



## THE CHALLENGES OF PROMOTING CENTRIPETAL FORCES IN NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Towoju Adedoyin John<sup>1</sup>, Asiyanbi Kazeem Aderemi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Politics and Governance Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Federal college of Education (Special), Oyo Department of Political Science, Fce(Sp) Oyo.

\*Email of Corresponding Author: [adedoyin.towoju13@kwasu.edu.ng](mailto:adedoyin.towoju13@kwasu.edu.ng)

Phone: +2348168582876 [asiyanbi.kazeem@fcesoyo.edu.ng](mailto:asiyanbi.kazeem@fcesoyo.edu.ng) Phone: :+2348030466805

### ABSTRACT

*The Focus of the Research is to examine the challenges of promoting Centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy, examine the Centripetal forces in Nigeria and evaluate if they serve their purposes Realize the Challenges and proffer solutions to the problems. The researcher employed Descriptive research design and Sample and sampling technique. Information and Data was sourced via primary data collated from questionnaire enabling the researcher to realize Numerical data. This study investigated the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), religious organizations, National Youth Service Corps, Federal Character Principle, Unity Schools and other institutions as centripetal forces. However, it was investigated that insecurity, ethnic-politics, corruption, poverty, unemployment all take leading position as challenges of promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy. Given to the above, we conclude that there are many challenges of centripetal forces in Nigeria that have always been accompanied by high tension since inception of democracy in 1999. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made recommendations that For Nigeria's democracy to be fruitful, all the parties involved (Politicians, INEC, Security agents, judiciary and Citizens) in electoral process must be committed towards ensuring free and fair elections and constitutionally guaranteed restructuring of the polity. that among other things grant autonomy to the ethnic nationalities will therefore suffice to remedy the challenges troubling Nigeria at the moment, lastly that The need to devolve and de-concentrate power to other component units of the Nigerian federation as prescribed by the federal principle is imperative in today's Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Democracy, Centripetal, Development, Election, Nigeria.

## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Democracy has become a universal political concept and has emerged as one of the most preferred forms of government based on its integrative competence to estimate the diverse political life of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-linguistic societies. Democracy is about free choice, it is about given people opportunities to choose their leaders without hindrance, but where obstacles exist, the people can hardly exercise their freedom of choice and in such situation, they can hardly gain anything from their rulers (Egwemi, 2010). The strength of the idea of democracy lies in the principle of people's participation in their governance. Thus, democratic regimes tend to be responsive to the collective needs of society due to periodic changes in governments and personalities (Hameso, 2002). On this note, Ojo (2007) posited that democracy has an educative value and there is no better way of educating citizens than giving them the opportunity to participate directly in the election of their representatives. And for representative government to be democratic, it must be accompanied by universal free suffrage,

elections, short terms of office and individual liberty.

Like most other countries of the world, Nigeria is currently a democratic state. Although, it must be noted that Nigeria has experienced failed attempts at democracy but the present dispensation represents the country's fourth attempt at democratization. May 29, 1999 marked a watershed in Nigeria's political annals. It was the dawn of the fourth Republic, a return to democratic rule after several years under the yoke of military misrule which was marked by much suffering, infrastructure decay, and institutionalized corruption. The hope of the common man for a just and an egalitarian society became rekindled with the institution of a democratic government. Nigerians greeted the return to democratic rule with widespread jubilation and optimism as they looked forward to a new era of stability, peace, and prosperity.

The adoption of democracy in Nigeria was necessitated by its capacity to unite a heterogeneous society like ours. Nigeria is one of Africa's most populated and most ethnically diverse countries. Its population reached 205 million in 2020 according to estimates, and this makes it the world's

seventh most populous state (Worldometers 2020). Nigeria is also a vast country with an area of nearly 924,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It is inhabited by members of about 250 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Hausa-Fulani (about 36% of Nigeria's population), the Yoruba (about 15%) and the Igbo (about 15%) (Index Mundi 2019). It is estimated that more than 53% of Nigeria's inhabitants are Muslims, who live mainly in the north of the country, while Christians make up about 46% of the population and live mostly in the south of the country (Index Mundi 2019). Put differently, Nigeria is a large country occupied by diverse people, with diverse languages and culture (Oputa, 2006). In other words, it is a multi – national state; a conglomeration of ethnic nations; an ethnic amalgamation of different people (over 400) each with its distinctive character and ethos.

