

## Mechanisms for Socio-Political Cohesion and National Development in Post-Civil War Nigeria: 1970-2015

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### Abstract

The focus of this study is on Nigeria's post-civil war socio-political cohesion status at the political, economic, and social levels. It examines what the Nigerian government has done to enhance the necessary blending of political forces and ideologies of the greatest number of citizens, and how far they have gone in stabilizing the country in the 21st century. The study adopts the qualitative descriptive historical research method using the primary and secondary source of data collection to arrive at its findings. It has also adopted the same descriptive and historical form in the presentation of the facts from oral interviews, journal articles, books and other secondary sources that have been consulted. The study ended with a short conclusion that leads the reader to recommendations on how the Nigerian state can achieve balance in its match to an enduring socio-political cohesion for national development.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, Reconciliation, Nationhood, Demobilization, Re-Integration.

### Introduction

Social justice is the criteria for socio-political cohesion and national integration. It must be based on diversity, equity and inclusion. Conflicts, wars and social cohesion are multi-dimensional concepts, delving through political, social and economic strata. Social cohesion has been described as 'the glue that holds a society together and enables its members to peacefully coexist and develop. The 20th century and early years of the 21st century were marked by wide spread violent conflict as a means of resolving political differences within and among countries. Two world wars took the lives of millions of people and destroyed the economies of dozens of countries in Europe and Asia during the first half of the 20th century. Cold War tensions from the 1950s to the late 1980s led to political and military interventions and internal conflicts in many countries throughout the world. Since the late 1980s armed conflicts among political, religious, and ethnic groups over the control of fragile states have exacted a high toll in human life and imposed misery on those who survived.

Because conditions in post-conflict war-torn countries vary widely, restoring governance and rebuilding trust in government requires different approaches in countries at different stages of conflict resolution, at different stages of recovery from conflict, and with governments at different levels of administrative capacity. Some countries require and can support a more comprehensive approach to governance reform. Others may only be able

to support narrow interventions that build capacity to carry out specific functions or to address critical deficiencies.

Nigeria's post-civil war nation-state peacebuilding project was framed around reconciliation, rehabilitation, and reconstruction policies which shaped the nature of national citizenship, the "peace dividend," and reintegration of the Igbo into a united Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Nigeria-Biafra War foreshadowed many of the devastating conflicts that would threaten the survival of most postcolonial African states. To this day, it still raises questions about the complex challenges facing peacebuilding in Africa. Consolidating post-war reconciliation and building durable peace is even more challenging in African contexts where state and nation building remains highly contested works in progress. This invariably has enormous consequences for lasting post-conflict peace, reconciliation, and settlement, and their impact on beneficiaries in specific contexts.

The end of the Nigeria-Biafra War was marked by the magnanimous proclamation of "no victor, no vanquished" by the General Yakubu Gowon-led Federal Military Government (FMG). This was widely welcomed and immediately followed by the policy of "Reconciliation, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction (3Rs)" toward the victims of the war. In a national broadcast, titled "The Dawn of National Reconciliation," Gowon declared that the task of reconciliation had truly commenced (Federal Ministry of Information, 1970, in, Tamuno and Ukpabi, 1989, p. 77). The harsh conditions of surrender expected from the FMG did not materialize; rather, the period was marked by the magnanimity of the FMG in pronouncements that guaranteed the personal safety and security of the Igbo and their properties, the right to reside and work anywhere in Nigeria, the reabsorption of civil servants of Igbo extraction into the civil service and the military, and the granting of general amnesty to the Igbo. John de St. Jorre, whose popular account referred to the conflict as "The Brothers' War," argues that this was probably the only armed conflict of its magnitude in history, perpetrated with so much viciousness and bitterness, where no reprisals, trials, or executions occurred (Jorre, 1972, p.78). A retrospective examination reveals that the FMG pronouncements did not fulfill the intended purposes, as they turned out to be more sensational than real. It gradually became apparent that there were indeed those who emerged as "victors" and others who were really "vanquished." (Azubuogu, Cyril, Interview March 30, 2023) The institutional and structural context of Igbo marginalization and alienation as reflected in subsequent developments and events in post-war Nigeria explains this point.

Gowon's administration in post-Civil War Nigeria coincided with that period in Nigeria's history when the desire for national integration was at its lowest. The end of the Civil war in 1970 plunged Nigeria into a prolonged period of socio-political and economic dreadfulness. The policies to those who it was made to assuage became a dream and a hoax in years to come due to the pattern and method of implementation. It ended up putting more torture on the psyche of a populace that had been traumatized and demoralized by the Civil War. Gowon failed to effectively tackle the nation-building challenges because he wore the garb

of a reformer and guardian, when what was needed was a rebuild and a reconstructor (Folade and Bolarinwa, 2019, p. 14).

