

The Democracy and Ethnicity Question in Commonwealth African Countries: A Case Study of Nigeria's Situation

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Abstract

In Nigeria, as in many Commonwealth African countries, ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping the democratic landscape. This influence is evident in voting patterns, the formation of the national assembly, the distribution of economic resources and power, and the selection of the nation's president. Various efforts have been made to develop a democratic culture among Nigeria, such as changing the national anthem, establishing the National Orientation Agency, creating an electoral tribunal, and reintroducing history into the education curriculum. However, these initiatives have not succeeded in promoting culture of democracy among Nigerians. This study aims to examine why ethnicity is prioritized over democratic culture Nigeria, understand how ethnicity inhibits democratic development. It seeks to suggest how ethnicity can connect with democratic culture in Nigeria. Recognition Theory has been adopted in this study to position ethnicity as a constructive factor in democratic development. The study employed a qualitative method for data collection, conducting in-depth interviews with participants purposefully selected from six regions of Nigeria: Northeast, North Central, Southwest, South-South, and Southeast. The findings indicate that while democracy embodies principles of constitutionalism, liberalism, and collective participation, ethnicity fosters divisions, nepotism, unrest, and unhealthy competition. The study concludes that to promote democratic development, it is essential to connect ethnicity with the advancement of democracy, the growth of secularism, and the reduction of religious, ethnic and sub ethnic, and clannish tensions, along with fostering industrialization and improved communication in Commonwealth African countries.

Keywords: Commonwealth African countries, industrialization, Nigeria, Democracy, Ethnicity Question

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Introduction

Twenty-three members of the modern Commonwealth are in Africa. (Rafferty, 2023). Thanks to the Commonwealth Charter (2013), Democracy is on the list of Commonwealth membership perquisites. (Dahl, Froomkin, and Shapiro, 2025). Commonwealth African nations are ethnically divided such as Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda: Namibia, Sierra Leone, and numerous others (Koter, 2023). Nigeria, has a population of over two hundred million people. (Worldometers, 2024). Nigeria is an amalgamation of over two hundred and twenty-five ethnic groups. The three major ethnic groups are the Yoruba, the Hausa and the Igbo. Sixty years after formal independence, it would appear people are attached to their ethnic group rather than the country. Ethnicity reflects in voting patterns, national assembly formation, economic and power distributions (Alhassan, 2025). Various attempts have been made to create democratic culture among the citizens such as changing the national anthem, creation of national orientation agency, establishing Nigeria Youth Service Corp, free economy, creation of more states and local government area. and adoption of civil education for the young generation (Anyanwu, 1982). Yet, these efforts have not yielded expected democratic values such as free and fair elections, equality, equity, free economy and others. In contemporary Nigeria, national politics, and ways of living is dominated by ethnicity.

Ethnicity and democracy are parallel concepts. In its worst manifestations, ethnicity promotes divisions, nepotism, restiveness and unhealthy competition. In theory, democratic principles promote national interest, and other core values such as patriotism, inclusion, love, recognition and development.

Ethnicity has been a recurring issue in democracy from independence to the current political dispensation in Nigeria (Onwutuebe, 2022). Ethnicity, in form and in practice, remains embedded in the modern political Nigerian democratic culture (Okpalike, 2015). And it is proving deeply problematic. The paper argues that recognizing ethnicity above democracy could undermine institutionalization of democratic culture in Nigeria the paper examines why ethnicity is politicized in democratic Nigeria, understand how ethnicity inhibits democratic development. It explores how ethnicity can connect to democratic development in Nigeria. The paper adopts qualitative method of data collection to gather information from participants in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The data collected was analyzed thematically. Finally, the paper, suggests that advancement of democratic principles is essential in connecting ethnicity with democratic culture in Nigeria.