No doubt, democracy has emerged as one of the most preferred form of government based on its integrative capability to approximate the heterogeneous political life of multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic societies. However in the Nigerian situation, the practice of democracy has remained a foreboding nightmare due to the skewed nature of federal practice which has led to serious contestations among the constituent nationalities thus resulting in endless

tinkering and attempts at dissolution. The Nigerian democracy has been hampered by a number of centrifugal forces that make democratization process an herculean task in Nigeria. Notably among these forces include incessant violence, political contestation leading to coups and counter coups, under development, widespread poverty, mass unemployment and the near collapse of social infrastructures to human survival, corruption and moral decadence and alarming problem of insecurity (Odofoin, 2011).

Unfortunately, while post-military Nigeria had greater potential for democratic prosperity, the country has been lagging behind in all indices of democracy. Several sources including academic and policy analysts describe Nigeria's democratic failures as being rooted in its inability to design an efficient, effective and politically non-partisan electoral process that reorients the country's political culture to show commitment to the rules governing voter and party registration, candidate eligibility and nomination, election observation, candidate and party access to the media and other resources, tabulation, counting and the declaration of results, as well as the design and operational frameworks of election management bodies and the resolution of

electoral disputes rules (Adetula, 2007; Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006; Ibrahim & Garuba, 2010 & 2009; Junaidu, 2011; Kew, 2004; Lewis, 2003; Reno, 1999; ERC, 2008).

Moreover, Nigeria is performing poorly compared to other African countries. For example, in terms of political participation measured by five indicators - free and fairness of executive elections, free and fair elections, political participation, electoral self-determination and effective power to govern – the country ranked 38 in Africa and far below Niger, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire in the West African sub region (IIAG, 2013). This ranking raises questions of democratic quality in the country and the extent to which some factors have militated against the centripetal forces of democracy in Nigeria.

The challenges impeding the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy have been greatly unuttered. While most scholars in Nigeria have looked into the problems of Nigeria's democracy as well as the ways through which democracy can be consolidated in Nigeria, there is a scanty literature on the challenges impeding the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy. It is against this background that

this study intends to look into the major challenges of promoting centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

The Nigerian state assumed a new governance status in 1999 following the demise of authoritarian regime in the country. Military dictatorship was replaced by representative democracy with the hopes and aspirations of good governance much higher than what the seemingly collapsible democratic institutions could fulfill (Ademola, 2011). The source and nature of transition in 1999 was later found to constitute threat to the foundation of democracy and obliterates the current efforts at consolidating democracy. The reality of the attempts to subvert the concept of democracy to serve the interests of a few, rather than a greater majority, still looms high (Okeke, 2015).

The emerging democracy was artificial and reflexive of external imposition. It is a weak democracy that repudiates inalienable ethos of its true identity. Democracy and political participation are related to good governance are interrelated and complementary but appear to be antithetical in Nigeria. Democracy in Nigeria is alien and its practice has proved difficult (Ovwasa and Abdullahi, 2017). The erosion of good

governance by the practice of democracy has deepened the crisis of democracy. When democracy is abused, good governance becomes elusive and evasive. Leadership challenges, corruption, lack of transparency, constitutional and electoral reforms, rising civil strife, poverty, unemployment, godfatherism, lack of human security and human rights all remain critical challenges to the practice of democracy in Nigeria (Ovwasa and Abdullahi, 2017).

However, some efforts have been made to ensure the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy; these forces are being impeded by some factors that are yet to be studied. The main problem of the study is the unavailability of literature on the challenges impeding the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main purpose of the study is to examine the challenges of promoting centripetal forces in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to;

- i. Investigate the challenges of promoting centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy

- ii. Suggest solutions on how to improve the centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

## **2.1 Conceptual Review**

### **2.1.1 Centripetalism**

Centripetalism is often perceived as a type of a political system for a multi-segmental, especially multi-ethnic, country in order to create among the members of the political elite of integrative and moderate political behavior cross-cutting segmental divisions which, reaching beyond group interests, depoliticize the segmental separateness and, in this manner, reduce their significance. Centripetalism, like consociationalism, is a model of a political system of power-sharing type, attributed to certain multi-segmental, especially multi-ethnic countries, including Nigeria (Reilly 2011; Kayode, 2015).