Non the less, in Nigeria and other West African countries, the idea of social-political cohesion has emerged as a response to persistent problems which, despite certain achievements over the past few years, continue to exist: high indices of poverty and indigence, the extreme inequality that characterizes our region and various forms of discrimination and social exclusion dating back to the distant past. The actors that might potentially be capable of fostering positive interaction lack a common set of principles of cooperation and communication. While there are usually many reasons for these gaps, the frail material foundation of socio-political national cohesion is a stand-out factor – although the problem certainly transcends the mere satisfaction of material needs. Hence the importance of policies to promote socio-political national cohesion based on democratic values. In addition to its unquestionable ethical importance, given its implications for equity, socio-political cohesion has a role to play in assessing the strength of the rule of law, the democratic social order and governance. Its conceptual use, however, has been far from rigorous; it is more akin to a political objective or aspiration, indistinctly associated with a variety of multifaceted social-development issues which are said to promote or impede its achievement (Ottone, 2007, p. 45).

The Nigerian example of federalism, like other developing African countries, is confronted with a lot of complex challenges which on many occasions have shaken the nation to its foundations. Some of these challenges are the issues of politics, economic and social instability frequently stemming from bad governance, dictatorial governance, failed economic policies, fundamental human rights abuses and inappropriate development programmes stemming also from exacerbated ethnic and religious differences in society. These problems have posed a lot of difficulties to the country, and government at all levels seems to be helpless and hopeless in the resolution of crisis and conflict arising from them thereby untying the rope of national cohesion. Most Nigerians who had lived peacefully together for years now suddenly take up arms against themselves on issues bordering on politics, resource control and distribution. Several communities that were previously living together peacefully suddenly took up arms against one another as a result of claim of ownership of land, natural resources and as a result of politics in a multi-ethnic and pluralistic society like Nigeria and not recognizing the importance attached to the socio-political status of citizens in the country (Azubogu Elixabeth, Asaba, Virtual Interview on April 28, 2023).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Consequently, this study is designed to examine socio-political relationships in Nigeria in relation to national cohesion. Over fifty decades after the end of the Nigerian civil war, it has become imperative to investigate not only the level of socio-political cohesion but also the factors responsible for socio-political rupture in Nigeria and suggest measures for the country's seamless socio-political development. Some of the moot sources of the current

socio-political rupture in Nigeria are the proliferation of ethno-religious organizations and their activities in governing Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts that have incapacitated the Nigerian state institutions – could not fulfill the primary responsibility of the state – protection of lives and property and promotion of the citizens' welfare. Recurrent ethnic militia movements in Nigeria's traditional sectional, intercommons and gender politics have continued to threaten the national socio-political structures. Some other contentious issues are the dilemma of Nigeria as a secular and multi-ethnic/religious state and the different shades of connotation of Nigeria's national motto and citizenship. In all these instances, there has been a lack of consensus among Nigerians, particularly the political elites, on the principles of social relationship in Nigeria - how should Nigeria be governed and by whom.

Recent upsurge in socio-political indices in Nigeria is a major cause for concern to the majority of the citizens and observers of the Nigerian state. According to reports by the Global Terrorism Index (2015 report), Jibrin Ibrahim, and other scholars, against the popular expectation that Boko Haram, Niger Delta militants, Fulani herdsman insurgency, and other security agencies' operations would pull together the socio-political relationship in Nigeria, the conflicts have virtually replaced the traditional north-south/Muslim-Christian cleavages with new communal and gender conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, lots of dislocation of people from their ancestral homes, destruction of public and private property, and massive drain on the entire nation's resources. These have gone to show Nigeria's lack of capacity for harmonizing her diversities. Accordingly, the apparent socio-political incoherence in Nigeria has given credence to the rumor of an impending break-up of Nigeria. This lack of unity and ability to unite in cohesion over the years is the main thrust of this paper.

### **Objective of the Study**

In a recent report, the former British foreign secretary, David Miliband, warned that no fewer than 20 million Africans would be at the risk of succumbing to a humanitarian crisis if Nigeria failed. The International Crisis Group posits that Nigeria may be facing imminent collapse, a view echoed and re-echoed by some world leaders, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, the former president of the United States, Barack Obama, and David Cameron a former British Prime Minister. A morass sustained by the faded and frayed lines of Nigeria as many entities are in diverse states of decay. Price Water House (PwC) echoed the slow and steady trajectory of the country to a failed state and speedily suggested that the country must reflect deeply on its gone and its going politics to avert the looming doom. The nation is shrouded in acute and chronic distressed governance. A 1995 report explained that the greatest impediments to the growth of the embryo of the Nigerian state are corruption, jungle justice, and the criminal manipulation of the prebendal state on such a scale that many large, thoughtful observers contested that the Nigerian nation is haunted by insecurity, mass disenchantments, and jadedness. Only a

military coup can reverse the situation, but only for a brief period as military regimes are now outdated in Africa and around the world.