Context

This study focuses on ethnicity and democratic culture in Nigeria. Before the imposition of formal colonial rule by external European powers in the mid-nineteen century, sub-Saharan Africa was dominated by different kingdoms, empires, ethnic groups, and clans before the scramble and partition at the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 (Yahaya, 2023). British colonization of Nigeria began in 1851 (Charles, 1967). The colonized territory consisted of different ethnic groups, kingdoms, empires, and emirates. The British divided the colonized region into Lagos colony, the Southern protectorate, and the Northern protectorate. The Lagos colony was merged with the Southern colony in 1907. Both the Southern and Northern protectorate were amalgamated in 1914 (Ajayi, 2022). The rationale behind the amalgamation was not to unite the different ethnic groups in the colony but for the ease of administration of the colony by the British. According to Emeka (2024), the roots of ethnic politics in Nigeria can be traced directly back to its colonial past, where the imposition of artificial boundaries and administrative structures disregarded ethnic identities and differences. For example, in 1922, the formation of political parties along ethnic lines demonstrated the depth of ethnic polarization within the Nigerian political landscape. The National Council for Nigeria and Cameroon (NCC), led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, represented the Eastern region, while the Northern People's Congress (NPC), was created out of the Northern Nigeria Cultural Organization, championed by Sir Ahmadu Bello and Sir, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Similarly, Afenifere, the Yoruba Cultural Organization created the Action Group (AG), led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Okibe, 2022).

Intense rivalry among different ethnic groups delayed the country's independence from the British. According to Ajayi (2022), Sir Ahmadu Bello argued that the North was not ripe for independence because the South was ahead in terms of development. He asked other regions to wait for the North until it matched up with them in terms of development. The position of Sir Ahmadu Bello reflected how ethnicity affected the nation at independence in 1960. From 1962 to 1965, the nation grappled with a series of crises, including North / South ethnic tensions, political vendettas, and thuggery, culminating in the collapse of the first republic in 1966 (Suberu, 2022). According to Emeka (2024), the struggle for political power and fear of domination further exacerbated ethnic politics in Nigeria. Despite subsequent constitutional amendments, including the creation of states and the enshrinement

of the federal character principle, ethnic politics remained deeply entrenched in the country's democratic process.

Coups and counter-coups with ethnic coloration led to civil war between 1967 and 1970 (Bradley, 2023). Nigeria returned to civil rule after many years of military interventions in 1979. Government during this period was led by Alhaji Sheu Shagari, Hausa / Fulani from the North. Civilian rule brought democracy with federal system of government. Political appointments, political arrangement, and other government business were enveloped with ethnicity because the ethnic group in power favoured, and focused on its group members only. The military, led by another Hausa / Fulani ethnic group, overthrew the civilian government, and occupied power from 1983 to 2000. During this period, the military refused to return power to civilians. Presidential elections were organized in 1993. It was won by Chief Moshood Kasimawo Abiola, a Yoruba from Southwest, Nigeria. His election was annulled and he later died in the military gulag under the watch of General Sani Abacha, a Hausa / Fulani from the North. Abacha rule from 1993 to 1998 (Idachaba, 2001) Abacha's autocratic regime came to an end after his death General Abdulsalami Abubaka. another Hausa/ Fulani came to power in 1998 and handed over to the civilian government in 1999 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). In 2000, the dawn of democracy was again marked with ethnicity. The regions in Nigeria agreed on rotational presidency to address issues of ethnicity. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba man from the Southwest became the president. His government was described as pro-Christians. Boko Haram was introduced by the politicians from the North during Obasanjo's government in 2002 (Oriola, 2022). Boko Haram attacked his government because the terrorist group wanted a separate caliphate (Zenn, 2018), and the head of government is a Yoruba and Christian from the Southwest (Barigaglia, 2012). Obasanjo handed over to President Sheu Yar-a-Dua from the North. President Goodluck Jonathan came to power after the death of Yar-a-Dua (Mckenna, 2025). Jonathan popularity dwindled because of his pro-ethnic approach in government. His ethnic group, the Ijaw dominated the government businesses (Adangor, 2018). Political class from the North used Boko Haram to terrorize the nation and to frustrate President Johnathan out power. Boko Haram kidnapped over 276 young schoolgirls (Salihu & Shodunke, 2024). It destroyed United Nations headquarters, police stations, military establishments, churches and mosque (Britannica Editors, 2025).

