

## **Religion in African Life**

Some scholars, Marx (1844); Durkheim (1915); Freud (1927), earlier predicted that religion would die out as societies modernize. However, this has not happened as can be seen in the impact of religion in lives of majority of world population in recent time. According to Bentzen (2020), “today, 83% of the world population believe in God and the role of religion is strengthening in some societies” (p. 1). Similarly, Barrett and Johnson (2001) cited by Koenig (2009) stated that “despite spectacular advances in technology and science, 90% of the world’s population is involved today in some form of religious or spiritual practice” (p. 283). This shows that religion has been serving a purpose that modernization does not fulfil. Hence, Sulkowski and Ignatowski (2020) noted that despite progressing secularization, religion, churches, and denominational associations have an impact on individual ethical choices and business decisions.

In Africa, religion constitutes an inextricable part of the society. Religion constitutes the main fabric of African societies, and is intertwined with their general existence, including their socio-political and economic development. Hence, Mbiti (1999) asserted that Africans are notoriously religious and religion permeates all departments of life to such an extent that it is not easy or possible to isolate it. According to Koenig (2009), in many African countries people who do not subscribe to any form of religion make up less than 0.1% of the population. Although the African religious consciousness was initially derived from the practice of traditional religion, Christianity and Islam have given further impetus to this consciousness. In Africa, practically all human activities and conditions including health and diseases are seen and experienced from a religious perspective. It is therefore common for Africans to resort to religion in their moments of despair, disaster, fear and uncertainty.

## **Analysis**

Today, many people are gradually drifting from religion. The establishment of scientific views to explain natural phenomenon has greatly propagated this change in the society. Many nations are investing heavily on technological inventions. Since the inventions are so great to many people, their attention on religion has declined significantly. This has transformed most scientists to social icons on the basis that they are able to bring into existence completely new things. With the current increase in scientific as well as technological inventions, many people are drifting into secularism. They advocate for people to be neutral in dealing with matters within the society. Secularism aims to separate the government from religious beliefs, practices and religious judgment...”it holds that the basis of human decisions and activities is evidence and facts but not on religious views” (Noah, 2005, p.14). Owing to this, several bodies has conducted surveys to establish the magnitude to which science has influenced religious beliefs. For instance, in 2009, the Pew Research Centre in America

showed that “only 33% of scientists believed in God... 17% of the public did not believe that a supernatural being, God exists and 7% believed in a personal God” (Panda, 2019). The whirlwinds of technology and progress without ado swept aside religiosity, and secularity became the norm. However, the story is not the same in Africa as Africans have continued to hold religiosity tenaciously despite the influence of science and technology. Africa is the Theatre in which the Drama of competing religions is played. Africans are both the Actors and the Audience in their own Drama, cheered by onlookers and bystanders who from time to time toss tokens of appreciation or disdain. In the meantime, Africans wear the garbs of Europe and North America, speak their languages, and play their music while dancing their dances. But African religiosity has remained intact. The Third Millennium has begun with Africans taking religion seriously, while elsewhere technology and progress took centre stage. The question begging for answer is whether Africa will be able to maintain the current religious tempo in the nearest future. Current happenings in Sub-Saharan Africa have shown that not only will there be many more African Traditionalists, Christians and Muslims, but they are also likely to be active and devoted in their religious practices and strongly resistant to secularization. African religiosity emerges strongly in most surveys, even if it is not quite uniform. Nowhere are there significant minorities rejecting or questioning the religious consensus, especially such fundamental assumptions as the belief in God. In modern times, by far the most important trend in African Christianity has been toward especially enthusiastic, charismatic, and Pentecostal expressions of faith. Many of the newer churches use highly entrepreneurial forms of marketing and evangelism to spread that faith, commonly employing the most advanced technology. Similarly, in many African societies, youths have vigorously reintroduced traditional religious practices earlier abandoned as a result of modernization.

## **Conclusion**

Religion is the single most important aspect in bringing people together. This is due to the system of norms and values as well as practices within each religion. Before the inception of the modern world and the modern liberal state, religion and religious actors were at the helm of affairs in the running of society; religion and state were effectively mixed. But the Enlightenment era, which gave birth to industrialized *cum* secularized societies, initiated ideas which attacked religion and its exalted position in the affairs of society. However, amidst all the changes, there is always a remnant in each religion that truly holds to the initial aspects and meaning of their religion. Despite the dynamism of the world, religion will remain an important social aspect. The future of religion is uncertain; however, the possibility of Africa maintaining the current religious tempo in the nearest future almost a reality in the light of the high rates of African spirituality.

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## **THE PROS AND CONS OF PREMARITAL SEX IN IGBO CULTURE: A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Premarital sex is a contentious issue in many cultures, and Igbo culture is no exception. This paper explores the phenomenon of premarital sex within the context of Igbo culture in Nigeria. It examines the cultural norms, beliefs, and practices surrounding sexuality and marriage within the Igbo community. The research draws on both qualitative and quantitative data, including interviews, surveys, and ethnographic observations, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes towards premarital sex among the Igbo people. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these changes for Igbo society and suggests areas for further research. Understanding the complexities of premarital sex within Igbo culture is crucial for developing effective strategies for promoting sexual health and well-being within this community.*

### **Introduction**

In Igbo culture, a tapestry of traditions, values, and beliefs intricately weaves together the fabric of society. Among the myriad aspects of Igbo life, the topic of premarital sex stands as a nexus of cultural norms, individual agency, and societal expectations. This presentation aims to explore the nuanced landscape of premarital sex within Igbo culture, shedding light on both its pros and cons from a cultural perspective. To embark on this journey, it is essential first to grasp the essence of Igbo culture and its profound significance. Rooted in a rich history stretching back millennia, Igbo society boasts a vibrant tapestry of customs, rituals, and communal practices. Central to Igbo identity is the concept of community, where interconnectedness and mutual respect form the

bedrock of social cohesion. Within this cultural tapestry, premarital sex assumes a distinct place, shaped by historical precedents, traditional beliefs, and contemporary influences. Understanding the Igbo perspective on premarital sex necessitates a nuanced examination of cultural norms and values surrounding sexuality. Moreover, recognizing the importance of individual autonomy and agency in navigating intimate relationships is paramount to comprehending the complexities of this issue.

As we delve deeper into the cultural context of premarital sex in Igbo society, we will unravel the historical roots of prevailing attitudes and explore the evolving landscape of sexual practices over time. From the role of traditional beliefs and customs to the impact of modern influences such as globalization and media, our exploration will illuminate the multifaceted nature of this cultural phenomenon. Ultimately, this presentation seeks to foster a deeper understanding of the pros and cons of premarital sex in Igbo culture, acknowledging both the challenges and opportunities inherent in navigating this complex terrain. By engaging in open dialogue and embracing cultural sensitivity, we can cultivate a more inclusive and informed perspective on sexuality within the Igbo community.

### **Cultural Context**

The Igbo culture, renowned for its vibrancy and depth, is a testament to the rich tapestry of traditions that have flourished within the heart of Nigeria. With a history steeped in resilience and innovation, the Igbo people have cultivated a distinctive cultural identity that resonates across generations and continents. At the core of Igbo culture lies a profound reverence for community, family, and tradition. From intricate masquerades that breathe life into ancient myths to the rhythmic beats of traditional music that echo through village squares, every aspect of Igbo life is imbued with meaning and significance. This cultural richness serves as a beacon of pride for the Igbo people, uniting them in a shared heritage that transcends boundaries of time and space.

Within the intricate web of Igbo customs and traditions, the concept of premarital sex occupies a complex and often contentious space. In the Igbo context, premarital sex refers to sexual activity between individuals who are not yet married according to traditional or societal norms. However, the interpretation of this concept varies widely, influenced by factors such as age, gender, and socio-economic status.

Understanding the cultural perspectives on sexuality within the Igbo context is essential for navigating the nuances of premarital sex. In Igbo culture, sexuality is not merely a physical act but a deeply ingrained aspect of identity, spirituality, and social interaction. From the rituals of courtship that precede marriage to the expectations placed on individuals to uphold family honor, the dynamics of sexuality in Igbo society are multifaceted and nuanced. Recognizing the importance of cultural perspectives on

sexuality is paramount for fostering a more inclusive and informed dialogue on the topic of premarital sex. By acknowledging the diverse beliefs, values, and experiences that shape Igbo attitudes towards sexuality, we can begin to unravel the complexities of this cultural phenomenon and pave the way for meaningful engagement and understanding.

As we embark on this journey of exploration, let us delve deeper into the intricate tapestry of Igbo culture, unravelling the threads that bind together tradition, identity, and sexuality. Through open dialogue and a spirit of cultural sensitivity, we can strive towards a more holistic understanding of premarital sex in Igbo society and its significance for individuals and communities alike. With this foundation laid, let us embark on a journey of exploration, reflection, and dialogue as we navigate the intricate tapestry of premarital sex in Igbo culture.

### **Historical Background of Igbo Cultural Norms and Values Regarding Sexuality**

The Igbo people boast a rich cultural heritage that dates back centuries, characterized by a complex tapestry of norms, values, and traditions. Within this cultural framework, attitudes toward sexuality have been shaped by a myriad of historical influences, including indigenous belief systems, colonial encounters, and socio-economic transformations. Historically, Igbo society held a nuanced perspective on sexuality, viewing it as an integral aspect of human experience intertwined with spiritual, social, and familial dimensions. Traditional Igbo cosmology emphasized the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, with sexuality occupying a sacred space within this worldview. Rituals and ceremonies surrounding marriage and fertility underscored the importance of sexual union in ensuring the continuity of lineage and community. Moreover, gender roles and expectations played a significant role in shaping Igbo attitudes toward sexuality. While men often enjoyed greater freedom and autonomy in expressing their sexuality, women were expected to adhere to stricter moral standards and codes of conduct. This disparity in gender norms contributed to the perpetuation of traditional power dynamics within Igbo society.

### **Role of Traditional Beliefs, Customs, and Taboos in Shaping Attitudes toward Premarital Sex**

Central to Igbo cultural identity are a myriad of traditional beliefs, customs, and taboos that govern every aspect of life, including sexuality. These cultural norms serve as guiding principles, shaping individual behavior and societal expectations surrounding premarital sex. Traditional Igbo beliefs often emphasized the sanctity of marriage and the importance of chastity before wedlock. Concepts such as "nkali" (dignity and respect) and "nne mmuo" (ancestral spirits) underscored the significance of upholding

moral integrity and honoring familial obligations. As such, premarital sex was often stigmatized and discouraged, viewed as a violation of communal values and a threat to social cohesion. Customs and rituals surrounding courtship and marriage further reinforced these traditional norms, providing a structured framework for navigating intimate relationships within the confines of cultural expectations. For instance, elaborate ceremonies such as "igba nkwu" (wine carrying) and "igbankwu" (traditional wedding) symbolized the union of families and the formalization of marital bonds, reinforcing the importance of sexual fidelity and commitment. However, alongside these traditional beliefs and customs, Igbo society has also witnessed gradual shifts and adaptations in attitudes toward premarital sex over time.

### **Changes and Adaptations in Igbo Society Regarding Premarital Sexual Practices over Time**

The dynamics of premarital sex in Igbo society have evolved in response to a myriad of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors. Colonialism and Christian missionary activities introduced new moral codes and religious doctrines that influenced attitudes toward sexuality, often promoting abstinence and monogamy as virtuous ideals. Moreover, urbanization, globalization, and the proliferation of mass media have contributed to the erosion of traditional norms and values surrounding premarital sex, leading to greater cultural diversity and individual autonomy in sexual decision-making. The rise of modern education and women's empowerment movements has also played a significant role in challenging traditional gender roles and expectations, reshaping the landscape of intimate relationships within Igbo society.

These changes and adaptations reflect the complex interplay between tradition and modernity, highlighting the ongoing negotiation of cultural values and practices in response to shifting social realities. As Igbo society continues to navigate the complexities of contemporary life, the discourse surrounding premarital sex remains a dynamic and evolving aspect of cultural identity, shaped by the enduring legacy of tradition and the imperatives of change.

### **Pros of Premarital Sex in Igbo Culture**

Some of the advantages of premarital sex in Igbo culture include the following:

*Exploration of Individual Autonomy and Freedom of Choice:* Premarital sex in Igbo culture can provide individuals with a platform to exercise autonomy and make informed choices about their intimate relationships. In a society where familial and communal expectations often influence marital decisions, engaging in premarital sex allows individuals to explore their desires and preferences independently, free from external pressures. This exploration of personal agency fosters a sense of empowerment

and self-discovery, enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of intimate relationships on their own terms.

*Fulfilment of Sexual Desires and Expression of Love:* For many individuals in Igbo culture, premarital sex serves as a means of fulfilling natural human desires and expressing affection and love for their partners. In a society where sexuality is often intertwined with notions of intimacy and emotional connection, engaging in consensual premarital sex can deepen the bond between partners and enhance the quality of their relationship. By openly expressing their desires and affection, individuals can cultivate a sense of emotional intimacy and mutual understanding, laying the foundation for a fulfilling and harmonious partnership.

*Social Bonding and Relationship Building within the Community:* Premarital sex can also play a role in fostering social bonding and relationship building within the Igbo community. In many cases, intimate relationships are viewed as an integral part of social life, providing individuals with opportunities to forge connections and establish networks of support. Through shared experiences of intimacy and companionship, individuals can strengthen their ties to family, friends, and community members, contributing to a sense of belonging and solidarity within the broader social fabric.

*Potential for Strengthening Compatibility and Intimacy between Partners:* Engaging in premarital sex offers couples the opportunity to deepen their understanding of each other's needs, desires, and expectations, thereby strengthening compatibility and intimacy in their relationship. By exploring their sexual compatibility before marriage, couples can identify areas of alignment and potential areas of conflict, allowing them to address any concerns and establish a foundation of trust and communication. Additionally, premarital sex can facilitate honest and open conversations about sexual health, preferences, and boundaries, paving the way for a more fulfilling and satisfying intimate partnership.

In summary, premarital sex in Igbo culture can offer individuals the opportunity to explore their autonomy, fulfil their sexual desires, foster social bonds, and strengthen compatibility and intimacy with their partners. While navigating the complexities of intimate relationships, it is essential to approach premarital sex with respect, communication, and mutual consent, thereby ensuring the well-being and dignity of all involved parties.

## **Cons of Premarital Sex in Igbo Culture**

Some of cons in premarital in Igbo culture could be identified as follows:

*Violation of Cultural Norms and Traditional Values, Leading to Social Stigma and Ostracism:* Engaging in premarital sex in Igbo culture can be perceived as a violation of deeply ingrained cultural norms and traditional values surrounding chastity, purity,

and marital fidelity. In a society where the institution of marriage holds significant cultural and religious significance, individuals who engage in premarital sex may face social stigma, judgment, and ostracism from their families and communities. This stigma can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation, impacting individuals' mental and emotional well-being.

*Risk of Unintended Pregnancies and Sexually Transmitted Diseases:* One of the most significant risks associated with premarital sex in Igbo culture is the potential for unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In a society where access to comprehensive sexual health education and reproductive healthcare may be limited, individuals engaging in premarital sex may lack the knowledge and resources to protect themselves from these risks. Unplanned pregnancies can have profound social, economic, and emotional consequences for individuals and their families, while STDs can pose serious health risks and complications if left untreated.

*Impact on Family Honor and Reputation:* Premarital sex can also have a detrimental impact on family honor and reputation within Igbo culture. The perceived loss of chastity or moral integrity by an individual can reflect negatively on their family's honor and standing within the community. In a culture where family reputation is highly valued and closely intertwined with social status, the revelation of premarital sexual activity can lead to shame, disgrace, and social exclusion for both the individual and their family members.

*Potential for Exploitation and Abuse, Particularly on Vulnerable Individuals:* Engaging in premarital sex can leave individuals vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, particularly in contexts where power imbalances exist within intimate relationships. Vulnerable individuals, such as women and young girls, may be coerced or manipulated into sexual activity against their will, leading to physical, emotional, and psychological harm. Moreover, the stigma surrounding premarital sex may deter individuals from seeking help or reporting instances of abuse, perpetuating cycles of violence and oppression within Igbo society.

*Contemporary Perspectives:* In the contemporary landscape of Igbo culture, modern influences such as globalization, media, and education have significantly shaped attitudes toward premarital sex. The advent of globalization has brought about increased interconnectedness and exposure to diverse cultural norms and practices, challenging traditional beliefs and values surrounding sexuality. The proliferation of media, including television, film, and the internet, has played a pivotal role in shaping perceptions of sexuality, often portraying premarital sex as a normative aspect of romantic relationships. Moreover, advancements in education have expanded access to information about sexual health and reproductive rights, empowering individuals to make informed choices about their sexual behavior.

Case studies or surveys can provide valuable insights into the diverse viewpoints within Igbo communities regarding premarital sex. By examining the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds, age groups, and geographical locations, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the complexities of

this cultural phenomenon. These case studies or surveys can illuminate the factors influencing attitudes toward premarital sex, including religious beliefs, cultural traditions.

## **Conclusion**

In examining the pros and cons of premarital sex within Igbo culture, we have navigated through a complex terrain shaped by tradition, modernity, and individual agency. On one hand, premarital sex offers individuals the opportunity to explore autonomy, fulfill desires, foster social bonds, and strengthen compatibility with partners. However, it also carries significant risks, including violation of cultural norms, health concerns, impacts on family honor, and vulnerabilities to exploitation and abuse. Throughout our exploration, one recurring theme has emerged: the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding when addressing sensitive topics such as premarital sex in Igbo culture. It is imperative to approach these discussions with respect for diverse viewpoints, acknowledging the complexities of tradition, modern influences, and individual experiences that shape attitudes toward sexuality.

By fostering an environment of openness, respect, and inclusivity, we can promote healthy dialogue and education within Igbo communities, empowering individuals to make informed choices about their sexual health and well-being. As we move forward, let us continue to uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals, honoring the richness and diversity of Igbo culture while striving for greater understanding and inclusivity in our discourse on sensitive topics. In conclusion, premarital sex in Igbo culture carries significant risks and consequences, including social stigma, health risks, impacts on family honor, and vulnerabilities to exploitation and abuse. While acknowledging the complexities of intimate relationships, it is essential to prioritize respect, communication, and consent, and to provide individuals with access to comprehensive sexual health education and support services to mitigate these risks and promote overall well-being.

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## **HARMONY IN DIVERSITY: EXPLORING THE NEXUS OF IGBO/AFRICAN HERITAGE AND CHRISTIAN VALUES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN IGBOLAND**

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### **Executive Summary**

*This study aims to delve into the complex interplay between Igbo/African heritage and Christian values, exploring how these intertwined elements influence attitudes, behaviors, and practices conducive to sustainable development in Igboland, Nigeria. Through a multidimensional analysis drawing on insights from cultural studies, anthropology, theology, and development studies, the research seeks to elucidate the synergistic potential and challenges inherent in the fusion of indigenous cultural traditions and Christian ethics. By examining historical narratives, cultural practices, religious rituals, and contemporary discourses, the study endeavors to uncover the ways in which Igbo/African heritage and Christian values intersect to shape approaches to environmental stewardship, community empowerment, social justice, and ethical governance. Employing qualitative research methods such as interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic observation, the study aims to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of individuals and communities navigating the intricate terrain of tradition and modernity, spirituality and pragmatism, and local knowledge and global ideologies. The findings of this research are envisaged to contribute to theoretical understandings of the relationship between religion and sustainable development, inform policy interventions, and empower local stakeholders to harness the rich cultural and spiritual resources of Igboland for holistic and inclusive development.*

**Keywords:** Igbo/African Heritage, Christian Values, Sustainable Development, Cultural Syncretism, Environmental Stewardship.

## **Introduction**

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria have long been recognized for their rich cultural heritage, vibrant traditions, and deep spiritual beliefs. The Igbo cosmological system, which recognizes the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual realms, has informed traditional agricultural practices, resource management, and communal decision-making (Nwosu, 2015). The Igbo concept of *Ala*, which embodies a deep reverence for the land and the natural world, has been a cornerstone of their worldview, guiding their relationship with the environment. However, the advent of Christianity, coupled with the forces of globalization, has introduced a complex interplay between indigenous Igbo/African worldviews and the values and teachings of the Christian faith. This dynamic nexus between Igbo/African heritage and Christian ethics holds significant implications for the pursuit of sustainable development within Igboland. Sustainable development, as defined by the United Nations, is "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN, 1987). This holistic approach to development encompasses environmental protection, social equity, and economic prosperity. In the context of Igboland, where traditional communal values and a reverence for the natural world coexist with the tenets of Christianity, understanding the interplay between these diverse elements is crucial for crafting development strategies that are culturally relevant, spiritually grounded, and environmentally responsible.

## **Literature Review**

- Mbiti (1969) in "African Religions and Philosophy" discusses the potential for integrating African traditional beliefs with Christianity. He argues that some African practices, like respect for nature, align with Christian principles of stewardship.
- Ajayi (2000) in "Christian Missions in Africa" explores the historical tension between Christian missionaries and indigenous African religions. However, his work also acknowledges instances where these traditions have found ways to coexist and even influence each other.
- Sidibe (2010) in "Ecologies of Knowledge: Local Knowledge and Sustainable Development in Africa" examines how indigenous knowledge systems in Africa can contribute to sustainable development practices. He argues that traditional ecological knowledge holds valuable insights for resource management and environmental conservation.
- Schiere (2012) in "Religion and Sustainable Development in Africa" analyzes the role of religious institutions in promoting sustainable development in Africa. He highlights how certain religious values can motivate communities to adopt environmentally friendly practices.

- Uzodinma & Agu (2013) in "Igbo Cultural Values and Sustainable Development in Nigeria" explore the concept of "Iwu Onima" (cosmic harmony) in Igbo cosmology. They argue that this traditional concept emphasizes living in balance with nature, which aligns with sustainability principles.
- Okoro (2017) in "Igbo Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Sustainable Development" examines traditional Igbo practices related to agriculture, land use, and resource management. He argues that these practices embody a deep respect for nature and can inform sustainable development initiatives.
- Isiche (1997) in "Voices of the Igbo: An Introduction to Igbo History and Culture" acknowledges the historical influence of Christianity on Igbo culture. However, he also emphasizes the resilience of Igbo traditions and the ongoing negotiation between them and Christianity.
- Amanze (2012) in "The Igbo and Christianity: The Challenge of Inculturation" explores the challenges of integrating Christianity with Igbo culture. He emphasizes the importance of respecting the agency of Igbo communities in shaping their own unique form of Christianity.

## **Methodology**

To investigate this complex topic, a mixed methods approach is ideal. Qualitative methods such as focus groups, interviews, and observation to gather in-depth information from community members, religious leaders, and those involved in sustainability efforts. This will allow an in-depth understanding of perspectives on how these traditions and values intersect with practices that promote a sustainable future. Also, quantitative methods, like surveys, provide broader data on the prevalence of these beliefs and practices within the Igbo community.

By combining these approaches, you'll gain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of how Igbo heritage and Christian values can contribute to a sustainable future in Igboland

## **Theoretical underpinnings: Integration Theory**

Integration theory, as explored by scholars like Berry (1980) and Padilla (1980), posits that seemingly disparate cultural or religious belief systems can coexist and even complement each other. It emphasizes finding common ground and identifying points of convergence between different traditions. The theory acknowledges potential tensions but focuses on the possibilities for synergy and mutual reinforcement (Berry, 1980).

*Implications for the Study:* Integration theory allows you to explore how Igbo/African heritage, rich in traditional ecological knowledge and communal values, can find common ground with Christian principles of stewardship and social responsibility. You

can examine how these traditions, seemingly distinct, can be interwoven to inform sustainable development practices in Igboland. By analyzing specific practices, rituals, or proverbs within Igbo culture, you can identify how they embody environmental awareness and social justice, aligning with Christian values.

### **The Intersection of Igbo/African Heritage and Christian Values**

The arrival of Christian missionaries in the 19th century introduced a new set of religious and ethical principles that, in many cases, challenged or coexisted with existing Igbo cultural traditions. As Igbo converts embraced the teachings of Christianity, they often sought to reconcile their newfound faith with their ancestral beliefs and practices (Ugochukwu, 2014). This process of cultural and religious syncretism has resulted in the emergence of unique, hybrid forms of spirituality that draw from both Igbo/African heritage and Christian values. The Igbo emphasis on communal solidarity, mutual support, and collective decision-making dovetails with the Christian principles of compassion, justice, and the common good. Both Igbo and Christian traditions place a high value on virtues such as honesty, accountability, and servant leadership, as embodied in the Igbo cultural tradition of *Ofo* (Ekeh, 1990). These complementary principles have the potential to inform and empower sustainable development initiatives in Igboland.

### **Environmental Stewardship: The Igbo Concept of *Ala* and Christian Teachings on Creation Care**

The Igbo concept of *Ala*, which embodies a deep reverence for the land and the natural world, aligns with the Christian teachings of responsible dominion and care for creation (Nwosu, 2015). This shared emphasis on environmental stewardship holds significant potential for informing and empowering sustainable development initiatives in Igboland. In the Igbo cosmological system, *Ala* is considered the earth goddess, the source of life, and the ultimate arbiter of morality and justice. The land is viewed as a sacred trust, to be cared for and passed down to future generations (Nwogu, 2019). This reverence for the natural world is manifested in various cultural practices, such as the observance of *Iri-ji* (new yam festival), which celebrates the fertility of the land and the cyclical nature of life.

Similarly, the Christian scriptures emphasize the responsibility of humanity to be faithful stewards of God's creation. The book of Genesis declares that humans were tasked with "subduing the earth and having dominion over it" (Genesis 1:28), but this dominion is understood as a call to responsible caretaking, not exploitation. The Psalmist proclaims that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm 24:1), underscoring the belief that the natural world belongs to the divine and must be respected and protected. By drawing on these complementary perspectives,

development programs in Igboland can promote sustainable agricultural practices, forest conservation, and the protection of biodiversity. For instance, the integration of traditional Igbo farming techniques, which emphasize crop rotation, soil replenishment, and the preservation of native plant species, with Christian principles of environmental stewardship often mark by Rogation Sunday in Orthodox churches, can lead to more holistic and ecologically sustainable approaches to food production (Nwosu, 2015). In the Orthodox Christian tradition, Rogation Sunday holds deep significance. It marks a time of blessing and sanctification of the land, crops, and livestock, reflecting the church's close connection to the agricultural roots of its communities (Reff, 2005). Through processions around parish boundaries and the recitation of litanies, the clergy and congregation invoke God's protection and provision over the land and its produce. Rogation Sunday is a moment of spiritual renewal, where the church intercedes on behalf of the local community, praying for a bountiful harvest, the well-being of the people, and the overall prosperity of the region. It serves as a reminder of the church's stewardship role, honoring the interdependence between humans, the land, and the divine (Dues, 1993). Thus, Rogation Sunday's emphasis on blessing the land and praying for a bountiful harvest encourages a more holistic, ecologically sustainable approach to food production. By recognizing the inherent sacredness of the land and the community's dependence on it, the church promotes responsible stewardship and a deeper connection between spiritual, agricultural, and environmental well-being.

Furthermore, the Igbo reverence for sacred groves and the Christian teachings on the sanctity of creation can inform community-led initiatives to protect and restore fragile ecosystems. Joint efforts by religious leaders, traditional authorities, and development practitioners to safeguard these natural sanctuaries can not only preserve biodiversity but also strengthen the spiritual and cultural connection between the Igbo people and their environment.

### **Community Empowerment: Synergies between Igbo Communal Values and Christian Teachings**

The Igbo emphasis on communal solidarity, mutual support, and collective decision-making dovetails with the Christian principles of compassion, justice, and the common good. These complementary values hold significant potential for informing and empowering sustainable development initiatives that prioritize community-driven and inclusive approaches to addressing socio-economic challenges. (Umeanolue & Anizoba, 2017). In the Igbo cultural context, the concept of *Umu-ada* (daughters of the community) and *Ndi-Ichie* (traditional elders) embodies the collective responsibility for the wellbeing of the community. Decisions that affect the community are made through a process of consensus-building, where the voices and interests of diverse stakeholders are taken into account (Obijiofor, 2015). This emphasis on communal

solidarity and participatory decision-making aligns with the Christian teachings on the importance of compassion, justice, and the common good. The book of Acts in the Christian scriptures describes the early Christian community as one where "all who believed were together and had all things in common" (Acts 2:44), with members supporting one another and sharing resources. Similarly, the Igbo concept of *Igwe bu ike* (unity is strength) underscores the belief that the community's collective wellbeing and resilience are paramount. By harnessing these synergies, development initiatives in Igboland can foster community-driven approaches to poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education. For instance, the integration of traditional Igbo systems of mutual aid, such as *Isusu* (rotating savings and credit associations) and *Oru-Ulo* (communal labor), with Christian principles of compassion and solidarity, can empower local communities to address socio-economic challenges through collaborative and inclusive means (Obijiofor, 2015).

Moreover, the Igbo cultural emphasis on the role of traditional authorities and elders in decision-making can be leveraged to ensure that development programs are aligned with the values and aspirations of the community. By engaging with these traditional leaders, who often hold significant spiritual and moral authority, development practitioners can foster a sense of ownership and commitment among community members, ultimately enhancing the sustainability and impact of their interventions.

