



**TRANSFORMATIVE LAW, SUITABLE SECURITY ARCHITECTURE
AND NATIONAL DIALOGUE AS MODELS FOR A BETTER
NIGERIA**

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Abstract

The persistent need for a stable and justiciable Nigerian polity has constantly fuelled demands for a national conference to address longstanding grievances threatening the continued existence of Nigeria as an indissoluble and indivisible nation. This study joins the conversation in advocating for a national conference through a doctrinal research approach, leveraging on primary and secondary sources of data. It discusses national dialogue, its benefits, challenges and future prospects. Key findings suggest that national dialogues can foster a secure, just, and practicable polity in Nigeria that will drive political and economic transformation of the nation, enthrone the rule of law and sustainable security. To build a more equitable and prosperous Nigerian society, the study recommends convening a national dialogue as a matter of necessity, to address pressing issues, including national identity, the role of religion in government, political rights, basic freedoms, institutional reforms, election procedures, and government structure.

Keywords: National dialogue, National conference, Indivisible nation, Transformation

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The urgency, the need and search for a practicable, secure, sure and justiciable polity in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. This demand has continued to dominate discussions in a bid to ensuring that good governance, justice and the rule of law are enthroned. Geographically, Nigeria is a country located in West Africa, bounded by Benin to the west, Niger to the north, Chad to the northeast, and Cameroon to the east¹. It has a population of over 200 million people, making it the most populated country in Africa and the seventh most populous in the world². Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960³ and has since experienced periods of military rule and civilian governance⁴. The country is known for its diverse culture, with over 250 ethnic groups⁵, each with its own language and traditions. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo⁶.

In economic terms, Nigeria is a major oil producer and exporter and endowed with many other mineral resources⁷, with oil revenues playing a significant role

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¹ Emmanuel Ikechi Onah, 'Nigeria: A Country Profile' (2014) 10 JIS 151.

² Vitalis Jafla Pontianus and Emeka Daniel Oruonye, 'The Nigerian Population: A Treasure for National Development or an Unsurmountable National Challenge' (2021) 2(1) IJSRA; Mark A. Green, 'Nigeria Has More than 500 Languages, 300 Ethnic Groups...and Critically Important Elections' (2023) Wilson Center <<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/nigeria-has-more-500-languages-300-ethnic-groups-and-critically-important-elections>> accessed 26 July 2024.

³ Emmanuel Ikechi Onah, (n 1) 153.

⁴ Ibid 153-154.

⁵ Mark A. Green, (n 2).

⁶ Hussein Solomon and Rian Leith, 'On Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria' (2001) Human Rights <<https://www.acord.org.za/ajcr-issues/on-ethnicity-and-ethnic-conflict-management-in-nigeria/>> accessed 26 July 2024; Ukoha Ukiwo, 'On the Study of Ethnicity in Nigeria' (2005) Crise Working Paper No. 12 <<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08c99e5274a31e0001300/wp12.pdf>> accessed 26 July 2024; Lalekan Bolutife Oluwadele et al, 'Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Nigeria: A Panacea for National Development or Decapitation?' (2023) 4(4) IJAH 60-70.

⁷ A.A Ahmed, 'Overview of Nigeria's Solid Mineral Potentials, Challenges and Prospects' (2022) 16 (1) FUTY Journal of the Environment <<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/fje/article/view/256334>> accessed 26 July 2024; Alexander B Chinago et al, 'Geographical Survey of Nigerian Mineral Resources: A Step toward Planned Development' (2015) 6 JCS 38-43.



in its economy. However, the country also faces challenges such as corruption, poverty, and insecurity, including the activities of insurgent groups like Boko Haram in the northeast, oil bunkering and pipeline vandalizing activities of ethnic militants in the southeast. The capital city of Nigeria is Abuja, while the largest city is Lagos, which is also one of the fastest-growing cities in the world. Nigeria is a member of the African Union, the United Nations, and the Commonwealth of Nations, among other international organisations.