Ethnicity in democracy has become a vicious cycle in Nigeria (Onwutuebe, 2022). The 2015 general elections marked a pinnacle in the escalation of ethnic politics, fueled by rising insecurity and regional alliances. The emergence of alliances such as the coalition between the All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) and the Alliance Democracy (AD), which birthed the All People's Congress (APC), underscored the entrenchment of ethnic politics in Nigerian politics (Emeka, 2024). President Jonathan was removed and President Muhammadu Buhari, the Hausa / Fulani was elected as president in 2015. President Buhari's administration was characterized by naked ethnicity, with the dominance of appointments of Fulani in key institutional positions. Channeling of state resources towards particular Fulani communities. Eighty-one of hundred political appointees were northerners, (Akhigbe, 2014), President Buhari oversaw the construction of the Federal University of Transportation in Daura, Katsina State, his home town (Oyelude and George, 2022), and initiated the Kano-Maradi railway project (Chukwu, 2020). Like other leaders before him, he excluded other ethnic groups from his government. Between 2015 and 2023. He projected ethnic agenda above the national interests. He invited willing Fulani ethnic group across Africa continent to move and reside in Nigeria (Oji, Okeke, Orisakwe, & Olemeforo, 2024). Marginalization, domination, nepotism, identity, resource control and other ethnic agenda led to the formation of ethnic nationalists such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). and the Yoruba Nation. The government approval of the Fulani group to move from different parts of Africa to Nigeria was rejected by the Hausa, the Igbo, and the Yoruba (Ducrottoy, Majekodunmi, Shaw, Bagulo, Bertu, Gusi, Ocholi & Welburn, 2018).

President Bola Tinubu, a Yoruba man from the Southwest came to power in 2023. His government has been accused of nepotism, favoritism and ethnic chauvinism by the Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) (Obinna, 2025) HURIWA accused President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of fostering nepotism by appointing the Independent National Electoral Chairman, and extending the tenures of key public officials predominantly from the Yoruba ethnic group. (Fasan, 2024). Recognizing ethnicity above democracy has been a challenge in institutionalization of democratic culture in Nigeria.

Recognition, Ethnicity and Democracy

Recognition Theory, a theory of identity politics is used in this study. Recognition Theory explains why ethnicity is being used to undermine democratic process in

Nigeria. The theory is adopted in the study to understand why ethnicity is promoting above democracy, and to how to connect ethnicity to democratic development in Nigeria. Georg.W.F. Hegel first posited the concept of recognition, which was later expanded into a full social and political theory by Axel Honneth in 1992 (Brincat, 2014). Recognition Theory emphasis intersubjective recognition and equality paradigms. It states that recognition of others as people with equal rights can only come through intersubjective recognition. It is when individual possess self-esteem, self-respect and self-realisation then they will be able to function as equal partners that have claims to legitimate rights in a democratic setting (Honneth, 2001). Fraser (2003) argues that the dichotomy between legitimate and illegitimate claims creates marginalization. Ethnic groups can only function in democracy as equals through participatory parity. In situations where politicised ethnicity, and ethnic advantage prevail over other social groups in a state's territory, structures and institutions, the values associated with democracy necessitate the adoption of Recognition Theory to offset institutionalized norms which limit ethnics equality. Democracy confers legitimacy rights on different ethnic groups (Omoigberale, 2025). The major shortcoming identified with ethnicity is, it limits citizens' access to legitimate rights as citizens, rather than simply subjects (Umejesi, 2014) Legitimate rights are considered for participatory recognition in democratic development.

As mentioned above, the purpose of this paper is to examine why ethnicity is promoting above democracy in Nigerian democratic development. Recognition Theory is used in this paper to explain how and why ethnicity undermine democracy in Nigeria. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country where differences should be a strength and advantage. It is worrisome to note that instead of acquiring the advantages of ethnicity in a democratic setting, ethnicity has been an albatross that retards nationalization of democratic culture.

Methodology

Nigeria has thirty-six States with a Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. There are six geo-political zones in Nigeria: Northwest, Northeast. Northcentral. Southwest, Southeast and South south.