The essence of centripetalism is to assure members of various (ethnic/national/religious/confessional/linguistic) segments of a share in power, but not as part of particular institutions protecting and reinforcing the interests of individual segments (like it is in the case of consociationalism), but in the dimension of supra-segmental, or inter-segmental institutions, i.e., institutions that are open to

individuals from all segments. Such an approach is intended, above all, to create among the members of the political elite integrative and moderate political behavior cross-cutting segmental divisions which, reaching beyond group interests, depoliticize the segmental separateness and, in this manner, reduce their significance (Reilly, 2007; 2011). Thus centripetalism, in contrast to consociationalism, does not promote institutional recognition of segmental differences and interests. Quite the contrary, the essence of centripetalism is to foster cooperation not so much between segments as between members of different segments and even *sui generis* forcing them to cooperate by creating an integrative institutional framework.

The two prominent writers on centripetalism are Reilly and Trzeciński. These scholars agreed that the principal formal centripetal institutions include 1) supra-regional and inter-segmental parties and, should the need arise, coalitions between them; (2) the election of a supra-segmental (supported by members of various segments) president through the use of the so-called territorial vote distribution requirement, i.e. the need to win an appropriately large number of votes in presidential elections in the majority

of states or provinces (meeting this requirement is indispensable to occupy the presidential office, and merely winning a numerical majority of votes is insufficient) (Trzeciński 2017); (3) the use mainly in parliamentary elections of electoral systems that promote cross-segmental voting, especially preferential voting in the form of an alternative vote in single-mandate districts or a single transferable vote in multi-mandate districts, or some other kind of cross-segmental vote-pooling (Reilly 2020); (4) decentralization (e.g., in the form of federalization) leading to a division of large segments into smaller parts that inhabit different, ideally multi-segmental states, thus inclining regional political elites of different segments to collaborate.

### **2.1.2 Democracy**

Differing views exist when attempting to define Democracy. This stems from the fact that, there has been no universally accepted definition of the term. Various characteristics rather than definition are mentioned in the discourse on democracy. According to Erunke (2012), democracy is a fluid concept that resulted in several have the power and choice of either exercising such power directly or elect persons who

will represent them or to come together and form a governing body.” It is also known as or referred to as the rule of the majority. Okoli and Gusau (2013) describe democracy as rule by the citizens or citizen’s rule. They view democracy as one of the surviving legacies of the ancient Greek civilization. This is however, not without any partiality to the belief that comparable practices of democracy grew well in other places, even in Africa prior to recorded history. “Huntington (1991) posits that democracy survives where the principal leaders (of a form) of government are chosen through a competitive election during which the majority of the population are enabled to participate. Inherent in this definition is the notion of election as a fundamental element of democracy. It equates democracy to election and therefore the electoral processes during which the making of decision and selection are with the people.” Democracy, to Huntington, revolves around selective procedures, which leaders go through to power.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) defines democracy as “a system of government in which everyone in the country can vote to elect its members, a country that has a government which has

been elected by the people of the country, a situation or system in which everyone is equal and has the right to vote, make decisions etc. Macionis (2005), simply defines democracy as “a type of political system that gives to the people as a whole”. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1995), has a broader definition of democracy as “a system of government by all the people of a country, usually through representatives whom they elect, thought as allowing freedom of speech, religion and political opinion...”

Abraham Lincoln, one time president of United States of America (U.S.A) gave a classic definition of democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This definition of democracy has remained popular to date and is seen by the author as a very simple and direct picture of what democracy implies and therefore the preferable definition of democracy for this paper. This is because it captures the real essence of the practice of democracy as a kind of government that has popular power in which the people are free, happy, duely represented and people decide what happens through their representatives. And the government is continually focusing on the general will of the people.