Prior to and even after independence from the British colonial masters, Nigeria has remained divided based on political, cultural, religious and ethnic differences⁸. Therefore, achieving a united and stable political system is still a serious challenge to the Nigerian state. More than ever before and since the return to democratic governance, Nigeria has been challenged with grievances of insecurity stemming largely today from the covert conspiracies and terroristic rebellion of militias such as Boko Haram, Niger delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Odua People's Congress (OPC), marginalization, unbalanced sharing of assets and power, and sanctioned injustice⁹. The paper is preceded by the introductory review, followed by conceptualisation of terms. The paper equally discusses security and its impact on the Nigerian economy, national dialogue and its benefit to Nigeria. Thereafter, the various attempts by successive governments in Nigeria at conveying (sovereign) national dialogues/conferences will be discussed. The fundamental problems of Nigeria in achieving transformation are discussed. The study more so, discussed the challenges encountered in previous national dialogue in Nigeria and the way forward which was followed by conclusion and recommendations.

2.0 CONCEPTUALISATION OF TERMS

2.1 Transformation

Transformation refers to a profound, significant change or alteration in form, nature, or character. It involves a fundamental shift from one state or condition to another, often resulting in a marked difference or improvement¹⁰. Transformation can occur at various levels, including personal, organizational, societal, or even global. In the context of personal development, transformation may involve a

⁸ Nigeria went into a civil war barely six years after independence.

⁹ Godwin Ikechukwu Udeuhele, 'Nigeria National Conference and its Impacts on Unity and Diversity in Nigeria' (2014) 6(1) AJPAS 111.

¹⁰ Robert Gass, 'What is Transformation?' (2012) <<https://www.strategiesforsocialchange.com>>...> accessed 27 July, 2024.



profound change in beliefs, behaviours, or mind-set that leads to personal growth and self-improvement. This could include overcoming challenges, adopting new habits, or achieving personal goals¹¹. In the organisational context, transformation often refers to a strategic change initiative aimed at reshaping the structure, culture, or processes of a company to adapt to new market conditions, improve performance, or drive innovation. Societal transformation involves unconscious or subconscious large-scale changes in social, political¹² or economic systems that impact a society as a whole¹³. This could include shifts in governance, cultural norms, technological advancements, or environmental policies. Generally, transformation entails a fundamental and impactful modification that goes beyond incremental adjustments or superficial modifications. It often requires vision, leadership, and a commitment to embrace new ways of thinking and operating to achieve desired outcomes.

2.2 National conference

According to Udenhele¹⁴, a National Conference is labelled as an official platform for dialogue by constituent units of the nation assembled by the national government of a country to converse issues or problems that inhibit national progress or challenge national cohesion. A National Conference is expected to give rise to a national dialogue which is in turn expected to proffer appropriate solutions that will assist in moving the nation forward.

2.3 Dialogue

Dialogue is contextually defined as an ecumenical attempt to bring people of different faiths together on the platform of peaceful co-existence, co-operation and tolerance¹⁵ Umaru defines dialogue as “Unity in diversity”¹⁶. Dialogue refers to a discussion or interchange of ideas between two or more people or parties. It involves a back-and-forth communication where individuals express their thoughts, opinions, and perspectives on a particular topic or issue. Dialogue can

¹¹ John Bradley, 'The Role of Education in Personal Growth and Transformation' (2023) Medium <<https://www.medium.com>> accessed 28 July 2024.

¹² James Patterson *et al.*, 'Exploring the Governance and Politics of Transformations towards Sustainability' (2017) 24 EIST 1-16.

¹³ Garry Jacobs, 'Process of Social Transformation' (2021) 4(4) CJ <<https://cadmusjournal.org.node>> accessed 28 July 2024.

¹⁴ Udeuhele, (n 9) 112.

¹⁵ Daniji, F. (2007) *Conflict Resolution Studies in Africa*. Nigeria: Meks Links Publisher.