Across the globe, socio-political cohesion has become the in-thing in both developed and developing societies, Nigeria inclusive. The despair and desolation caused by myriad of violent conflicts have surged the race for socio-political cohesion. Since Nigeria transcended into nationhood in 1914 and gained independence in 1960, the country has groaned under waves of restiveness as a result of bad governance, recession, and depression. The result is insurgency in the northeast, militancy in the oil-rich Niger Delta, cattle rustling in the north-central, and kidnappings in the south. These and sundries of other anti-state activities perpetuated by Boko Haram, Niger Delta Avengers, and Fulani herdsmen have bestridden the political fabric of the Nigerian state. The implications have continued to be dire and worrisome. The upscale of the activities and operations of these socio-political brigades appears scoffing and tormenting. Equally, there are the resilient calls for restructuring, re-negotiation, and the call of a referendary option designed to reengineer the Nigerian state and its journey in the 21st-century socio-political cohesion. The objective of the study therefore is to investigate and analyze the mechanisms that have facilitated socio-political cohesion in Nigeria following the civil war that took place from 1967-1970. This includes: examining the various factors, events, and policies that have contributed to fostering unity and reconciliation among different ethnic and religious groups within the country. By understanding these mechanisms, the study aims to provide insights into how post-conflict societies can build and maintain social and political cohesion over an extended period.

### Methodology

In the study for the mechanisms for socio-political cohesion and national development in post civil war Nigeria from 1970-2015, a mixed method approach will be used. This will involve a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to gather, analyze, and interpret relevant data.

1. A comprehensive review of existing literature on socio-political cohesion, national development, and post civil war Nigeria will be conducted to understand the historical context and identify key themes and patterns in the existing research.
2. Interviews will be conducted with key stakeholders, experts, policymakers, community leaders, and citizens to gather firsthand experiences and perspectives on the mechanisms for socio political cohesion and national development in Nigeria post civil war.
3. Surveys will be administered to a range of stakeholders, including government officials, civil society organizations, local communities, and youth groups to gather qualitative and descriptive data on their perceptions of the initiatives of the topic.
4. In-depth case studies will be conducted on successful examples of socio political cohesion ad national development initiatives in Nigeria to understand the specific mechanisms and factors contributing to their success.

5. A comparative analysis will be conducted to compare the mechanisms, strategies, and outcomes of socio-political cohesion and national development initiatives across different regions and time periods in Nigeria to identify lessons learned and best practices for building a cohesive and prosperous nation.

### Theoretical Framework

The journey towards Socio-political cohesion is an important determinant of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation. It creates stronger bonds within and across different groups, and fosters greater trust in the institutions of government. Reinforcing or promoting socio-political cohesion needs to be an integral part of government policy and civil society engagement in countries where multiple identity groups share geographic space. It is even more important where there is a history or current context of conflict, hostility, or mistrust between different identity groups or the state and its citizens (UNDP Report, 2015, p. 4).

Against this background therefore, the theoretical framework of this paper will be hinged on the theories of Nation Building. Some of the theories of nation building have been dedicated to the study of link between nation and nationalism; others are attributed to explore nation building, state building, social integration, national integration and even conflict transformation during various historical periods (Bhat, 2021, p. 41). However, nation building is a normative concept used by academics and nation builders alike to study the role of government and other stakeholders in nation building in recent times.

There have been so many proponents of nation building theories with different approach. Among these proponents are Ernest Gellner, Reinhrd Brendix, Karl Deutsch, and Benedict Anderson who propounded the theory of Imaginary Communities, Stein Rokkan, Geltung, and Rand Corporations with their post conflict scenario theory on nation building, Charles Tilly etc.

Of note is the Rand Corporation theory which sees nation building as the use of armed forces in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy. While this serves as a good platform to underpin nation building in Nigeria, it is also very obvious that Nigeria has defied all indices of nationhood as postulated by these non-Africanist proponents.

Considering these theoretical approaches, one can argue that none of the nation building theories can be relevant in the context of Nigeria. Since these theories are built up in the western models, they could not be appropriate in Nigeria's geo-political contexts. Their concept, however, can partially be applied in integrating multiple theories in Nigerian context. In a process of nation building, Nigerian nation has been progressing in its unique way, so it does not have to apply other countries' approaches and models without serious speculations and this cannot be duly adopted for national unity and integration. (Herbert, 2009, vol.3, p. 19).

## ***Integration Theory***

Ernst Haas, one of the most influential neofunctional integration theorists, once defined integration as the process 'whereby political actors in several, distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states'<sup>8</sup>. This is a broad definition, which includes both a social process and a political process. Not all theorists would include both aspects in their definition, and there are reasons why Haas, from his perspective, emphasized the social element of integration. Integration theory is thus the field of systematic reflection on the process of intensifying political cooperation in societies and the development of common socio-political institutions, as well as on its outcome. It also includes the theorization of changing traitions of identities and interests of social actors in the context of this process. Integration is also a process whereby political actors from different national settings are motivated to bring together their loyalties, expectations, and political activities towards a new center, whose institution poses or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states. The objectives of the agreement could range from economic to political to environmental, although it has typically taken the form of a political economy initiative where commercial interests are the focus for achieving broader socio-political and security objectives, as defined by national governments.

National Cohesion and Integration therefore constitutes unity, equality, freedom, democracy, absence of war, just peace, social justice and the rule of law. It helps cultivate in members of a community shared values, challenges and opportunities.