❖ **Sampling Techniques**

Six states were selected. Each state represents the six geopolitical zones. The criteria for selection included: (1) state in existence immediately after independence; (2) the aboriginal states; (3) state governed by non-indigene in the past. Therefore, the following six states and capital were selected based on sampling criteria stated above: Oyo (Ibadan); Enugu (Anambra); Kano (Kano); Katina (Katsina); Kogi (Lokoja) and Edo. (Benin).

❖ **Participants**

Participants in this study were selected using purposive data collection technique. Seventy-one participants were selected from the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The criteria for sampling included social parameters such as age, ethnicity, status and education. The participants consisted of traditional figures, women leaders, youth leaders, political office holders, and media.

Table 1: Distribution of Participants:

Participants	Oyo/ Ibadan	Enugu/ Enugu	Kano/K ano	Katsina/ Katsina	Kogi/ Lokoja	Edo/ Benin	Total
Traditional figures	3	2	3	3	1	1	13
Women leaders	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Youth leaders	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Political Office Holders	4	4	4	2	4	4	22
Media	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Total	13	12	13	11	11	11	71

Source: Fieldwork 2024

❖ Data Collection

Qualitative method of data collection was adopted. In-depth interviews were organized in the six selected States. In-depth interview schedule was designed to elicit information from the participants. The in-depth interview consisted unstructured questions. The interview schedule contained 13 items on democracy and ethnicity, and other questions on how to ensure that ethnicity questions are adequately addressed in democracy in Nigeria. The in-depth interview schedule contained questions on factors identified as drivers patterns and dynamics of ethnicity, which continue to divide the nation, and defy solution to the problems of democracy in Nigeria.

❖ Findings

Findings from both literature review and the fieldwork and highlight the complex interaction of multiple factors which explain the prevalence of ethnicity as a significant structural inhibitor of Nigerian democratic governance and stable nation-building: these include legacies from colonialism, enduring regional and ethnic identity, religion and religious fundamentalism instrumentalized by political actors, structures of voting wards, institutional arrangements around power sharing, and biased resource control.

❖ Colonialism

Participants in this study opined that colonial heritage of the artificial construction of Nigeria coupled with the particular political culture(s) which prevailed at independence which were ill-suited to the imposition of the Westminster constitutional model are the major problems. It was also revealed that the legacy of indirect rule combined with continuation of traditional power structures and value systems which continue after the independence make institutionalization of democratic culture a herculean task in Nigeria.

Ethnicity undermines institutionalization of democracy in Nigeria (Orji, 2024). People are attached to their ethnic group rather than the country. Politically, one region dominates the other. Interviews conducted with participants revealed how Nigeria is deeply divided as a result of colonialism which amalgamated Nigeria. A youth leader in Ibadan stated:

Nigeria is a product of British amalgamation. We are different politically, economically and socially. My ethnic group- Yoruba is distinct and sophisticated.

A traditional ruler in Kano expressed the same line of thought regarding the driver of ethnic politics:

Before the arrival of the Europeans, "Arewa", the northerners were living peacefully among themselves. Force marriage by Lord Lugard created artificial nation called Nigeria. I cherish my ethnic group. Though, we have accommodated some Fulani because of Islamic religion inclination.

❖ Identity

A participant from Enugu was asked how deeply the country is divided along the political lines. She retorted:

Ethnic politics is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. From inception the Igbo political view is different from the Yoruba, and the Hausa political understanding. At independence the Igbo aligned with the Hausa. We formed the national government at the expense of the Yoruba. Historically, the Igbo never overwhelmingly voted for the Yoruba because they often prove to be smart and independent.

A political office holder in Benin talked about accommodation and inclusiveness. He said:

We are ethnic minority. We have a sense of nationalism. One of us moved a motion for Nigeria independence in 1957. Politically, the Edo often supported the Yoruba. We are close neighbor and we shared affinity with them.