¹⁶ Umaru, R. (1999) “Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Implication for National Development in Nigeria” in Iyela (Ed) 'The challenges of Development in Nigeria' (Katsina-Ala, Benue State College of Education Publication).



take place in various settings, such as personal interactions, formal discussions, negotiations, or debates. The resolve of dialogue is to facilitate understanding, encourage mutual respect, and seek common ground on a given subject¹⁷. It allows participants to listen to each other, share their viewpoints, and engage in a constructive manner to explore different viewpoints and reach potential solutions or agreements. Dialogue involves the recognition of differences, not as a way of foreclosing engagement (let us accept our differences and leave it at that), but of “seeing” and engaging with each other¹⁸.

2.4 National Dialogue

National Dialogue provides an inclusive, broad and participatory official negotiation framework, which can resolve political crises and lead countries into political transitions with mandates that includes political reforms, constitution-making, and peace building¹⁹. It provide a means for a broad range of stakeholders within a country (government ministries and agencies, non-governmental/civil society organizations, communities, academic and research institutions and the private sector, as well as partners and donors) to come together learn, discuss and agree, or take steps toward agreement, on vital political and economic issues. National Dialogue is a Political dialogue and it is a feature of democratic system of government. According to Mbombo²⁰, it is supposed to identify and redress existing practices that conflict with the rule of law (constitution). Even though any form of dialogue constitutes an integral part of negotiation and mediation processes, it does not imply binding agreements between conflicting parties at a go.

3.0 SECURITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

Like most concepts, there has been no unified definition of the term 'security' or what constitutes security hence it has been a subject of endless debate²¹. Igbuzor²²

¹⁷ Dorothy Nguemo Afoar, 'The Relevance of Dialogue to Conflict Resolution in Benue State' (2022) 1&2 LJRH.

¹⁸ Rule, P. 'Bakhtin and the Poetics of Pedagogy: a Dialogic Approach' (2006) 40JE 79-101.

¹⁹ Thania Paffenholz et al, 'What Makes or Breaks National Dialogue?' UN Peacemakers <...> accessed 28 July 2024.

²⁰ Jean-Marie Mbombo, 'National Dialogue as Solution to African Problems: The D.R. Congo in Focus' (2017) 8(5) IJPDS 55-63; Osita Agbu, 'Navigating Nigeria Toward a Nation-State: Re-Visiting the 2014 National Dialogue' (2024) Research Gate <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/379034332> accessed 1 August 2024.

²¹ E.A. Oghuvbu and Felix Chidozie, 'Security Challenges and National Development in Nigeria: A Study of Boko Haram' (2018) 8(1) AHR 294; Ejogba O.A. 'African Security in the Twenty-First Century, Nigerian Forum: A Journal of Option on World Affairs' (2006) 27 (9-10) NIIA 303-319.

²² Igbuzor O., 'Peace and Security Education: A Critical Factor for Sustainable, Peace and National Development' (2011) 2(1) IJPDS 61-69.



in his work sees security as a situation where everyone in a country can go about their day to day activities without fear or threat to lives and property. Security refers to the state of being protected from harm, danger, or threats. It can refer to physical security, such as protection from theft or violence, as well as digital security, such as safeguarding personal information online. It could also mean financial security such as fortification from cybercrime. Security measures are put in place to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals, organizations, and assets. Katsina²³ sees issue of national security and national development as inseparable which must be treated alike in order to address security challenges.

Security in Nigeria is a complex issue with various factors contributing to the challenges faced in the country. Some of the key security concerns in Nigeria include terrorism, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, cybercrime and other forms of criminal activities. The security situation in Nigeria has had a significant impact on the country's economy in various ways. Some of the key ways in which security challenges have affected the Nigerian economy include disruption of economic activities. Security threats such as terrorism, insurgency, banditry, and kidnapping have disrupted economic activities in affected regions. Businesses may face challenges in operating, leading to reduced productivity and economic growth. Farmers have been chased out of their farmland thereby leading to unemployment and increased poverty level²⁴.

The security situation in Nigeria has affected investor confidence and foreign direct investment in the country. Investors may be hesitant to commit capital to projects in areas with security risks, leading to a slowdown in economic development²⁵. Security challenges can hamper infrastructure development projects in Nigeria, as construction activities may be disrupted or delayed due to security concerns. This can impact the overall economic growth and development of the country.