Social cohesion is the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities based on a sense of hope, trust and reciprocity. It also involves the willingness of groups with diverse values and objectives to coexist, share resources, have mutual respect for each other and abide by the rules of the land. Social cohesion involves building shared values and communities of interpretation, reducing disparities in wealth and income so as to generally enable people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community. Political cohesion is where structures and institutions are operating to ensure that citizens' needs are met while ensuring that political actors are in harmony with each other. The Integration theoretical framework binds together these activities for national integration but whether the elements of integration is really being put into practice in Nigeria is a matter of conjecture.

## **Socio-Political Cohesion and Nationhood**

Unifying disparate peoples at national and local levels and promoting cohesion in conflict-affected and fragile states are important intangible aspects of state building and peacebuilding. A legitimate political order needs to be based on some agreement about the boundaries of the political community, national priorities and collective identity. In addition, a shared over-arching identity can focus attention away from ethnic and sectarian



identities that may have become the source of divisions in violent conflict. This leads to ideas of nationhood.

A 'nation' implies a shared sense of political community and elements of identity. Nation-building as defined by a Scholar is 'the construction of a shared sense of identity and common destiny, to overcome ethnic, sectarian or religious differences and counter alternative allegiances (Haas, 1958, p. 11).

Citizenship and nationality cannot be conflated. In some cases, citizenship may be conferred based on belonging to a particular ethnic group, or may be effectively exercised only by dominant groups. Thus, nationals of a country may still be denied citizenship and rendered stateless. In other cases, nationality is defined solely in ethnic terms, whereas citizenship is seen as broader, encompassing various ethnic groups living within a country. Statebuilding and peacebuilding may enable nation-building but do not necessarily guarantee it. Effective state institutions may not result in a sense of nationhood; and a sense of nationhood may not improve the likelihood of strong institutions. There is a growing body of literature that argues, however, that the line between statebuilding and nation-building is not clear-cut (DFID Report, 2010, p. 18).

State structures permeate through to societal structures and statebuilding processes affect socio-political cohesion. Constitution drafting and elections, state policies on language and educational systems, for example, can have a profound impact on nationhood. They address and shape fundamental questions related to nationality, citizenship, identities, trust and values. They also impact on the degree to which a state is politically inclusive. Participatory and inclusive deliberation in constitution drafting can provide a forum and process to bring divided groups together to negotiate controversial issues and to think about a common vision of the state. A constitution serves as a symbol that disparate groups have agreed to live together.

It is thus important for external actors to address the reality that statebuilding can bring them into the realm of nation-building, instead of avoiding it. Trying to build institutions without linking them to shared values and inclusive notions of citizenship and political community can result in the persistence of divisions. Perceptions of nationhood and state legitimacy are fostered through a sense of belonging and connection to the state and to wider society. In addition to attention to inclusive institutions, this can be fostered through educational, cultural and sports programmes (Okeke, (et al), 2022, p. 25).

It is also important to recognize that nation-building is a long-term indigenous process and that, similar to issues of legitimacy, there is a limit to which external factors can play active role. In many cases, legitimacy and nationhood require that central institutions engage with local, community and customary governance. It is not enough that full and equal membership in society entitles the individual to an equal voice in the control of his government; it must also give him the right to enjoy the benefits of society and to contribute to its progress. The opportunity of each individual to obtain useful employment, and to have access to services in the fields of education, housing, health, recreation and transportation, whether available free or at a price, must be provided with complete



disregard for race, colour, creed, and national origin. Without this equality of opportunity, the individual is deprived of the chance to develop his potentialities and to share the fruits of society. The group also suffers through the loss of the contributions which might have been made by persons excluded from the main channels of social and economic activity (Mudacumara and Moreol (ed), 2022. P. 23). This can give people a stronger connection to the state and a greater sense of belonging and hence foster lasting and enduring socio-political cohesion.

### **Peace Building Mechanisms and Post Civil War Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)**

The peace process that brought an end to the Nigerian Civil War led to the immediate disbandment of the military structure of the Biafran forces and on the federal side, it was to lead to a reduction in the size of the armed forces. The expectation was that many of those who had fled their homelands would return, and resettle into their home communities or into a new environment. Central to this were Biafran soldiers, and military personnel on both sides who needed to reintegrate back into civilian life. In the immediate aftermath of the civil war, the federal military government (FMG) under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon introduced a policy of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction (the 3Rs).

The rapid transformation in the size, composition, and character of the Nigerian military from 1960 to 1967 constituted a significant factor in the emergence of the civil war (Franklin, 1945, p. 609).