### **Ethical Governance: The Igbo Tradition of *Ofo* and Christian Teachings on Ethical Stewardship**

The Igbo cultural tradition of *Ofo*, which embodies the virtues of honesty, accountability, and servant leadership, shares resonance with Christian teachings on ethical stewardship and moral responsibility (Ikegwu, 2012). By integrating these principles into governance structures and decision-making processes, development programs can promote transparent, equitable, and values-driven approaches to the management of resources and the delivery of public services. In the Igbo cultural context, *Ofo* is a symbol of authority, legitimacy, and moral rectitude. It is entrusted to individuals who are recognized for their integrity, wisdom, and commitment to the wellbeing of the community (Ekeh, 1990). The bearer of *Ofo* is expected to act as a steward, using their power and influence to serve the collective interests of the people, rather than pursuing personal gain or narrow political agendas.

Similarly, the Christian scriptures emphasize the importance of ethical leadership and responsible stewardship. The book of 1 Peter calls on leaders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you" (1 Peter 5:2). This notion of servant leadership, where those in positions of authority are called to prioritize the needs of the community, resonates

with the Igbo ideal of *Ofo*. By integrating these shared principles of ethical governance into the design and implementation of development programs, practitioners can foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and equitable resource allocation within Igbo communities. This could involve, for example, the establishment of participatory budgeting processes that empower community members to have a direct say in how public funds are utilized, or the creation of oversight mechanisms that hold local leaders accountable to the people they serve. Furthermore, the Igbo tradition of *Ofo* and the Christian teachings on moral responsibility can inform the development of ethical frameworks and codes of conduct for individuals and institutions involved in the delivery of public services and the management of development projects. By aligning these frameworks with the shared values of honesty, integrity, and servant leadership, development interventions can cultivate a sense of trust and legitimacy among the Igbo people, ultimately enhancing the sustainability and impact of their efforts (Ikegwu, 2012).

### **Overcoming Challenges and Fostering Synergies**

Despite the potential for synergy, the intersection of Igbo/African heritage and Christian values has also been marked by tensions and challenges. The historical legacy of colonial-era Christian Christianization and the imposition of Western cultural norms have, in some cases, led to the erosion of traditional Igbo practices and the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems (Ugochukwu, 2014). Furthermore, the perceived incompatibility between certain Igbo cultural rituals and Christian doctrines has resulted in ongoing debates and conflicts within Igbo communities.

One prominent area of tension has been the role of traditional religious practices, such as the veneration of ancestral spirits and the observance of rituals related to the 'Ala' goddess, within the context of Christian faith. Some Igbo Christians have grappled with reconciling these ancestral practices with the monotheistic teachings of Christianity, leading to the emergence of diverse theological interpretations and the development of syncretic religious forms (Nwogu, 2019). Similarly, the Igbo reverence for the natural world and the sanctity of the land has, at times, clashed with the Christian emphasis on personal spiritual salvation and the perceived dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. This has resulted in debates and conflicts over issues such as the use of natural resources, the protection of sacred sites, and the integration of traditional environmental management practices into development initiatives.

To navigate these complexities and foster productive synergies, development practitioners, religious leaders, and community stakeholders must engage in a process of inclusive, respectful, and in-depth dialogue. This collaborative effort should aim to identify and amplify the shared values and principles that can inform sustainable development, while also addressing the historical grievances and contemporary

challenges that have arisen from the intersection of Igbo/African heritage and Christian ethics. One potential approach is the establishment of interfaith platforms and dialogue forums that bring together Igbo traditional leaders, Christian clergy, and development practitioners to collectively explore the convergences and divergences between their respective worldviews and ethical frameworks. These dialogues can facilitate mutual understanding, identify areas of common ground, and develop integrated approaches to addressing local challenges (Ugochukwu, 2014). Additionally, the integration of Igbo cultural and spiritual elements into the design and implementation of development programs can help to bridge the perceived divide between tradition and modernity, fostering a sense of ownership and buy-in among Igbo communities. This could involve, for example, the incorporation of traditional rituals and symbols into community-based initiatives, or the collaborative development of curriculum and educational resources that blend Igbo/African heritage with Christian values and sustainable development principles.

By embracing a pluralistic and inclusive approach, development interventions in Igboland can navigate the complex terrain of tradition and modernity, spirituality and pragmatism, and local knowledge and global ideologies. This process of negotiation and synthesis can ultimately lead to the creation of holistic, culturally resonant, and spiritually grounded strategies for sustainable development that address the unique needs and aspirations of the Igbo people.

## **Conclusion**

The harmonious integration of Igbo/African heritage and Christian values holds immense promise for advancing sustainable development in Igboland. By recognizing the complementary principles of environmental stewardship, community empowerment, and ethical governance that are present in both cultural and religious traditions, development initiatives can cultivate holistic, culturally resonant, and spiritually grounded approaches to addressing the region's socio-economic and environmental challenges. Through continued dialogue, mutual understanding, and a commitment to inclusive and collaborative problem-solving, Igbo communities can leverage the rich fabric of their cultural and spiritual resources to forge a path towards sustainable development that respects the past, embraces the present, and secures a vibrant future for generations to come. This process of synergy and synthesis can not only empower the Igbo people to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, but also serve as a model for other communities grappling with the intersection of tradition and modernity, spirituality and pragmatism, and local knowledge and global ideologies. As the Igbo people continue to navigate the dynamic interplay between their rich cultural heritage and the tenets of Christianity, the potential for

sustainable development that is rooted in harmony and diversity holds the promise of a more equitable, resilient, and spiritually fulfilling future for all.

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## **AFRICAN MIGRATION AND THE GLOBAL FUTURE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION**

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### **Executive Summary**

*The conundrum of African predicaments has created a general despair in the populace. This situation now catalyzes incessant migration of many Africans to the Western and Asian countries. African migration is the mass movement of indigenous Africans out of the continent in search of conducive environment necessary for fruitful economic ventures and better living conditions. This phenomenon has become unprecedented in recent time and its increasing wave is being propelled by the popular Nigerian slogan Japa. Why then are there persistent African predicament and unconducive environment in Africa, hence the surging migration? Could it be that African continent is now becoming uninhabitable and unsuited for Africans? Are there other factors in African continent catalyzing the present surging migration of the inhabitants? Is this unprecedented surge in African migration of any benefit to Africa and the migrants? Are African governments making enough effort to control this unprecedented phenomenon? What are the intentions of African migrants amidst their migration (japa) to America, Europe or Asia? What implications does the present African migration (japa) hold for the global future? In critical response to these questions, this paper, using the method of phenomenology, interrogates the increasing migration of Africans to Western and Asian countries (popularly called japa) to determine their rationale, implications and what the phenomena hold for the global future. The study as well accesses the impact of African migration on African continent and in the host countries. The discourse finds that African migration is a posteriori outcome of human needs. Along the ultimate search for these needs are African migrants confronted by*

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*actual needs expectation versus actual needs satisfaction. The widening gap between these needs now underscores scholars' conclusion that African migration may appear lucrative, yet it maximizes loss of human capital/resources, creates human dissatisfaction, despair and attitudes akin to 'already made situations.' The study also finds that the increasing African migration (japa) is now a phenomenon that feeble the morale of the African; indisposes him or her to attitude necessary for autochthonous venture or development or for staying behind and joining in developing his or her country. The study then opts for controlled migration, and notes the need for good governance that would create a conducive environment for better human living condition and fruitful economic ventures.*

**Key words:** Africa; Global Future; Japa, Migration; Needs satisfaction

## **Introduction**

There is a deep-rooted need in human psyche that strikes far beneath other needs and interests. This is the need to feel comfortable and at home in this universe (Burt, 1970). Inadequacy of this need in Africa is occasioned by poor governance, harsh economic condition, insecurity, poor social welfare, incentive, and unconducive environment that are now the foundation of poor human condition that catalyzes the increasing African migration. As such, many Africans now “want to escape the economic hardship they face in their home countries into a better land” for a better life (Isife, 2022:6). This increasing escape among Africans has recently found expression in the popular Nigerian slang *japa*; which connotes a quick, anyhow, but permanent escape to Europe, America or Asia without coming back to Africa (Ayandayo, 2022). This phenomenal escape (*japa*) results from a greater number of African citizens' dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in the continent; hence ‘*japa*’ (to escape or run) is a disavowal of patriotism and a new cultural personality as well as a trigger of the current mass migration of Africans to Europe, America or Asia (Dayo, 2022). Consequently, African migration records an increasing rate of 5% per annum in 1951 and 1953, 8% in 1963 and now to an unprecedented percentage (Ajaegbu, 1976). Between 2000 and 2019, the number of African migrants then swelled “from 15.1 million to 26.6 million” (Hovy, Laczko, Kouassi, Vidal, Iturralde and Bel-Aube, 2019:16). This increment plunges African migration to the relative increase of 76% more than migration from the other continents of the world (Hovy, et al, 2016). Responding to this unprecedented increment, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2017) reports in Achieng, El Fadil and Righa (2019:1) reveals “that there were about 41 million international migrants moving from Africa; where 17 million were residents outside the continent.” Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019:2) congruently responds that, there were 36.3 million African migrants in 2017, amounting to 2.9% of Africa's population. African migrations represented around 14% of the global migrant population... In 2017,

the top ten migration flows from Africa...the EU hosted 9 million African migrants, 5 million from North Africa and 4 million from sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, many Africans now migrate in droves to countries in Europe, America and Asia “believing that life is better lived in those countries” (Isife, 2023:129). This is evident in the large number of Africans crowding western and some Asian countries’ embassies in quest for visas as well as the irregular large number of Africans risking the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea to cross to Europe. Adu (2018:88) observes that this increasing regular and irregular African migration is among the reasons Africa is “portrayed as the continent with the most mobile population in the world.” This mobility however appears to be encouraged by the leadership of African countries, who appears to be less interested in quality of governance and on improving human living condition that could check migration, but are more interested in the increasing migrants’ remittances that lead to increased government revenue and economic advantage (Ratha, Mohapatra and Scheja, 2011). Yet, these much-vaunted remittances come at substantial costs to the migrants and their families. Along with this is the brain drain of unimaginable magnitude that draws many agents of development out from African continent. Counted among these factors are the challenges of integration of these African migrants faced by the host countries.

A critical investigation indeed reveals that those who migrate out of Africa possess some amount of wealth. Hence, they are able to fund their journey. As such, poor Africans hardly migrate at the international level. This is as their situation disconnects them from world markets, global trade, information, production networks and financial wherewithal required for migration (Taylor, Walkey and Mbokazi 2019). African migration in modern time has however become more possible for people with the required means because of the present globalization that has “narrowed the bridge that once separated nations of the world,” and enhanced interdependence of diverse sections of the world and human cross-border movement (Isife, 2022: 1-2). The increasing African migration however draws the attention of diverse African governments and right-thinking people because of the global future the phenomenon holds for humanity and Africa in particular. Unless the situations catalyzing the recent increasing African migration are quickly addressed and the phenomenon controlled, its propelling expression *japa* will continue to grab the psyche of more Africans, and African countries may eventually lose the able manpower and human capital required for the sustainable development of the continent.

### **Conceptualizing African migration and its propelling ‘japa’ thought**

African migration is the movement of indigenous Africans from the continent to other parts of the world in search of permanent or temporal residence and greener pastures.

International Organization for Migration in Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019) Reports connotes this view, alluding to African migration as the movement of a person or a group of persons of African origin across an international border or out of the African continent. Because of the global changes induced by African migration and future implications of these changes, there is presently a constant redefinition of African migration. Thus, African migration is now understood as the movement of African cultures; traditions and customs embodied by African migrants to other parts of the world.

Contextually, African migration depicts the current mass movement of Africans to Europe, America and Asia propelled by their dissatisfaction with the affairs in African continent. With the continent deteriorating quickly in key areas like economy and security, migration to Europe, America and Asia popularly expressed as *japa* has become the dream and aspiration of young Africans who have the resources to fund it. With the 2020 popular hit-track *Japa* (meaning run, escape or relocate) by the Nigerian Afro-Pop singer, Naira Marley, suggesting the required response to the excruciating poor human conditions in Nigeria and other African countries as escaping or running to Europe, America and Asia, mass migration became more meaningful and practical in the thoughts and actions of Nigerians and Africans at large. *Japa* as a popular thought and expression thus became a trending migratory slang in the continent conveying the idea of swift and evasive action bothering on permanently relocating to Europe, Asia or America to escape the prevalent hardship in Africa. Thus, *japa* is a single word that now sums up the burning desire of many young Africans to legally or irregularly leave the continent to Europe or America without coming back to Africa (Akinwotu, 2023).

*Japa* is indeed a Nigerian-Yoruba word meaning ‘run away’ or ‘escape’ amidst excruciating human condition. The word has evolved and become a popular slang, expressing and inducing haste, quick and urgent escape from harsh human situation and relocation out of the continent (Ayoola, 2023). From all these meanings, one can decipher that the current African migration catalyzing word *japa*, carries not only a sense of documented (regular) migration, but that of quick, ‘anyhow’ and by all means (irregular/illegal) escape from the harsh human condition in the continent. This meaning accounts for the increasing number of regular and irregular (illegal) Africans leaving the continent *en masse*. Although used in the context of expressing intention or readiness to escape (migrate) to Europe or America, *japa* is also a migration inducing slang used playfully in pointing to migration out of Africa as the best and most important option.

Meanwhile, expression of *japais* a depiction of Africans’ response to the prevailing harsh human condition in the continent. Thus, *japa* could be said to be reflecting the

resourcefulness and adaptability of African youths in navigating challenging situations in the continent. Today, all these usages of *japa* have become frequent in African movies, music and social media conversations inducing African youths to (run) migrate to Europe, America or Asia. With its present evolvement, *japa* has now become synonymous with migration out of Africa in search of a better life (Akinwotu, 2023). Based on the fact that migrating out of the continent is now for many Africans an escape (*japa*) from harsh human conditions in Africa, a great number of African migrants often swore never to come back, while others eventually return to establish investments they will run from their base in the host countries. As these African migrants “accumulate experience abroad, their motivations change, usually in ways that promote additional trips of longer duration, yielding a rising likelihood of settlement over time” (Massey, 2003: 27). Hence, as African migration is largely fostered by search for comfort and economic achievements, the migrants undergo changes through their experiences in the host countries. This is so as living and working in the advanced, post-industrial economies like Europe and America for instance, expose these African migrants to economic cultures that inculcate new tastes, motivations and decisions that cannot be satisfied by poor economic activities at home. The easiest path to these African migrants’ satisfaction then becomes additional foreign labour and longer stay in the host countries that often snowballs into Diaspora. As African migrants then stay longer and spend more time abroad, they acquire social and economic ties with the host countries, and even begin to work for the escape (*japa*) of their friends and family members from Africa and entry into the host countries. This means that over time, African migration have a way of increasing *japa* or migration of more Africans out of the continent.

### **Trends of African migration**

The discussions on recent African migration (*japa*) call to mind the existential question of who migrates in Africa. Hence, the concern surrounding African migration was mainly because of the very groups involved. Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019), reports that contemporary African migration (*japa*) mostly involves young and educated men and women. The foundation reports that,

60.0% of irregular African migrants are estimated to be Under 35 years old. Moreover, 27.5% of all migrants hosted in Africa, the majority of which originate from the continent, are between 15-29 years old. Almost ½ of the African migrants, are female (46.1%), contrary to common perceptions that African migrations are male-dominated...Almost 1/3 (31.5%) of young Africans have thought somewhat or a lot about moving to another country, almost twice as many as those older than 35. (2019:14 & 16).

Certainly, these young Africans, and generally people at this age bracket are standing labour force whether in their home or destination countries. Wahba (1996:4) refers to

this group, when he stated that “in all developing countries, migration is concentrated in the 15-30 age groups; with a substantial portion in the 15-24 sub-groups.” This is so because this is the age when people are replete with life vision, strength, capability, health and willingness to pursue their dreams successfully. More so, many people within this age bracket have high morale, resolve and endurance to succeed. This explains why many of them are undaunted by their previous experience of traumatic events and awareness of the perils of their journey. As such, many African youths involved in the current surging migration are eager to bear burdens, take possible risks and conquer barriers on their journey. Also, urban and highly educated young and well-to-do Africans tend to migrate (japa) abroad (Kirwin and Anderson, 2018). Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019:16) reports concurs that “more than 1/2 of those who prepare their departure have completed secondary or tertiary education.” Explored migrants’ characteristics then corroborate that individual development; wealth and higher level of education are important determinants of African persons’ propensity to migrate (Martin and Taylor, 2019). Because human effort and worth are not well rewarded in many parts of Africa, migration is high among the educated, skilled and well-to-do Africans. Many are therefore eager to leave the continent to where their efforts and worth would be better rewarded. Part of the present African migration is also the African middle class. This is an important group necessary for every country’s sustainable development. This is as the middle class is replete with skilled men and women; technicians, specialists and professionals like teachers, lecturers, engineers, doctors, nurses, scientists, technocrats, industrialists, and business men and women. In the knowledge of this, Adu (2019:89) assents that “Africa is worst hit in the loss of educated personnel to more developed regions of the world.” This view is collaborated by Akanni (2004) who holds that almost a third of African medical personnel had migrated to Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. The resourceful constituents in the middle class that catalyze development reflect in planning, redefinition and execution of social, economic and political policies. Particularly, the current migration of Africa is informed by dissatisfaction over the poor conditions and state of affairs in Africa and search for greener pastures. What migration of these Africans take then deconstructs the view that African migration is informed by poverty. Thus, poor people in Africa hardly migrate. This is as they lack the resources to fund the cost of migration. Based on their ugly experiences here, many of these migrants are so dissatisfied with Africa that they swore never to come back to Africa. Many of them who eventually come back from host countries do so either for investment, bonding with their relatives or because of some problems beyond their control.

## **Destinations of African migration**

Central to the current surging in African migration is the question of where? This as the present African migration is not largely bound for every continent. A critical investigation reveals that current African migrants largely head to places with conducive environment and high economic prospects. Such places include Western Europe and North America; with the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, Italy, Greece, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, etc., as the dominant destinations. There is an increased African migration to these places because of the liberality of these countries, functional democracy, large economies and belief that human services are needed and better rewarded. Friends and relatives in these destination countries also increase the attraction of these countries with their show and tales of increased income and better living conditions. It is also evident that African migrants bound to Asian countries like Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, UAE and Qatar in search of economic prospects. Among all these places, Europe is a top destination for African outbound migrants. On account of this, Mugabo (2019:146) records that “26.9 per cent (that is, 10.6 million) of the total 39.4 million African migrants worldwide live in Europe, followed by Asia (4.6 million) and North America (3.2 million).” Conversely, African migrants tend to stay away from strict Islamic states with stringent Sharia laws like Iran and Afghanistan. Despite these, Migrants’ characteristics show that individual development, wealth and higher level of education are also determinants of African migrants’ choice of their destinations (Martin and Taylor, 2019).

## **Catalysts of African migration**

African migration is a human response to poor societal affairs, conditions and future prospects in Africa. The phenomenon is a way of responding to poor political and economic development in the continent propelled by poor governance. Thus, socio-political and economic reasons have always been at the front burner of human migration. This is because of their direct link with human living condition. Congruently, Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019:2) maintains that “almost 80% of potential African migrants are driven by the hope for better economic or social prospects.” The poor living condition in many African countries induced by non-masses-oriented politics, devaluation of currencies and egoistic economic policies maximize poverty from time to time among the masses. This is coupled with the consumer economy, thoughtless government policies and spending, and importation that plunge many African states into endless economic crisis and a future that is bleak. African migration therefore happens in socio-political and economic contexts. The existent poor socio-political and economic contexts in the continent therefore give the recent phenomenon of African migration (japa) some socio-political and economic explanations. These explanations are evident in the fact that African poor socio-political and economic

contexts; systems and interactions are the consequences of the increasing human poverty, suffering, and poor living condition that catalyze the present surging migration in the continent. This is as these poor socio-political and economic systems deprive the masses of economic incentives, economic opportunities, economic resources, social welfare, adequate security and conducive environment necessary for human survival and quality life.

The societal institutions that control the entire population derive from politics; and their contents, continuous existence and mode of operation are synthesis of their dialectics with politics (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2013). As such, African migration is a consequence of bad politics and socio-economic systems. This is as bad politics devastates functional institutions, political/economic structures; give rise to detrimental policies that foster hash economic practices, inflation and poor living conditions that set the larger population with no wherewithal to access better economic opportunities and living conditions. The non-masses' oriented policies also further the demise of systems and structures that ensure stability and development in the continent. In Africa therefore, politics have created weak economic institutions, leaving the citizenry with the option of migration to other continents. As political and economic systems reduce people's access to means of livelihood and investment; they pave way for high unemployment, unhealthy environment, poor health services, poor education, mass poverty, hash living conditions and dire changes in people's material comfort zone.

The failure of socio-political and economic systems in African continent indeed breaks the resolve of many Africans to stay behind and join in building their countries. Consequently, there is spate of African migration (japa) in which search for safety, economic opportunities, good living condition, quality education and health care system has become paramount. African migration is however not only tied to the poor rhythms of political and economic systems. Migratory pressures in Africa is not as well only tied to the glaring disparity between labour force growth and job creation (under and unemployment) and their resultant human deprivation and poor living conditions. Some African migrants are asylum seekers who have their lives threatened in their countries for one activism or the other.

### **Rationale behind the increasing African migration**

Despite the viable welfare scheme, most developed countries are laden with racism in which Africans are largely the victims. As these host countries are yet to satisfy the needs of their citizenry, they are evidently replete with social problems like unemployment. Aware of these social and economic obstacles in the host countries, the World Bank (2006) is baffled that over 180 million people or three percent of the world population still migrate to these places in search of better lives. Why then are Africans

migrating to these countries *en masse* despite their awareness of these odds? A critical study however shows that the social, political and economic odds facing man in African continent appears far worse than those prevalent in the host countries. Africans therefore migrate (japa) because of the assumed benefits which presumably exceed their private costs and outweigh the benefits at home. In view of this, Massey (2003:24) argues;

Standards of living are low in structurally transforming societies and high in the developed, capitalist world, and by moving between the two regions migrants can expect to realize a net gain in their material well-being. In practical terms, migrants are assumed to make a cost-benefit calculation that weighs the projected costs of moving against the expected returns, monetary and otherwise, from living and working in a developed country. Since this balance is large and positive for most people outside the nations of the OECD, they rationally choose to emigrate.

Apart from this, contemporary African migration arises from the attraction of developed countries in Europe, America and Asia, and the lucrative social, political and economic prospects around them. Thus, African migrants are attracted by better access to quality public services; electricity, clinics, schools, education and big differentiated labour markets, economic opportunities, incentives, prospects and better life believed to be available in the host countries. Indeed, the gap in social development as well as economic prospects between African continent and many other parts of the world with functional democracy is glaring. As such, the increasing African migration predicates on this perceived inequality. On this ground, Hugo (1998) advances that African migration is spurred by disparity in levels of income, employment, working conditions and social wellbeing visible in many other parts of the world. This disparity supports the view that African migration shares a link with development; hence this migration predominantly arises from failed development in the continent. Along this lane, Africans perceive that stable and people-oriented government policies and gainful employment that ensure viable economic opportunities, human quality life, human rights and freedom abound in the developed world. This perception even informs the neoclassical economic theory which tenders the main cause of migration (from low to high wage economies) as human efforts to maximize incomes (Borjas, 1989). Constituting these pull factors towards migration are also religious, marriage, and family unification purposes. African female migration has along this lane also become dominant in recent time. Adu (2018:89) attests that this is “due largely to the fact that there is an increasing demand for service, provided by women working for example, as domestic workers, nurses, teachers, and even as sex workers.”

It then stands that the increasing African migration (japa) is mainly occasioned by quest for better economic earnings and human living conditions. Apart from this, it is obvious

that some Africans also migrate for adventure, sightseeing, recreation, entertainment, solidarity, knowledge acquisition, and actualization of personal dreams and freedom. One can from these rationales infer that behind African migration are the push factors that abound in the continent and pull factors that draw migrants to the host countries. Among the push factors are the poor governance occasioning civil strife, inter-communal/religious conflicts, instability, insecurity, terrorism, poor economic conditions, low income, mass poverty, endemic corruption and poor human living condition. People also migrate because they are “fugitives avoiding the consequences of their actions, whereas some migrate based on community sanctions which mandate them to leave their town permanently or temporary due to their anti-social behaviours” (Chinweuba, 2019:388-389). Adding to these push factors is the increasing population density in many parts of Africa, which is putting pressure on many indigenous people to leave the continent to other countries. In this regard, Achebe (2012:58) asserts that population density among Igbo Nigerians compels “their ultimate migration” to other parts of the world. Congruently, Abbas (1993) cites that human migration sequentially rose from 20 million in the year 1931 to 32 million in 1952/53, 56 million in 1963, 88 million in 1991 and more than 180 million currently. With the increasing population density in African continent therefore, the need for survival runs paramount, especially as many African countries are characterized by corruption, political instability, religious/ communal crises, some undemocratic practices, exploitation of the masses, poor economic condition and harsh and harmful economic policies. These conditions are aggravated by governments’ recklessness, interventions and breach of human rights visible in thoughtless land grabs and demolition of private properties for projects that often remain uncompleted. Frustration brought by these state interventions often leaves the well-to-do victims with the lone choice of migrating to other continents. In the knowledge of this, Bonat and Abdullahi (1989) write that up to 30% temporal African migrant workers are landless in their countries and more than 90% permanent African migrant workers are landless in their countries of origin.

### **Persistent African predicament and the increasing African migration**

The connection between African predicaments and the surging African migration (japa) is so far glaring. Why then are there persistent predicament and uncondusive environment in Africa, hence the surging African migration? Answers to this critical question are traceable to the driving forces of poverty and greed subduing the resolve of many African leaders to solve African problems. Fukuyama (2012) argues that these forces of poverty and greed breed various kinds of dysfunction in people; such as financial insecurity and irrational pursuit of wealth. Because most Africans have trailing history of poverty deepened by poor masses abounding in the continent; the tendency is always to overcome this deplorable condition. This is why many people in governments of diverse African countries view their offices as avenues of looting

public coffers and making egoistic policies that yields egoistic financial returns and impoverishment of the masses. Sequel to this trend, Nwigwe (2005:49-50) reveals that in Africa,

the progressive trend and the ideological approach to forge a political economy has lost in zeal and strength. It is not only because we often do not have purposeful leadership, but mainly because the leadership we have is often that which collaborates with the imperialists against African people. Through such leadership, colonialism continually re-enters Africa through so many forms and guises.

Sadly, there is little or no transitional justice in Africa; hence successive governments get away with conscious policies that increase dissatisfaction and its consequent migration among African populace. Aggravating African predicaments and its resultant migration also are many African indigenous cultural tenets that recognize people and measure their social status and worth with their level of wealth (Ani, 2009). The desire to attain this social status, honour and recognition endears many African leaders to plunder the civic public and commonwealth. The massive dissatisfaction and frustration created by decades of these political developments in the continent catalyzes African migration.

### **African migration as the *a posteriori* outcome of human needs**

An outstanding finding of this discourse is that the recent African migration predicates on *a posteriori* human need. Satisfaction of these motivating needs was viewed paramount, hence the surging need for migration. Along the ultimate search for these needs are the African migrants confronted by actual needs expectation versus actual needs satisfaction. Prior to migration, the African has mental prospects of his outstanding needs that are, and often not the realities on ground in the host countries. Thus, migration may appear lucrative, yet the strain, hostilities and human abuses unexpected by the African migrant are unimaginable. Jimenez (2011) captures this situation when he posits that most African migrants face frustrating human barriers to social, economic and political endeavors. These realities do not only contradict the expected needs of African migrants but increase their frustration, anger and depression (Nnadi 2012). African migrants are thus burdened by the gap between their wants, desire and anticipated prospects prior to migration and what they are actually getting in the host countries.

Among the motivating expected needs of many potential African migrants however, is increased earning, through which they hope to satisfy some other needs. Working in the advanced and industrialized economies to achieve this need exposes African migrants to consumer cultures that inculcate new tastes that cannot be satisfied at home. As such, the alternative path to African migrants' satisfaction of *a posteriori* needs then

becomes additional foreign labour and the need for longer stay in the host countries. This decision develops into what we call African Diaspora- a situation of African migrants becoming permanent settlers. Staying longer in Diaspora however avails African migrants the capacity to vie for the entry (migration) of their family members and friends into the host countries.

### **Impact of African migration in African continent and in the host countries**

The truth remains that African migration “have made important economic, political, cultural and intellectual contributions to the development of their homeland territories and the world” (Neumann, 2008:39). In particular,

The economic contributions from the Diaspora, principally in the form of what are called “remittances,” account for the greatest proportion of financial contributions to the domestic economies of African nations. According to a 2003 World Bank working paper, remittances from the African Diaspora in the United States to African countries amount to \$12 billion annually, with about \$4 billion of that going to sub-Saharan Africa alone (ibid).

In 2011, Ratha and Mohapatra estimate the potential annual savings of “African Diaspora to about US\$53 billion, of which US\$30.5 billion (approximately 3.2 percent of GDP) is attributable to the migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries. Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2019:2) validates this record arguing that African migrant’s “remittances represented 3.5% of Africa’s 2018 GDP, and more than the net 2017 ODA. The estimated contribution of migrants to local GDPs is estimated at 19% in Cote d’Ivoire, 13% in Rwanda, and 9% in South Africa.” Corroborating these estimations, African Development Bank in 2010 adds that more than 30 million African migrants living outside their countries sent home about \$40 billion on an annual basis. Based on these remittances, Docquier and Rapoport (2007:3) maintain that “skilled migrants continue to affect the economy of their origin country after they have left, be it through remittances, return migration, or participation in business and scientific networks.” Remittances from migrants which represent a large proportion of African foreign capital and financial flows are therefore crucial to the survival of African economies. Thus, remittances made by migrants constitute significant contribution to sources countries’ Gross National Products (GNP), and are major sources of income in many African nations. Because of the beneficial effects of these remittances, Hanson and Woodru (2003) and Cox and Ureta (2003) document that the migrants’ remittances of their foreign income also impinge on households’ decisions in terms of labour supply or future migration of other family members in Africa. Migration is therefore a decision that impacts on the welfare and economy of the migrant’s household, community and country.