Insecurity in rural and urban areas can negatively impact agricultural activities, leading to food scarcity, insecurity and affecting the livelihoods of farmers. This can have a ripple effect on the economy, as agriculture is a significant sector in Nigeria. Security concerns can deter tourists from visiting Nigeria, thereby adversely upsetting the tourism and hospitality industry. This can result in a loss of revenue and job opportunities in the sector.

²³ Aliyu Mukhtar Katsina, 'Nigeria's Security Challenges and the Crisis of Development: Towards a New Framework for Analysis' (2012) 1(3) IJDS 107-116.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Wale Ajayi, 'Nigeria's Security Challenges: The Social Perspective' (2023) The Cable <www.thecable.ng> accessed 2 August 2024.



4.0 NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND ITS BENEFITS TO NIGERIA

The need for a national dialogue in Nigeria is important at this point in time because it will address the lingering ethnic and religious tensions. Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups with a significant divide along religious lines²⁶. A national dialogue can provide a platform for open and honest discussions about these differences, promote understanding, and foster national unity. Nigeria has experienced various forms of conflict, including communal violence, insurgency, and ethno-religious clashes. A national dialogue can help address the root causes of these conflicts, promote reconciliation, and build sustainable peace and security²⁷. A national dialogue can help articulate a shared vision for the future of Nigeria, identify common goals and priorities, and mobilize collective action towards achieving national development objectives.

A national dialogue can ensure that all segments of society, including marginalized groups, have a voice in shaping the country's future. It can promote inclusivity, participation, and representation in decision-making processes²⁸. Engaging in a national dialogue can enhance transparency, accountability, and good governance practices. It can foster trust in institutions, promote respect for the rule of law, and strengthen democratic principles. Nigeria faces significant socio-economic challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and inadequate social services. A national dialogue can facilitate discussions on policy reforms, economic development strategies, and social welfare programs to address these challenges. National dialogue will not jettison variances of view and principle, but to advance an understanding and reception of those variances²⁹. National dialogues represent a means to establish a new political settlement during a phase of transition. Political settlements are essentially agreements forged between the major stakeholders within a society on the organisation of political and economic power and the allocation of resources³⁰.

²⁶ Udeuhele, (n 9) 113-115.

²⁷ Daniel Olukayode Adekeye, 'Social Justice, Democratic Dialogue and the Quest for National Security: Implications for Sustainable Development in Nigeria' (2019) 6(4) ASSRJ.

²⁸ Kenneth Adibe Nwafor and Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo, 'Media Frames of Group Identities in the 2014 National Dialogue in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Daily Sun and Leadership Newspapers' (2015) 6(3) AAJSS.

²⁹ Abu-Nimer, M., 'The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue: Are you a Believer?' in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace building*, ed. David R. (2002) Smock. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

³⁰ Henrik Hartmann, 'National Dialogues and Development' (2017) National Dialogue Handbook Background Paper No. 3. Berlin: Berghof Foundation 4.



Generally, a national dialogue in Nigeria can serve as a platform for constructive engagement, consensus-building, and collective decision-making to address the country's pressing issues and chart a path towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous future. One beneficial peculiarity of Nigeria is its rich cultural diversity³¹. With over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own languages, traditions, and customs, Nigeria is a melting pot of diverse cultures. This diversity contributes to a vibrant and colourful society, with a wide range of music, art, cuisine, and festivals that showcase the country's cultural heritage³². Nigeria's cultural diversity also presents opportunities for cultural exchange, learning, and appreciation among its people. It fosters a sense of unity in diversity and promotes tolerance and understanding among different ethnic groups. Additionally, Nigeria's cultural diversity is a significant attraction for tourists and visitors who are interested in experiencing the country's unique traditions and way of life. It offers a wealth of cultural experiences, from traditional dances and music to local crafts and cuisine, making it a fascinating destination for those seeking to explore different cultures. Nigeria's rich cultural diversity is a beneficial peculiarity that adds depth and richness to the country's identity and contributes to its unique charm and appeal.