It is noteworthy that almost all the military installations in pre-civil war Nigeria were concentrated in the Northern part of the country. Kano had the Fifth Battalion. In Kaduna were the 3rd Battalion, the 1st Field Battery (Artillery), the 1st Field Squadron (Engineers), the 88th Transport Regiment, the Nigerian Defence Academy, the ordinance Depot, the 44th Military Hospital, the Nigerian Military Training College, the Reconnaissance Squadron and Regiment, the Nigerian Air Force, and the Ammunition Factory; in Zaria were the Recruit Training Depot and the Nigerian Military School. Outside the Northern part of the country, the West had the Fourth battalion in Ibadan, and the Second Field Battery (Artillery) as well as the Second Reconnaissance Squadron in Abeokuta. The only military installation in the Eastern part of the country was the First Battalion in Enugu. There were no military units in Mid-Western Nigeria, and those in Lagos were either administrative or ceremonial (Lukman, 1971, p. 22). This arrangement was a threat to the country's socio-political national integration and cohesion.

Madiebo points out that 'in order to ensure the loyalty of the military thus, the criterion for promotion and advancement was based more on political considerations than efficiency or competence'. With this ethnic tone to the location of military installations and recruitment into the armed forces, the armed forces became politicized, ethnic rivalry became established within its polity, standards fell, and the effect was the various military coups that led to the outbreak of the civil war (Madiebo, 1980, p. 84). This also threatened

Nigeria's integration and national socio-political cohesion and the overall development of the country (Esedebe Fred, April 28, 2023).

The thrust of the 3Rs was to: create an atmosphere conducive for resettling those displaced and others who had fled their homes; reunite families and friends; rebuild physical facilities which had suffered some damage during the civil war; and place demobilized armed forces personnel in gainful employment in civilian life. In contrast to other post-civil war policies on the African continent, the 3Rs was multifaceted rather than being explicitly demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) focused. The need for an overarching post-civil war policy in Nigeria, in contrast to an explicitly DDR-focused policy, was informed by the difficulty of the federal government in identifying a Biafran combatant from a Biafran civilian. During the war, the federal forces had been accused of indiscriminate prosecution of military operations against Biafra, without any regard for civilian locations, and legitimate military targets. This military tactic was justified by Colin Legum (1968) on the basis that given the successful mobilisation of the Igbo populace by Biafran leaders for the prosecution of the war, it was difficult to distinguish between civilians and soldiers, and between who was and was not a combatant (Madiebo, 1980, p. 84).

Non the less, the bedrock of the 3Rs policy was the Second National Development Plan 1970–74 (SNDP) for post-war reconstruction. The details of the SNDP as highlighted in the three high priorities of the plan relates to reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement, and the demobilization of the armed forces. About 40 per cent of the total net public sector programme of £780 million was devoted to the reconstruction element of the SNDP by the post war regime of Yakubu Gowon (Legum, 1968, p. 128). Whether these policies brought the much expected socio-political cohesion that had disappeared during the war years still remain unclear as those on the losing side of the war still feel and remain marginalized fifty years after this purported noble policy.

### **Post Reconstruction Mechanisms and the Politics of Military Disarmament, Demobilization and Re-Integration**

The moment the Nigerian Civil War ended and efforts at post-war reconstruction began, it was obvious to all the key actors that the DDR exercise, largely because of the nature of the civil war, would have different ramifications and opinion. (Olaleye, 2010, p. 71) In this regard, the broader process of reconciliation, nation building, strengthening of civil society and reintegration usually entails elements of military demobilisation. In a virtual oral interview with Mr Eboigbe from Benin city, on May 14, 2023; he opined that during the Nigerian Civil War, the size of the armed forces on both sides increased dramatically especially as some forms of conscription were adopted by one side while the other opened its gates to a wide variety of recruits. The grounds for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) after the Nigerian Civil War were numerous, key among which were:

1. Some of those who fought were conscripted, and it was not certain whether such people would still want to remain in the armed forces (Eboigbe, May 14, 2023);

2. After the war, it was obvious that many of them had sustained injury that negate their continued commissioning;
3. The defeat of the Biafran war machine meant that the force had to be disbanded, re-orientated and debriefed before they could be reintegrated into the army;
4. Some of those who claimed to have fought probably did not and only came into the equation because they wanted opportunities and privileges that could come from demobilisation;
5. The pattern of expansion of the armed forces of both sides did not take into consideration any level of educational attainment of the soldiers and it was possible that many of those in the force may not have the academic requirement to be in the military;
6. Most of those soldiers sent to the war front, because of the war exigencies did not undergo sufficient training. With the end of the war, it was necessary to do away with these people to give room for more capable hands (Idahosa, 1989, p. 48).

Furthermore, it is important to re-emphasize that the Biafran war did not end either by negotiated settlement or by exertion from external powers. Rather, it ended because the Biafrans had no military, psychological and economic will to continue their rebellion. This thus conferred on the federal side the status of a victor who should dictate the terms of surrender. The manner in which the war ended thus placed the rebels at the mercy of the federal forces. The capitulation of Biafra on the battlefield and the cessation of hostilities through the military might of the federal forces consequently reflected in the formulation and implementation of the post-war reintegration and demobilization policy of the Gowon government (Amadi, 1973, p. 67). Against this background, the vanquished had no input in the post war policies and terms that shaped the purported reconciliation, demobilization and re-integration and this left much to be desired in the psych of the Biafran side. To them, it was obvious that the sing song of "No Victor, No Vanquished" was only a fluke and very unrealistic (Ahazuem Jones. Interview at Nsukka, April 29, 2023). Demobilization may also entail the need to raise funds for training programs, loan schemes and settlement projects, to look for appropriate areas of training and settlement sites, and to provide services and support mechanisms to ex-combatants to facilitate reintegration into civil society (Olakunle, 2010, p. 110).