African migration however “creates social, cultural and political challenges that create strong opposition and overwhelm any rational policy debate in source and destination countries” (Adu, 2018:89). The political contributions of African migrants on the other hand have continued to range from organizing and sponsoring historical mass movements towards upholding the rule of law, civil and political rights in their home countries. Such mass movements like the 2020 #END SARS# protest in Nigeria stand as a direct involvement of African migrants in the decision-making processes within their diverse countries of origin. Indeed, the march for freedom and civil rights movements of African migrants around the globe are the most prominent examples of African migrants’ political contributions to African continent (Neumann, 2008). Further contributions are visible in the works of Shirley Chisholm, Colin Powell, etc whose diasporic political capabilities at the highest level of US government had enormous impact on African affairs in the continent. These migrants’ Pan African efforts have led to historic independence of Africa, collapse of apartheid South Africa and numerous other changes in African continent.

Nevertheless, the cultural contributions of African migration are numerous prominent in artistic and musical creations, intellectual outputs, and specific religious practices. Referring to these, Docquier and Rapoport (2007) holds that skilled African migrants are outstanding contributors in their host countries; hence their migration remains a loss to the source countries. This loss is more glaring in the sense that these skilled migrants are outstanding complements with the unskilled labour in the production process within the source countries. The phenomenon of migration thus leads to substantial scarcity of skilled labour and abundance of unskilled labour in the home countries of Africa. This negative impact leaves Africa with unskilled workers’ productivity and its consequent poor economic performance. Besides, the problems arising from irregular migration, as seen in Africa, has also intensified the negative aspect of smuggling and trafficking of human beings, arms and ammunition used for various kinds nefarious activities that destabilize Africa today. The more negative dimension of the poor check of African migration and activities of these migrants abroad creates room for funding of conflicts back home.

### **African migration and the global future**

The economic stability of the recipients of migration remittances now underscores scholars’ conclusion that African migration is lucrative. Yet, a critical survey shows that African migration also hold dire implication for the global future. Prominent among these implications is the growing attitude akin to “already made situations” among Africans and its consequent loss of human resources (brain drain) that once stood as developmental advantage for Africa. *Human capital base* has in the modern world become a core element in the socio-political and economic developmental efforts

of many nations. This is so because all the sectors and means of development are managed and driven by human capital. This human capital largely makes up the middle class that is sufficient with Doctors, Engineers, lecturers, technocrats and other professionals that stand as the tripod of sustainable economy. Thus,

mineral resources and its prospects alone are not real wealth but human capital is, because it is the professionals or technocrats; Doctors, Engineers, Lecturers, etc that effectively cure or manage the health systems, generate constant electricity and inculcates the rudiment of sustainable economic development. In fact, it is these professionals that initiate and generate the necessary production of goods and services that boost socio-economic development (Chinweuba, 2019:391).

To sustain development therefore, advanced countries focus on controlled migration in order to retain enough competitive human resources and capacity that will effectively tackle the cosmic challenges buffeting societal development in their territorial boundaries. The situation is different in Africa where the prevailing uncondusive environment is propelling the human capital out of the continent. The disconnection and imbalance resulting from African migration is already being felt in the general administration, resource management and African countries' achievement of *the* United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). Using Nigeria as instance, Adedeji and Rowland (1973:14) observe that, "in virtually all the existing urban areas of Nigeria, the level

Of basic essential services to the community is inadequate. The services are a daunting one; the scope of the challenge is enormous and some of the resources-trained manpower, technical know-how and finance-are in very short supply." With the majority of the middle class harbouring the intention to migrate, African migration could be best described as deprivation of human resources in the continent. The results of this outstanding brain drain are under- development of Africa on one hand and stable development of the host countries, due to abundant concentration of human resources, on the other hand. It is based on this deprivation that almost all African countries run a consumer economy, and had been unable to achieve the required diversified economic base necessary for development. This is how Africa became condemned to frequent food shortages, inflation and health menacing imported industrialized foods from western countries (Tinker, 1988). The situation is presently worse as most of the mineral resources (like crude oil) that count for revenue of most African countries are crashing in the international market or are being stolen and unaccountable for by the corrupt African leaders. Besides, African migration is undoubtedly among the factors eroding African cultures, traditional values and language in the modern time. This is as some of these migrants eventually return home with new ways of life that conflict with the autochthonous cultures and sever the internal equilibrium of personhood in the continent. The liberal attitude of many returned migrants towards indigenous cultures

and traditions thus breaks down values and norms that for ages bonded African communities, and then plunges the indigenous populace into crisis of personhood (Odumegwu, 2008).

The influx of African migrants in the host countries however creates a glaring insufficiency that leads to scramble over human needs like good jobs, accommodations, etc. Some of these scrambles at times lead to conflict between the African immigrants and indigenes of host countries. Shortly before the Hamas invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023, such African migrant-indigene clash as aired by Al Jazeera network erupted between indigenous Israeli and Ethiopian immigrants in which the migrant Ethiopians became threatened with deportation. The host countries too, face the problem of integrating the migrants which often takes tolls on their governments.

### **African migrants and migration**

Pertinent in this discourse is the situation of the African migrants and migration, hence the need for further interrogation of these phenomena. Worth noting in this context is that the disadvantages of African migration appear to outweigh its advantages on some occasions. On those odd occasions, the situation of African migrants is largely not palatable. It is mainly a situation of survival in which African migrants exercise no choice over all manner of odd jobs abandoned by the indigenes of the host countries. Sadly, some of these African migrants even go without meaningful means of livelihood for a long time; hence they hardly raise enough funds to burden the cost of living decently in the host communities or travelling back home.

Indeed, many African migrants are irregular and undocumented. *En route* Europe, illegal means and dangerous routes like Mediterranean Sea, Sahara Desert, etc, are employed by these migrants to the detriment of the continent; as loss of life of highly skilled labour migrants desperate for the greener pasture is often tremendously recorded. Kirwin. and Anderson (2018:3) record that, the movement of sub-Saharan Africans through North Africa and on to Europe has garnered intense media attention. Over

600, 000 African migrants have arrived in Italy through the perilous Central Mediterranean route since 2014, and nearly 120,000 arrived in 2017 alone according to the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The route is notoriously dangerous, with risks including making a journey through the Sahara Desert, indefinite detention in bleak conditions in Libya, and capsizing at sea...Migration through Niger and onto Libya has garnered so much attention that European governments have scrambled to slow down the movement.

Irregular migration really portends a reduced benefit to the African continent. This is as “illegal migrants are vulnerable and exploited...not able to unionize, and are exploited by unscrupulous employers” (Adu, 2018:89). This is coupled with the fact that the journey of these African migrants via Mediterranean route is direly perilous. This is as good number of these migrants perishes in the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea while other survivors are traumatized. In this insecure world, some are victimized in the different stop-over countries *en route* their destinations. Apart from the strain and abuses associated with African migration, the host countries initially view these African migrants with suspicion. The racism prevalent in some of these host countries makes African migrants to be viewed as low lives, social deviants or nuisance. Consequently, African migrants are often denied accommodation, good job and integration within the host communities.

As many of the African migrants remained vagabonds in the host countries, some others face traumatic experiences that result to complicated health problems. The unfortunate African migrants in their homelessness are exposed to harmful climatic conditions, sexual abuse, rape, and forced prostitution where they contract HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), unplanned pregnancies and other health complications that compound their problems. The Aljazeera news of Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019 aired a contextual instance of National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons’ (NAPTIP) rescuing of more than fifty Nigerian female migrants that never reached their destination (Europe) but were forced into prostitution in Mali by traffickers. As many African migrants become victims to ritual killers, racial killers, serial killers, human traffickers and human organ traffickers, others become prone to kidnappers that bait them with fake jobs abroad. These migrant victims are often subjected to severe hunger, torture, slave labour, traumatic experiences and untimely death. There were reports of some African migrants used by their hosts to attack their enemies, engage in robbery or foment other anti-social activities in which these migrants get injured, jailed or killed by law enforcement agents. A great number of African migrants abroad also face police abuse, intimidation and brutality (Usoro, 2007). As such, many African migrants trod with fear in the host countries, and are driven from one location to another where they are exposed to harsh weather condition that affects their health. Due to their wretched state, they are intimidated and abused by passersby, and this laden these migrants’ psyche with unimaginable trauma.

### **Functionalists’ perspective to African migration**

The functionalists’ perspective to African migration focuses on its socio-economic value. In this direction, the functionalists hold that African migration often pay off despite the excruciating challenges. This is as some African migrants achieve economic prospects by gaining meaningful employment and increased income that are far better

than what are available back home. With this increased income, the functionalists argue that African migrants contribute to the development of the source countries via their remittances. Some of these migrants also send money home for investment and for the wellbeing of their relatives; thereby promoting economic development in the African continent. While African migrants are abroad, many of them are exposed to modern social, economic, political, developmental systems and industrial technology (Ajaegbu, 1976). The functionalists argue that many African migrants are likely to bring home new ideas, innovation and technology in those systems, which could initiate and generate industries, production of goods and services necessary for the source countries' economic development (Canuto, 2011).

Outstanding in the functionalists' argument is trans-nationalism that is often secured by African migrants. This is a process whereby Africans in diaspora forge and sustain socio-political and economic relations that would connect their host and home countries. Such relations could span across borders and open up possibilities for shared development that is glaring in exchange of ideas, expertise, services and technologies to the advantage of African continent. In the knowledge of this, Plaza and Ratha (2011:20) add that migrants "can be an important source and facilitator of research and innovation, technology transfer, and skills development" between the host and home countries.

### **Towards an organized migration for African development**

The growing discussion on African migration calls for a new paradigm for African migration. This paradigm has to bother on how migration can become functional stimulus to African development through exchange of new skills and ideas. The search for this paradigm exposes organized migration as programmes holding tremendous advantage for African development. Organized migration does not however come naturally. Such public order, economic and social progress and prosperity "depend on ceaseless effort and attention from an honest and effective government" (Yew, 2000: xiii). Such conscious effort begins with changing the attitudes of the citizens by improving their physical conditions, developing in them a taste for adventure, strenuous and thrilling activities, and getting them to participate fully in governance. Along this lane, African governments have to step up to the duties of creating public order, societal security, economic and social progress, and prosperity (Yew, 2000). As such, adequate social amenities, social welfare, economic opportunities, economic incentives, security and conducive environment for human ventures and better living have to be put in place. These should be followed with strict implementation of people-oriented policies that will encourage African indigenous production, exchange of goods and services. The basic infrastructures, industries, factories, government ministries and institutions especially those that hold economic opportunities should be made more

functional in order to curb migration. As such, persuasion is not enough. African countries need effective institutions that are well organized, staffed and directed to follow up government exhortations and stirring speeches that tend to harness migration. Research should at this point be encouraged in order to harvest new ideas that will encourage development while new technologies and strategic development should be introduced. These must be coupled with establishment of legislative and judicial autonomy, effective and efficient rule of law. In this direction, governments of African countries must set examples and insist on stringent measures that deter corruption. It is then that African politicians would be forced to shun corruption and embark on developmental activities in their constituencies. It is also then would the masses be spurred to rise above their lukewarmness and demand accountability from public servants without thought that they might be ignored or persecuted. Implementation of these action plans (which for Plato and Aristotle are the goals of the state) would encourage Africans to stay at home and develop their countries.

Outcome of these giant strides would indeed yield job opportunities, increased income, satisfaction of the yearnings of many Africans and reduction of migration and the prevailing *japa* thought in the continent. This is in the sense that the expected needs catalyzing the current surging migration (*japa*) would then be available at home. Availability of these needs is indeed the beginning of state control of privately sponsored and/or irregular (illegal/undocumented) migration (*japa*). This is not in the sense of restricting people's freedom of movement but in the sense of making people see the same opportunity they seek abroad at home, and then realize the importance of staying back and building their countries. The second stage of state-controlled migration in this context bothers more on state sponsoring of migration as evident among some Asian countries. This practice will consciously give birth to return migration that would turn African brain drain to brain gain, and convert African enormous human resources to real wealth. State sponsored migration policy has become the development hub of the fast-growing economies like China, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Thailand.

Consequently, students from these countries with "government scholarships are scattered in European, Australian and North American Universities where they are expected to learn one science, technology, craft, skill or the other, as well as analytic, dynamic and dialectical reasoning, with the intention of returning home" to build greater economies and sustain the development of their countries (Chinweuba, 2019 :395). The governments of these Asian countries indeed aim their sponsored citizens (students) to acquire the expected knowledge and skill at their desired level and return as full labour force for the development of their diverse countries using the knowledge and skills they acquired abroad. These Asian countries indeed rely on sponsored migrants' knowledge sources in fostering their development. In awareness of this,

Plaza and Ratha (2011:20) particularly stipulates that “the governments in these economies promoted the return of foreign-educated students or established networks of knowledge exchange with them.” Post colonial African nations like Nigeria even implemented such state-controlled migration in the first and second republics. Alas, endemic corruption in Nigeria and many other African countries rendered this policy moribund. Today, the Catholic Church in Nigeria also does the same as they send their Priests to study courses, learn arts or skills either at home or overseas and these priests return to use such knowledge for the development of their different dioceses. Such migration programme also appears to be retained by the multinational companies in Africa that send their staff for training and studies of subjects relevant to their companies. State sponsored migration programmes indeed predicate on the “awareness that University education and further studies abroad play a key role in the development of a country by contributing to the creation of a pool of knowledge and skills among those who provide vision and leadership in government, academic circles, business, and civil society” (Ndiaye, Melde and Ndiaye-Coïc, 2011:240).

The issue of state-controlled migration is thus crucial to the development of Africa. This is more so as it would avail Africa the human, physical and social capital acquired by sponsored migrants during their sojourn in the host countries. This is as it would too enhance analysis of African problems, and returned African migrants will assist in African development by sharing their expertise with their professional counterparts back home. With the increasing migration (*japa*) among Africans, it has now become germane for governments of African countries to formulate more functional development-end and migration policies, and make these action plans routine subjects of discussion for improvement in African Union conventions.

## **Conclusion**

The increasing migration (*japa*) among Africans is making the continent more unpopular in the global committee of nations. The study therefore interrogated the surging African migration popularly called *japa* and ascertained its causes and implications for the global future. The study finds that the phenomenon of migration (*japa*) bothers on human needs. These needs revolve more on dissatisfaction over the seeming unchanging state of affairs in Africa. However, African migration (*japa*) appears not to be the business of the poor as it requires some level of funding often beyond the reach of the poor. It is however evident that African youths and the educated are more involved in the present surging migration in the continent. The incessant African migration (*japa*) might seem lucrative to the source African countries because of the remittances being made by these African migrants, yet migration draws human capital which is the real wealth out of Africa. The study therefore opts for state-controlled migration through African Governments’ provision of good governance;

human needs and conducive environment for better human living condition and fruitful economic ventures. The study again opts for state-controlled migration that would encourage return of migrants whose expertise would bear positively on African development.

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## **CURBING THE INJUSTICES BY THE MIGHTY: THE GOLDEN RULE OPTION**

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### **Executive Summary**

*The history of mankind is replete with tales of injustice which have occurred in various forms. While the state battles against other forms of injustice, a particular type – the injustice perpetrated by the mighty – has not received the kind of attention that is commensurate with the harm it produces. The subjugation of the weak by the strong, powerful and influential persons, corporate organizations, and nations is atrocious, despicable, morally shocking. As horrendous as the injustice by the mighty is, the perpetrators are rarely apprehended or held accountable. It is so because of their possession of enormous power, finance, and influence with which they control the state, manoeuvre their ways and shield themselves from the punishment they deserve. In effect they are rarely and inadequately punished for the wrong things they do. This paper is an attempt to find a way of curbing the injustice by the mighty and its accompanying menaces. Hence, we posit the Golden Rule Principle as a veritable panacea. Using the qualitative research model the paper critically examines the subject matter and argues for the Golden Rule to be universalized. The Golden Rule – treat others as you would want them to treat you – requires the mighty to test the plausibility or implausibility of their actions by putting themselves in the position of those they oppress, subjugate and despise. The human person, possessing conscience and integrity, will curtail his doing of harm to others if he detests being harmed.*

**Keywords:** Injustice, the Mighty, the Weak, Golden Rule, Silver Rule, Platinum Rule

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& Justin Arinze EGBE

## **Introduction**

“Those who reproach injustice do so because they are afraid not of doing it but of suffering it.”<sup>1</sup> The above declaration was made by Plato more than two millennia ago to buttress the undesirability of injustice, yet our today's world remains a theatre of injustice of different colours, sizes and shapes with humanity suffering ceaselessly. The pertinent question here is: What should we do? Fold our hands and perish or respond with an antidote to save humanity? Reason will strongly recommend that we do something rather than fold our hands in despair and get crushed under the heavy weight of injustice. We can do something to change the narrative; we can do something to make our world just and safer for mankind. We may not be able to have a completely just society but we can attain a certain level where injustice will be minimal. What exactly should we do?

Our response to injustice is a function of the type, the perpetrator, and the victim. This matters so much because injustice is a product of power relations. By power relations we mean the relationship in which one person or group has social-formative power over another, and is able to get the other person or group to do what they wish whether by compelling obedience or in some less compulsive and even a more subtle way.<sup>2</sup> It was within the perimeter of power relations that the despoiling of Africa by European slave traders and imperialists happened. It was not outside the horizon of power relations that the destruction of Libya and Iraq by the US led coalition army took place. The devastating bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the dehumanization and brutalization of the Congolese by Belgium under King Leopold; and the corporate complicity in the exploitation, devastation, wanton abuse of human rights of the region and people of Niger Delta of Nigeria all fall within the periphery of power relation. In a similar way, the stealthy exploitation of French colonized African countries by France; the annihilation of six million Jews by Adolf Hitler's Germany, and the brutal exploitation of Latin American countries by Spain and other Europeans were all cases of power relations. Eduardo Galeano satirizes the situation thus:

The division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others in losing. Our part of the world, known today as Latin America, was precocious: it has specialized in losing ever since those remote times when

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Translated with notes by Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 250. Book viii. 1.344c.

<sup>2</sup> Essien D. Essien, “The Paradox of Increasing Women's Space and Influence in Public Life in Africa: The First Lady Experience,” in *Behavioral-Based Interventions for Improving Public Policies* published by IGI Global, 2021. <https://doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-2731-3.CH010>

Renaissance Europeans ventured across the ocean and buried their teeth in the throats of the Indian civilizations<sup>3</sup>

In all of these there was power imbalance – the mighty demonstrated its might in contrast with the feebleness of the weak. Resistance, though spirited, was not sufficient. Worse still, the mighty is rarely held accountable for all the injustices. This point and many more are, before now, well expressed by Ugwu<sup>4</sup> and Ugwu and Abah.<sup>5</sup> Typically, the human society is most often separated into two conflicting groups who differ in capacity - finance, wealth, and power or ability to exert their influence. The two opposing groups are: the rich and the poor, the superior and the inferior, the strong and the weak, the mighty and the feeble. The power relation between these two has always been one of exploitation, subjugation, oppression, suppression, and injustice by one side while the other side remains at the receiving end. It is always the mighty or stronger who exploits, subjugates, oppresses and suppresses the weak. The stratification, though may involve issues like sex, religion, and ethnicity, it is mostly about economic and political domination. It is always the economically and politically stronger unleashing mayhem on the weaker opponents.

The challenge is about how to deal with such injustices bearing in mind that the mighty has always used its power and influence to shield itself from punishment it deserves. How we deal with the injustice by the mighty and in fact, all injustices, goes a long way to determine the future of humanity and society. As it were, the state manages other kinds of injustice by punishing the perpetrators but when it comes to those injustices perpetrated by the mighty, the state seems to be incapacitated or unwilling to do the needful. Why? It is so because the mighty subtly or overtly control the state apparatuses. The law, for instance, is made to protect the interest of the mighty, though it rubs off on the rest members of the society. The law is in the interest of the powerful members of the society whose lives and property are at risk if there were no such protective mechanisms like the law. According to Peter Joyce, the powerful minority defines what crime is; stipulate what is right or wrong, and determine the punishment

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<sup>3</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: Five centuries of the pillage of a continent*, 25th Anniversary Edition (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), 18

<sup>4</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, “A Critical Approach to the Problem of Nigeria and the Struggle for Nation Building,” *Sociology Study*. Vol. 10, No. 5, 2020, 223-251. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5526/2020.05.005>

<sup>5</sup> Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and George O. Abah, “A Discourse on the Politics of Consciencelessness in Nigerian: An Enquiry into the Concept of Good Governance,” *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2022, 10-18. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24949.65764>

for going against those laws.<sup>6</sup> In all these effects from the activities of the mighty, it is paramount to point out two factors with high influences: tribe and religion.<sup>7</sup>

This paper is an attempt to find a way out of the persistent and pervading injustice especially the injustice perpetrated by the strong and mighty on the weak. It is a recommendation for the universal application of the Golden Rule principle in all human related dealings.

### **What is Injustice?**

To facilitate the understanding of injustice, it is apposite to explain what justice means especially in the context of this paper. Justice is one of those concepts whose meaning may not possibly be pinned to one particular thing or state of affair. “An explication of justice with the view of pinning it to one generally accepted meaning is obviously impossible because there are varied notions of it. In fact every culture has its version of justice.”<sup>8</sup> This is in line with Aristotle's view that the words justice and injustice are ambiguous concepts and the most we could do is to attempt an analysis of them by highlighting their various meanings and implications. For Cephalus in Plato's *Republic* justice is telling the truth and restoring what one has received.<sup>9</sup> For Polemarchus it is to give back benefits and injuries to friends and enemies respectively. For Thrasymachus, “justice is simply the interest of the stronger.”<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Plato holds that justice is bifocal - justice in the community and justice in the soul. Hence, justice is harmony - a proper, harmonious relationship between the warring parts of the person or city.

Justice for Aristotle is what is lawful, fair and equal. It is “that kind of state of character which makes people disposed to do what is just and makes them act justly and wish for

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Joyce, *Criminology: A Compulsory Introduction* (London: Holder and Stroughton, Ltd), 4

<sup>7</sup>Anayochukwu K. Ugwu, “Politics of Religion and Tribalism and the Fate of the Nigerian Nation,” *Academia Letters Journal* (Article 3538), 2021, 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.20935/AL3538>. Cf. Anayochukwu K. Ugwu and George O. Abah, “The Role of Philosophy in Insecurity and Good Governance in Nigeria,” *Sociology Study*, Vol. 10, No. 6, 2020, 287-318. <https://doi.org/10.17265/2159-5526/2020.06.004>

<sup>8</sup> Ejike Akpa, “Justice for Peace: Analysis of Justice in Edeh's Philosophy of Thought and Action (EPTAISM),” *Online Journal of Arts, Management and Social Sciences (OJAMSS)*; vol. 1, no. 1, September 2016, 201

<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 1. 330-331d

<sup>10</sup> Plato, *Republic*, Bk. 1. 338-339a

what is just and by injustice is that state which makes them act unjustly ...”<sup>11</sup> Aristotle further distinguished between two kinds of justice - universal justice and particular justice. While the former corresponds to justice as virtue, the highest virtue; the later corresponds to distributive and remedial justice.

Reiterating the primacy of justice over other virtues, John Rawls contends that “justice is the first virtue of social institutions as truth is of systems of thought ... laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust.”<sup>12</sup> Being the first virtues of human activities, truth and justice do not compromise. The only reason for allowing injustice, according to Rawls, is when it is necessary to avoid a greater injustice. For Rawls then, justice is fairness, based on some basic principles:

(1) The principle of equal basic liberties - that all citizens have equal rights to basic liberties such as freedom of speech, religion, and association. (2) The principle of fair equality of opportunities - all citizens have equal opportunities to access education, employment, and other resources. (3) The difference principle - social and economic inequalities are arranged so as to benefit the least advantaged members of the society<sup>13</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, justice shall be understood as fairness, equality, respect for human rights and upholding of human dignity. The term 'injustice' is very commonly defined as the absence of justice. In other words, wherever justice is denied, injustice is affirmed. Hence, injustice could be understood to mean unfair treatment, a situation in which the rights of a person or a group of people are ignored, denied or abused; to treat someone or something in an undignified manner. According Wikipedia, “injustice is a quality relating to unfairness.”<sup>14</sup> Undeniably, injustice is a universal human feature though the exact circumstances considered unjust can vary from culture to culture just as justice may be culturally bound. What is important however is that injustice is evil and should be condemned, avoided, discouraged, prevented; and efforts made towards correcting it because its effects are sure to bounce back on the wellbeing of man and society. No wonder Martin Luther King Jr. declares that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1129a

<sup>12</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 3

<sup>13</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 53

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia, *The Free Encyclopedia*. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/injustice>

<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” 1963, 1. Culled from [www.csuchico.edu/iege\\_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf](http://www.csuchico.edu/iege_assets/documents/susi-letter-from-birmingham-jail.pdf)

According to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, injustice consists of the persistence, aggravation and very existence of extreme poverty which plagues the globe. Those who suffer deprivation of their fundamental human rights; robbed of their freedom; and are subjected to discrimination, poor health, vulnerability, insecurity, various abuses, and lack of personal and professional development opportunities suffer a great deal of injustice. All these represent sufficient evidence that injustice is persistent and growing in the world.<sup>16</sup>

Global inequality as epitomized by the disparity in life span, mortality rate, income, access to education and health between the African/Asian/Latin American and American/Western European. The disparity illustrates the gross injustice in the world even though nature has blessed the world with enough resources to keep every person comfortable and happy. One form of injustice is inequality which is a creation of the mighty and which is ravishing the world presently. For example, the mortality rate of children under five was 26 times higher in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa than in Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries in 2001. Educationally, the inequality is extremely high. For instance, “the average American born between 1975 and 1979 has completed more than 14 years of schooling (roughly the same for men and women, and in urban and rural areas), while the average school attainment for the same cohort in Mali is less than 2 years, with women's attainment less than half that for men, and virtually zero in rural areas (World Bank, 2006a).”<sup>17</sup> Economically, the story is worse. Majority of African families are living below poverty level. According to March 2024 global poverty update from the World Bank: first estimates of global poverty until 2022, “an estimated 23 million more people were living in extreme poverty in 2022, compared to 2019.”<sup>18</sup> Incidentally, extreme poverty levels were lower in 2022 relative to 2019 for more prosperous regions, but not for the world. This suggests that the economic recovery from COVID 19 Pandemic was uneven and slower for sub-Saharan Africa where more than half of the extreme poor live. This is all about inequality.

In another development, Luca Ventura, in “Poorest Countries in the World 2024,” writes that “the world has enough to ensure that the entire human race enjoys a decent standard of living. Yet, people in countries like Burundi, South Sudan and Central

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<sup>16</sup> The International Forum for Social Development, *Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations* (New York: United Nations, 2006), 1

<sup>17</sup> Darrel Moellendorf, “Global Inequality and Injustice,” *Journal of International Development, J. Int. Dev.* 21, 1125-1136 (2009), 1126. <https://doi:10.1002/jid.1651>

<sup>18</sup> March 2024 Global Poverty update from World Bank. <https://blogs.worldbank.org>

African Republic continue to live in desperate poverty.”<sup>19</sup> No thanks to political instability and conflict, corrupt governments, history of exploitative colonization, weak rule of law, war and social unrest, severe climate conditions or hostile aggressive neighbours. To determine the poorest countries in the world, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is often the standard metric. However, to compensate for differences in living costs and rates of inflation, using purchasing power parity (PPP), can be better to assess an individual's buying power in any given country. Before COVID 19 Pandemic, living in extreme poverty meant living on less than \$1.90 a day. With the rising cost of living the International Poverty Line (IPL) was raised to \$2.15.

In Nigeria, with the dollar exchanging for about 1,500 Naira, not to be in the bracket of the extreme poverty would mean living on not less than 3, 200 Naira a day. The minimum wage for workers is 30, 000 Naira which is about \$20 per month (28 - 30 days) translating into 9.30 days spending at 3,200 Naira per day. If he spends his whole monthly salary within 10 days or even less, how does he survive for the remaining 18-20 days? The implication is that many Nigerian workers, including some university lecturers, are with the bracket of extremely poor people. To some extent, this injustice is traced to the mighty, powerful, and influential people who continually dominate the weak.

### **Injustice by the Mighty**

With a fair understanding of injustice, it is pertinent at this juncture to dwell on what can be identified as 'injustice by the mighty.' Who are the mighty and how do inflict injustice on the weak? The mighty is here understood as those persons, groups, or nations who wield so much power and influence such that they dominate, subjugate, and exploit others. They are able to do this because they possess the finance, influence, connections and power direct, and control government policies and personnel in their favour even from afar. In other words, they act overtly, subtly, and discreetly. They practically determine the affairs of nations and the direction of states from the comfort of their homes or conclaves. They include those powerful individuals, nations, multinational and transnational corporations whose ubiquity accord them presence nearly everywhere and who significantly control global affairs especially economically and politically. The mighty here does not include terrorists and other clandestine groups that do not enjoy any form of legitimacy. The latter may have, and exercise some power, but such is not recognized by law.