4.1 Nigeria's Attempts at National Dialogue

Nigeria, the biggest country in the West African sub-region and the most populous black nation on earth has had a long history of national dialogues that have influenced her constitutional and political development³³. Apart from the national dialogues that took place during colonial rule and after colonial rule, Nigeria has made several attempts at national dialogue in the past, with varying degrees of success and challenges encountered. During military regime, the General Gowon led government had an Ad Hoc Constitutional Conference of the Advisory Group of Civilians was convened on September 2, 1966 in Lagos. Latter, there was another conference tagged the Aburi Accord held in Ghana.³⁴ General Murtala Mohammed on assumption of office in 1975, announced the establishment of a Constitution rafting Committee (CDC) to produce and submit to the Supreme Military Council a Draft Constitution³⁵. General Ibrahim

³¹ United States Institute of Peace, 'National Dialogues in Peacebuilding and Transitions: Creativity and adaptive Thinking' Peaceworks (2021) Eds Elizabeth Murray and Susan Stigant <<https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/06/national-dialogues-peacebuilding-and-transitions-creativity-and-adaptive>> accessed 1 August 2024.

³² Udeuhele, (n 9).

³³ Kenneth Adibe Nwafor and Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo, 'Media Frames of Group Identities in the 2014 National Dialogue in Nigeria: An Analysis of the Daily Sun and Leadership Newspapers' (2015) 6 (3) AAJSS 2

³⁴ Nwafor and Ogbodo (n 26) 9-10.

³⁵ Ibid 10.



Badamasi Babangida came to power on August 27, 1985. In September 1987, set up a Constitution Review Committee (CRC) to examine the 1979 Constitution and make relevant amendments³⁶. General Abacha in his time, convened a National Constitutional Conference in 1994. The Conference concluded its assignment in 1995³⁷. The National Political Reform Conference which was convened in 2005 by President Olusegun Obasanjo to address key issues affecting the country, including constitutional reforms, resource control, and power-sharing arrangements. However, the conference faced challenges such as lack of consensus on critical issues, political manoeuvring, and limited implementation of the recommendations³⁸. In 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan organized the National Conference on Political Reforms. The conference was formed to address issues of national importance, including federalism, resource control, and electoral reforms. While the conference made recommendations on various issues, implementation of the outcomes was limited, and some recommendations faced resistance from political actors³⁹.

5.0 FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS OF NIGERIA IN ACHIEVING TRANSFORMATION

Nigeria faces several fundamental problems that have significant implications for its development and stability such as corruption⁴⁰ which is pervasive in Nigeria and affects various sectors, including government, private businesses, and the society at large. It undermines governance, hinders economic growth, and erodes public trust in institutions. Insecurity is another challenge very notable in Nigeria⁴¹. This includes insurgency, terrorism, communal violence, kidnapping, and banditry. Groups like Boko Haram⁴² in the northeast and clashes between herders and farmers in the middle belt have led to loss of lives and displacement of communities. Despite being a resource-rich country, poverty and inequality remain widespread in Nigeria. High levels of unemployment,

³⁶ *ibid* 10.

³⁷ *ibid* 10-11.

³⁸ Udensi Lawrence Okoronkwo et al, 'Repositioning Nigeria as an Emerging Democracy: Dialectics of social Dialogue and the 2014 National Conference' (2015) SJAHSS; Nwafor and Ogbodo (n 26).

³⁹ Udeuhele, (n 9) 119; Nwafor and Ogbodo (n 26) 12-13.

⁴⁰ S.T. Akande, 'A Critical Analysis of Corruption and its Problems in Nigeria' (2005) 7(1) *Anthropologist* 1-18; Tolu Lawal and Abe Oluwatoyin, 'National Development in Nigeria: Issues, Challenges and Prospects' (2017) 11 (4) *AJPS*.

⁴¹ Nasiru Zubairu, 'Rising Insecurity in Nigeria: Causes and Solution' (2020) 19 (4) *JSSS* 1-11.

⁴² Gillian Dunn, 'The Impact of the Boko haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria on Childhood Wasting: A Double-Difference Study' (2018) 12 (6) *CH*.



inadequate social services, and lack of economic opportunities contribute to the cycle of poverty for many Nigerians⁴³.