In any post-conflict peace building process, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration are the three legs of a tripod. They represent the three significant phases of one single process – to turn purveyors of violence and conflict into pursuers of peace and development. Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants, and where necessary armed and militarized civilian population. However, in Nigeria, the demobilization, reconstruction and reintegration of the armed forces took place in a climate of distrust and political affiliations among the former adversaries. And this never fostered the required national cohesion.

Also, the implementation of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration for Biafran officers was not fair across the board. This is succinctly explained by Phillip Effiong, the Deputy Commander of the defunct Biafran Army in his own words that:

*"The vestiges of war have not been removed or addressed. There are many officers who ... have been punished and deprived of every consideration of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration .....I would want to save time and words by pointing out that the application of the three Rs was neither fair nor devoid of acrimony."*(Ademoyega, 1981, p. 45).

The politics of military disarmament, reconciliation, reconstruction and re-integration was so badly delivered and given ethnic coloration that the adversaries know even fifty years after that the exercise did not encourage nor help to build national cohesion and integration.

### **Formation of Federal Government Organs that Fostered National Cohesion in Nigeria National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)**

The ethnic and regional politics that created a hostile socio-political atmosphere within a decade after the independence of Nigeria served as a major factor that led to the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 through Decree No. 24 under the administration of General Yakubu Gowon. This divisive atmosphere was birthed in the course of colonial rule and groomed by nationalists within a decade after independence.

At the end of the war, it was realized that ethnic and regional politics were salient in Nigeria's disintegration. Steps were therefore taken to promote national integration in both policy making and implementation. This effort gave birth to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 as an instrument to promote peaceful coexistence among all ethnic groups in Nigeria. The choice of youth for the programme was based on the fact that they are considered as agents of change and also the backbone of every society. A way of achieving this was for the youths to imbibe and nurture a sense of common belonging and national consciousness which would transcend political, social, state and ethnic loyalties. The program aims to enhance reconciliation and restructuring of intergroup relationships between and among the different ethnic groups in Nigeria and also to create common ties among the Nigerian youths. The NYSC is a current scheme for every Nigerian youth who obtains their degree from universities or polytechnics who has not exceeded thirty years old at the time of graduation (Berdal, 1996, p. 87).

The reasons for the establishment of the Scheme are presented in its vision, mission and objectives. They are:

- To build a pragmatic organisation that is committed to its set objectives with the ultimate goal of producing future leaders with a positive national ethos, leadership that is vibrant, proud and committed to the unity and even development of the Nigeria State.

- To be at the forefront of National development efforts, as well as serving as a profitable platform for imparting in our youths values of nationalism, patriotism, loyalty and accountable leadership.
- To raise the moral tone of our youths by giving them the opportunity to learn about high ideals of national achievement, social and cultural improvement.
- To develop an attitude of mind acquired through shared experience, and suitable training that would make them more amenable to mobilisation in the national interest.
- Nigerian youths would acquire the spirit of self-reliance, a reliable source of economic empowerment and effective participation in nation building.
- To develop an organisation that lives to its responsibilities and responsive to the needs of the country (Gowon and Effiong. 2001, p. 58).

### **Promulgation of the Indigenization Decree**

The Nigeria-Biafra war-time experience revealed that there were important loopholes yet to be filled in the growth of the Nigerian economy, and that could not be addressed without articulate planning. The strained areas of the economy became more evident with the nature, and execution, of the 'wartime economic policies' adopted by the then Nigerian Military Government. Owing to this background of economic disequilibrium caused by the Nigeria-Biafra War, the planners of the Second National Development Plan, 1970-1974 crafted the objective goals of the plan as to achieve: a united, strong and self-reliance nation; a great and dynamic economy; a just and egalitarian society; a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens; and a free and democratic society. These objectives were, as would be expected general in tone and content (Federal Government Gazette, 1970, p. 7).

Perhaps, the objective that requires much further articulation here is that which refers to 'self-reliance'. It meant that Nigeria would have to depend not on external agents but on it and on her nationals. Thus, Nigeria would: (a) produce, to the maximum extent possible, its own goods and services; consequently, it must feed itself from its own production and develop to the utmost possible its industrial capacity, (b) finance its development from its own resources, (c) rely on its own labour rather than on expatriates. There are other dimensions of self-reliance but these outlined aspects represent in summary the directions to which policy instrument could be most possibly applied. The 1970-1974 Plan gave the public sector a major role, if self reliance was to be achieved, and this 'dominant role' was seen in the control of productive capacity through public ownership and management of major national resources.