In a democratic state, authority is rooted in the consent of the people, that is, in the belief that people have the right to run or at least to choose their government. Democracies impose clear, legally established limits to what elected officials can do. All participants in the system must obey the rules regarding such principles as open, free and fair elections, one person, one vote, and acceptance of majority decisions while respecting a minority's right to dissent. Calhoun et al (1997), describe democracy as a system in which "the law guarantees extensive civil liberties, including the freedom to associate with whomever one chooses, freedom of speech and the press, and freedom from unreasonable search and seizure". A democracy does not claim exclusive, unquestioning loyalty from its people; in fact, if those in power overstep their authority, the people have a right, even a duty, to vote them out of office or impeach them through their representatives.

From the above definitions, we can conclude that;

- i. Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all adult citizens, directly, or

through their freely elected representatives.

- ii. Democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule and individual rights. Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and decentralize government to regional and local levels, understanding that all levels of government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.
- iii. Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.
- iv. Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to citizens of voting age.
- v. Citizens in a democracy have not only rights, but also the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn,

- protects their rights and freedoms.
- vi. Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, Intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit.

This study opts for a descriptive research design. The population of the study covered the three (3) senatorial districts in Kwara state, namely: Kwara Central, Kwara South and Kwara North due to limited resources and timeframe a sample size of 300 respondents was drawn from the study population. To ensure even spread and equal representation, the researcher adopted a simple random sampling technique. This technique allowed the researcher to draw 100 respondents from each senatorial district within the state.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Question: What are the challenges of promoting centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy?**

**Table 4.1: Challenges of promoting centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	Corruption has been deterrence to the promotion of Nigeria's democracy.	62	163	47	53	25
28	Ethno-religious crisis is a major challenge of Nigeria's democracy.	71	159	23	61	36
3.	Unemployment is a disuniting factor in Nigeria's democracy.	57	187	32	50	24
4.	Godfatherism is a major bane to the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.	65	147	20	71	47
5.	Insecurity takes the forefront as a major challenge of promotion of centripetal forces	45	136	34	97	38

	in Nigeria's democracy.					
<b>6.</b>	Poverty is capable of disunity the Country.	<b>76</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>7.</b>	Electoral malpractices are major challenges of Nigeria's democracy.	<b>68</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>8.</b>	Bad governance takes lead as challenge of Nigeria's democracy.	<b>59</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>9.</b>	Ethnic politics is a bane to the promotion of Nigeria's democracy.	<b>59</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>10.</b>	Incompetence of the judiciary can break the country and serve as a challenge to Nigeria's democracy.	<b>54</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>44</b>

Source: Author, 2022

The Table 4.1 shows the responses of the respondents on the challenges of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

From the table, the item 1 shows that 62 respondents strongly agreed, 163 agreed, 47 did not decide, 53 disagreed and 25 strongly disagreed that corruption has been deterrence to the promotion of Nigeria's democracy.

The item 2 shows that 71 respondents strongly agreed, 159 agreed, 23 did not decide, 61 disagreed and 36 strongly disagreed that ethno-religious crisis is a major challenge of Nigeria's democracy.

The item 3 shows that 57 respondents strongly agreed, 187 agreed, 32 did not decide, 50 disagreed and 24 strongly

disagreed that unemployment is a disuniting factor in Nigeria's democracy.

The item 4 depicts that 65 respondents strongly agreed, 147 agreed, 20 did not decide, 71 disagreed and 47 strongly disagreed that godfatherism is a major bane to the promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

The item 5 depicts that 45 respondents strongly agreed, 136 agreed, 34 did not decide, 97 disagreed and 38 strongly disagreed that insecurity takes the forefront as a major challenge of promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

The item 6 shows that 76 respondents strongly agreed, 104 agreed, 43 did not decide, 86 disagreed and 41 strongly

disagreed that poverty is capable of disunity the Country.

The item 7 depicts that 68 respondents strongly agreed, 111 agreed, 36 did not decide, 91 disagreed and 44 strongly disagreed that electoral malpractices are major challenges of Nigeria’s democracy.

The item 8 depicts that 59 respondents strongly agreed, 142 agreed, 43 did not decide, 71 disagreed and 35 strongly disagreed that bad governance takes lead as challenge of Nigeria’s democracy.