Infrastructure in Nigeria are in deplorable state⁴⁴. This includes roads, power supply, and healthcare facilities, is inadequate and in need of significant investment and improvement⁴⁵. Poor infrastructure hampers economic growth and quality of life for citizens. Weak governance, lack of accountability, and challenges in upholding the rule of law undermine the effectiveness of institutions and hinder progress in addressing key issues facing the country.⁴⁶

Nigeria's diverse population is characterized by ethnic and religious diversity, which at times leads to tensions and conflicts. Managing these differences and promoting national unity remains a challenge⁴⁷.

Weak governance occasioned by corruption, and lack of accountability hinder the country's ability to implement transformative policies and initiatives effectively⁴⁸. Political instability and inconsistent policy implementation also contribute to the low level of transformation. The implications and costs of political instability across the country are over-whelming. It leads to loss of live, insufficient use of natural and human resources that is endowed in the Nigerian state⁴⁹. Economic Vulnerabilities is another major challenge to achieving transformation in Nigeria. Nigeria's heavy reliance on oil revenues makes its economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. Diversifying the economy and promoting sustainable growth in non-oil sectors are essential for achieving transformation and reducing dependence on oil.

⁴³ Chimobi Ucha, 'Poverty in Nigeria: Some Dimensions and contributing Factors, (2010) 1(1) GME-J.

⁴⁴ Olalekan Bashir Aworinde and Ishola Rufus Akintoye, 'Institutions, Infrastructure and Economic growth in Nigeria'(2019) 15 (3) ACTA UD 205-216; Punch Editorial Board, 'Nigeria's Infrastructure Deficit Needs Attention' (2023) Punch Newspaper 18 September 2023 <punching.com> accessed 26 July 2024; CSL Research, 'Impact of Deplorable Rural Roads on the Nigerian Economy' (2022) <<https://proshare.co/articles/impact-of-deplorable-rural-roads-on-the-nigerian-economy?menu=Economy&classification=Read&category=Transportation>> accessed 26 July 2024.

⁴⁵ Fidelis O. Nedozi et al, 'Infrastructural Development and Economic Growth in Nigeria: Using Simultaneous Equation' (2024) 5(3) JE 325-332.

⁴⁶ A.A. Akinwole, 'The Menance of Inadequate Infrastructure in Nigeria' (2010) 2 (3) AJSTID

⁴⁷ Kemi Anthony Emina, 'The Nigerian Problems of Development and Human Security' (2020) Biblioteka Nauki <<https://www.bibliotekanauki.pl>>...> 193-198 accessed 1 August 2024.

⁴⁸ Ochoga Edwin Ochoga and Shishi Zhema, 'Good Governance and the Challenges of Nation-Building in Nigeria: A Historical Experience since 19989' (2019) 16 GJAMSS 281-291.

⁴⁹ Rasheed Aderemi Raji and Elizabeth Ikeola Wahab, 'Trends of Political Instability in Nigeria: The Way Forward' (2016) xix(1) NJSS 7-8.



Social Inequities prompted by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and income inequality pose significant barriers to transformation in Nigeria. Addressing social inequities, improving access to quality education and healthcare, and creating economic opportunities for all citizens are crucial for driving inclusive growth and development. Weak institutions, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited capacity for policy implementation impede transformation efforts in Nigeria. Strengthening institutions, enhancing public sector effectiveness, and promoting good governance are essential for driving sustainable transformation.

6.0 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN PREVIOUS NATIONAL DIALOGUES IN NIGERIA

Previous attempts at national dialogue had failed due to some challenges encountered prior to, during and after. Looking at the preamble of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, which says that 'we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria having firmly and solemnly resolved: to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God...' ⁵⁰ This preamble is an official falsehood manifested in the Constitution. Members of the Constitution review Committee were selected and or appointed by the Abdulsalami Abubakar led Government. The people of Nigeria had never at any time met to agree on whether or not to be 'one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God'. ⁵¹ Ethnicity and lack of patriotism is another major challenge be devilling national dialogue in Nigeria. Looking at the history of Nigeria from the political perspective show that Nigerians are tilted more to their ethnic lineage than to Nigeria as a Nation. ⁵² This can be attributed to the very peculiar nature of the Nigeria kind of federalism.