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<sup>19</sup> Luca Ventura, “Poorest Countries in the World 2024,” *Global Finance Magazine*, May 6, 2024. [www.gfmag.com](http://www.gfmag.com)

What may be classified as injustice by the mighty are the harms, injuries, deprivations, discriminations, and unfair treatments meted on persons and groups that are comparably weaker. The injustice transcends borders, race, gender, and religion. It is often motivated by economic and political gains. The classification of countries of the world into developed, developing, and underdeveloped; first, second and third world is the consequence of economic and political policies motivated by the greed of the powerful nations, groups, and individuals whose goal is to subjugate, dominate, control and exploit the less powerful nations and individuals.

A peep into the history of man and the world reveals that many great atrocities that have been committed against humanity were by the organized society. As it were, those atrocities have legitimacy in the laws. Interestingly too, the Church and organized religious groups, which ordinarily should condemn and stand against all forms of injustice, find ways of supporting those evils either openly or covertly by their silence and inaction. Till today, Africa still bleeds as a result of the 400 years of slavery and nearly a hundred years of colonialism. The two events were carefully planned, rationalized and executed by civilized European governments, businessmen, politicians, royalties and religious leaders. It is on record that from 1619 when the first twenty Negroes were sold as slaves at Jamestown from a Dutch vessel, till January 1, 1863, when Abraham Lincoln officially made the Emancipation Proclamation to officially end slavery in America, Africa lost millions of able-bodied men and women. An estimated “total number of slaves exported from Africa during the four centuries amounted to some fifteen million; in addition, the trade caused the death of perhaps thirty to forty million others in slave raids, coffles, and barracoons.”<sup>20</sup> It was incredibly cruel and incredibly costly in human life.

There were also issues of the atrocities perpetrated in Congo by King Leopold of Belgium, the obnoxious policies of French in the French colonized states. The present indigent status of most African states is traced to the injustices embedded in the economic and political policies of the colonial masters before, during and after colonialism. In the words of Walter Rodney, “in the period of the notorious 'Scramble for Africa', Europeans made a grab for whatever they thought spelt profits in Africa ... The gap that had arisen during the period of pre-colonial trade gave Europe the power to impose political domination on Africa.”<sup>21</sup>

The human (especially children) and material losses that accompanied the Nigerian civil war, and government and corporate complicity in the devastation of the Niger

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Hanly Furfy, *The Respectable Murderers: Social Evil and Christian Conscience* (New York: Herder and Herder Inc., 1966), 33

<sup>21</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Abuja: Panaf Publishing, 2009), 163

Delta Region of Nigeria are just a few examples of the injustice by the mighty on the weak. The Amnesty International in one of its 2005 publication, "Claiming rights and resources: Injustice, oil and violence in Nigeria" noted that "ten years after executions that horrified the world, the exploitation of oil in the Niger Delta continues to result in deprivation, injustice and violence."<sup>22</sup> Liberia and Sierra, Rwandan, Sudanese crises, and the many massacres and genocides (Algeria, 8th May, 1945; Angolan, 15th March, 1961; Benin, 1897; Congo, 1885-1908; Ethiopian, 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1937; Guinea Bissau, 3rd August, 1959, Kenya, 1905 and 1952, Libya, 23th October 10, 1911, Madagascar, 29th March, 1947)<sup>23</sup> and many more that dot the continent are permanently stuck to the memories of Africans and men of conscience. They were planned and executed by legitimate authorities, not by miscreants, burglars, and pick-pockets.

Mention must also be made of another huge inhumanity and moral callousness - the slaughter of the European Jews. During the Nazi persecution of the Jews, spanning from 1933 to 1945, that is, from the period of harassment to the period of annihilation, some 5,100,000 European Jews - Polish, Germans, French, Czechs, and Slovaks were slaughtered under Adolf Hitler's Germany.<sup>24</sup> There are other such genocides and massacres in history such as the millions of Armenians and Greeks who lost their lives under the Turkish persecution of 1914-15, extremely bloody Stalin's great purge of 1937-38, and the millions of persons who were put to death in Communist China. During the two World wars millions of combatants and non-combatants were slain. One cannot forget in a hurry the obliteration bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the invasion and plundering of Iraq and Libya, and the ongoing destruction of Ukraine.

It is a similar or near similar case in Latin America where centuries of confrontation of cultures has led to massive "human suffering, destruction, oppression and the death of millions."<sup>25</sup> Francesco Moreno is very succinct when noting that "for Latin American people and history, the culture of European modernity (humanism, Enlightenment, progress, technology, science, etc.) projected the dirtiest and least attractive image: slavery, exploitation, dependence, marginalization, and extermination of great numbers of people."<sup>26</sup> In all these injustice, the perpetrators are often not held accountable not because they are not known but because the power and influence they wield. But why

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<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International. *Claiming Rights and Resources: Injustice, Oil and Violence in Nigeria* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2005), 2

<sup>23</sup> World Council of Churches. "Massacres Committed in Africa During Colonial Times." <https://www.oikumene.org/resources/documents>. Accessed 25/08/21

<sup>24</sup> Furfy, *The Respectable Murderers*, 50

<sup>25</sup> Francesco Moreno, *Moral Theology from the Poor* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1988), 53

<sup>26</sup> Moreno, *Moral Theology from the Poor*, 54

would they not be held accountable and treated the same way ordinary people are treated when they do not have any special immunity? Jason Brennan notes that “the state does not have special immunity so as not to be punished for her crimes and injustices.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, multinational/transnational corporations, powerful individuals and organizations should not be treated as if they have any special immunity so as not to be punished for the injustices they met on others. They should rather be made to face the consequences of their unjust actions. Unless a society is “paramoral,”<sup>28</sup> (a society where, by a strange perversion, crime is the badge of decency), there ought not to be tolerance of injustice, not even of the mighty. The mighty might be the respectable citizens, often at the helm of leadership (in reference to individuals), yet justice requires that they are not exempted from punishment if they commit acts of injustice.

### **The Golden Rule Option: Towards Curbing the injustice by the mighty**

As a result of the power and influence of the mighty, they do harm to people and go free. This is because of the absence of the means with which to hold the mighty responsible, that is, the inability to punish them; hence, something else has to come into play. This paper, thus, posits the Golden Rule. One may ask: why Golden Rule instead of the Platinum Rule, or Silver Rule? An explication of the silver rule will be followed by that of platinum rule and finally the golden rule.

The Silver Rule is basically the 'negative' of the Golden Rule. “It is the golden rule without gold.”<sup>29</sup> It says: “do not treat others the way you would not like them to treat you” or “What you do not wish done to you, do not do to others.” The silver rule sounds like the principle of reciprocity – “what you give is what you get back” - if you steal, you will be stolen from; if you kill, you will be killed; whatever you do to someone will be done to you in return. The silver rule forbids one from stealing another's purse because such is hateful to him/her but if he/she finds a purse in the parking lot, the silver rule is mute on what the person should do, the person simply minds his/her business, that is, “I care not attitude” or “it has nothing to do with me attitude.” Meanwhile, the right thing to do would be for him/her to report the discovery so that the rightful owner could reclaim it. Incidentally, many persons live by the principle of the silver rule: mind your business Golden Rule says 'treat others the way you would

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<sup>27</sup> Jason Brennan, *When All Else Fails: The Ethics of Resistance to State Injustice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019), 206

<sup>28</sup> Furfy, *The Respectable Murderers*, 21

<sup>29</sup> Wayne Jackson and Christian Courier, *Gold, Silver, and Iron: Three Rules of Human Conduct* (Fortify Your Faith Foundation, Inc. 2023). <https://christiancourier.com/articles/gold-silver-and-iron-three-rules-of-human-conduct>

like them to treat you', or 'do not treat others the way you would not like them to treat you', or 'what you do not wish done to you, do not do to other'.

The Platinum Rule favours the other person more than the self. It says: 'Treat others as they would like to be treated.' In this case, how you want to be treated is not as important as how the other person wants to be treated. But if we adopt that as our guide in dealing with crime, the judge will not punish the criminal since he (the criminal) would wish that he is not punished even though he has done something that deserves punishment. If we should apply that principle in all cases, we would be encouraging all sorts of untoward acts and since the person only benefits but does not give or forfeit anything in return, he might not change to a better person. A more serious problem is in knowing how the other person would want to be treated. It will require that he says how he wants to be treated.

The Golden Rule states thus: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' It expressly enjoins us to look into ourselves and use ourselves as the standard for dealing with others. At the Sermon on the Mountain, Jesus declared thus: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ..."<sup>30</sup> Jesus is simply urging people to treat other people the way they would want other people to treat them. By implication, we should only do to others those things we would accept when done to us. If we would be comfortable with our money being stolen, then we would be justified to steal. If you will be comfortable with being enslaved, marginalized, exploited, discriminated against, or maltreated in any way; you are at freedom to do same to others; but if otherwise, don't do them to others. The human person being what he/she is, most time wants to be treated well; in compliance with the golden rule, he/she should treat other people well. Hence, the golden rule is practically appropriate to guide the action of humans in their relationships and dealings with their fellows.

In praise of the golden rule, Robert MacIver remarks thus:

There is no rule that can prescribe both my values and your values or decide between them. There is no universal rule, and only that can be laid down, on ethical - that is, apart from the creeds of particular religions and apart from the ways of the tribe that falsely and arrogantly universalize themselves. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. This is the only rule that stands by itself in the light of its own reason, the only rule that can stand in the naked, warring universe, in the face of the contending values of men and groups.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gospel of St. Mathew, Chapter 7 verse 12

<sup>31</sup> Robert M. McIver, "The Deep Beauty of the Golden Rule," in *Philosophy and Contemporary Issues*, edited by John R. Burr and Milton Goldfinger (New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited, 2012), 211

The golden rule can be easily grasped intuitively. “It has such an immediate intelligibility that it serves as a ladder than anyone can step onto without a great stretch. I know how I like to be treated; and that is how I am to treat others. The rule asks me to be considerate of others rather than indulging in self-centeredness.”<sup>32</sup> It strikes the average person as intuitively true. We know its truth effortlessly. “The beauty of the golden rule is that instead of attacking the will that is in other men, it offers their will a new dimension.”<sup>33</sup> It redirects their actions towards a more mutually beneficial course. It takes place in an ethic of relationship and construes action, first and foremost, not as a quest for self-actualization, nor as a theme for reasoning, nor as determined by social structures, but as interaction with fellow human persons. “The rule is primarily designed for relationships. The agent identifies with the recipient and acts in the light of that identification.”<sup>34</sup>

The golden rule is a philosophy of living as it sets the standard for the conduct of one-to-one relationships between human persons in line with the fact that humans cannot thrive in isolation with cooperation and interaction with others. Nature, in fact, abhors isolation. Since we must be in relationships, as human beings, we must relate well for “if there is righteousness in the heart, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, the nation will well governed. If the nation is well governed, there will be peace in the world.”<sup>35</sup> The golden rule brings out the sense of equality between the agent and the recipient such in accord with the understanding that a relationship is basically a relationship between equals. Within the framework of human equality, the golden rule is fully compatible with leadership and teamwork, so long as teamwork is voluntary and leadership is understood as functional matter, not a matter of display of superiority. The golden rule invites leaders to lead as they would like to be led, and invites team members (the led) to give the quality of teamwork or followership they would want if they were leading. Pertaining to justice, it is noteworthy that the taproot of justice and the entire foundation of equity consist in not doing another what you would not endure yourself. By measuring your own feelings by those of your neighbour enables you realize whether you are acting justly or unjustly. Putting yourself in the position of another enables you know and judge your actions better and perhaps prevents you from hurting another. How could one inflict on another the kind of hurt he/she would be bitter about if inflicted on him/her?

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<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Wattles, *The Golden Rule* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3

<sup>33</sup> McIver, “The Deep Beauty of the Golden Rule,” 212

<sup>34</sup> Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 171

<sup>35</sup> Wattles, *The Golden Rule*, 172

The golden rule prescribes the spirit with which we should treat others, and that is the spirit of neighbourliness, humanness, and compassion. If the society operates on that principle, criminals would not commit crimes, and if they do, the punishing agents would not treat them inhumanly but with some sense of humanity and compassion in sight. That does not necessarily mean letting them go unpunished. The golden rule, put in operation, would prevent the state, the wealthy, and the ruling class – the mighty – from perpetrating all the injustices they met on the weak. It would significantly reduce if not completely eradicate exploitation of man by man. It would as well, guard against inhuman treatment of fellow human beings and the tendency to subjugate and dehumanize others. The golden rule recognizes and respects the dignity of man irrespective of race, status, or whatever other profanities that plague our world. From an economic angle, the golden rule has the capacity to transform capitalism into a humanistic phenomenon devoid of unhealthy competition, greed, and exploitation.

As an antidote to both small and big crimes, the golden rule invites us to put ourselves in the positions of the other person as a test for the acceptability or non-acceptability of our actions. When I do that, I will be very reluctant to inflict any form of harm, hardship, or pain on any other person because I will not want harm to be inflicted on me by others. I do not want to be murdered; therefore, I should not murder another. I do not want my spouse to commit adultery, my property to be stolen, deprived of my freedom, or unjustly imprisoned; therefore, I should not commit adultery, steal, deprive any other person of his/her freedom, or unjustly imprison another person. At all times, I should treat others with comparable consideration. Since others have comparable interests, the rule calls me to treat the other as someone akin to myself. Given the highly favourable disposition of the golden rule to humanity one might think that it would not be criticized. That is not the case because there is no principle, or system that can be so good that it would not be criticized. Dave Kerpen points out that the magnificence of the golden rule but that it is limited by the differences between people and situations. For him in *The Art of People* the golden rule is “a splendid concept except for one thing: Everyone is different, and the truth is that in many cases what you'd want done to you is different from what your partner, employee, customer, investor, wife, or child would want done to him or her.”<sup>36</sup> Kerpen would then propose the Platinum Rule which says: do unto others as they would want done to them, as a better option. He perceives the platinum rule to be more difficult than the golden rule because it is easy to know what you want but much harder to put yourself in another person's shoe, walk around in them, and understand that person's perspective. In spite of the harder nature of the platinum rule, Kerpen thinks that it is more powerful in business and in life. He further states: “The Golden Rule, as great as it is, has limitations, since all people and all situations are different. When you follow the Platinum Rule, however, you can be sure

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<sup>36</sup> Dave Kerpen, *The Art of People: 11 Simple People Skills that Will Get You Everything You Want* (New York: Crown Business, 2016), 90

you're actually doing what the other person wants done and assure yourself of a better outcome.”<sup>37</sup>

One would agree with Kerpen that differences between persons and situation might limit the golden rule but it does not diminish its effectiveness in checkmating wanton perpetration of injustice. It is not that injustice will be eradicated completely, that is not possible in a human world but supposing that the rule is universalized and truly observed; only few persons would still perpetrate injustice. Meanwhile, our argument is that the universalization and adherence to the golden rule would curb the injustice by the mighty still stands even in the midst of differences. No man would choose to be enslaved, tortured, defrauded, exploited, denigrated, oppressed, if he can help it. Invariably, what the mighty would do for the recipient, supposing he applies the platinum rule, will still remain that which he, the agent, would not want done to him - injustice. It is also valuable to point out that adherence to the platinum rule would be dangerous to the society. A criminal for instance, would not want to be punished for his crime, rather he would want to be set free and allowed to continue his criminal life. A lazy man would want to be taken care of without making any effort of his own. An average worker would want to be paid the salary of a highly skilled professional. No wonder, another name for platinum rule is asymmetrical (irregular) rule.

## **Conclusion**

With the proven culpability mighty in infliction of injustice on the weak, the need for holding accountable cannot be overemphasized. It is inconsistent with sound reasoning that those who enslaved and treated their fellow human beings like articles of trade; those who plundered other nations and massacred the citizens at the same time; and those who have kept their fellow human beings in perpetual poverty, servitude and misery; are not made to pay for their crime. Rather than punish the real offender it is the victim that is punished. It may sound audacious yet it is the right thing to do - to compel the mighty account for the crimes they commit. Finally, as we aspire to have a world where justice rather than injustice will prevail, it is appropriate the golden rule is made the principal guide to all human relationships. We should always be guided by the injunction: only do to others what you would accept if done to you.

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<sup>37</sup> Kerpen, *The Art of People*, 99

## **RELIGIOUS MANIPULATION AND ELECTION IN NIGERIA: PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE APPEAL COURT SACKING GOVERNOR MUTFWANG OF PLATEAU STATE**

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### **Executive Summary**

*This paper examines the political implications of the Appeal Court's sacking of Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang of Plateau State in Nigeria from a philosophical perspective. Drawing upon a qualitative research method, the study argues that religion has increasingly become a tool used by politicians to manipulate the electorate in electoral contests in Nigeria. This has become a problem in Plateau State, where the Appeal Court's sacking of Governor Mutfwang has been seen by many as an example of the use of religion for political gain. In developing our argument, we first consider the current political landscape in Plateau State. The then examines the court's decision to sack Mutfwang in the context of past electoral contests and how religious manipulation has become more prevalent. Using interviews and general observation, we analyze how the electorates have reacted to the court's ruling and their perceptions of how religion has influenced elections in Nigeria. The paper is also anchored on the instrumentalism religious conflict theory which is a political economy approach. The study finds that, whilst the Appeal Court's decision to sack Mutfwang is seen as a necessary step to ensure fair and free elections, it has also highlighted the issues that arise when religion is used to manipulate the electorate. It is argued that politicians must not be allowed to exploit religious sentiment as a way of gaining support. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the court's ruling for future elections in Nigeria and how the use of religious manipulation must be addressed.*

**Keywords:** Religious Manipulation, Election, Appeal Court, Governor

### **Introduction**

There is no doubt about the fact that, religious manipulation, poverty, political, social and economic inequalities between groups predispose to conflict, policies to tackle

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& Justin Arinze EGBE

them will reduce this risk. Therefore, elections being the only tool for a democratic participation could be a source of violent conflict unless well managed. In developing and developed countries too, election is a fierce contest for position of leadership, power and access to resources Ojo (2021), Molomo (2006:23). Nigeria electoral process from independence to date was characterized by violent conflict. Other countries too are not immune from violent conflict as a result of electoral process, but the level of conflict differs from country to country and culture.

This paper is an examination of the implications of the ruling by the Nigerian Appeal Court to sack Governor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State on the 19 day of November, in the year 2023, from a philosophical perspective. Specifically, the paper seeks to bring to light the philosophical dimensions and potential implications of the decision to sack the governor and explore how it could be regarded as a form of religious manipulation in the Nigerian political system. Religious manipulation which is often said to be abuse is used in the paper as the suppression, rights deny, psychological manipulation and harm inflicted on a person by using the teachings of their religion. The action of electing a leader into political office or a formal and organized way of voting people for political offices is considered in the paper as an election.

The Appeal Court Judgement sacking Governor Caleb Mutfwang as the legitimately elected Governor of Plateau State has generated significant commentary from the press, politicians, clerics and the general public alike. There is hardly a Plateau indigene or resident who wouldn't have a thing or two to say about the judgement. Most of the commentaries, however, failed to unequivocally point out the most salient issues. The appellate court's judgement, many commentators have failed to see, marks an era in the socio-political life of Plateau State. It is discernible from the general euphoria on the streets that many *Plateaunians* know that their mandate was (temporarily) stolen. The court judgment glaringly confirms many suspicions and leaves many questions begging for answers.

First, the court judgement advertently or inadvertently made a caricature of the Nigerian electoral system. The judgement, premised on the sham argument that PDP had no structure is *ad hominem* in itself. The question to ask is, if the PDP had no structure, why were they on the ballot paper in the first place? Your guess is as good as mine. The PDP had structures hence they were on the ballot. If anything, the whole process was a well-planned collusion between the APC and the electoral commission. If PDP had no structures, then INEC should answer questions as to why the PDP fielded candidates. This clearly showed a well-planned scheme of the APC to get power in

Plateau state by whatever means necessary. Rigging during the elections, which was the Plan A, was not possible; the courts, their Plan B is being played.

The court judgement also shows a new system of government introduced. This new system is what I'd call *judicracy*. This system does not give power to the power as Abe Lincoln had defined; rather, the power is to the courts. As glaringly played out, the courts are gradually becoming very influential and dish out judgement based on who knows who not on the merits of the case. The APC realize this and a popular APC figure (Yusuf Gagdi) were recorded to have said, "We know who they know, but they don't know who we know". If anything, the statement portrays the shameful system we are in. The cockiness of the APC about the Appeal Courts only confirms this claim: they feel they had the judiciary in their pockets. The bigger issue is that, the appointment of the judiciary by the executive makes the system ipso facto flawed.

The influence of religion in the judgement must not be overlooked. This is clearly an indication that a particular religion is struggling for political relevance. Before the elections, it became clear how a Muslim cleric campaigned on the ship of religion. Although both candidates are Christians, it is clear that there was a well-planned scheme to continue the agenda of giving the Muslims more relevance in the politics of Plateau state. The contest was lost on the battle field, but as I stated above, the courts are there to help. In order to gaslight the masses, a Christian judge, Elfrieda Williams-Dawodu delivered the judgement in order to lessen the tension and quell the allegations of religious interest. What a shame. The judgement was clearly to heal the bruised ego of certain religious bigots who thought it was an opportunity to flex their muscles and brag about their relevance. The bigger picture here is that future elections may likely be polarised on the basis of religion. Implicitly, depending on which side candidates may contest, there is a possibility of losing good leaders due to such stereotypes. The losers, like always, will be the masses.

Therefore, this election confirmed rot in our system; the weakness in the judiciary; the new emerging trend and form of government; the religious undertone to the struggle and what it portends for the future of elections in the strategic Plateau State. Like the peace-loving indefatigable governor stated, this is a temporary set-back and Plateau State will be the winner in the end. The lack of celebrations on Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 2023 even in Pankshin Local Government Council is a clear indication of the people's choice (Interview with Daya, 2023).

## **Clarifications of Terms**

### *Religion*

Religion, although it appears difficult to have a conflated definition of religion, nevertheless, we shall attempt a survey of various definitions of religion by various

philosophers and theologians. Religion is such a powerful phenomenon that exerts great influence on humanity. Atoi *et al* (2020) detailed that religion has created a lot of religiosities and less morality in Nigeria through the deceptive and covetous mentalities of some religious adherents and their powerlessness to put a premium on appropriate conduct, discipline, dedication, nationalism, responsibility, straightforwardness, civil rights, pledge keeping and other positive qualities in their day-to-day dealings

Religion cannot be defined by simple statements. Best (2011) defines religion “as an institutional framework within which some specific theological doctrines and practices are advocated and pursued, usually among a community of likeminded believers”. This includes the socio-political and economic structures that support such beliefs on one hand, and those that are continually produced in ideology, philosophy and social relationships. Religion is not easy to define although it is something man claims to know and practice throughout his lifespan. Some scholars defined religion as belief in one or more gods, or in supernatural beings. But this could not include all religions, because some religions may mean a way of living rather than a way of belief.

### *Religious Manipulation*

The impact of religious manipulation is not something to write home about in Nigeria. It has retarded the Nigeria *Koinonia* of societal development. However, intolerance is a great condition in any human society, and most times, it is predictable. History shows that intolerance, insurgency and segregation are common and often useful element in human relations and may occur within and among individuals and groups, they are rarely productive. One of the several types of intolerance, insurgency and segregation that constantly plague the societal development of the nation is the sort of vices that is based on religious manipulation which differs. Religious manipulation has resulted intolerance, insurgency and segregation which occurs mostly between the Christian and Muslim population in the northern part of the country. These conflicts have resulted in the loss of lives and property and have tremendously fractured the Christian-Muslim relationship in the country. Going further, conflicts and crises have been observed as the cause of religious manipulation in Nigeria. Onabanjo (2011) affirmed that it has hindered genuine national integration more than fifty years after Nigeria’s independence thus raising serious concerns on the unity of the nation. In this vein, several debates and attempts have been made towards resolving the many crises facing Nigeria.

Dr Yusufu Bala Usman - remember him? Not many of us dare forget the late radical, leftist scholar, an historian who positively influenced young students in the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The students were nicknamed “Bala Brought Up” to correctly situate their radical leftist politics. Usman railed against incompetence in government

– be it military or civilian. He was very much aware of our nation’s fault lines. The major and troubling fault lines for him were religion and ethnicity. They have been, and still are, the greatest tools for manipulating the nation and wasting its immense human and natural resources; hence Nigeria remains a potentially great nation because its feet are tied to the millstones of the manipulation of our fault lines.

The manipulation of these fault lines retards our national progress and hobbles our national cohesion and unity. Their manipulation has become tools for the purposes of securing political and economic advantages in our multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation. These manipulative tools are used to oppress and suppress other ethnic groups and people of different religious faiths. They hold down our national progress. The manipulation creates; worsen our faulty leadership recruitment process. Men who are not fit to lead a village council are manipulated into leadership and crowned our political leaders at national and sub-national levels.

Ethnic and religious fault lines are, if you like, the twin evils of our nation. In each political generation, these fault lines tend to widen to accommodate new twists in their unending manipulation to meet new and refurbished ethnic and religious ambitions and interests. Usman saw it coming. He foresaw that our nation would eventually come to this sorry pass at which the manipulation of these fault lines would effectively widen them and scuttle our attempts at national unity and cohesion and arrest our national development. Perhaps, his greater worry was the religious fault line and its crass and shameless manipulation by the denizens of the political power kingdom, not for purposes of gaining heaven but for the more mundane pursuit and acquisition of political power and opportunities and, of course, personal wealth in the individual kingdom here on earth.

In 1987, the repressible scholar published a 166-page book, *The Manipulation of Religion in Nigeria, 1977-1987*. The book grew out of his lecture on the subject organised by the Students’ Union, Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in November 1977. The book itself is made up of his other lectures dealing with national unity and cohesion or lack thereof over a ten-year period. He mocked the NPN slogan of One Nation, One Destiny with his own slogan, No Nation, No Destiny.

This column is based on his book. I have also borrowed its title for this column. The alarm he sounded some 35 years ago fell on deaf ears. We may ignore it, but we cannot deny that it casts ominous shadow on our nation and its people. In his foreword to the book, Professor Usman A. Tar, points out that “The book echoes the material foundations of power politics in Nigeria with key focus on how religion, region and tribe are bandied as platforms for negotiating access to power and wealth.”

This, I think, is actually the crux of the manipulation of both religion and ethnicity in our country. When we cannot get access to power and wealth in the context of the distribution of our national resources, we cry marginalisation. The manipulation of religion has had a deleterious effect on the unity of a country desperate for unity. It has made it impossible for our leaders at all levels to effectively manage our ethnic and religious diversities. Inherent in the manipulation of ethnicity and religion is the unwritten code enforced to fence out other tribes and people of different religious faith from the national feeding trough.

Before the students invited Usman (1987) to deliver the lecture on this sensitive subject, he had watched for years and seen how the manipulation of religion had manipulated the nation and its citizens. He saw how every political decision in the country was coloured by ethnicity and religion; and perhaps more importantly, how, for the sole purpose of manipulating religion, every political development was seen through the religious prism. Usman was prescient. Consider this: “The meaning and significance of the increasingly violent political campaigns built around differences in this country today can only be understood when seen within the larger context of what has been happening to Nigeria, to Nigerian”.

He wrote that some 35 years ago. Nothing, as you can see, has changed in our country. Take that back almost everything has gone from bad to worse. It may not be the change we crave but it is the change we have. The manipulation of religion has become an article of faith among those who seek to dominate the political space, not for the sake of Nigeria and the Nigerians, but for the sake of access to power and wealth at the expense of the nation and its people. We are poised for other people’s jugular. Usman cites three instances of the pattern of the manipulation of religion, namely, the assassination of General Murtala Muhammed in a failed coup led by Lt-Col Buka Suka Dimka; a lecture by Professor Chike Obi, which he described as “... an example of a well-tuned act of manipulating religion in Nigeria today;” the third was the sharia debate in the constituent assembly which “... provided an excuse for the publication of provocative and scurrilous articles purporting to support or oppose the sharia in newspapers.” According to him, some serious, if diabolical, attempts were made to present the assassination of General Muhammed in stark religious terms of Christians versus Muslims. Attempts were made locally and internationally “to present Murtala as a Muslim martyr and his assassins as Christian villains.” The attempt might have failed but it left a residue of its cynical mark on the nation’s conscience by creating the impression that there is a silent war between the two major religions, each of which is in search of its own champions.

More importantly, it continues to define political contest or elections in terms of us versus them and thus makes nonsense of political pluralism and the freedom of choice inherent in a democracy. The manipulation of religion is intended to drive a wedge between the two dominant religions in the country. We are not just navigating tortuous political and economic landmines; we also have to navigate religious and ethnic sensitivities.

The current controversy over the Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket of APC throws up the challenge of navigating the religious sensitivities for purposes of capturing power. We are not electing religious leaders; we are electing secular political leaders, men who offer them-selves to serve the nation at the highest level because they believe they have the capacity to turn the misfortunes of our nation into fortunes. But because we have dragged religion into the political decision-making process, our political leaders give pride of place to religion to endorse their political decisions. They need the religious imprimatur.