A youth leader in Lokoja lamented ethnic background consideration in the appointment of political holders such as judiciary. He said:

Judiciary which supposed to be independent is in the pocket of the executive, they are products of ethnic identity. I think, a successful democracy should rest on independent judiciary

❖ Religion

A political office holder in Kano offered a different interpretation, such as weaponization of religion, and tradition for political gains

Democracy does not identify with a particular belief. Why our leaders continue to waste the state money on pilgrimage? Is it because, a particular ethnic group is identified with a particular religion? Principle of free market which democracy support should come into play.

In contrast, a traditional leader in Enugu lamented religion domination, and how it is used as a political weapon in democracy. He retorted:

I cherish my religion, it is my way of life. I cannot continue to support political candidate from the North because they do not believe in other religion. They do not believe in freedom of religion which is one of the pillars of democracy-

Political practices which deny equality of rights between gender, tolerance and recognition of ethnic differences, and which reject Independence of the judiciary, and separation of powers, are deeply problematic to institutionalization of democratic culture in Nigeria.

❖ **Patterns**

Ethnicity is reflected in voting patterns, power sharing, and resource control. Ethnic identity is a predominant deterministic principle in the national affairs thus affects national democracy and development.

❖ **Voting Pattern**

Ethnic identity forms the basis of voting patterns in Nigeria since independence. Hausa/ Fulani dominated political power since independence because of their population and numerical strength, patterns of recruitment and appointments in the military. Gimbiyar Hausa (2024) provided the distribution of the population of different ethnic groups as follow: Hausa - 30%; Yoruba - 15.5%; Igbo - 15.2%; Fulani - 6%; Tiv - 2.4%; Kanuri - 2.4%; Ibibio - 1.8%; Ijaw - 1.8%; Nupe - 0.96%, and Other - 24.04% The north has produced nine out of sixteen head of state / presidents since independence. A political officer holder in Oyo State lamented:

I have to support a candidate from region. Some that understand my language and respect my views about life. It is difficult to produce the president from your ethnic group if you are not in majority. You have to compromise and patronize. This is what killing our democracy.

A youth leader opinion in Edo was similar to the above opinion on the voting pattern. He explained:

We are from a minority tribe. We think very well before deciding on the national candidate to be voted for. We refer a candidate from the Yoruba because of our historical antecedent. Ethnicity was the major determinant of our choice in the last presidential election. You may ask another participant.

❖ Power Sharing

Participants explained that political office distribution and access to the national positions is determined by ethnic affiliation. Most of the offices at the centre of a state (what about federal politics?) are occupied by the ethnic group with a large population and that belong to the same religion set. A traditional figure in Enugu state retorted:

It is a winner takes all. You get appointment if a member of your ethnic group occupied the one seat at the center. The spirit of democracy does not support inequality. This attitude is killing our democracy in Nigeria.

A media person in Ibadan looked at the problem of power sharing from the history of the military coups. He lamented:

The problem with power sharing led to the termination of the first republic in 1996. The problem persists until today. Political appointees occupied by people from the same ethnic group, most especially the sensitive positions such as finance, Chief of Army Staff, Electoral chairperson, justice and others for patronage and perpetuation of power

A woman leader in Enugu explained the consequences of undemocratic culture:

Ethnicity consideration in democracy often led to political unrest and agitations. Lack of equity in power sharing creating social problems for you. Poverty, militancy, terrorism, banditry, restiveness and social maladies are products of undemocratic culture.

❖ Resource Control

Undemocratic culture reflects in economic distribution. People of the same ethnic cleavage enjoy juice contracts, appointments and patronage. A youth leader in Ibadan stated:

Look, most important offices are occupied by the major ethnic group. You cannot be appointed if you cannot practice their religion, if you cannot speak their language.

A youth leader from Enugu lamented:

Most oil rigs in the southeast and southsouth are occupied by those from the North. Is this democracy? I asked. Democracy is about equity, justice, and progress.

This subsection identified undemocratic culture exhibited through resource control in Nigeria. It also examined problems of power sharing, disregard for Constitution:

human rights abuse, suspension of rule of law. Voting patterns are based on ethnic identity.