Generally, federalism is a mode of political organisation that unites separate States or other polities within an all-encompassing political system in a way that allows each to maintain its own integrity ⁵³. In 1947, Awolowo wrote "Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'; the word Nigeria is

⁵⁰ Preamble to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended).

⁵¹ Nwafor and Ogbodo (n 26) 11.

⁵² S.U. Fwatshak, 'Ethnicity and Consensual Politics in Post-Colonial Nigeria' in J.A. Nasir et al (eds.) (2008) *Contemporary Readings in Governance, Law and Security: Essays in Honour of (Sir) Mike Mbama Okiro* 212-225.

⁵³ The Editors of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 'Federalism' (2024) *Britannica*<<https://www.britannica.com/topic/federalism>> accessed 1 August 2024.



merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.⁵⁴ On why there were instabilities, leading to riots, two coup d'états and a civil war, just within seven years of Nigeria's independence, Babangida replied that "We were struggling to be a nation. We hadn't fully become a nation; we were just a group of people in a geographical environment called Nigeria"⁵⁵. Each ethnic group deals with other ethnic group with high level of scepticism.

Political interference is also a mitigating factor⁵⁶. Political interests and power struggles often influence the outcomes of national dialogues, leading to compromises and diluted recommendations that do not fully address the root causes of the issues at hand. Lack of Implementation is also another one of the major challenges justifying the problems of national dialogue in Nigeria. It is the lack of political will and commitment to implement the recommendations and outcomes of national dialogues. Many dialogues have ended without concrete actions taken to address the identified issues. There is complaint of Marginalization and lack of Inclusivity which have remained a major hallmark of the Nigeria state.⁵⁷

Some national dialogues have been criticized for not being inclusive enough, with certain groups or stakeholders feeling marginalized or excluded from the process.⁵⁸ This can undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the dialogue. More so is the challenge of sustainability. Maintaining momentum and sustaining the impact of national dialogues beyond the initial discussions is a challenge. Without continued engagement and follow-up actions, the outcomes of dialogues may not lead to lasting change.

7.0 NATIONAL DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: WAY FORWARD

The need and search for a practicable, secure, sure and justiciable polity in Nigeria aimed at ensuring that good governance, justice and the rule of law cannot be over emphasized. These are and ought to be the basis and bedrock upon

⁵⁴ Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London, Faber and Faber, 1947), 47-48.

⁵⁵ Olu Fasan, 'Can Nigeria Change from a mere Geographical Space to a Nation?' *Vanguard News* (September 2 2021) <<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/09/can-nigeria-change-from-a-mere-geographical-space-to-a-nation/>> accessed 1 August 2024.

⁵⁶ Udeuhele, (n 9).

⁵⁷ *ibid* 117.

⁵⁸ A Carl LeVan et al, 'Study on Marginalized Groups in the Context of ID in Nigeria National Identification for Development (ID4D) Project' (2018) World Bank <<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/922031561717650301/study-on-marginalized-groups-in-the-context-of-id-in-nigeria-national-identification-for-development-id4d-project>> accessed 1 August 2024.



which the Nigerian constitutional government/democracy should be built. In achieving these, there ought to be continuous dialogue on energy transition.⁵⁹ According to Global Environment Facility (GEF),⁶⁰ National Dialogues afford a means for an across-the-board range of stakeholders within a country (be it government ministries and agencies, non-governmental/civil society organizations, communities, academic and research institutions and the private sector, as well as partners and donors) to come together learn, discuss and agree, or take steps toward agreement, on environmental issues across the board. This includes information and validation of national objectives, policies, strategies and the means to achieve them; how to mainstream environment in national decision-making; national positions in Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and coordination; incorporating the capital value of environment to national accounting and other issues of interest. Since the amalgamation of the Southern and northern Protectorate in 1914, issues related to federalism, resource control, land borders and boundaries, type of government, type of constitution, regional autonomy, self-determination etc. have been hotly debated and in so far as this all important issues are not addressed.