Thus did the presidential candidate of APC, Asiwaju Ahmed Bola Tinubu feel he needed to tell the world that his choice of a running mate was endorsed by Christian clerics. His handlers made a crude, tendentious and desperate show of it. They recruited men from the motor park in Abuja, dressed them in borrowed robes of Catholic bishops and transported them to the venue where Senator Shettima was unveiled as Tinubu's running mate last month. The manipulation of religion takes many forms but serves only one purpose, to wit, to use religion as a prop for personal and group or sectional ambitions and interests. The presence of the fake bishops was not winner. Fake bishops do not win elections. It was a needless attempt to do right by the Christian community.

Why has religion become important in this purely civic and secular duty performed by Nigerians to have a say in who governs them? The answer lies in the fact that having invited religion as an arbiter in the political decision-making process, the politicians must accord it the place in deserves in their political calculations both as crude manipulation and as a winning strategy. The assumption is that like the Israelites, the Muslims and the Christians would each go to their tent and vote for the party whose candidates are of the same faith with them. This is a dangerous assumption. But it has assumed a centre stage in our political discourse, including the proper management of our diversities.

It does serious injuries to our democracy and confuses our patriotism. It denies the electorate the right to make rational choices of their preferred candidates based on what they think of each man's antecedents, integrity, competence, and ability rather than the deity he worships. It forces the electorate to vote on sentiment; consequently, it foists on the nation mediocre, incompetent, and indifferent leadership. We choose because

he is our own; not because he has a proven track record of competence and qualitative leadership. Yep, Richard Dworkins is right: religion poisons everything. In his conclusion to the 1977 lecture, Usman said: “The real basis of the manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria a fundamental aspect of our reality: that is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed. And this is to enable this class to cover themselves with religious and ethnic disguises in order to further entrench division among our people, slow down their awakening, at any cost; even the unity of our country, for which so much has been sacrificed.”

The real basis of the manipulation of religion in Nigeria today is the need to obscure from the people of Nigeria a fundamental aspect of our reality: that is the domination of our political economy by a class of intermediaries who are being increasingly exposed. And this is to enable this class to cover themselves with religious and ethnic disguises in order to further entrench division among our people, slow down their awakening, at any cost; even the unity of our country, for which so much has been sacrificed as in Yusufu Bala Usman, 1987, the manipulation of religion in Nigeria 1977-1987. Nigerians may be the “most religious people on earth”, as a BBC worldwide survey once concluded. However, while the generality of Nigerians expresses a deep attachment to some form of religious belief, the religiosity of the Nigerian political class is often based on expediency and egocentrism rather than a commitment to the principles of either Christianity or Islam. What is more, citizens have failed to detect, much less react to, the manipulation of religion – with telling consequences on the pattern of elections, the structuring of national security, economic relations and socio-cultural cohesion throughout the country. All the claim to piety is hollow, and has not stopped the political class from political perfidy and massive economic fraud, such that, ironically, the country that is “most religious” is also among the “most corrupt” in the world, as various corruption surveys by Transparency International have shown. – Usman A. Tar, 2020, Foreword to the manipulation of religion in Nigeria 1977-1987.’

### *Election*

Election is the process through which people can express their political opinion. They express this opinion by public voting to choose a political leader. Furthermore, this political leader would have authority and responsibility. Most noteworthy, Election is a formal group decision making the process. Also, the selected political leader would hold public office. The election is certainly a vital pillar of democracy. This is because; Election ensures that the government is of the people, by the people, and for the people. An election is an excellent opportunity for people to express their resentment. Most noteworthy, if people are unhappy with a particular leadership, then they can remove

it from power. People can certainly replace an undesirous leadership with a better alternative through Election.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

*Instrumentalism conflict theory:* This is a political economy approach. It explains the politicization of religion and religious identities and the radicalization of religious communities in response to political and economic decline (Hansenclever and Rittnberger, 2000). Conflict entrepreneurs normally take advantage of this to mobilize groups into violence using religion as the fuel. Again, according to Mary O. Jemegbe looking at religion from the lens of social theory system, one cannot but, postulate that religion is an expression of the relationship that exists between human beings and the divine. This religious expression by individuals accumulates into plethora of communication within a given society.

*Relative Deprivation Theory of Conflict – Gurr:* Relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes to be entitled. It also refers to the discontent people feel when they compare their positions to others and realize that they have less of what they believe themselves to be entitled than those around them (Dinshak 2017).

### **Appeal Court Sacks another Governor**

According to "*The Nation*" newspaper (From Eric Ikhilae, Abuja and Kolade Adeyemi, Jos) Plateau State Governor Caleb Mutfwang yesterday described the Court of Appeal verdict nullifying his election as a temporary setback. He is optimistic that his mandate will be restored as he has instructed his legal team to appeal at the Supreme Court. Mutfwang is the second Governor to be sacked by the Court of Appeal in the last three days. Kano State Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf was dismissed from office on Friday. The Plateau State candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) in the March 18 election Nentawe Goshwe Yilwatda, who is the beneficiary of the judgment said he is sure of victory again at the Supreme Court. Then Court of Appeal in Abuja yesterday voided Mutfwang's election as Governor. Mutfwang contested on the platform of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) (Monday, November 20, 2023: p.1). A three-member panel, led by Justice Elphreda Williams Dawodu, ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to withdraw the certificate of return issued to Mutfwang. The Court directed that a fresh one be issued to Yilwatda. Mutfwang in a statement, by his spokesman, Gyang Bere, urged citizens of the state and supporters to remain calm. He assured them that as long as God remains on throne, the mandate of the people will be preserved and protected. The Governor reiterated his commitment to the rule of law and assured the people that there was light at the end of the tunnel, as he has unwavering faith in the judiciary and the 1999 Constitution. Urging supporters and citizens to

maintain law and order, he affirmed that Plateau will be victorious to the glory of God and reassured of his commitment to continually serve the state with dedication and integrity ((Monday, November 20, 2023: p.5).

Justice Williams Dawodu, in the lead judgment, set aside the decision of the Governorship Election Petition Tribunal, which had dismissed the petition of the APC and its candidate. The Justice held that Mutfwang was not validly sponsored by the PDP and that he was not qualified to have contested. This, she held, was because the PDP did not conduct valid state, local government and ward congresses ordered by a High Court of Plateau State and it, therefore, had no structure at the time of election. The judgment was the appeal filed by the APC and Yilwatda against the September 22 tribunal decision which had dismissed their petition and affirmed the PDP candidate's election. Justice Williams-Dawodu held there was no evidence that the PDP complied with the subsisting High Court order which had directed it to conduct a valid party congress before its sponsorship of the candidates. She further held that the issue was not about nomination or sponsorship but disobedience to a subsisting court order which had not been set aside (Monday, November 20, 2023: p.5). Justice Williams -Dawodu noted that the tribunal was "highly inconsistent," and "perversely" dismissed the petition against the Governor following the invalid state congress of the PDP. She said: "The appeal is hereby allowed. The issue is resolved in favour of the appellants. "The first petitioner (Yilwatda) is perfectly entitled to be returned as Governor. INEC is directed to withdraw the certificate of return from Caleb." Yilwatda, who hailed the Court of Appeal verdict, is hopeful the Supreme Court will affirm it. He said: "I am excited, the party is excited. Our effort is not in vain. Our campaign is not in vain and everything we put up is not in vain. I commend the Judiciary for standing for the truth and standing by the truth. "The Judiciary is the last hope of the people and has proven time without number that it is the last hope of the common people." Whether you are in APC, PDP, LP, or any party, all we have to work for Plateau. "I'm going to operate an all-inclusive government as all political parties are going to be represented in the government." My victory is for Plateau and the people. My agenda will focus on agriculture, infrastructure, security, job creation, employment and ICT" (Monday, November 20, 2023: p.5).

The appellate court, in another judgment, upheld the sack of Rimvjat Nanbol of the PDP for Langtang Central State Constituency by the National and State Houses of Assembly Election Petition Tribunal in a judgment in September. It upheld the tribunal declaration of Daniel Ninbol Listic of the Labour Party (LP) as the winner of the state constituency election. In the lead judgment read by Justice Okon Abang, the court agreed with tribunal's finding that the structure of PDP had collapsed after the Plateau State High Court declared in a judgment that the party failed to conduct a valid

primary/congress involving delegates from the 17 LGAs of the state. Justice Abang said: "It is my view that without complying with court orders, there was no party by the name of PDP in the election. " It is a joke taken too far for a political party to disobey an order of court." He further held that a court of law has jurisdiction to entertain a matter bordering on a political party, especially if that party disobeys a subsisting order of a court. Justice Abang said: "The appeal lacks merit and it is accordingly dismissed. The judgment of the tribunal is hereby affirmed." He added that the LP candidate remains the lawmaker representing the said Constituency at the Plateau House of Assembly (Monday, November 20, 2023: p.5).

### **Lalong: An Affirmation of the People's Mandate**

Minister of Labour and Employment, Simon Bako Lalong, hailed the judgment, saying it was an affirmation of the mandate unanimously given to Dr Yilwatda and his running mate Pam Bot-Mang. He said the development was a good omen to Plateau as Yilwatda and his running mate will have the opportunity to implement their plans to take the state to the next level. The minister said through the PDP and Mutfwang have the constitutional right to exhaust all the legal opportunities available to them, he is confident that Yilwatda's victory will endure. Lalong, in a statement by his media aide. Dr Makut Simon Macham appealed to APC members and Yilwatda to be magnanimous in victory and consider this joyous moment as a celebration for the entire people of Plateau who are yearning for good governance, security and development. He also called on the citizens to continue to be law abiding and shun any attempt to incite them to unlawful action capable of threatening the peace of the state (Monday, November 20, 2023: p.5).

### **The Appeal Court Sacking of Mutfwang and the Religious Implications for Plateau State**

Considering the historic role of religion in the state, this article uses qualitative data from interviews and secondary sources to investigate how the decision has impacted local perceptions of justice and social cohesion. The article is also anchored on the instrumentalism religious conflict theory which is a political economy approach. It explains the politicization of religion and religious identities and the radicalization of religious communities in response to political and economic decline (Hansenclaver and Rittnberger, 2000). Conflict entrepreneurs normally take advantage of this to mobilize groups into violence using religion as the fuel. Results suggest that Mutfwang's dismissal was met with mixed reactions: from those who viewed it as a positive step in the direction of justice and fair governance, to those who believed it to be interference by the court in the traditional practices of tribal rule. But in response to the above and through general observations the question that the researcher needs answer is why is it that only the Ngas and some Muslims celebrated the sack of Mutfwang? A renowned

clergy and academicians once said while preaching that for those politicians who did not win elections but court or government of the day forcefully gave them, they must be put into church discipline if they are communicant members in a church he is serving. Furthermore, the decision has raised questions about the ability of the appeal court to effectively protect the autonomy of the Plateau State institutions and resolve conflicts. Finally, the implications for social cohesion and religious tolerance among the religiously diverse population of Plateau State are discussed. Ultimately, it is argued that the sacking of Mutfwang has had negative effects rather than positive effects on the local religious climate and those policymakers should take into account the social implications of their decisions in order to strengthen Plateau State's social and religious harmony. Therefore, there is clear evidence that the Plateaunians were not happy at all and consider the appeal court verdict as robbing the votes of the people.

### **The Negative Consequences of Izala Political Mobilization on the 2019 Presidential Election**

The 'use' of religion for political mobilization seems to be manipulative in some respects. One of the fundamental drawbacks of the Izala political mobilization concern in the 2019 presidential election, as revealed by the findings of the study is that the group used the muscles of religion towards earning economic gratifications. As an Islamic civil society organization, many of the respondents interacted with shows a kind of dismay on the group's behaviours in relation to the group's leadership personal economic gains for marketization of one candidate over another. This as depicted the sickening character of Nigeria's democracy where politics seems to be commoditized at the expense of public interest.

Furthermore, the Izala unconditional support of the ruling party candidates poses a fundamental challenge to the other presidential candidates particularly the non-Muslim ones. And, it painted a clear picture of a religious identity politics which serve as a huge threat to politicians who are not on the same creed with the group due to their power of organized and block votes at the poll, particularly in northern Nigeria. Unarguably, this creates a tendency to further fuel the already religiously and communally polarized society. This polarization is not only limited to Muslim and Christian but also among the numerous sects among the Muslims.

### **The Way Forward and Policy Implications**

There is no doubt that Islamic religious groups have become one of the tools of political mobilization in contemporary Muslim societies including northern Nigeria. So, despite the constitutional restriction in form of the security of the country, there is an urgent need for the creation of a religious oversight body to supervise the political activities

of religious civil society organizations in Nigeria. This would help in regulating the extent of political manipulation.

### **Religious Manipulation Syndrome: Nigerian Political Experiences of 2023 Elections**

The 25th February, 2023 Nigerian presidential and national house of assembly (senatorial and house of representatives) elections was characterized by religious manipulation syndrome. This is observed by the researcher in the aspect of religious sentiments which can be argued for especially in the area of "Muslim and Muslim ticket" in the presidential candidate of the ruling all progressive party (APC). This led to a considerable number of respondents in the social media that religious sentiments influence voters' behavior and that the electoral decisions are easily influenced by religious sentiments. The researcher also observed that most Nigerians vote based on their religious identity. This is evident in most Christian dominated states voted for Mr Peter Obi candidate of the Labour Party with the exception of some few Christian dominated states voted Senator Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Party (Dajwan, 2023: p.7).

Again, in most of the Muslim dominated states Muslims voted Asiwaju Ahmed Tinubu of the All Progressive Party and with the exception of some few states like Kano State voted for the former governor Dr Kwankosso of the NNPP. The 2023 presidential election was also characterized by prophesy from religious leaders who claim that God says that a particular candidate will win influences the electorate's decision. It was observed by the researcher that religious leaders use prophecy to sell their preferred candidates to the electorate and prophecy from religious leaders against an opponent instigated manipulation (Dajwan, 2023: p.8). The endorsement of a candidate by religious leader causes a religious divide. Some politicians use an endorsement from religious leaders to attract support and votes of electorates. It was also observed that the diversity of religious practices in Nigeria is to some extent the outcome of manipulation. Some politicians capitalize on the diversity of religious practices in Nigeria to manipulate electorates. Electorates are likely to vote against a political party or politician that manifests exclusive governance toward their religious group or identity (Dajwan, 2023: p.9).

The researcher indeed, observed that exclusion of people from a religious group by a political party or politician can become a tool for instigation of political violence. This exclusion can also likely cause agitation from that religious group and lead to the political party or a politician to lose support from the electorates of that religious group. It is generally observed that the unemployed in society are easily engaged by religious extremists or politicians to carry out violence. This can be possible with the Almajiri

who are sometimes can easily be brainwashed into religious extremism for the purpose of using them for political violence. On the other hand the uneducated can easily be induced with religion to engage in political violence (Dajwan, 2023).

Therefore, religious sentiment is one of the factors that are responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics. Religious intolerance is observed also as one of the factors that are responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics. In the just concluded 25th February, 2023 elections speech from religious leaders is one of the factors that is responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics. Poverty also which was intensify by the scarcity of naira notes due to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) naira redesign policy, the hardship is one of the factors that is responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics. Prophecy from religious leaders is one of the factors that is responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics. Again, illiteracy/lack of formal education and hate speech are observed by the researcher as factors responsible for the manipulation of religion in Nigerian politics (Observations from the social media on 05th March, 2023 and the researcher's experienced of Nigerian politics) as in (Dajwan, 2023: p.10).

### **The Complex Dynamics of Nigerian Democracy: A Deep Dive into the Implications of a Politician's Claims of Influence on the Supreme Court**

In this section of the paper the researcher observed the implications of the Nigerian Constitution in relation to “no citizen of the country is above the law” and the implications of a Politician’s claims of influence on the Supreme Court. Therefore, the researcher agreed with Dr. Elias Nankap Lamle (PhD: Leuven) (Associate Professor: Anthropology of Conflict Management) write up on social media and is examined:

This article is a continuation of the initiative prompted by the Incumbent President of the Nigerian Courts of Appeal, Justice Monica Dongban-Mensem. In a video I recently viewed, Justice Monica urged the academic community to thoroughly examine the decisions of the Appeal Court and provide recommendations that could potentially influence the Supreme Court's rulings on these appellate judgments. She specifically called upon Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN) to contribute insights pertinent to the Supreme Court's reconsideration of cases subject to scholarly analysis. Despite not being a SAN, my expertise lies in conflict resolution as an Associate Professor specializing in the Anthropology of Conflict Management. This background allows me to approach these issues in a manner that can contribute to a comprehensive representation of legal insights within the realm of scholarly publications

I appreciate Justice Monica Dongban-Mensem's humility in acknowledging that the Appeal Courts, in their interpretation of the law, are not infallible. This acknowledgment creates an opportunity for those in academia to express their views and offer suggestions, as it aligns with our corporate social responsibility to analyze and shed light on complex issues, including court judgments. Bridging the gap between the public and the courts is crucial. While Justice Dongban-Mensem suggested that academia should publish their analyses in journals, the urgency of the situation prevents me from waiting to have these thoughts incorporated into a formal academic paper before sharing them with the Members of the Supreme Court.

My desire in this analysis is to look at claims by Hon. Gagdi Yusuf when he said, "From the day of my political journey, my slogan has always been 'we know whom they know, but they don't know whom we know.'" "At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know."

The statements above raise concerns about the perceived reliability of the entire judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, in the eyes of the Nigerian public. The politician's assertion explicitly suggests an awareness of public skepticism regarding the judiciary's commitment to fairness and equity. Considering the potential prejudicial nature of such claims, could they be admissible in the Supreme Court, or are they merely a smokescreen for possible judicial manipulations?

It is imperative to address these allegations to ensure transparency and restore public confidence in the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court. However, before delving into the implications of such claims on the pending ruling in the Governorship case of Plateau State, it is essential to examine the admissibility of such statements in the Supreme Court and understand how they may impact the overall judicial process. The admissibility of evidence in court, including statements that may be considered defamatory, is generally determined by established legal principles and rules of evidence. It's important to note that specific legal procedures and rules can vary, and the final decision rests with the court considering the matter.

In many legal systems, including Nigeria, the admissibility of evidence is governed by rules that prioritize fairness, reliability, and relevance. Here are some key considerations:

*Relevance:* For evidence to be admissible, it must be relevant to the issues before the court. This is predicated on the fact that the statement made by Hon Yusuf Gagdi has its tie to the Supreme Court when he publicly declared, "At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know." If a statement is defamatory but not relevant to the case at hand, the court may rule it as inadmissible.

*Hearsay rule:* The hearsay rule generally excludes statements made outside the courtroom that are offered as evidence in court for the truth of the matter asserted. However, there are exceptions, and whether a statement falls under an exception is a matter for the court to decide. Care should be taken with statements that mention the Supreme Court, “At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know.” This statement is given as a fact not just an assertion. Any situations where the audience should know that the person who made the statement can direct the stance of the Supreme Court.

*Defamation and the truth defense:* In defamation cases, truth is often a defense. If a statement is indeed defamatory but can be proven to be true, it may be admissible as evidence. However, if the statement is false and defamatory, its admissibility may depend on other factors. The statement of Hon Gagdi saying “At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know.” It sounds defamatory especially since it mentions a specific court not just the judiciary as a whole, this should be considered if there is a pending case on the issue before the same Supreme Court.

*Public interest and fair comment:* Courts may consider whether the statement is a fair comment on a matter of public interest. In some cases, statements made in the public interest or as fair comment may be given more latitude. At this junction of our political process where there are emotional tantrums over the Nigerian political space and a politician who has a vested interest in a case should say, “At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know.” This statement can water down the trust of the public in the fairness of the Supreme Court in dealing with the case before it, Most especially if the court does not address the statement by calling this politician to name the Supreme Court people that he knows and how they will play to his whimsies and caprices.

*Court's Discretion:* Courts have discretion in determining the admissibility of evidence. They may consider factors such as the probative value of the evidence, its potential to unfairly prejudice a party, and whether its admission aligns with the interests of justice. The statement that says “At the Supreme Court, we will know who they know and they will know who we know.” This statement shows the speaker can unfairly influence the stance of the Supreme Court on the case before it. He needs to be called to book because his stances have gone viral across the globe. It can erode the confidence of the public in the fairness of the Nigerian judiciary.

*Procedural Rules:* Procedural rules specific to defamation cases or cases involving statements against the court may also influence the admissibility of evidence. In the context of a defamatory statement against the Nigerian Supreme Court, the court would likely evaluate the evidence based on these principles. If the statement is relevant to the case at hand, not excluded under the hearsay rule or other legal doctrines, and meets

the criteria for admissibility, it may be considered by the court. However, if the statement lacks relevance or falls under an exclusionary rule, the court may rule it as inadmissible.

The central inquiry I am posing is whether, given the intricacies of the Nigerian legal system and the unique details of this case, the Supreme Court must deliberate on this matter before advancing with the case to provide precise and context-specific guidance.

I will endeavor to present my rationale regarding why the declaration made by Hon. Yusuf Gagdi should be appropriately addressed. This is to alleviate public concerns about the judiciary's credibility in ensuring justice for the public.

The political landscape in Nigeria is no stranger to intricacies and challenges. The intersection of legal disputes, party rivalries, and the assertion of personal influence within the judiciary raises profound questions about the health of the nation's democratic institutions. This comprehensive exploration delves into the implications of a politician associated with the All Progressives Congress (APC) responding to a complaint filed by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the Supreme Court. The added layer of the politician claiming to have connections within the Supreme Court introduces a myriad of considerations, including the rule of law, judicial independence, ethical conduct, public perception, and the broader impact on Nigeria's democratic fabric. Nigeria, as one of the largest democracies in Africa, has experienced a rich and complex political history. The current scenario involving a legal challenge by the PDP against the APC, with a politician asserting personal connections within the Supreme Court, adds a new chapter to this narrative.

This discourse aims to unravel the implications of the aforementioned situation, dissecting its impact on key pillars of democracy. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we explore the rule of law, judicial independence, ethical considerations, public perception, and potential consequences for the involved parties, and the broader international implications.

*Rule of Law and Judicial Independence:* The rule of law serves as the bedrock of any democratic society, ensuring that all individuals, including political entities, are subject to the law. The act of filing a complaint in the Supreme Court is an established legal mechanism, emphasizing the democratic principle that all parties are equal before the law.

*Judicial Independence:* Crucial to a fair and impartial legal system, judicial independence shields judges from external influence. Any assertion by a politician of personal connections within the Supreme Court raises concerns about potential attempts to compromise the independence of the judiciary. The consequences of such interference can reverberate throughout the legal and political landscape.

*Legal Process and Due Diligence:* Responding to a complaint is an integral part of the legal process. It provides an opportunity for all parties involved to present their arguments within the confines of established legal procedures. However, claims of personal influence within the judiciary disrupt the sanctity of these proceedings, casting doubt on the fairness and impartiality of the legal system. The due diligence required in legal proceedings is essential for a just resolution. If a politician suggests connections within the Supreme Court, it prompts questions about the integrity of the due diligence process. Is the legal system equipped to handle potential external pressures and ensure an unbiased outcome?

*Ethics and Accountability:* Political parties and their members are expected to adhere to ethical standards that uphold the principles of justice and fairness. Leveraging personal connections within the judiciary for political gain is not only ethically questionable but also undermines the trust citizens' place in the democratic process. Breaches of ethical standards demand accountability. If a politician is found to have attempted to influence the judiciary, it raises questions about accountability within the political system. Will there be consequences for such actions, and how might they shape future political behavior?

*Public Perception and Confidence:* Public perception plays a pivotal role in the success of democratic institutions. If citizens perceive the legal system as vulnerable to external influence, it can erode confidence in the judiciary and the broader democratic framework. The impact of a politician's claims on public perception requires careful examination. The consequences of actions that undermine public trust are profound. Trust in democratic processes is essential for political stability and social cohesion. How might the public interpret claims of influence within the judiciary, and what are the potential ramifications for the nation's political landscape?

*Consequences for the Politician and Party:* Attempting to influence the judiciary is a serious breach of legal and ethical standards. The potential legal repercussions for the politician involved and the APC as a whole are significant. What legal avenues are available to address such interference, and how might they shape the future conduct of political actors? Beyond legal consequences, the political fallout for the politician and the APC could be substantial. Voter sentiment is sensitive to perceived attempts to manipulate the legal system for partisan gains. Exploring potential electoral consequences and their broader implications for Nigerian democracy is essential.

*International Implications:* Nigeria's adherence to democratic principles is closely scrutinized on the international stage. Claims of political interference with the judiciary can have repercussions beyond national borders, affecting diplomatic relations and the country's standing in international forums. How might the international community respond to such developments, and what impact could it have on Nigeria's global

image? International relations are intricately tied to perceptions of democratic governance. Any erosion of democratic norms, especially involving the judiciary, can pose diplomatic challenges. Analyzing potential diplomatic consequences and strategies for mitigating them is crucial for Nigeria's foreign relations.

*Strengthening Democratic Institutions:* Addressing the implications of this situation necessitates a commitment to safeguarding judicial independence. What measures can be implemented to fortify the judiciary against external pressures and ensure its autonomy?

*Reinforcing Democratic Checks and Balances:* Strengthening checks and balances within the political system is vital for preventing future attempts to influence the judiciary. How can Nigeria reinforce these mechanisms to ensure the robustness of its democratic institutions?

The implications of a politician associated with the APC responding to a complaint filed by the PDP in the Supreme Court, coupled with claims of personal connections within the judiciary, are vast and intricate. This comprehensive analysis seeks to shed light on the multifaceted dimensions of this scenario, emphasizing the critical importance of upholding democratic principles, preserving judicial independence, and fostering a political environment that inspires public trust. The resolution of this case carries significant weight in shaping the trajectory of Nigerian democracy, both domestically and on the global stage.

The integrity of the judiciary, particularly the Supreme Court, is paramount to the functioning of a democratic society. The recent claim made by Hon Yusuf Gagdi, suggesting that he possesses knowledge of individuals capable of influencing the Plateau State judiciary process in the election of Caleb Mutfwang, raises serious concerns about the sanctity of the electoral system and the potential compromise of justice.

In any democratic system, the judiciary plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and ensuring a fair and transparent electoral process. Any allegation of external influence on judicial proceedings is a direct threat to the foundation of a democratic society. The need for an urgent and thorough investigation by the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, cannot be overstated. Public trust in the electoral system is contingent on the belief that the judiciary operates independently and impartially. If there is even a perception that the judiciary could be influenced or manipulated, it erodes the faith citizens have in the democratic process. This has far-reaching consequences, affecting the legitimacy of elected officials and the overall stability of the democratic framework.

The Supreme Court, as the highest judicial authority, must take swift action to investigate the claims made by Hon Yusuf Gagdi. This is not only to dispel any doubts surrounding the specific election in question but also to send a clear message that the judiciary is committed to upholding its independence and ensuring justice prevails.

The investigation should be conducted transparently, with findings made public to reinforce accountability and maintain public confidence. The credibility of the judiciary is at stake, and a thorough inquiry is essential to preserve the principles upon which a democratic society rests. The urgency of this matter cannot be overstated, as a prompt resolution is vital to safeguard the democratic foundations of Plateau State and, by extension, the entire nation.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, the religious manipulation of the Nigerian political system is a longstanding phenomenon that has been documented in various forms, including the use of political leaders to promote religious agendas or to sometimes suppress the rights of certain religious groups. This paper analyzed Governor Mutfwang's case from the perspective of political philosophy and the right to religious freedom. Firstly, the paper explored the principles of justice and fairness which must be present in all state institutions, and analyzed whether or not the decision to sack the governor goes against these principles. Secondly, the paper focused on the legal and constitutional implications of this decision, and the right of citizens to religious freedom. Thirdly, the paper discussed the sociological implications of this decision, in terms of how it affects the perception of the Nigerian political system among the general populace. Finally, the paper reflected on the ethical implications of this decision, and suggested potential changes that should be made in order to prevent future occurrences of religious manipulation in Nigeria. Considering the historic role of religion in the state and how it has been used to caused conflicts, the researcher recommends that all hands must be on deck to avert any crisis occurrences or tendencies.

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## **TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: SACRED GROVES AS SANCTUARIES FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES IN IGBOLAND, NIGERIA**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Igboland Nigeria's species endangerment causes ecological imbalance, biodiversity loss, and harm to the local communities that depend on these species for traditional customs and livelihoods. This paper studies how Southeast Nigeria's traditional sacred groves served as sanctum for endangered species. This paper adopted Environmental Ethics Theory to determine how sacred groves prevent extinction in the traditional environment of southeast Nigeria. The work employs ethnographic methods of observation and interview to study two communities in southeast Nigeria, focusing on traditional religious practices and their role in environmental sustainability. Specifically, it examines how sacred groves serve as sanctuaries for endangered species in the region. The research discovers that ecological deterioration, biodiversity loss, and deforestation result from southeast Nigeria's abandonment of traditional religious customs and environmental sustainability concerning sacred groves. The findings shows that reverence of sacred groves in the Traditional Religious Practices of Southeast Nigeria fosters environmental sustainability by preserving biodiversity and maintaining natural habitats, as these groves are protected from deforestation and exploitation due to their cultural and spiritual significance. This cultural practice inherently supports conservation efforts, demonstrating a sustainable model of land use and resource management rooted in indigenous traditions. The paper recommends that conserving biodiversity and shielding essential ecosystems from deforestation and degradation, upholding traditional religious practices and keeping holy groves as sanctuaries in Southeast Nigeria can support environmental sustainability. These religious and cultural customs promote reverence for the natural world, which motivates nearby people to take part in conservation and environmentally friendly agricultural initiatives.*

**Keywords:** Environmental Sustainability, Biodiversity, Endangered Species, Sacred Groves, Ecology.

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## Introduction

Khan, Khumbongmayum, & Tripathi (2008) write that, sections of virgin, very diverse forest known as sacred groves have long been guarded by the locals due to taboos and cultural and religious beliefs that the deities live there and shield the villagers from various disasters. Igboland of Nigeria has a long history of protecting forest areas for spiritual and religious purposes, known as sacred groves. For ages, local people have relied heavily on these grooves as part of their cultural and religious rituals. They are frequently guarded by stringent taboos and laws since they are traditionally believed to be the homes of deities, spirits, and ancestors. In spite of increasing deforestation and changes in land use, these limits have guaranteed the preservation of these natural areas. Thus, the sacred groves are important for preserving the region's ecological balance and biodiversity in addition to their cultural value. According to Cardelus, Scull, Baimas-George, Lowman, Eshet, (2013), sacred woods were places that the Igbo forefathers designated as holy places, places that were closely guarded by taboos, customs, and beliefs. They however wrote that sacred groves are located around the globe, not only in the Igbo community. Some of their locations include Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Ethiopia, Japan, and Morocco.