❖ Dynamics

Ethnic identity is affecting democratic development in Nigeria. The dynamic undemocratic culture was examined through concepts such as nationalism, agitation for self-rule, institutional decay, and injustice and lack of equity.

❖ Insecurity

The ethnic consideration in the nation's life has led to the atmosphere of insecurity in the country. The country is facing with the problem of marginalization, exclusion, underemployment, gender inequality, and violence. A media person in Lokoja stated:

Kidnapping has become a business in Nigeria. Terrorists from a particular ethnic group are on sprawl. Bandits are attacking cities, villages, Militants are attacking oil installation. This is a sign that democracy is not working in Nigeria, Nigerian democracy is underpinned by ethnicity.

Another media person interviewed in Enugu explained the military coups apprehension from ethnicity point of view:

Let me burst your bubble. People are clamoring for the return of the military. Don't you know that it will be an end to democracy in Nigeria. We suffered by this democracy. Citizens from a particular ethnic group is asking for the suspension of democracy. What lesson have we learn from neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso

Agitations for self-rule

Promotion of ethnicity in democracy has led to the formation of political organizations such as Indigenous People of Biafra, Yourba Nation and Arewa. These ethnic groups are dissatisfied with the democratic process in Nigeria. They are demanding for self-rule. A traditional leader in Lokoja lamented:

If our democracy is good nobody will be agitating for self-rule. IPOB is for the Igbo, Yoruba Nation is for the Yoruba while Arewa is for the Hausa. Where is unity in Nigeria. Democracy cannot survive where there is unity, peace, harmony, and equity.

A political office holder from Katsina identified exclusion and marginalization as the reason why the North is asking for Arewa country. He said:

Agitation for self-rule was not common among the Northerners until the recent time when another president from another ethnic group occupied the office. The Hausa/Fulani have been skimmed out of power. We are no longer occupying juicy positions.

Institutional decay

Ethnic identity in politics promotes weak leadership and weak institution. Participants identified the area affected with the consideration of ethnic agenda instead of merit in political appointments, employment, job allocation and good governance. A political office holder in Kano lamented:

Everything is based on ethnicity in this country. This promotes incompetence, weak leaders and slow development. These are no in line with democracy because democracy supports equity, equality, progress and development.

Another political office holder in Ibadan looked at the appointment into political institutions which has been shrouded in ethnicity. He quipped:

Ethnicity has affected our democracy greatly. This led to the centralization of power which is not democratic. The history of who become what is dotted with ethnicity in Nigeria. Power sharing based on meritocracy should be projected as a culture of democracy in Nigeria,

Nationalism

Participants all agreed that ethnicity affect the sense of Nigerian nationalism. Many Nigerians prefer their ethnic group to the country, or that they identify first by virtue of their ethnicity and location Military attempted to create sense of nationalism in Nigeria by changing the national anthem, creation of national orientation agency, Nigeria Youth Service Corp, and centralized the national capital, yet these have not yielded positive results. Military incursion in politics is anti-democratic tendency. A political office holder in Ibadan explained:

I want to tell you the reason why we change our national anthem to the old national anthem. It is purely because of anti-democratic tendencies in our people. We are not as patriotic as expected.

A pressman in Enugu lamented how ethnicity is affecting democracy through lack of nationalism reasoning. He submitted:

Most of the unique programme established by the military to unite the nation have been jettisoned. For example, National Youth Service has lost it glory, national anthem is no longer bidding, national defence is compromised.

Promotion of Democratic Culture

Given the diversity of the Nigerian state, it is essential to connect ethnicity with the advancement of democracy in the country. Participant were asked how ethnicity can positively affect democratic culture? The following issues were suggested such as the growth of secularism, encouragement of power sharing, along with fostering industrialization and inter-ethnic relations.

Secularism

Religion also promotes division among the citizenry. As mentioned above, some people cannot be voted for by others outside their religious inclination, State should not promote any religion. State should not sponsor any citizen on pilgrimage. A traditional figure in Ibadan opined:

Religion is one the problems dividing us. It supports ethnicity. Religion cult promotes divisions. You are supported politically if you are a member of specific religious cult.