8.0 CONCLUSION

In a bid to assuming her rightful position in the committee of Nations especially living true to her name as the 'Giant of Africa', there is the urgent need to constitute a national dialogue through the instrumentality of National Conference which is expected discuss and find lasting solutions to the key problems confronting Nigeria as a Nation. The concern is to remove all obstacles which have prevented the country from establishing political justice, economic justice, social justice, cultural justice, religious justice and to construct a new constitutional framework⁶¹ that will take care of the fundamental concerns of the people. To borrow the words of Anyim⁶², democracy flourishes on dialogue and it functions to build compromise, create understanding and boost national solidity, even as alterations are made in the constitution and laws of the nation to reflect current realities and create new nerve links to peace and progress.

⁵⁹ Deborah Ununu, 'Expanding National Dialogue for Energy Transition' (2022) The Budget Foundation <<https://budget.org/expanding-national-dialogue-for-energy-transition/>> accessed 1 August 2024.

⁶⁰ Global Environment Facility (GEF) 'Nigeria National Dialogue' (2022)<<https://www.thegef.org/events/nigeria-national-dialogue>> accessed 1 August 2024.

⁶¹ Kunle Ajayi, 'From the Demand for Sovereign National Conference to National Dialogue: The Dilemma of the Nigerian State' (2006) 4(2) STT.

⁶² Anyim Pius Anyim, 'The Importance of Dialogue in Remaking Nigeria' *Premium Times Nigeria* (20 August 2021) <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/480161-the-importance-of-dialogue-in-remaking-nigeria-by-anyim-pius-anyim.html?tztc=1>> accessed 2 August 2024.



Overall, the security situation in Nigeria has had a negative impact on the country's economy, hindering growth, development, and investment opportunities. Addressing security challenges is crucial for creating a conducive environment for economic prosperity and sustainable development in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has been working and must continue to address these security challenges through various measures, including military operations, law enforcement efforts, pushing for constant reforms in the criminal justice system, harmonization of the operations of the various military and para military organs and community engagement initiatives.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria has witnessed serious economic, political and social consequences and loss of lives as a result of religious conflicts have caused Nigeria and peace is still very fragile in some parts of the country. This is why it is important for religious organizations to be involved in peace-building in the country which will help to resolve religious conflict of many kinds⁶³. Therefore, there should be continuous inter-faith dialogue aimed at ensuring peaceful co-existence.

Also, the urgent need for a National conferences or national dialogue gingered by the imperatives of engineering a new constitution and as a way in charting the path for finding lasting solutions to seeming national problems⁶⁴, including type of government, devolution of power/ power sharing, control of mineral resources, state autonomy, marginalization, development issues and so on.

Government should be sincere in convening a national dialogue that is aimed at finding solutions to the problems threatening the very fabric of Nigeria. Past attempts at national dialogue /conferences had failed partly because of the insincerity of the government and their deep involvement⁶⁵. Rather than allowing the people to elect, appoint and or select their representatives to such conferences, government do the opposite thereby making the conference to lack people's mandate. There ought to be inclusion. An effective national dialogue should involve a broad set of stakeholders for a deliberative process. To maximize the dialogue's potential to address the real drivers of conflict, all key interest groups should be invited to participate, including women, youth, civil societies, religious groups and other traditionally excluded groups⁶⁶.

⁶³ Emmanuel Achus Jah and Damila Kevin Mabas, 'Inter-Faith Dialogue, Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Nigeria' (2022) 6(2) WISJ.

⁶⁴ Udeuhele, (n 9) 112.

⁶⁵ Ibid 120.

⁶⁶ Murray and Stigant (n 31) 2.



A national dialogue that seeks to reach agreement on key issues facing Nigeria should as a matter of necessity be convened. This should be done through pre-negotiation or consultation with stakeholders to identify and agree upon these crucial issues, which could include national identity, the role of religion in government, political rights, basic freedoms, institutional reform, election procedures, and the structure of government. It is also recommended that government should summon up the courage to implementing the outcome of such national dialogue/conference and ensure that the resulting recommendations are implemented.