Many endangered species have found refuge in sacred groves in Southeast Nigeria. The untouched and safeguarded nature of these groves offer a refuge for flora and species that are endangered elsewhere due to human activity. These groves are home to a variety of rare and endangered plant, animal, and insect species that are not found in other areas. This is especially crucial because Nigeria is under growing pressure from urbanization, logging, and agricultural growth, all of which have significantly degraded and destroyed ecosystems. Therefore, the sacred woods serve as essential havens for the preservation of the region's biodiversity.

Both national and international environmental groups now acknowledge and promote the importance of sacred groves in conservation efforts. Given their significance as both hotspots for biodiversity and locations of cultural history, efforts have been made to preserve and document these areas. Since the preservation of sacred trees greatly depends on the ongoing respect for customs and beliefs, community involvement is essential to these activities. Through the integration of contemporary conservation methods with traditional ecological knowledge, the efficacy of these sanctuaries in safeguarding endangered species and their ecosystems in Southeast Nigeria can be improved.

Sacred groves are important locations for religious ceremonies and activities since they are frequently thought of as the homes of gods and ancestor spirits. The Igbo people consider these natural sanctuaries to be endowed with strong spiritual powers, which

makes them indispensable for carrying out rituals, sacrifices, and offerings to please the gods and ancestors. By ensuring the community's health, fertility, safety, and overall prosperity, these customs strengthen their ties to their spiritual past.

Additionally, sacred woods are essential to the survival of Igbo customs and oral histories. The transmission of cultural information from elders to new generations, as well as initiation ceremonies and festivals, frequently take place there. By offering a place for the sharing of proverbs, songs, and stories, the groves help to preserve the Igbo people's rich cultural heritage. These areas are further integrated into the socio-cultural fabric of the community by serving as venues for traditional justice administration and conflict settlement.

In terms of ecology, sacred groves help Igboland conserve its natural resources. The indigenous flora and animals are often preserved because of the respect shown for these areas, which shields the groves from exploitation and deforestation. Local community values as well as customary knowledge, abilities, and practices were acknowledged by Wild and McLeod (2008) as essential to the survival of local ecosystems, cultures, and resources. The spiritual and cultural qualities ascribed to the groves have resulted in this ecological stewardship, which illustrates a happy coexistence of the human race with the environment. The preservation of these groves is essential to maintaining biodiversity and the cultural customs that rely on these hallowed areas.

Sacred groves are essential sources of traditional medicine in Igboland, playing a crucial role in the healthcare practices of the community. Numerous herbal treatments used to heal ailments and illnesses are made from the raw materials found in these groves, which are rich in numerous plant species. The Igbo people have accumulated a wealth of information about the medicinal benefits of the plants that grow in these grooves over many years. The community is guaranteed to keep the abilities required to use their natural surroundings for health and healing through the oral traditions and apprenticeship that transmit this ethno-botanical knowledge. In this situation, traditional healers known as *Dibias* are extremely important. They are skilled in making and using herbal remedies made from the sacred groves. Frequently, the *dibias* perform ceremonies and call upon the spiritual forces thought to reside in these trees in order to improve the effectiveness of their healing practices. In Igbo culture, where physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being are intertwined, the holistic approach to health is emphasized by this spiritual side of treatment. The use of these natural treatments is indicative of a thorough knowledge of the ecosystem in the area and its medicinal possibilities.

Furthermore, the viability and well-being of the community are inextricably related to the maintenance of the sacred groves. Medicinal plants that may otherwise disappear due to deforestation and environmental degradation are guaranteed to remain available as long as these places are protected. The Igbo people protect their resources for basic healthcare as well as their cultural legacy by keeping the groves intact. By highlighting the mutually beneficial relationship between the community's health practices and their reverence for the natural world, this ecological stewardship illustrates how Igbo society is entwined with environmental and cultural protection.

In Igbo communities, sacred groves are important cultural landmarks and markers of collective identity that are ingrained in the people's social and spiritual fabric. These groves often have connections to the community's history and mythology. As such, they are valued as living archives of cultural history and communal memory in addition to being beautiful natural areas. A sense of continuity and belonging among community members is fostered by the stories, rituals, and customs associated with these groves that are passed down through the years. The sacred groves are also essential to community celebrations and rituals, which are important ways for people to express their cultural identities. These occasions, which frequently include the entire community, bring people together to pray, celebrate, and reaffirm their common ideals. For example, the people in the community may congregate in the sacred grove on festival days to carry out rituals, offer offerings, and ask the spirits or deities they believe to be present there for blessings. In addition to strengthening social ties and fostering a sense of community, these events serve to uphold the grove's position as a cultural centrepiece. Additionally, the communal duty to preserve and care for the holy groves fosters collaboration and community connection. These places have taboos and rules that are enforced by community agreement, demonstrating a common desire to protect their sacredness and ecological fulfilment. Since they understand how important it is to them to preserve a critical component of their natural and cultural heritage, community members feel a sense of pride and identity from this stewardship duty. Sacred groves represent the close ties that exist between the people, their culture, and their surroundings and serve as emblems of the community's distinctive customs and common history.

Natural holy places are of great importance to international organizations like UNESCO and others because of their distinctive cultural, spiritual, and ecological qualities. These locations are important storehouse of biodiversity and natural heritage, and they are often endowed with profound religious and cultural value for indigenous and local groups. Organizations seek to maintain the interwoven cultural and natural legacy, promote sustainable development, and increase awareness and respect for many cultural traditions across the globe by designating and safeguarding these sites. This

pledge emphasizes the overarching objective of preserving the world's cultural heritage for next generations. Ray, Chandran, & Ramachandra (2014) note this fact and write that international organizations like UNESCO and the World-Wide Fund for Nature are becoming increasingly interested in the role of these natural sacred sites. Sacred groves fall under the category of sacred natural sites (SNS), which is defined as "natural areas of special spiritual significance to peoples and communities" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).

### **Biodiversity and Endangered Species in Sacred Groves**

Many of the species of plants and animals found in Igboland's sacred groves have important ecological, cultural, and medical significance. One common kind of plant found in these groves is the *Milicia excelsa*, or iroko tree. Many African societies, notably the Igbo, hold the Iroko tree in high regard and at times identify it with ancestral spirits and deities. This big hardwood tree is a great source of timber because of its resilience to rot and long lifespan. But in holy groves, these trees are shielded from harm and allowed to grow to remarkable heights and ages, adding to the forest's richness. Khan, Khumbongmayum, & Tripathi (2008) noted that for human survival, ecological processes must remain in a condition of balance, which is maintained by biodiversity. Thus, the sacred groves, which are rich in species, have enormous ecological significance. They are also crucial to the preservation of the natural world's plants and animals. Furthermore, a number of endangered and unusual species can only be found in sacred woods, which may be their sole natural sanctuary.

The African mahogany, or *Khaya senegalensis*, is another important plant species that is frequently found in Igbo sacred forests. The therapeutic benefits of this tree are highly valued in addition to its quality timber. Traditional medical practices employ various African mahogany components to cure illnesses like fever, gastrointestinal problems, and skin disorders. Future generations will be able to access these valuable natural resources thanks to the preservation of this tree in holy groves. The African mahogany also contributes to the biological richness of the groves by giving a range of species habitat and food. Among the animal kingdom's inhabitants of certain of Igboland's sacred woods is the African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*). These extremely smart parrots have a reputation for being able to mimic human speech. They are frequently connected to knowledge and communication and are seen as important in many African cultures. These birds, who would otherwise be in danger due to habitat degradation and the illegal pet trade, can find refuge in sacred groves. These groves are crucial for maintaining the diversity of birds since they are home to the African Grey Parrot.

The sacred groves of Igboland are also home to a variety of monkey species, including the Mona Monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*). Because they disseminate seeds, these monkeys are essential to the ecosystem and help the forest regenerate. In sacred groves, monkeys are essential for seed dispersal and forest regeneration because they eat fruits and then excrete the seeds at different areas. By enabling the emergence of new plants away from the parent tree, this natural mechanism lessens competition for resources and contributes to the preservation of plant diversity. Monkeys often leave behind nutrient-rich excrement while they go through the forest, which increases the chances of seeds germinating. They travel in a way that ensures seeds are dispersed over large regions, promoting the ongoing regeneration and ecological balance of these sacred groves. They do this by climbing and jumping across the forest canopy.

They have cultural significance as well; they are frequently mentioned in local folklore and are regarded as clever and agile symbols. These monkeys are threatened by habitat destruction and hunting in other locations, therefore sacred grove conservation helps assure their existence. The sacred groves help to preserve Igboland's cultural history and biodiversity by protecting these species.

### **Role of Sacred Groves in Environmental Sustainability**

All over the world sacred grove vegetation is characterized by unique ecological traits. For instance, Rajendraprasad (1995) writes that in India's Kerala sacred forests, there are several tree tiers, shrubs, climbers, herbs, parasites, epiphytes, and wild cousins of domesticated plants. Sacred trees, according to Frese and Gray (1995), are a kind of nature that stand for life and the sacred continuity of the material, cosmic, and spiritual realms. A tree is often used to represent a god or other holy creatures, or it might represent everything that is holy. Trees are sometimes associated with cultural beliefs in heaven or the afterlife, and they represent certain deities or ancestors, act as mediators or as a link to the religious realm. Kanu (2021) notes that in ancient Igbo-African civilizations, people saw trees and woods as an extension of themselves. Therefore, to treat them disrespectfully is to treat oneself disrespectfully, and to exploit them would be to wage war on oneself because of the potential repercussions. They were not only revered but also engaged with in a variety of ways as fellow human beings. Hughes and Chandran (1998) wrote that the emergence of sacred trees and plants in ancient societies may be attributed to their intricate spiritual links with their biophysical surroundings. They were the earliest temples dedicated to the gods, and as such, they were held in high regard.

Numerous ecological services that these groves offer are crucial to the preservation of the environment, and they are frequently shielded from harm by taboos and spiritual beliefs. Initially, they serve as repositories of biological diversity. Numerous plant and

animal species, some of which may be uncommon or endangered, can be found in these groves. These places are traditionally protected against activities that could otherwise result in habitat destruction and the extinction of species, such as farming, logging, and hunting. Hence, sanctified groves play a crucial role as safe places for biodiversity, supporting the region's ecological resilience and equilibrium.

Climate management in Igboland is another important environmental service that sacred groves provide. Since trees and plants take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it as biomass, the thick vegetation in these groves is essential to the process of sequestering carbon dioxide. This procedure lowers the atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases, which helps lessen the effects of climate change. Additionally, the groves' canopy cover contributes to the regulation of nearby temperature and humidity levels, resulting in the creation of microclimates that may be advantageous for human habitation and agriculture. Sacred groves also improve the quality and conservation of water. Groundwater recharge and surface runoff are both facilitated by the vegetation in these groves, which contributes to the maintenance of the hydrological cycle. In these groves, the roots of the plants and trees stabilize the soil, lowering the possibility of landslides and preventing erosion. This is especially crucial in places where there is a lot of rainfall. Sacred groves help to keep surrounding bodies of water clean and free from siltation by preserving the health and structure of the soil. This can be crucial for the local communities that rely on these water sources for drinking, agriculture, and other needs.

Sacred groves in Igboland are important for culture and education in addition to the environment. They contribute to maintain the Igbo people's intangible cultural legacy by acting as locations for customary ceremonies, rites, and other cultural traditions. The groves are firmly ingrained in the belief systems of the community members, who frequently identify them with gods, spirits, or ancestors. The local community considers the preservation of these groves to be both an ecological and spiritual duty, which supports conservation efforts considering their cultural significance. Furthermore, because sacred woods are living archives of conventional ecological knowledge and methods, they provide instructional possibilities. Ultimately, Igboland's sacred trees offer a variety of provisioning services that sustain local livelihoods. They are sources of non-timber forest products, fruits, nuts, and other medicinal plants that are essential to the health and financial stability of the surrounding populations. Because of the cultural rules controlling the groves, which encourage conservation and prohibit overexploitation, these resources are frequently extracted responsibly. The groves enhance the general resilience and sustainability of the communities that safeguard them by promoting traditional medicine. It was on this backdrop that Khan, Khumbongmayum, & Tripathi (2008) assert that sacred woods are the perfect location

for conserving biodiversity. In some of the sacred groves, numerous species of plants and animals that are endangered in the forest are still well maintained. It has been noted that the sacred groves include large populations of a number of medicinal plants that are absent from the forest. Moreover, sacred forests usually house a concentration of rare, endangered, threatened, and unique species. Ray, Chandran, & Ramachandra (2014) equally write that the area of a sacred grove undoubtedly contributes significantly to the services and functionality of ecosystems. A big, complete grove is an example of a healthy forest ecosystem, which offers important ecological functions like temperature control, nitrogen cycling, and soil, water, and biodiversity preservation.

In Igboland, sacred groves are extremely important from an ethnobotanical standpoint since they help to preserve the region's biodiversity and cultural legacy. Numerous plant species, some uncommon, beneficial, or otherwise noteworthy, use the groves as reservoirs. The transmission of important ethnobotanical activities is ensured by the traditional knowledge linked with these plants, which includes their applications for food, medicine, and rituals. The preservation of ecological equilibrium and the provision of resources for long-term subsistence depend heavily on this biodiversity. Furthermore; sacred groves serve as cultural havens, protecting customs and beliefs that are essential to the Igbo people's identity. Because of the social ties and cultural values that are reinforced by the rites and ceremonies conducted there, these places are revered, which promotes a sense of community and continuity. Since logging, hunting, and other exploitative activities are prohibited in these groves, they often function as unofficial conservation zones that support the preservation of the ecosystem. In summary, the holy groves of Igboland are essential for maintaining the cultural and spiritual fabric of the communities that guard them, in addition to their environmental value. Ethnobiology, the study of the interactions between humans and the plants and animals in their immediate surroundings, is incredibly insightful. Vartak and Gadgil (1973) carried out some fascinating ethnobotanical research in Maharashtra's sacred forests in India, which revealed some of the plant's benefits to the local population.

### ***Ekwu Arikpo Sacred Grove in Ezimo***

*Ekwu Arikpo* Sacred Grove in Ezimo, Udenu Local Government Area of Enugu State Nigeria, plays a crucial role in preserving the biodiversity of the community, particularly the *Bridelia Ferruginea* plant. Sacred groves, such as *Ekwu Arikpo*, are protected areas with cultural and spiritual significance, where traditional practices often prohibit the felling of trees or hunting of animals. This cultural protection has allowed *Bridelia Ferruginea*, a species known for its medicinal properties, to thrive. The preservation of this plant is essential as it is a valuable resource for traditional medicine in the community. *Bridelia Ferruginea*, is commonly known as *Ola* in Igbo language

and *Ede* in Ezimo dialects. Branches appear in the lowest portions of the stem, which is often twisted. It has rough, gray, and often scaly bark. It may be bright crimson in color and has spines rather often. The leaves can be simple, rotating spiral, broadly elliptic, hairy, and tiny to medium in size. They have an acute apex and a plummy veined inner border. The fruits ripen in July, while the creamy-yellow, sweetly perfumed blossoms bloom from February to August. Nnamani, Akah, Okoli, Ezike, and Kenne (2020) state that *Bridelia Ferruginea* is used in traditional African medicine to treat rheumatic pains, oedema, burns, bruising, boils, dislocation, fever, headaches, and stiffness. Additionally, they wrote that fresh stem bark is utilized in Ezimo, to stop bleeding from newly cut wounds. This is achieved by applying a fresh stem bark paste to the wound.



**Figure 1:** *Ferruginea* Shrub



**Figure 2:** *Ferruginea* Stem

In Ezimo community, the *Ekwu Arikpo* sacred grove acts as a living pharmacy, where the knowledge of medicinal plants is passed down through generations, preserving both the biodiversity and the cultural heritage of the area. The Ekwu Arikpo Sacred Grove also serves as a natural laboratory for the study and conservation of *Bridelia Ferruginea* and other medicinal plants. Ethnobiology, the study of how humans interact with the plants and animals in their immediate surroundings, is a highly insightful field of research. In the Maharashtra sacred grove of Western Ghats India, Vartak and Gadgil (1973) carried out some fascinating ethnobotanical research that demonstrated some of the plant's benefits to the local population. This means that researchers and ethnobotanists can study the diverse flora within the Ekwu Arikpo grove, that will lead to the discovery of new uses for these plants in traditional and modern medicine. The preservation of the grove ensures that these plants are not lost to deforestation or agricultural expansion, which threatens many medicinal plant species. This conservation effort supports the broader goal of sustainable development by promoting the use of natural resources in a way that benefits both the environment and the local community.

Moreover, the existence of the sacred grove contributes to the cultural identity and continuity of the Ezimo people. The grove is not only a source of medicinal plants but also a place of spiritual significance. The traditional beliefs and practices associated with the grove reinforce the community's connection to their environment, promoting

a sense of responsibility for its preservation. This cultural reverence for nature has helped to maintain the grove's biodiversity, including the important *Bridelia Ferruginea*, and has fostered a sustainable relationship between the community and their natural resources. Ekwu Arikpo Sacred Grove is a vital ecological and cultural sanctuary that has significantly contributed to the preservation of *Bridelia Ferruginea*. By protecting this sacred space, the people of Ezimo have safeguarded a critical resource for traditional medicine, maintained biodiversity, and upheld their cultural heritage. The grove's preservation is a testament to the value of indigenous knowledge and practices in conserving natural resources and promoting sustainable development. This relationship between the community and the grove highlights the importance of integrating cultural traditions with modern conservation efforts.

### **Threats to Sacred Groves**

Human activities, which have been more intense due to urbanization, economic pressures, and rapid population expansion, are the main causes of the demise of sacred groves in Igboland, Nigeria. Once valued for their spiritual significance and as hotspots for biodiversity, these groves are currently being more and more invaded by commercial logging, urbanization, and agricultural growth. The cultural foundations that formerly safeguarded these hallowed places have also been undermined by the departure from traditional beliefs and practices brought about by modernity and the rise of new religions. Furthermore, insufficient legal safeguards and governmental regulations heighten their susceptibility, resulting in noteworthy ecological and cultural detriments. According to Khan, Khumbongmayum, & Tripathi (2008), globally, a variety of human activities have changed the composition and dynamics of many ecosystems. The decline in biodiversity has been one of the most noticeable consequences of environmental disturbance. Tiwari, Barik and Tripathi (1998) observed that holy groves are constructively protected by taboos and belief, and the groves are deteriorating as a result of the degradation of these two things. The current state of holy groves is somewhat problematic since it has been seen that religious taboos and beliefs that were essential to their maintenance are eroding over time for a variety of reasons.

*Urbanization* – A research on the state of several holy groves in the Himalayan area by Saxena, Rao and Maikhuri (1998), revealed that these groves are now being abused because traditional groups are being pressured by economic factors to abandon the community-oriented protection that these trees formerly provided. Sacred groves are seriously threatened by urbanization in Igboland. As urbanization picks up speed, growing towns and cities are encroaching more and more on these holy areas. These groves are frequently destroyed or degraded due to the need for land for housing, business development, and infrastructure projects, which undermines the Igbo people's

spiritual and cultural heritage. Loss of traditional knowledge and practices exacerbates the effects of urbanization on sacred groves. The younger generation may lose touch with traditional values and practices, such as respect for holy groves, as more people move to cities and take up contemporary lifestyles. The taboos and social conventions that have traditionally shielded these places are being undermined by this cultural transformation. Furthermore, legal and administrative changes brought about by urban expansion frequently disregard the customary ownership and maintenance of sacred groves, which facilitates the taking over of these lands for development. Moreover; there are environmental ramifications to the urbanization-related loss of sacred groves. These groves frequently act as hotspots for biodiversity, protecting a range of uncommon or endangered plant and animal species. Destroying these habitats may cause local ecosystems to become unstable and biodiversity to decline. Likewise, holy groves give vital ecological benefits to the surrounding areas by regulating the climate and conserving water. Therefore, the removal of these groves jeopardizes Igboland's natural sustainability in addition to endangering cultural and spiritual values.

*Agriculture* - As the population grows and economic pressures mount, the need for agricultural land rises, resulting in the encroachment and deterioration of these sacred sites. Owing to the necessity of expanding their agricultural lands to fulfill the demand for food, farmers occasionally invade these groves and clear them to make way for crops. This threatens the Igbo people's cultural legacy in addition to causing the loss of hallowed places. For instance, in their discussion of the deterioration of holy groves, Kushalappa and Bhagwat (2001) state that the main threats to the preservation of groves in Karnataka's Kodagu districts are human settlement and the conversion of sacred forests into coffee farms. The weakening of customs and traditions frequently makes agricultural development into sacred groves worse. In many Igbo communities, the younger generation may see sacred groves as untapped resources for agricultural expansion rather than fully appreciating their traditional significance. The taboos that formerly safeguarded these groves disappear as industrialization and economic need impose their preferences on traditional beliefs and rituals. The spiritual and cultural significance of keeping these places intact may be overshadowed by the short-term financial gains from agricultural use, which could result in their destruction and conversion to farmland.

Environmental effects of agricultural expansion-related loss of sacred groves are also noteworthy. These groves protect a variety of plant and animal species that might not be found elsewhere, making them hotspots for biodiversity. A loss of biodiversity, disturbance of regional ecosystems, and a decrease in environmental resilience might result from clearing these lands for agricultural purposes. Additionally, by serving as organic erosion barriers and preserving regional hydrological cycles, sacred trees

frequently play significant roles in soil fertility and water conservation. Because of this, turning these groves into farms may have far-reaching ecological effects on Igboland, affecting not only the region's cultural landscape but also the sustainability of the ecosystem. Bhagwat & Rutte (2006) observed that people may have been forced to use these locations for daily needs like gathering food and fuel due to the ensuing population growth. It seems that the groves were not originally intended for any particular use, yet their presence in the landscape may have led to the development of other uses.

*Climate Change* – Plieninger, Quintas-Soriano, Torralba, Mohammadi Samani, & Shakeri, (2020) note that in tackling the climate change-related problems the communities face in their immediate socioeconomic and agro-ecological setting, the local community is concerned about the worldwide phenomena of climate change and the significance they identify with the preserved holy grove. Their opinions on the changes in the local weather, agro-economic variables, and natural resources like water and biodiversity have all been taken into consideration while evaluating this. The sacred groves of Igboland are becoming more vulnerable due to the growing effects of climate change, which include increased temperatures, changed rainfall patterns, and extreme weather. For these groves to preserve their distinctive ecosystems, particular climatic conditions are frequently necessary. Climate and precipitation changes have the potential to upset the delicate equilibrium in these settings, which could result in a decline in biodiversity. For example, some plant species that are essential to the local populations' spiritual activities might find it difficult to adapt to changing conditions, while invasive species might establish a footing and further disrupt the ecology. Apart from environmental hazards, global warming intensifies additional human-caused stresses on holy groves. People may be forced to extend their farms into these protected areas as a result of shifting agricultural patterns brought about by variations in soil fertility and rainfall, which would result in deforestation. Furthermore, the groves may sustain physical harm from an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events like floods and storms, which could destroy important natural features and holy trees. This affects the cultural practices and beliefs associated with these places in addition to endangering their natural integrity. The customary knowledge systems and cultural legacy connected to sacred groves are also impacted by climate change. The elders and caretakers of these locations have important ecological information that has been passed down over the years; this expertise is frequently connected to the preservation of biodiversity and the management of regional resources. The cultural connections to the land may be weakened when climate change affects the environment and makes this knowledge less relevant or even obsolete. The identity and cohesiveness of Igbo communities are at risk due to this loss of knowledge and cultural estrangement because the sacred groves are essential to their spiritual and cultural lives.

*Christianity* - During the colonial era, Christianity was introduced in Igboland, which further affected the destiny of sacred trees. Missionaries frequently attempted to convert the local populace to Christianity by viewing indigenous religious practices—such as the veneration of holy groves—as paganism. As a result of new converts being urged to give up their native beliefs, the customs and rites held in these trees decreased. As a result, a great deal of sacred woods was abandoned or used for Christian religious purposes, which resulted in the extinction of native biodiversity and ecological expertise. Hence, the combined influences of Christianity and Westernization have been instrumental in changing Igboland's cultural and spiritual environment, with holy groves suffering as a result of these larger social and theological shifts. Bhagwat & Rutte (2006) remarked that sacred groves have deteriorated as a result of religious conversion in several nations. Furthermore, the institution of sacred groves is becoming less significant to the indigenous populace's younger generations as westernized metropolitan cultures undermine local customs in many nations. Sacred groves in Igboland were preferred places for church construction by colonial rulers and their Christian missionaries because they were important to the indigenous religious customs that they wished to eradicate. They wanted to subvert indigenous beliefs and install Christianity as the prevailing faith; therefore, they built churches on these sacred groves. The physical eradication of the sacred areas was accompanied with a symbolic conquering of indigenous traditional religion by this calculated placement. Encouragement or coercion of the local populace to convert from their ancient religion to Christianity further aided the conversion process by establishing the new faith thoroughly in the community and lessening the sacred groves' cultural value.

*Government Policies affection Sacred Groves* - Land use regulation is one important government policy that affects Igboland's sacred groves. Nigerian policies concerning land distribution, urbanization, and agriculture frequently overlook the cultural value of sacred groves as the government controls almost all of the lands. Sacred groves are susceptible to being used for other purposes since they are not clearly protected by the law. According to Ormsby (2011), under British rule, forest that had been communal resources were taken over by the government, kept out of the hands of the people, and exploited for state purposes like building railways. Environmental conservation policies in Nigeria, including those in Igboland, aim to protect natural resources and biodiversity. However, these policies sometimes conflict with the traditional management of sacred groves. For instance, while government policies may promote large-scale conservation projects, such as the establishment of national parks, they may overlook the small, community-managed sacred groves. Additionally, government-led conservation initiatives often impose regulations that may not align with the traditional practices of local communities, potentially leading to the erosion of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. Government policies on cultural heritage and

preservation are critical in protecting sacred groves as cultural sites. However, the implementation of these policies is often inadequate. While Nigeria has laws aimed at protecting cultural heritage sites, the lack of specific recognition for sacred groves means they are frequently neglected. Moreover, there is often limited funding and resources allocated to the preservation of these sites, resulting in inadequate protection measures. The government's focus tends to be on more prominent cultural heritage sites, overlooking the importance of sacred groves to local communities.

## **Conservation Efforts**

*Role of Local Communities in Managing Sacred Groves* - For these groves to be preserved and to continue existing, local communities are essential to their management. This position is firmly anchored in customs and beliefs that acknowledge the groves as the homes of gods, ancestral spirits, and organic protectors. Aniah & Yelfaanibe (2016) remarked that worldviews rooted in Africa often center on the complex interrelationship between nature and mankind. Worldviews in African communities are extremely similar to the endogenous development framework (EDF), which emphasizes the connectivity between the material and non-material worlds. Communities cherish sacred groves because they hold them in high regard and believe it keeps them in harmony with the supernatural realm and preserves their cultural legacy. Maintaining customs and taboos related to sacred woods is one of the main responsibilities of the local communities. Activities including farming, hunting, logging, and even entering the grove without authorization are frequently forbidden by these regulations. Enforcing these taboos contributes to the preservation of rare and endangered species, ecological balance, and the richness of the groves. The implementation of these regulations is frequently overseen by community leaders, such as elders and spiritual leaders, who make sure that the groves' sacred character is upheld and that breaches are dealt with effectively.

Sacred groves require constant care and upkeep, and local communities are essential to this effort. They do tasks including clearing space for new growth, maintaining the routes leading to and from the groves, and planting new trees. The groves' continued health and accessibility for cultural and spiritual purposes are guaranteed by this guardianship. The community's strong dedication to conservation is further reinforced by their active participation in the maintenance of these sites, which cultivates a sense of ownership and responsibility. The transfer of information and customs about sacred groves is another important function played by local communities. In order to preserve the cultural value of the groves over time, elders and caretakers of these sites transmit tales, customs, and rituals to younger generations. Maintaining the continuity of cultural practices and promoting a sense of identity and belonging among community

members depend significantly on this information transmission. It also aids in spreading awareness among the general public of the significance of protecting these sites of ecological and cultural significance. When it comes to defending sacred groves against outside forces like industrialization, urbanization, or agricultural growth, local people frequently stand up for their protection. Aniah & Yelfaanibe (2016) viewed that it is customary for nearby communities to create regulations that serve as a check on activities that might devastate or disrupt the environment around holy trees. The cutting down of trees and the slaughter of animals in these hallowed locations are forbidden in communities with holy groves and shrines.