The Plan enunciated a policy of public ownership of industry hence the public sector was seen as the major driver of self-reliant development envisioned by the plan. To this end, the government laid concrete plans for the establishment of agro-allied industries, petrochemical and chemical industries, diversification of the textile industries, iron and

steel complex, motor assembly, manufacture for exports and import substitution industries. For instance, Motor Assembly in Kaduna, Lagos, and Emene in Enugu; Bicycle Assembly in Port Harcourt; Ajaokuta Steel and Iron Complex and; Eleme and Warri Petrochemical Plants were established by the government during the life of this plan. The public investment in heavy industry would take the dominant position as an important engine of economic transformation, only if the manufacture of capital and intermediate goods had been localized. This effort by the government was to meet the need to create a strong industrial base for Nigeria which had eluded the country since the colonial days. To assist this effort, the Nigerian Government established two construction companies; the Road Construction Company of Nigeria (RCCN) and the Nigerian Engineering and Construction Company (NECC) in 1972 and 1973 respectively, since over 60 percent of development projects involved construction in one form or the other (Onuegbu and Ezemonye, 2016, p. 517).

Moreover, the Nigerian government in 1972 promulgated the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree No. 4. This was done to increase the Nigerian participation in the ownership and management of the economy: a crucial element in the indigenization of the Nigerian economy (Ake, 2005, p. 41).

#### **Roll Out of the Second National Development Plan (1970-1974)**

The chief economic aspiration of the Second National Development Plan of 1970- 1974 was three-fold: self-reliance, defeat of neo-colonial forces in Africa and achievement of the highest possible growth rate per capita income. In line with this aim, the Gowon's regime promulgated the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion Decree (EPD) in 1972. The primary aim of this policy was to promote economic decolonization, reduction of economic dependence and the achievement of economic autarky. The EPD limited foreign participation in the economy and thereby increased the indigenous ownership and control of business stakes and industrial enterprises in the country. Through the EPD, the Federal Government acquired over 40% shares in major industrial concerns in the country. These include banking, petroleum, manufacturing and agriculture. The EPD also divided enterprises into three major categories: those exclusively reserved for Nigerians; those in which Nigerians must have up to 60% shares; and those in which Nigerians must have at least 40% shares (Egbe, NISER, 1992, p. 68). To all intents and purposes, this decree empowered Nigerians but whether the people who belonged to the former Biafran enclave were part of this empowerment remain totally illusive.

#### **Introduction of the National Sports Festival**

The National Sports Festival (NSF) debuted in Lagos in 1973 with very lofty goals. The first two major ones were to engender unity in the country and to hasten the development of sports in the nation by identifying and developing talents (Gaston, 2000, p. 132). It became Nigeria's mini-Olympics with the regions and then the states taking it really seriously and developing sporting talent in their domain. Some went as far as inviting other nations to

play friendly matches to win the football gold which was then regarded as the 'star' medal. You represented a state either because you lived there or you schooled there. There were no barriers then.

In a nutshell, one of the cardinal objectives of the sports festival was to give the opportunity for talented athletes at the grassroots to be discovered and nurtured to represent the country in international championships (Falode and Bolarinwa, 2019, p. 184). It was an avenue to bring together athletes from all parts of the country and this fostered national integration.

### **Other Policies of National Cohesion**

#### ***Federal Character Principle***

For a country as heterogeneous as Nigeria, especially in terms of culture, tradition, religion, and resources, enacting the federal character principle is deemed pivotal. Governments of heterogeneous countries utilize federal character as a balancing act to ensure the rapid and even development of their countries, to bring their administrations nearer to the people, and, more importantly, to cater to the interests and needs of the diverse population (Federal Character Commission, 1979, p. 1-2).

The federal character principle is mainly implemented in countries with vast arrays of land and a large population with diverse ethnic and tribal differences. This political arrangement is seen as necessary in such countries to create an enabling environment for cooperation, ensure national unity and stability within and between people of all regions, and enhance state legitimacy.

The federal character principle is a political arrangement that seeks to ensure appointments into public service institutions fairly reflect the linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity of the country. The principle also emphasizes fostering a feeling of belonging by citizens of a country by promoting national integration and unity (Federal Character Commission, 1979, p. 1-2).

In Nigeria, the federal character principle became institutionalized in 1979 after it was enshrined in the constitution that ushered in the government of President Shehu Shagari. According to the 1979 constitution, the principle's introduction was to ensure Nigeria's linguistic, ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity in public service (Onimisi, 2017, p. 77). According to the framers of the 1979 constitution, the federal character principle is meant to prevent the dominance of persons from a few states or ethnic groups in the country's political governance structure and civil service (Ugoh and Ukpere, 2012, vol.3, p. 677). In other words, the national (centre/federal) government and its institutions are expected to reflect the federal character of Nigeria – in terms of the individuals elected or selected from the diverse ethnic, tribal, and religious composition of the country. Therefore, the federal character principle is enacted to create and build genuine and strong bond of national unity. This is to ensure that the country remains one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign State (Oyedeji, vol. 1, 2016, p. 12). By this principle, all states are to have at least one person in the federal executive council.