The item 9 depicts that 59 respondents strongly agreed, 89 agreed, 67 did not decide, 79 disagreed and 56 strongly disagreed that incompetence of the judiciary can break the country and serve as a challenge to Nigeria’s democracy.

Lastly, the item 10 shows that 54 respondents strongly agreed, 123 agreed, 41 did not decide, 88 disagreed and 34 strongly disagreed that ethnic politics is a bane to the promotion of Nigeria’s democracy.

**Table 4.2: Ways to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria’s democracy**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	National Youth Service Corps should be retained to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria’s democracy.	75	109	23	93	50
2	Adequate security will promote Nigeria’s democracy.	49	164	25	73	39
3.	The best to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria’s democracy is through the provision of jobs.	53	172	27	56	42
4.	Proper finance of the educational system will promote Nigeria’s democracy.	72	103	39	87	49
5.	Corruption should be dealt with if we want to promote Nigeria’s democracy.	56	141	43	73	37

Source: Author, 2022

The Table 4.2 shows the responses of the respondents on the ways to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria.

From the table, the item 1 shows that 75 respondents strongly agreed, 109 agreed, 23 did not decide, 93 disagreed and 50 strongly disagreed that the National Youth Service Corps should be retained to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

The item 2 shows that 49 respondents strongly agreed, 164 agreed, 25 did not decide, 73 disagreed and 39 strongly disagreed that adequate security will promote Nigeria's democracy.

The item 3 shows that 53 respondents strongly agreed, 172 agreed, 27 did not decide, 56 disagreed and 42 strongly disagreed that the best to promote centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy is through the provision of jobs.

The item 4 depicts that 72 respondents strongly agreed, 103 agreed, 39 did not decide, 87 disagreed and 49 strongly disagreed that proper finance of the educational system will promote Nigeria's democracy..

The item 5 depicts that 56 respondents strongly agreed, 141 agreed, 43 did not decide, 73 disagreed and 37 strongly disagreed that corruption should be dealt

with if we want to promote Nigeria's democracy.

It is found in the study that corruption is one of the major challenges deterring successful democratization process in Nigeria. This finding is unconnected with the assertion that corruption is one the most dangerous ill of any society (Agbekaku, Itakpe & Okoye, 2016). This problem is manifested in high rate of unemployment, poverty, hunger, disease, insecurity, infrastructure decay and deficit all over the nation. Painting the gloomy picture of corruption in Nigeria and making it difficult to promote centripetal forces within the country.

The second major challenge discovered in this study is insecurity. Insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. The rate of kidnapping, highway crime, banditry and other forms of security challenges faced in Nigeria today makes insecurity a great challenge of promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the major challenges of promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy. For this purpose, we investigated the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC), religious organizations, National Youth Service Corps, Federal Character Principle, Unity Schools and other institutions as centripetal forces. However, it was investigated that insecurity, ethnic-politics, corruption, poverty, unemployment all take leading position as challenges of promotion of centripetal forces in Nigeria's democracy. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

- i. The need to devolve and de-concentrate power to other component units of the Nigerian federation as prescribed by the federal principle is imperative in today's Nigeria. The existence of minority groups in Nigerian federation also makes it compelling that mechanisms that allay minorities' fear of domination and oppression be created, enshrined and guaranteed.
- ii. For Nigeria's democracy to be fruitful, all the parties involved (Politicians, INEC, Security agents, judiciary and Citizens) in electoral process must be committed towards ensuring free and fair elections.
- iii. A constitutionally guaranteed restructuring of the polity that among

other things grant autonomy to the ethnic nationalities will therefore suffice to remedy the challenges troubling Nigeria at the moment.

- iv. There is also a need for effective collaboration between civil society organizations and other professional groups. This will bring about unity in diversity in Nigeria.
- v. The strengthening and empowering of the institutions of fighting corruption through law, making them independent and institutionalizing them will go a long way to tame the monster called corruption. And if not, democratization process, fast growth and sustainable development in Nigeria will be a mirage.
- vi. Nigeria equally needs re-orientation and new value systems that will enhance people's commitment and confidence in government. Full democratization needs serious efforts from the government and commitment of the people.

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