In order to get legal protection for these locations, encourage sustainable practices, and increase public knowledge of their significance, they might interact with governmental bodies, non-governmental groups, and other interested parties. Local communities in Igboland are essential to the administration and conservation of sacred groves because they serve as stewards, guardians, champions, and enforcers of tradition. This ensures that the groves will be preserved for future generations.

*The Role of government in managing Sacred Groves in Igboland* – Regarding the preservation of India's sacred groves, Chandrashekara (2011) notes that as part of its "Intensification of Forest Management" initiative, the Indian government has introduced the "Protection and Conservation of Sacred Groves" scheme. The Kerala Department of Forests and Wildlife (KFD) launched the 'Protection and Conservation of Sacred Groves' initiative in Kerala as part of this Central Government supported scheme. Government can be a key player in developing policies and providing legal protection for sacred groves. The government can aid in preventing deforestation, land encroachment, and illicit activities that endanger the groves by passing laws that identify and safeguard these areas. The legal framework ought to acknowledge and honor the customs and beliefs of the nearby populations, guaranteeing that the groves continue to be overseen by the individuals who have traditionally defended them.

Cooperation between contemporary conservationists and traditional guardians might be facilitated by the government. By giving resources for conservation efforts, such as funding for initiatives that encourage biodiversity conservation or training in sustainable land management techniques, the government can assist these caretakers. This collaboration can uphold indigenous knowledge systems while enhancing holy grove protection. There is a responsibility on the part of the government to inform and educate the people about the significance of sacred groves. Campaigns to raise awareness of the ecological, cultural, and spiritual value of these places can inspire everyone in society to treat them with care and to take precautions to keep them safe. Education initiatives in schools and communities help ensure that future generations

continue to respect and conserve these groves by instilling a feeling of pride and responsibility in their preservation.

Furthermore, by promoting sustainable tourism in sacred groves, the government may strike a balance between environmental preservation and the prosperity of the surrounding areas. The government can guarantee the preservation of the groves' ecological and cultural integrity while simultaneously giving the locals a means of income through the creation of eco-tourism projects. It is important to impose regulations to manage the number of visitors, guarantee polite conduct, and guard against environmental harm.

In summary, the government of Igboland plays a variety of roles in the management of sacred groves, including public education, legal protection, working with traditional grove custodians, and developing sustainable tourism. The government can ensure that these important locations remain a dynamic part of Igbo history for future generations by adopting a proactive strategy to protect them for their ecological, cultural, and spiritual worth.

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## **ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVITY IN HISTORY: THE VEHICLE TO NATIONAL UNITY AND NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Attainment of objectivity in history: The vehicle to national unity and nation building in Nigeria is an attempt to highlight the efficacy of writing history the way they are without prejudice or bias which enhances national unity and nation building. Considering the fact that, coherent continuity in any relationship is built upon the foundation of trust and trust is guaranteed by fact, is a clear indication that, attainment of objectivity in history will close the gap of suspicion among different tribes in Nigeria, hence truth is presented at the highest table of discourse. This paper emphasizes the need for objectivity in historiography for the attainment of a true national unity and nation building in Nigeria. It contends that, attainment of national unity and nation building has posed an intractable challenge to the country. This is notwithstanding her possession of abundant natural and human resources. The paper further argued that, successive governments in Nigeria have become victim of the challenge because of unprofessional/unskilled writers and some government correspondence accounting of historical work in an inaccurate way which facilitates disunity and unproductiveness among Nigerians. With the use of qualitative method of secondary and primary sources, the paper submitted that, in spite of the difficulties associated with objectivity in history, the study revealed that, objectivity could be achieved with the application of prescribed steps that would become a catalyst to national unity and nation building in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *History, Objectivity, Unity, Nation building.*

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& Justin Arinze EGBE

## **Introduction**

This paper examines the issue of objectivity in history and its impact to national unity and nation building in Nigeria. It recognizes the fact that objectivity is difficult to achieve in historical writing because of the nature of historical knowledge that include issues of religion, politics, etc., which are principally less scientific in nature. Also, the historian himself is simply human and as such finds it difficult to divorce himself completely from the object of his study which is the activities of man like himself who lived in the past. Thus, the need to draw the attention of historians on the subject matter of historical objectivity is now necessary. This is because, a lot of historical write up are devoid of objectivity and in many instances, history is written without regards to professional ethics which in turn create chaos, disunity and an uneven development.

The paper is not only limited to professional historians and non-professional historians but also to students of history and the reading public of certain characteristics which would help them to differentiate between history and propaganda and which would also serve as a guide, especially to History students who are required to write an original project as an important requirement to enable them graduate, (Onwuzirike: 2004). The study also has an additional importance to liberate historians and students of history from erroneous impression that whatever history that is written down is very authentic especially when it is written by a colonial officer. It will make historians look at any historical write up with critical attention and in the words of Ekechi F. (1982.5), “Any monograph written by an anthropologist (or ethno historian of external extraction especially in the colonial days), on a particular tribe and accessible to its illiterate members becomes the tribal Bible, the charter of its traditional history and culture”. This is so because the illiterate members of such tribes were not well informed on the issue of objectivity and bias hence, they accepted the write up adumbrated by most European writers of early colonial period. The point to make here is that, in spite of the difficulties associated with reconstruction of the past by historians yet, the study revealed that objectivity is attainable in history and goes on to prescribe the steps that a historian would take in order to achieve objectivity in the writing of history and hence objectivity is achieved, the distorted relationship that exist among individuals, groups, nations, states, etc., that create room for disunity and uneven development would be ameliorated.

## **The Concept of Objectivity in History**

Historical objectivity stands for what is true and the real. It implies the state of being free from personal bias and sentimental approach and the state of not being one sided, personal and partial. According to Oyewale, P. O (2014) ..., facts are meaningless without interpretation or judgement. Therefore, objectivity in history means a state of having a comprehensive, systematic record of past events as they actually happened.

Objectivity in history holds the belief that historical writing should be based on solid facts alone. In other words, it refers to the ability of historian to stand outside of himself and view things in a detached rational manner. It is also referred to as, “respect for the truth” (Fadeiye, 2004). Thus, in interpreting historical facts, respect for the truth therein is that, the historian must play down his sentiments and emotions. He must respect his evidences by not suppressing or deliberately twisting them to suit any selfish purpose (Joyce, 1982). What it implies is that, the historian should avoid looking at past events with the eyes of the present as well as demonstrating high sense of intellectual integrity and honesty in his work.

Admittedly, there are several theories of objectivity in history such as, the Skeptical Theory, the Positivist Theory, the Perspectivist Theory, etc. all boil down to the measurement of attaining to solid objectivity in history and arguments therein which is tailored to academic discourse on attainment of objectivity in history. However, there are some opinions and writers who are of the view that objectivity in history is not attainable while scholars such as E. H. Carr insisted that objectivity in history is attainable when historians presented their facts and interpreted it without sentiments and bias. He posited by saying that, “the function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present” (Carr, 1961). Therefore, in order not to lose focus from the philosophy of the work which centered in finding the relevance of objectivity in history to national unity and development and not basically to investigate deeply on various arguments on the nature of objectivity in history, the researcher wish thus, state briefly the nature of history by focusing on the meaning of history to enable for easy understanding of the work. Having gone so far in exposing the concept of objectivity in history which we summarily said to be a situation whereby a historian does not allow his emotion to affect his presentation or interpretation of the object of study.

### **The Concept of History**

The essence of working on the meaning of history is to show case the relevance of history to national unity and development and use it to buttress that attainment of objectivity in history is truly the vehicle to national unity and development. History which is the subject matter of historiography has not yet got any universally and eternally accepted definition. E. H. Carr defined history as a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, and unending dialogue between the present and the past. Little wonder Oluwaseun, P. O, (2014), stated that ..., history may also be tentative in the sense that discovery of fresh evidence may affect historical reconstruction and therefore the result is a re-evaluation of a previous objective account. Considering this, it is crystal clear why each generation re-writes and re-interprets its history. Huizinga, J. (1936) defined history as the intellectual form in

which a civilization renders account to itself of its past. Marwick, A. (1970) defined history as follows: firstly, it connotes the entire human past as it actually happened; secondly, it connotes man's attempt to describe and interpret that past and thirdly, that history is a systematic study of the past. Thus, having laid down briefly the definition of history, it is important at this juncture to state categorically that history connotes in its entirety every aspect of man and his environment and as such, requires a true account of such event in order to use the study as a parameter for national development as well as fostering unity among different peoples and Nigeria in particular.

Consequently, no group, nation, state or even individual would like to see their historical account distorted in such a manner as it is not properly contained. To the person or group, it is a slap on their integrity and a total misrepresentation of their foundation which the aftermath is total disunity and lack of development. This is true because, you won't talk of any meaningful development in a situation where people's identity is falsely presented and in that case no unity. Therefore, writing history without bias, sentiments, attachment of emotion, prejudice etc., which is captured as objectivity in history would not only bring Nigeria on the part of unity but attract development because people have seen the truth about their existence. For instance, in a situation of distorted colonial history of Nigeria where the production of cocoa was attributed to the Northern Nigeria, the production of groundnut attributed to Eastern part of Nigeria and the production of palm oil attributed to the Western part of Nigeria will not only be seen as a threat to the national unity but also affects level of development as each party would demand for a re-write or absolute correction of the write-up.

### **Historical Objectivity: Road to National Unity and Development in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a multi-faceted and heterogeneous society that requires authenticity in their national account. Indeed, authenticity requires accuracy in any form of official dealings particularly in areas of socio-economic and political matters especially in a country such as Nigeria that is surrounded with many ethnic groups. Thus, one of the major reasons for disunity and lack of nation building in Nigeria is as a result of historical account that was based on false foundation. Admittedly, Nigeria is blessed with abundant human and natural resources, yet there is evidence of disunity and backwardness as captured by Ifeancha and Nwagwu (2009) who stated that, Nigeria's effort at achieving national unity...has remained largely unrealized. In fact, there is every reason to prove that Nigeria is experiencing baffling multiplicity of crises since achievement of political independence in 1960. The election and census crises of 1960-1966, the coup and counter coup of 1966, Nigeria-Biafra civil war of 1967-1970, ethnic agitations, problems of resource control in Nigeria, terrorist act from different quarters in Nigeria, mass killing of innocent people, constant post-election petitions, etc., were in one way or the other connected with lack of historical objectivity of Nigeria history.

Emeghara E. (2014), rightly opined that, “what principally accounts for this unsavoury state of affairs is the inability of government, past and present, to employ the resources of history as a strong unifying factor in ensuring a true national unity and integration”. The resources of history as stated by Emeghara is purely and squarely objectivity in Nigeria’s historical account.

For instance, the 1966 revolutionary coup was wrongly captioned, “Igbo Coup” simply because, most Eastern Nigeria politicians as at then was not killed in the coup such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Micheal Okpara, etc., while the coup took the life of Sir Tafawa Belewa, Ahmadu Bello, etc. These sectional killings as tagged by some writers were as a result of circumstantial action which was beyond the organizational structure of the revolutionist. Thus, considering the controversy surrounding the 1966 revolution, it becomes necessary to identify its commanders and leaders which according to nairaland.com were (1). Adewale Ademoyega-Yoruba (2). Kaduna Nzeogwu-Delta Igbo (3). Adeleke G-Yoruba (4). Fola Oyewole-Yoruba (5). Emmanuel Ifeajuna-Delta Igbo (6). Tijani Kastina-Hausa (7). Gibson jalo-Niger Delta and (8). Olafemiyan O.-Yoruba. The truth is that, it is not Igbo coup, the problem is that, the Igbos who should have been killed were not killed even though some of them were killed. Indeed, there were other minor participants who contributed in one way or the other to the revolution but were not the commanders of the coup. Therefore, the weight of any group is measured by the strength of its leaders and by extension ascertains the way and manner as well as when and who started the group. According to (Adewale, 1981, 55) one of the major participants of 1966 revolutionary coup in his work, *Why We Struck*:

Stated that, today, if one were to ask “When did the preparation for the revolution really begin?”, the most accurate answer would be, “from 1961”, because the three of us who formed the nucleus of the revolutionary group had met in that year. Although we had not there and then planned a revolution, we had seen eye to eye and we knew that we had a common cause. It was as if the seed was sown at that time and only needed time to germinate, grow and bear fruit. But these meetings were between Ifeajuna and me on the one hand, and between Nzeogwu and me on the other. This pattern remained almost the same throughout.

To this point, following by what Adewale captured in his work as stated above, it ordinarily implies that, he was the arrow head behind the formation of 1966 coup having been at the middle of Ifeajuna and Nzeogwu. Secondly, if you go by the numbers of the leaders in the coup, you observe that it was only two (2) Igbos, four (4) Yorubas, one (1) Hausa and one (1) Niger Delta that were leaders in the coup. The question is that, when did two (2) became greater than four (4)? Honestly, this is a case

of when a lie is told repeatedly people will start to accept it as the truth. The point to make here is that, the distorted history of 1966 coup led to the counter coup of 1966 thereby sowing the seed of continued discord among different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. To put things straight, most writers of 1966 coup did not employ objectivity in the construction of what transpired during the time under review, hence, disunity and uneven nation building became the order of the day.

Again, as rightly captured by Agbodike C. C. (2004) about some European writers whose contention was that Africa had no history worthy of studying or writing about before the advent of Europeans in the area largely because documentary history was almost non-existent among preliterate Africans and that amount to distorted history on the part of Africa and Nigeria in particular. The proponent of such view is Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, Professor A.P. Newton, Sir Reginald Coupland, etc., to them history only begins when men take to writing. However, research has proven the above contention to be wrong, [Nigeria] has not only a past but a rich socio-cultural heritage and that the study of the people's past is not only possible but is also useful and indispensable. To this point, the assertion that, Africa and Nigeria in particular had no history before the coming of Europeans is a misrepresentation of history and should be seen as baseless and historical fallacy.

## **Conclusion**

The work concluded by saying that, national disunity and lack of nation building on the part of Nigeria has its root to the lack of objectivity in most Nigeria history and should be shun in its entirety in order to make a head-way. As rightly said by (Adewale, 1981, 21). that, "the safety valves of the nation [Nigeria] were reposed in such institutions as the courts, the Census Commission, the Electoral Commission, the Police and finally the Armed Forces. But the sanctity of those institutions was being politically assailed, assaulted and dragged in the mud, so that...the ship of the nation was heading for the rocks". This is true because, Nigeria as at then would have seized to exist or become a divided nation if not the intervention of the 1966 revolutionary group, yet, few historical fallacies saw the action as sectional/regional excise whereas it was a national excise meant for the unity and development of Nigeria. Therefore, it is not proper that distorted and biased account of 1966 revolutionary coup be referenced or tagged Igbo coup as captured in nairaland .com whereas the coup was a national act with clear intention to ameliorate corruption in Nigeria's socio-economic and political face without consideration to tribal sentiment. Historical scholarship accounted by (Falola, et al, 1989,2) opined that, "a long historical view not only helps us to keep calm in time of trouble but also reminds us that there is an end to the longest tunnel. Even if we can see no hope ahead, a historical interest as to what will happen is a help in carrying on".

Admittedly, the attainment of objectivity in history is not a tea-cup-party but the combination of respect for basic documented facts, sufficient scrutiny of sources, and restrained creativity that does not distort the real story is what distinguishes good renderings of history from works of fiction, fabrication, falsehood and most importantly from mere write-up that is meant for propaganda and cheap popularity. Consequently, professional Body such as Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) should as a matter of urgency stipulate procedures to checkmate the excesses of lack of historical objectivity and if possible, sponsor it as a bill at the National Assembly indicating grounds for professionalism in historical writing. Moreso, the construction/writing of socio-economic and political history of any group or Nigeria as a country by non-professionals should involve at least one or two professional Historians, hence they are acquainted with the culture of objectivity in historical writing.

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## **POTENCY OF THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE OF AFRICAN ETHICS: IMPLICATIONS TO THE CHALLENGE OF DEHUMANIZATION IN NIGERIA**

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### **Executive Summary**

*Within the broader spectrum of human existing, the dignity of human life has continually been a global concern. Such agitations are more expressed in a context characterized by violence against human life. The scourge of dehumanization in Nigeria has prompted contributions and approaches from different fields of human endeavors. This paper premised on the potency of the distinctive nature of African ethics as an option to the Challenge of dehumanization in Nigeria. The notion is entrenched in the African religio-cultural experiences which centered on the value of human life. Methodologically, the paper employed a systematic review of African scholars that have unpacked views on the fundamentals of African ethics and its implications to threats that militates against human life. Through this methodological approach, the Nigerian context is highlighted alongside other factors that illegitimatized the dignity of human life. It also captures the various forms of dehumanization. While the paper acknowledges attempts towards curtailing violence to human life, attention is given to the Nigerian government and its relevant institutions that provides legal principles that value and protect human life in the midst of violence. The paper concludes that approaches to responding to threats to human life is not monolithic and that within the African religio-cultural experiences, there can be potent notion that can enhance the dignity of human life.*

**Keywords:** Potency, distinctive, Africa, ethics, implications, dehumanization, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Within the broader spectrum of human existing, abuse on the dignity of human life has continually been a global concern. The scourge of this omen is more expressed in a

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context characterized by violence against human life. The plague of dehumanization in Nigeria as captured in this paper is attributed to the eruption of different forms of violent conflicts perpetrated against human life. The devastating effects of violence in the Nigerian society is more described and understood in the light of the harassment, traumatic experiences and the colossal loss of the human lives. The incessant cruelty upon the dignity of the human life consequent to the aforementioned calls into question the responses and approaches employed by concerned individuals and groups within and outside Nigeria towards mitigating this threat to human life. This paper is premised on the potency of the distinctive nature of African ethics as an option towards curbing the Challenge of dehumanization in Nigeria. The notion is entrenched in the African religio-cultural experiences which are centered on the value and dignity of human life. While taking into account the pluralistic nature of the African society, attention is tilted towards exploring the African system of thought in conversation with the African ethics rooted in the people's religio-cultural experiences. The paper leveraged on African notion proposed by some African scholars as an attempt to propagate the potency of the African ethics and its capacity to not only sustains the dignity of the human life but to also protect it. Methodologically, the paper employed a systematic review of literatures African scholars that have unpacked views on the fundamentals of African ethics and its implications to threats that militates against human life. Through this methodological approach, the Nigerian context is highlighted alongside other factors that illegitimatized the dignity of human life. The factors that illegitimated the dignity of the human person in Nigerian context are occasioned by the negative application of the Nigerian pluralism which often resulted to religious, political and ethnic conflicts. The conceptual understanding of dehumanization was overviewed with the aim of accentuating its various forms within its nomenclature. While the paper acknowledges attempts by the Nigerian government and other spirited individuals towards curtailing violence to human life, attention is given to the Nigerian government and its relevant institutions saddled with the responsibility to enforce corresponding legal and moral laws that promote the value and wellbeing of the human life in the midst of violence. The institutions as mentioned in this paper include elements of the Nigerian judicial system which focuses on the wellbeing of human dignity. Other bodies which manifestos are rooted on the need to contribute towards offering a more life-giving are referenced. The paper concludes that approaches to responding to threats to human life is not monolithic and that within the African religio-cultural experiences, there can be potent notion that can enhance the dignity of human life in Nigeria.

### **Nigerian contextual background**

The complexity of Nigeria as the most populated Nation State in Africa is attributed to its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi religious character. In all, it has about 390 ethnic groups. Three quarters are from the Middle Belt and forty-four of

these are from Plateau State. According to Ogunleye (2021), the pluralistic nature of Nigeria has undoubtedly contributed greatly to the eruption of different forms of conflict experienced in most parts of Nigeria. According to Oyeboade, (2022) Nigeria's complex socio-political identities have been exploited by those who wish to use its ethnic and religious diversity as a reason to engage in violent conflict against human life. He further stated how Nigeria is today a context engulfed with religious and ethnic intolerance. Sometimes beginning from a simple misunderstanding, they can metamorphose into religious, communal, and ethnic clashes that often result to denying the fullness of life. Nigerian urban and semi urban areas have been affected most by these religious and multi ethnic conflicts. Whenever conflicts of this nature reoccur, they erupt much more and claim many more casualties.

In the light of this reality, ethno-religious and socio-political conflicts in contemporary Nigeria is attributed to the contentious atmosphere shaped by multiplicity of religions, socio-economic instability, Political rivalry and grave interest for amassing wealth at the expense of human dignity. Kolapo and Njoku (2022) further hold that, ethnic and religious conflicts against human life are attributed to such ill-gotten power, superiority, wealth linked to the religious and ethnic identities. This is contained in the discriminatory attitude of those in power. In recent decades religious and ethnic affiliation have become major criteria for appointments to key offices, the military, the police force, the civil service, enrolment in schools, colleges and universities the military, the police force, the civil service, enrolment in schools, colleges and universities, and so on. In a report on Nigeria at 2050, Nigeria is rated as the most complex country in Africa. This is attributed not only to its over increasing population and its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi religious character, but the skyrocketing of factors that militate against the dignity of the human person in Nigeria. The diversities as pointed earlier which is supposed to be harnessed or managed towards the enhancing tranquility of the human person has turn into prerequisites for describing and treating the humanity. Cutting across the six geo-political zones it has been estimated that there are about fifty ethnic groups in Nigeria. As pointed out in this report, the pluralistic nature of Nigeria has contributed and will greatly contribute to forms of violence and poverty due to its pluralistic nature. The report further holds that due to the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, ethnic culture has wrongly been utilized to breed tribalism, manipulation of religious sentiments, regionalism, religious fundamentalism, and political tension which has left the country in a trail of destructive violence that does not only threaten the integrity of Nigeria but also threatens human life (Yebona, 2022).

This contentious situation according to Nirmalasari and Sarwono (2021) presents an atmosphere of rancor and domination within the Nigerian community. They further argued that, violence against the human life can be triggered through symbols because

they can speak and provoke the people's emotions which mostly result into violence. Accordingly, the violence in Nigeria does not only seek to destroy or cause physical damage to lives and properties but also has psychological connotations that undermine human dignity due to cultural, religious, or political affiliations.

### **Conceptual understanding of dehumanization**

Dehumanization is a social construct that expresses an attempt or act that denies full humanness from another human person. Dehumanization is described as the gruesome treatment of the human person with the aim to deny him or her the quality of humanness. Bar-Tal describes dehumanization as an attempt to delegitimize the human person through certain religio-cultural beliefs that seeks to dominate and discriminate a person and makes him or her appears to be inhuman. Such religious and social groups have the tendency of labeling and rejecting an individual or group of persons as inhuman. For example, during the advent of colonial administration and slave trade imposed on most African countries, people were harassed and treated as inhuman due the European system of thought and belief that the black were less human This form of dehumanization was expressed before and during the advent of colonialism in Africa and particularly in Nigeria, Dehumanization with its discriminatory tendency was entrenched in the European system of thought which became a trajectory for treating human persons in Africa. Euro-centrism is a system of thought developed within the cultural and social context of Europe which seeks to undermine other systems of thought, making western European values and culture as the universal standard through which humanity can be ascertained (Araujo and Maeso 5). The Eurocentric system of thought postures triumphalist and superiority tendencies during its encounter with non-European anthologies (Serequeberhan, 2002). This assumption was expressed in different forms by traditional Eurocentric epistemologies. For example, Emmanuel Kant states that, "The Negroes in Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling" (110-111). Contributing on the same premise, Hegel states that, The Negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. We would lay aside all thought of reverence and morality-all that we call feeling if we would rightly comprehend him there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character (2).

Making a sense from the way and manner in which Christianity was introduced into the context of Africa, Tanger T. in his article Titled, "Missionary Adaption of African Religious Institutions: The Massai Case", delineates that the use of descriptive words such as barbarism, superstition, treachery, cunning, laziness, paganism, general moral depravity and people who lived in a perverted environment to describe the Africans, denotes the insensitivity of the Western missionaries on relevant value system that constitute the African context (1989:113).

## **Government response to the scourge of dehumanization in Nigeria**

Attempts by the Nigerian Government and other concern bodies to contribute towards curbing the scourge of violence against human life in Nigeria have brought about the introduction of alternatives approaches. Supported by Chapter four of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 section 33 as amended especially pointed out how the dignity of the human life should be protected. Based on the Nigerian perspective, the right to live is the right of all citizens to live and enjoy all privileges of protection and security to life (Seiyeta 2). An advanced understanding of the protection of the dignity of the human life as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution stipulates that the right to life encompasses right to enjoy good education, good health and right to good social amenities and good security in the Nigerian context. In the light of the conceptual definition of the dignity of life, Seiyeta (2-3) further delineates how disadvantaged a life that constantly lives yet is skeptical about the hope to life within a particular government. Such a life one cannot meaningfully participate or contribute in the development of the society.

In an attempt to respond to the adverse effect dehumanization during conflicts, the Nigerian government gives attention to the services of Law enforcement agencies and their operation mechanism enforcing the law upon perpetrators with the sole aim of curbing violence of which ever form in the country. The utilization of the military and police force in reducing the eruption and impact of dehumanization was assumed to be the first response by the government to the violence in Nigeria. However, it was proved abortive due to religious, ethnic sentiments. The military and police force were accused to have sided with their religious and ethnic counterparts to fight the other. Furthermore, as a result of the influx of firearms and counterfeit uniforms within the warring points, the military and police lost credibility before warring communities (Krause 49). The struggle by the Nigerian government and the security agencies to ensure security of all citizens seems to be sabotaged through external influence. This paper argued that national security towards protecting the dignity of the human person can be achieved only if the history of dehumanization is critically examined and alternative approaches are explored.

Another response mostly adapted by the Nigerian Government is the declaration of state of emergency. Based on the situation under consideration, in its bit to stop further escalation of how the human person is dehumanized, the Nigerian government declared state of emergency on some states. According to Premium Times of May 2013, the historical submission spelled that when Nigeria got its independent, there was alleged plan to overthrow the Federal Government by force which on 26 October, the Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa declared a state of emergency by banning public meetings and procession in the whole of Western Nigeria. It was reported that while citing

section 305 of the 1999 Constitution, Obasanjo declared state of emergency on Plateau state. In his attempt to respond to how human lives are dehumanized through the eruption of violent conflicts of diverse forms. President Goodluck Jonathan on behalf of Government declared state of emergency on Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. These attempts were necessitated by failure of security operatives in gaining control over the spread of dehumanization through ethno religious and socio-political conflicts that were out of the control of the local police services (Ushe 5).

In recent times, the Nigerian government employed the institution of Judicial Commission of Enquiries as response to ethno religious conflict that erupted in Nigeria. A Judicial Commission of Enquiry as the name implies is a panel that is judicially inclined saddled with the responsibility to dialogue with warring ethnic and religious groups and through a white paper report to Government all proceedings of enquiry and the way forward. The Nigerian Commissions of enquiry apportioned to states to partner with political stakeholders, security and religious leaders and through dialogue with victims explore remote and immediate causes to the ethno religious conflict with the view to produce a report to government. The commission of enquiry set by the Federal Government of Nigeria to investigate remote and immediate causes in most states that have experienced ethno religious conflicts such as Plateau, Kaduna, Borno and Yobe, seem not to achieve the desired objectives due to religious and ethnic influences (Higazi 4-5). While examining the potency of the work carried out by commission of inquiry in where they have functioned, it can be inferred that the outcomes seemed not to be potent enough to achieve the desired objectives. The intangible outcome according to Danfulani (2) were attributed to the inability of the state government to arrest, charge, prosecute initiators and perpetrators and sentence them if found guilty after they have been tried in a court of law). These lapses on the side of the panels and government have shipwrecked efforts in responding to ethno religious conflict and the adverse effect particularly on the human life (2-3).

### **Conceptual understanding of Ethics**

The distinctive nature of the African ethics can best be understood in the light of the conceptual understanding of ethics. Although the understanding of ethics may be relative based on the context it is being socially constructed and applied, yet it is generally perceived as the science of conduct. Fundamentally, ethics is considered as the ground principle by which people conduct themselves. While conversing with the various forms of ethics, Socrates argued that the emerging legal laws in every human community is a translation of ethical belief systems constructed from within a religio-cultural and socio-political experiences of a particular people. These ethical belief systems express the basic virtues of ethics that informs the right behavior of individuals and groups within the human community Strong & Meyer 2-4). The ethical values

focus on shaping people's behaviors with a clear-cut determination to be honest, fair and respect to the dignity of the human life. The ethical values of protecting the human life as entrenched in both ethical and legal principles of the Nigerian Laws constitute the supreme or golden rule upon which every citizen must be subservient (Seiyeta 2-3).