A participant from Lokoja explain secularism from the point of peoples' name. He expressed:

Religion is not the only area where we have to be neutral. We should remove religious name either as a first, middle or last name. We should stick to our indigenous name.

Power Sharing

Originally, the rotational presidency was introduced but this has not reduced ethnicity in Nigerian democracy. There should be a genuine power sharing to promote democratic culture among the six regions in Nigeria, via greater devolution of power and decision-making with the federal structures of Nigeria, to state and local level. This includes the police. A participant in Enugu lamented:

Do you know that the Igbo has not been given an opportunity to rule the country after the civil war? The denial of the Igbo attributed to agitations of self-rule.

A youth leader from Benin examines power sharing as rights of the minority. He suggested:

Power sharing without considering the rights of the minority cannot work. Rotational presidency cannot work. Let political office based on merit and objectivity.

Industrialization and Development

Ethnicity can promote democratic development if these indices are handled professionally such as poverty reduction, job creation, and social security. A woman leader opined:

Poverty is the reason why people are agitating. Poverty has been weaponized in this country. People see ethnic cleavage as a saving grace. If poverty is addressed, ethnicity will lose its place in the country.

A traditional figure said that job creation will reduce ethnic patronage. He explained:

Create job for people. Generate employment. Use universal yardstick to distribute job. There will be peace and development if there is equity and probity.

A youth leader talked about industrialization from social security standpoint. He said:

Social security will promote physical security. We lack this in our country. Social security will ensure unity, sense of nationhood and human rights protection.

Inter-ethnic Relations

Ethnicity could be productive in democracy through the promotion of inter-ethnic relations. Teaching of history as a curriculum has been stopped for sometimes in Nigeria. To achieve inter-ethnic relations in democracy the following must put into consideration: reintroduction of history, and civic education as school subjects.

Peace Education

Training of citizen about nationalism and democratic ethos. Participants revealed that peace education should be included on the education curriculum. Public orientation and good communication are part of peace education. teaching Nigerians constitutionalism, not just letting the constitution be implemented partially and imperfectly. A media lady in Enugu recollected:

I remember when National Orientation Agency was in existence in this country. It educated citizens about their rights and why they live peacefully with none another. Peace education is part of democratic culture.

Democracy involves constitutionalism, promoting the rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, rights protection, and majority rule alongside minority rights. (Bellamy and Castiglione, 1997). Political officeholders often prioritize ethnicity over the principles of democracy against what is outlined in Nigerian Constitution. Investing in civic education can foster a culture of democracy in Nigeria by letting people know their rights and responsibilities, encouraging active participation in political processes, and building a more informed and engaged electorate (Angwaomaodoko, 2024). Education extends beyond the classroom; it encompasses political campaigns, national orientation programs, and community meetings.

Cultural Revolution

Ethnicity could be productive in democracy through cultural orientation. Cultural exchange should be encouraged among the citizens, Participants identified other democratic values that are related with culture such as inter marriage, traditional festival, and mode of dressing.

Conclusion

Democracy and good governance are core aspirational values of the Commonwealth of Nations, as articulated by the Commonwealth Charter. Nigeria was selected as a case study because of the way ethnicity determines its democratic processes. In Nigeria, the contemporary culture of democracy is largely influenced by the politics of ethnic identity. This is in very large part the product of the history of colonialism, failed nation-state building since independence, flawed institutions and policy choices.

Yet, as Recognition Theory suggests, ethnicity could be downplayed in democracy. Democracy promotes inclusiveness and intersubjective recognition. Intersubjective recognition promotes self-esteem, self-respect and self-realization. It is through intersubjective recognition that the core values of democracy can be realized in

Nigeria such as equality, equity, rule of law, respect for human rights and accelerated development.

It can be concluded that the concept of democracy has not yet fully developed in Nigeria. The Nigerian state, like other African post-colonial states, is a dynamic hybrid model which continues to evolve, thanks to its own internal dynamics, regional factors and pressures, and a changing international system. To achieve adequate democratic development the country must adhere to the principle of human rights, equality, secularism, industrialization and improved communication.

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