### **The distinctive nature of African Ethics**

The distinctive nature of the African ethics emanates from a comparative study of human ethical principles. The unique nature of the African ethics is identified in the light of the western moral and ethical principles embedded in a system of thought that is individualistic and discriminatory. The visibility of such elements is more expressed when the western system of thought introduced in a different context. Euro-centrism is an ethical principle developed within the cultural and social context of Europe which seeks to undermine other ethical guidelines, making western European values and ethics as the universal standard through which humanity can be ascertained (Araujo and Maeso, 2015). The Eurocentric ethical principles posture triumphalist and superiority tendencies during its encounter with non-European anthologies (Serequeberhan, 2002). This assumption was expressed in different forms by traditional Eurocentric epistemologies. For example, Emmanuel Kant states that, "The Negroes in Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling" (1960: 110-111). Contributing on the same premise, Hegel states that, The Negro as already observed exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state. He further distant all thought of reverence, morality, feelings from the black Africans and nothing harmonious with humanity can be found in the African personality (2001). From the foregoing, it can be argued that the euro-centric ethical principles as introduced in Africa during the European encounter with the indigenous people carried some forms of dehumanization. Disassociating the humanity of the Africans from reverence, morality and feelings, is an attempt to deny them the quality of their humanity. It on the basis of the ethical principles that the paper quest for a distinctive African ethics that is potent to curb such forms of dehumanization.

### **Potency of the distinctive African ethical principle**

Through an ethics of care contained within the religio-cultural ethical principle of Ubuntu, every human person is expected to contribute towards protecting the dignity of humanity. The Ubuntu Ethical principle represents sacredness, goodness, tenderness to the human person (Obaje and Uzodike 36). One of the elements that constitute the Ubuntu principle as pointed out by Tutu is the religio-cultural understanding that every person within the larger human community belongs to a greater whole irrespective of his or her affiliation (Hendrick:17-18). Based on this understanding, the human person is honored and respected unconditionally devoid of any form of dehumanization. Thus, the ethical principle within the Ubuntu philosophy is considered as resource which can

be utilized to honor and respect humanity can be harnessed (:17). For example, the capacity and resilience of an African ethical principle identified within the Pyam, a tribe within plateau State of Nigeria, takes root in the understanding of God in relation to life in the community. Within the greater whole of humanity, every member participates in the wellbeing of every person irrespective of her or his affiliation.

Among the Pyem ethnic group, the Pyem religious and cultural medium for protecting and fostering mutual relationship between the human person is made the center stage life in the community. This is expressed in the drinking of local brew by two persons at the same time. According to Alfred Daspan, this form of African ethics is utilized to curb dehumanization by a community against another human community through ethnic conflicts. In an atmosphere of dehumanization, the traditional council within the Pyam is the body given specific responsibility of upholding the dignity of the human life in the community. To curb the menace of dehumanization, the local brew is brought in a calabash and the two individuals are asked to drink at the same time while one hand holds the calabash and the other holds the opposing individual. Both parties then drink the local brew from the same calabash (73).

Symbolically, the calabash is interpreted as both individuals having been originated from the same Supreme Being who is the source of all life. Holding each other while drinking the local brew means that their differences are not powerful enough to change the religio-cultural view and understanding of the Supreme Being as the source of all life. The local brew represents the condenser of all their grievances, anger and hatred that is converted to love and forgiveness and respect to the human life. Through this cultural practice, the human life is dignified in the face two individuals involving in an act of dehumanization (Daspan 74). From the Kadung's religio-cultural experience in Plateau State, Pokol (271-272) in his concept of Sumgi relates how two sprouted yam tubers from one single yam in the ground symbolizes that humankind although they may have their differences, yet they are from the same origin. While Pokol's concept emanated from a different ethnic group, it is relevant to this form of maintain human dignity among the Pyam who view drinking from the same calabash as depicting humankind having the same origin. Although this form of conflict resolution among the Pyam ethnic group involves two members of the community, it is still not divorced from the quest to always give attention to the common good of the community by traditional council leaders and lay members. It is an ethical principle that upholds the common good of the community. It is also relevant since it neutralizes grievances, wrong perceptions, hatred and any other threat dehumanizes the human life.

## Conclusion

Dehumanization has been a threat to the dignity of the human life in most Nigerian communities. This threat is undoubtedly expressed in the different forms of violent conflicts that have erupted in Nigeria. Due to ethnic and religious conflict, the quality of the human life was denied not only by the animalistic killings of human life, but also the verbal and psychological forms of dehumanization. Taking into account the various approaches to curbing this menace, this paper explored the distinctive African ethical principles embedded within the religio-cultural and socio-political experiences of particularly the Pyam people.

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## **SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN CULTURE AND GENDER ISSUES: THE IGBO CULTURE IN PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines contemporary African culture and gender issues, with specific reference to the sociolinguistic study of the Igbo culture of southeast Nigeria. Since gender issues are one of the most significant aspects of contemporary African culture, the study aims to discover whether Igbo gender issues are properly balanced between male and female genders or skewed in favour of or against a gender. Igbo cultural gender issues examined include defined gender roles, where men are typically the protector of their families and breadwinner while women are caregivers and home keepers; gender issues as embodied in proverbs; gender based cultural practices during marriage, child-upbringing, burial and mourning; and some aspects of language use. The major data for this study were collected through distant and participant observations, and seeking audience with specific actors in cultural issues. Few data materials were sourced from the literature. Analysis of data was by description. One major finding of the research is that although gender issues in contemporary Igbo society cut across both genders, the negative issues are discovered to be skewed against women, especially in language use, proverbs and cultural practices during burial and mourning. Also discovered is that some issues are being affected by modernity, either positively or negatively. The paper, therefore, concludes that gender issues in contemporary African culture, nay Igbo culture, are part of the true definition of our Africanness. While the positive gender issues should be sustained, the negative ones should be allowed to be reformed or swallowed up by modernity.*

**Keywords:** African culture, Proverbs, Gender-based proverbs, Igbo culture, Gender roles

### **Introduction**

When we talk about language, we refer to the communicative element at different level. Language being specifically the attribute of humans for communication and interaction cannot be extricated from the society. Language enhances effective communication and interaction and this in turn results in a cohesion and integration among a given speech community. Knowledge of a language can be the same as being acquainted with the pattern of principles that govern the language. Hence, one can correctly present the true nature of any well-formed sentence of the particular language (Recanati, 2002). Language serves various functions in a

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society. The aspect of linguistics that takes cognizance of this is sociolinguistics. People normally use utterances with implied meaning in their day-to-day communication. To guess that implied meaning, they should know where or when the utterance is stated based on the context, in order to achieve the set objective of the utterance itself. This determines how the addressee's interpretation of what the speaker really wants to address is synchronized. The context of the expression or utterance stimulates the addressee to interpret the meaning of the utterance.

Communication is an important thing and language helps in the daily communication practice by the community. In linguistics, language is an agreed vocal symbol system in the sense that it is used by groups of people in collaboration, communication, and self-identifying. Language is used to convey the ideas of the speaker. Language does not only represent ideas but also represents social identity (Agbedo, 2015).

Sociolinguistics can be described as the study of language in relation to the society. Hence, proverbs are words or statements with deep meaning in language specific. In Igbo language, proverbs play various roles such as; cautioning, directions, counsel, even ironic insults, etc. at this end, this paper tends to view the sociolinguistic study of contemporary African culture and gender issues, from the Igbo culture in perspective. In clear term, it aims as ascertaining the way by which language use, and proverbs are used across both genders in discovering some issues that are being affected by modernity, either positively or negatively. Hence, this paper adopts a descriptive approach in its analysis.

## **Literature Review**

### *Language*

Specifically, language is a medium of communication. According to Sanusi (1996), "Language is a medium of thought". It is a means of expressing of intentions and emotion, reacting to human beings at different times and situation, influence people at different circumstances and so on through the mass media. This shows that communication is an important thing and language helps in the daily communication practice by the community. As Agbedo (2015) states it, "In linguistics, language is an agreed vocal symbol system. It is used by groups of people in collaboration, communication, and self-identifying". Beyond conveying or representing one's ideas, language also represents social identity. Even the songs as used in this paper are elements of language which means that language can be expressed in different ways by various medium. In the words of Hymes (1972), he argues that the study of language must concern itself with describing and analyzing the ability of the native speakers to use language for communication in real situations (communicative competence) rather than limiting itself to describing the potential ability of the ideal speaker/listener to produce grammatically correct sentences (linguistic competence), Speakers of a language in particular communities are able to communicate with each other in a manner which is not only correct but also appropriate to the socio-cultural context. This ability involves a shared knowledge of the linguistic code as well as of the socio-cultural rules, norms and values which guide the conduct and interpretation of speech and other channels of communication in a community. Even though we take the concept of language for granted, it is of extreme importance. It is not

gainsaying that language developed as an oral phenomenon before it becomes written and standardized after which it becomes a tool through which we organize our thoughts into meaningful symbols. Practically, language is the most important form of human communication to many, which has served as the most efficient and versatile means of everyday activity. It is important to note that language is mainly a human activity. When language is used in the society for communication, it points to sociolinguistics which will be discussed in this paper.

### *Sociolinguistics*

Sociolinguistics as the name implies is the combination of society and linguistics which means the relationship of language and society. Hence, (Wardhaugh, 1986:12) opines that sociolinguistics is the study that is concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal of a better understanding of the structure of language and of how language functions in communication.

Sociolinguistics by Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2011) is the study of the correlation between linguistic variables and non-linguistic variables that reflect ideologies in communication power among those speaking a language.

According to Matthew (2007), sociolinguistics is generally conceived as the sociology of language, on one hand, and the study of how language is used or evolved in a society on the other hand. Furthermore, Nwala (2008), states that language is an exclusive and unique property of human beings as members of the society, which structures the system to conventionally meet with the daily communication needs of the society and the occupants. This means that language is an indispensable tool for communication among humans in any given society. Subsequently, Trudgill (1974: 32) defines Sociolinguistics as "that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the field of language and society and has close connections with the social sciences, especially social psychology, anthropology, human geography and sociology." Furthermore, he states that language can be viewed as a socio-cultural entity and the realization of social competence in connection with the social variables and the manifestation of linguistic variations.

Furthermore, Wardhaugh (2010) opines that sociolinguistics directly studies how language varieties are identified and their uniqueness among groups and classes, distinguishable by identifiable social variables, ethnic allegiance, religious affiliation, social status, gender, age, education, and how adherence to these variables prompt the categorization of communicative varieties. In addition to other scholars, Yule (2010:254), states that sociolinguistics focuses on language which deals with social and cultural phenomenon in the society. It usually explores the field of language and society which are related to social sciences, especially psychology, anthropology, and sociology. As this paper looks out for the proverbs that are used for gender differentiations, it is expedient that the concept of proverb is discussed.

### *Proverbs*

A proverb (from Latin: *proverbium*) is a simple and insightful, traditional saying that expresses a perceived truth based on common sense or experience. Proverbs are based on symbolic or metaphorical language. Metaphors used as an aspect of a teaching method could be effective because they could enhance the conceptualization of abstract ideas. Entwistle (2000) is of the view that metaphors reveal only part of the answers and learners could be actively involved in completing and understanding the meaning of metaphors. It is seen that proverbs encourage curiosity about their meanings. They also exert pressure or, at the least, suggest that ideas should be related to prior knowledge and experience. Explicitly, proverbs communicate in a symbolic way, which is not direct or literal.

In African languages, proverbs are used consciously to educate and to manipulate and persuade. McKenna (1974) describes proverbs as a way in which society warns its members of the dangers of life. Lewis (2011), states that African proverbs are the foundation of social and cultural wisdom and therefore serve as the basis for formulation of concepts that govern the social relations. According to Daniel, Smitherman-Donaldson and Jeremiah (1987), proverbs are central to abstract thinking and reasoning. Nnadi (2009) in his conceptualization of proverbs, sees it as embodiment of wisdom, and beauty on the aggregate, proverb expresses wit, philosophy, vision and wisdom that strike with its beauty which result from its sense, its shortness and the literary devices with which it is embellished. In the words of Boateng (1983:332), a proverb conveys a message in a way in which a child also learns to reflect on the possible meanings of the proverb. It is an indirect way of teaching through which a child does not feel bombarded by rules. Furthermore, Boateng (1983:332) states that ancestors play an important role in giving the proverb strength, in that a phrase such as “It is the ancestors that said...” is sometimes used before a proverb. Boateng (1983:331) also points that proverbs are “validators of traditional procedures and beliefs” and warns that the rejection of black African heritage will leave the black African with a feeling of lost identity.

Oha (1997) studies the semantics of female devaluation in Igbo proverbs. He identifies Igbo proverbs that are face-threatening to women as against those that are in affinity with their face wants and noted the preponderance of the face threatening proverbs over the face preserving ones in relation to women. Using the politeness principle, Oha argues that the expression of the anti-woman bias in Igbo culture suggests patriarchal inferiorization of womanhood. He perceives a stronger masculine presence in Igbo proverbs which imposes the interpretation of proverbs in Igbo discourse. One thing about proverbs is that proverbs conceal and reveal information and often leave one with a question that one has to answer oneself. Proverbs function metaphorically in the same way that visual communication design does.

### **Contemporary African Culture and Gender Issues**

The African culture is in varieties and variables which are enshrined in tangible and intangible aspects. When we talk about tangible aspect, we refer to the physical items of a culture such as food, dressing, etc. but intangible is the unseen but experienced aspect of the culture like language. The word ‘*gender*’ is the state of being male or female. In African society and Igbo in particular, the gender peculiarities and patriarchal construct remain the bane across virtually

all spheres of life in the society because the Igbo society is a ‘*child sensitive*’ one. Patriarchy in the words of Walby (1990) is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. Ojukwu (2015) simply put patriarchy to mean the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family; extension of male dominance over women in society in general. This implies that males hold power in all the vital institutions of the society, making the women suffer some constraints in the society. Ojukwu (2015: 12) further explaining the greater level of gender sensitivity extents that boys are brought up to see themselves as superior sex to girls and as such, boys feel stronger, more important and indispensable, while the females are trained to see themselves as weaker sex or even as appendages to the men folk. This is as a result of what Ibekwe (2018: 204) calls “natural factor” where she submits that this natural factor of being born a man or a woman places women in a subservient position in society and thus situates them mostly for indoor activities. Williams (1988) and Mahawonku (1988) in Obienusi and Chikwendu (2020) both emphasize these indoor activities of women when they say that ‘*women are the nutritional bedrock of human society, who feed, nurture mankind and manage the home*’.

In the words of Ozumba (2005: 1527), this silent but rigorous school of thought about the patriarchal and matriarchal stereotype was injected into the traditional institution of ndi Igbo which has caused menace over the years. As a result of this, Madunagu (2010: 48) states that female gender encounters various forms of discrimination, physical and emotional torture that pervades all aspects of their life, from childhood till death. This problem of Igbo women is similar to the situation of the women of Zimbabwe. Tsitsi Dangaremba (1988) recognizes the suffering of women in Zimbabwe and uses Tambu’s mother to speak their minds- ‘This business of womanhood is a burden. How could it not be? Aren’t we ones that bear children? When it is like that you can’t Just decide today, I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, When there are sacrifices to be made...’ (p. 16)

Here, womanhood is referred to as ‘business’ because it is seen as an enterprise a woman engages in and gives full time to for life just like a business one does for a living. Womanhood is also described as being a burden and full of sacrifices to the extent that a woman cannot fully decide what to do or have a plan of her own and carry it out the way she wants without being interrupted by responsibilities of the members of her household. Such business like bearing and rearing children, cooking, doing domestic chores (which sometimes not recognized or appreciated), farming, making handicraft, baskets, calabash in farming season; making earthen wares, ornaments like beads, anklets, necklaces and bangles during non-farming and non-harvesting seasons.

To this end, women are being discriminated against in various ways whereby their subordination has actually exposed them to difficult obnoxious practices meted out to them in the name of culture and tradition. However, this happens because the patriarchal institution is given prominence in the scheme of things (like most of their laws or traditions are gender discriminatory), hence, giving no room for equity and freedom. Several cases of the gender issues in Igbo culture are expressed in the use of proverbs which this paper looks out for.

However, due to civilization and modernization, some aspects of the culture have kept evolving including language use, gender issues, etc.

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

The data would be presented according to the classification of context which are; gender-based proverbs during marriage, child-upbringing, burial and mourning, and some aspects of language use.

### **Burial and Mourning**

When it comes to burial and mourning of a man, the woman always face several levels of humiliation from the people especially the husband's brothers (brothers-in-law). In the olden days, the woman will be forced to shave her hair which is a sign of last respect for her husband during the burial; she will be restricted of movement for a long time, and other activities which are not palatable. But when it comes to the burial and mourning of a woman, the man does not face any level of humiliation, rather he gets consolation irrespective on how his wife died. A man's movement is not restricted. He can bury his wife on a Friday, accepts condolences on that same day and on Saturday. Then, goes for outing service on Sunday, stays extra one day being Monday, and goes back to his base on Tuesday if such a man is not home based. It would not look strange to people unlike in the case of a woman who buries her husband. There are proverbs that are used in such situations, such as;

*Anya mmiri bu n'obi ka o na-agba nwoke* (a man sheds tears in his heart).

Whereas the woman who refuses to shed tears will be seen as hard-hearted, or heartless, or difficult, etc, with suspense as the killer of the husband. So, in the time of mourning, the woman will be forced to shed tears as a proof of brokenness. The man will be seen as normal for not shedding tears in the sense that men are seen as being strong and emotionally stoic. By this stereotypical conception about men, they are expected to suppress their feelings in the time of mourning which can create pressure on them where they are trying to conform to traditional masculine ideals. However, in the contemporary society, this act is being challenged but not as such especially in remote areas of Igbo land.

*Nwaanyi di ya nwuru ma buru ukpa jewe ahia, maara ihe gburu di ya* (a woman whose husband dies and she takes basket to the market, knows what killed her husband).

When a man dies, it is expected that the woman stays indoor (without going to market) to mourn her husband. But when a woman dies, the man does not stay in-door to mourn his wife. This act has been challenged in the contemporary society which has led to the fair treatment given to a widow but not in all parts of Igbo society.

*Ajadu nwaanyi idi ime bu aru* (a widow being pregnant is an abomination)

*Nwoke gara ira nwanyi no na mkpe na-aku aka n'uzo, o siri na di ya no ebe ahu?* (A man that goes in to have sex with a widow and knocks, did he say her husband is there?) These proverbs, however, do not provide counters of the widowers who eventually impregnate women or the

woman who goes in to have sex with a widower. This proves the one-sidedness or biasness in the gender difference in Igbo society. These proverbs also show that in Igbo land, it is only women (widows) that are blamed when it comes to sex matters during mourning period.

## Gender Roles

There are times the worth of a man and a woman, including their roles, marriage-family related responsibilities, and personalities, are expressed in both positive and negative perspective using certain proverbs such as;

*Agbala galasịa, ọ laa n'useekwu* (when a woman is done moving around, she will return to the kitchen). This proverb has likened the end point of a woman's journey in the kitchen. In the olden days, the women have their permanent place and authority in the kitchen, as the men get to the field to fend for the household. However, in today's world, the narrative has changed due to civilization as women like Late Prof. Dora Akunyili (Former Director-General of National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control of Nigeria (NAFDAC), 2001-2008); Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria Former Minister for Finance, Budget and National Planning, 2011-2015) and currently the 7<sup>th</sup> Director-General of World Trade Organisation (WTO); Prof. Kate Omenugha (the current Vice Chancellor of Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State) and others are breaking barriers into leadership and making great impact in the economic world.

*Nwata mee nke oma ọ buru ome ka nna ya, mana o mee nke ojoo, ọ buru o yiri nne ya* (when a child behaves well, he will be likened to the father, but when he behaves badly, he will be likened to the mother). It is believed that bearing and raising children are mother's roles. As the children grow, they are expected to turn out positive, but if peradventure they do otherwise, the woman will be blamed for it. So, in blaming the woman, the negative attitude of the child will be attributed to the woman. However, if the child turns out positive, the man claims the glory. This proverb creates biasness in the homes against the women/mothers. In today's contemporary society, raising of children has been attributed to both the father and mother, which will give them equal share of whether the blame or glory of the child.

*Ewu nwaanyi nwe zuru onwe ya* (a goat own by a woman, fends for itself). In Igbo land, it is primarily believed that raising children is the sole duty of a woman whereas the man provides for the family. But by this proverb, the masculine gender does not believe in the efficacy of the training given by a feminine gender. It is assumed that a woman cannot give a holistic and effective training to children. This proverb is being challenged in today's world as the reign of single mothers and feminists is taking the stage irrespective of the negative impacts on the society. Moreover, as the world keeps evolving, some of these defined responsibilities have been shifted, as some women now provide for the family and men take care of the children.

*Ma amughị nwoke, agburu echie* (if there is no male child, the lineage closes). Here, the male children play the role of continuity of lineage (posterity) and that is why Igbo people place much value on the masculine gender than the feminine gender. The feminine gender was never

accorded any importance in the olden days in Igbo land while without women; there would be no male children in the first place. This singular act made some people to antagonize the need to send a woman to school as it was tagged a waste. Also, this is the reason women are not captured as part of their father's will. They are not given any inheritance in their father's house. But in today's Igbo society, the feminine gender is now more in number in schools than the masculine gender; and many families are beginning to extend father's inheritance to females. This is to say that the feminine gender has proven its vital role in the society which has lowered the perspective of this proverb.

*Ego bu mma nwoke* (money is the beauty of a man). In Igbo society, the major role a man plays is being the breadwinner who caters for the family. And in doing that, money is involved. Whenever a man is financially bouyant, he tends to be on top of the game as he will be worshipped by all asundry. Nobody cares about his behaviour, origin, or sources, but praise and accord him all the necessary respect. The character of a man (unlike a woman, as seen in Proverb 10) most times is not in check because of the maaner of prevalent stereotypical description he assumes in Igbo society, which should be considered in the modern world.

*Ezigbo àgwà bu mma nwaanyi* (good character is the beauty of a woman). In the contrast of the male's '*ego bu mma nwoke*' (as in Proverb 9), the measure of a woman's worth is basically her character. No man considers a woman beautiful if not through the lens of her character. However, in today's world, physcial beauty, financial strenght, etc are also considered when measuring the worth of a woman. Meanwhile, good character is a role every man and every woman should play in order to build strong relationship and contribute positively to society, not just women as the above proverb depicts. But unfortunately, men are seen as flawless in Igbo society which is depicted in one of her addages, *nwoke adi njo* 'no man is bad'. This is one of such sayigs which shouldbe allowed be reforming or swallowing up by modernity.

*Nwoke lusia ogu, nwaanyi enwere akuko* (when a man is done fighting, a woman tells the story).

Through this proverb men are stereoptically seen as champions and fighters, whereas women are regarded storytellers. Women are seen as weak people who are less busy and have enough time to gossip and tell stories which is not true in most cases. This religates the women to the background as those who are not achievers. However, in the contemporaray Igbo society, the women have matched to the forefront of high achievers in the society, some in their homes are breadwinners thereby changing the narratives.

## **Marriage**

*Onye kwuru ugwo isi nwaanyi nwe ya* (he who pays a woman's bride price, owns her).

There is a superiority complex which has possessed some men over women. This set of men sees paying bride price of a woman as a tool of enslaving the woman. Many Igbo men still use this in intimidating their wives. Because they assume that they own women and everything they have, some men demand for the salaries of their wives from them, expect the women to bow and beg them for their needs. Here, some women have no say but to accept the patriarch nature tradition has placed on men over them. Due to modernization, such narrative is being

challenged as women are now seen as partners in the marriage and not a mere slave. Though in some homes, women still struggle for equity which at times result to domestic violence in return.

*Nwata nwaanyi zachaa onye muru, o zawa onye na- alu* (a lady after answering whose child, will later answers whose wife).

In the olden days, it is believed that a woman has two names to answer in lifetime- the father's and husband's names. This made marriage the priority of the women in the olden days. It caused some women then to marry out of their will and choice as they were getting older. This is because they know the kind of insult and humiliation they would face if they eventually remain in their father's house without change of name as a result of marriage. However, in the contemporary society, feminine gender has fought for prestige and relevance beyond marriage which has birthed feminist movement and more. In other words, without marriage, a woman can still be relevant in the society, and accomplish her God-given purpose in life without husband-children's distractions even.

*Ugwu nwaanyi bu di ya* (the prestige of a woman is her husband).

In those days, it is believed that a woman does not have any prestige or respect except when she marries. So, a woman is only accorded respect when she marries. In the contemporary society, feminine gender has fought for prestige beyond marriage.

*Nwa agboghọ nọkarịa na be nne ya, o ghorọ amosu* (a lady who stays too long in her parent's home without getting married, turns to a witch).

In the olden days in Igbo land, the relevance of a feminine gender is so much attached to marriage. This put much pressure on the feminine to marry and leave their *fathers' houses*. However, this proverb refers to the abode of a lady to be that pertaining to her mother- *be nne ya* 'her mother's house' (feminine gender) instead of *be nna ya* 'her father's house' (masculine gender). What does this imply? Could it be that her overstay is the fault of her mother? No. It is just that women are being relegated in Igbo society and taken as cause of misfortune when the situation of a child is a negative one (cf. Proverb 6). In today's world, due to civilization and modernization, the feminine gender is brutally fighting the much relevance attached to them at the point of marriage.

16. *Onye nwe nwaanyi nwe ihe ya* (he who owns a woman, owns her possessions).

This proverb is used by the masculine gender to denounce the right of ownership to a feminine gender. In marriage setting, the woman has no property accorded to her irrespective of her contribution to the growth or acquisition of them. At such, the man can decide to put the woman away without any property which has broken many women. This proverb has been challenged in the contemporary society whereby through the aid of the court (judicial system), the woman secures the ownership of properties even in marriage.

### **Other Language Use**

Here, we consider how spoken variations of language are routinely employed by its native speakers; it refers to the collective habits of a language's native speakers. In Igbo cultural setting, women are restricted on how they use certain words unlike men. Such words like

private body parts- penis, vagina, and so on. For instance, men in their course of discussion freely use these words even in open places and public gatherings. But women would not call those private parts the actual names they bear; rather, they use more pleasant names to refer to them.

*Okọ kọwa nwaanyi n'otu ya, e were amu kọọ ya* (if a woman's vagina begins to scratch her, the penis is used to scratch it)

Igbo men say it this way without anyone around feeling or being offended. But when an Igbo woman says it, people around would see it as taboo or that such a woman has no respect. This makes Igbo women to find alternate names for such words and would render the above proverb as-

*Okọ kọwa nwaanyi n'ihu ukwu ya, e were odogwu kọọ ya* (if a woman's vagina begins to scratch her, the penis is used to scratch it). The vagina rendered as 'ihu ukwu' (front part of a woman's leg); and penis as 'odogwu'.

*Nwoke na-ara nwanyi ajadu a naghị atụ ujo ebe o maara ebe di ya nọ* (a man that is having sex with a widow does not fear because he knows where her husband is [in grave])

Here, there is nothing wrong when it is a man that goes in to have sex with a woman that lost her husband. He even does that without fear. The Igbo society sees that as normal but when it is a woman that lost her husband that goes to have sex with any man at all, it becomes a heavy crime. This still exists in the contemporary Igbo society and needs to be addressed. Anything called or seen as crime or taboo should be a taboo for everyone, both for male and female.

*Ma nwoke erighi ariri, ya na nwaanyi agaghị ebi* (if a man cannot condone wrath, he can't live with a woman).

This proverb poses a woman as an agent of wrath, pain, and hardship to a man, as if men are perfect and cannot cause wrath. This has birthed a negative mindset even unto the up-growing men as some are skeptical about getting married as a result of what they have heard about women from some of the married man through the channel of this proverb. But in contemporary times, men are mostly the agents of domestic violence; meaning that any woman who cannot condone wrath, she cannot live with a man.

From the above presented and analyzed data, it can be seen that some of the proverbs are being challenged by modernization and civilization in the contemporary Igbo society. More of the proverbs support the ego and positivity of the masculine gender such as; (examples 8, 11, 12), whereas many of feminine gender-based proverbs point towards humiliation, intimidation, etc such as (examples 11, 16, 20). This has brought about revolts in several quarters of life endeavor both negatively and positively. Positively, in the sense that women work harder to add more values to themselves, and to the society beyond the residency of kitchen as stated in (example 5). Negatively, this is seen as certain moves have brought distortion in the society especially in the family settings.

## Summary and Conclusion

In Igbo culture, one of the areas of study is gender issues as there have been issues emanating from the gender differences which are becoming study of concern. In this paper, a sociolinguistic study of contemporary African culture and gender issues from the Igbo culture in perspective, proverbs and some other language uses are used across both genders (male and female) in examining some issues related to gender in Igbo. Since gender issues are one of the most significant aspects of contemporary African culture, the study has x-rayed whether Igbo gender issues are properly balanced between male and female genders or skewed in favour of or against a gender. Igbo cultural gender issues examined include defined gender roles, where men are typically the protector and breadwinner of families while women are caregivers and home keepers; gender issues as embodied in proverbs; gender based cultural practices during marriage, child-upbringing, burial and mourning.

Proverbs are majorly used in this paper to mirror these gender related issues because they are words of deep understanding whose meaning have several expressive roles, and in Igbo each situation has proverbs suitable for it showing how significant proverbs are in the language. Through this paper, we see how proverbs are used across both genders in discovering some issues that are being affected by modernity, either positively or negatively. Findings reveal that majority of the proverbs give notice of positive aspect of the masculine gender while certain proverbs despise and give negative impressions of the feminine gender.

In conclusion, beyond very many aspects of proverbs in Igbo land, this paper has thrown more light on this dimension on how proverbs and other language use can be used to point to gender issues in highlighting the positive and negative sides of the both genders. It is observed that although gender issues in contemporary Igbo society cut across both genders, the negative issues are discovered to be skewed mostly against women. The paper, therefore, recommends while the positive gender issues should be sustained, the negative ones should be allowed to be reformed or swallowed up by modernity.

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