***The Federal Capital Territory et al.***

The Federal Capital Territory was created upon the promulgation of decree number 6 of 1976. It came into existence due to a need to find a replacement for the capital city of Lagos, which had become congested and had little space for expansion. It replaced Lagos, the country's most populous city and capital as the capital on 12 December 1991 under the military government of Ibrahim Babangida (Majekodunmi, 2013, p. 227).

*Moreso, some national asset was named after some of the nationalists and other great fallen heroes. The International Airport in Lagos was named after late General Murtala Muhammed while the one in Abuja is named after Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe. Also, the airport in Kano is named after Mallam Aminu Kano while the one in Enugu is named after Sir Akanu Ibiam, the first Governor of Eastern Nigeria (Nwokocha, Lagos, Previous Interview December 31, 2019).*

*On the other hand, some universities that were owned by the former regional governments were taken over and named after some late nationalists. For instance, the University of Ife was renamed Obafemi Awolowo University while the one in the north was renamed the Ahmadu Bello university. The federal university in Awka was named Nnamdi Azikiwe University. All these were done to bring and foster national integration and cohesion. But whether these efforts have yielded the required dividend of enthroning social and political cohesion in Nigeria remains to be seen as the events on the ground suggest the opposite.*

**Conditions that Discourage Socio-Political Cohesion in Nigeria**

Despite the fact that large amounts of human and financial resources have been invested to promote sustainable development in developing countries including Nigeria, statistics show that the majority of these countries have not yet achieved significant improvements in their people's living standards (Imade, 2007, p. 7). The inadequate socio-economic development policies in these countries, coupled with poor governance, have negatively impacted the lives of millions of people and Nigeria in particular. African countries have been affected by these inadequacies. Despite its abundant natural and human resources, Africa is the only developing region of the world that has grown consistently poorer over the past five or more decades (federal Government of Nigeria Gazette, 1990, p. 45). This to a large extent has led to manifest disconnect in the socio-political cohesion of these countries and Nigeria in particular.

Other important factors that have impaired socio-political cohesion in Nigeria since after the civil war is nepotism, social injustice and the cult of mediocrity, lack of patriotism, indiscipline and corruption. In his book, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (2000), Chinua Achebe stated that the real and only problem with Nigeria is leadership. He stated that once Nigeria is able to get its leadership right, all other vices that confront the nation including the lack of socio-political national cohesion and integration will be corrected.

The annulment of the Presidential election held in Nigeria on June 12, 1993 brought a new episode of division in Nigeria. The Babangida military government had approved a civilian transition programme that ended with the conduct of a presidential election in June 1993 between the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention

(NRC). Note that halfway into the release of the results of the election, the military administration stopped further release of the result and finally annulled the election which was deemed and seen as very free, fair and credible by all Nigerians. In an interview at Nsukka with Mr Okolo, a retired teacher, he disclosed that the backlash of the annulment was a total breakdown of law and order as the action of the military government was seen by the tribe of the candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as a ploy not to allow the Yoruba tribe ascend to the office of the President of the federal republic of Nigeria against the background that almost all the military Heads of State in Nigeria except Ironsi had come from Northern Nigeria. This ethnic divide almost brought Nigeria down and the rope of socio-political national cohesion was torn to pieces. Note also that Chief M K O Abiola who was purported to have won the election was arrested by the military and later died in detention. Scholars have argued that wherever there is injustice, there is no socio-political cohesion and integration. Against the backdrop of injustice, It is worthy to point out here that Yakubu Gowon's declaration that there were no victors and no vanquished after the three years war was on the face of it, noble. Yet, the government's post-war policies did not always conform to the government's lofty sentiment. For one, the idea that the erstwhile Biafrans were not automatically entitled to the houses they owned, before the war, in different parts of Nigeria was at odds with the logic of "no victor, no vanquished", enthrone structural imbalance and injustice. In many cases, the Nigerians who held such homes in trust were honorable enough to return them to their original legitimate owners as soon as hostilities ceased. In other cases, the government deemed the properties "abandoned," thus enabling usurpers to snatch them permanently from their true owners (Mudacumara and Marcol, 2014, p. 7).

When a group so passionate about testing the viability of Nigeria feels such wretched sense of injustice as to demand a divorce, then there is cause for sober reflection. More than two million people perished in a war to uphold the sanctity of the space called Nigeria. The casualties of that war paid with their blood for Nigeria to germinate, flower, and grow. Alas, post-war Nigeria chose to erase the memory of their great sacrifice. It never seized the opportunity to ask necessary questions about the meaning of this name—Nigeria—in whose name so many lives were cut short, so many more bodies maimed (Achebe, 2000, p. 68). Instead, Nigeria returned to its old, reckless ways. It proceeded as if the war had never happened, as if so many lives had not been lost. That return to business as usual, the business being an unjust dispensation—meant that those who had died in the fight for one Nigeria constituted a colossal betrayed and waste.

On the purported ex-gratia "offer of twenty ponds (£20) social grant to the liberated Biafrans who requested for it," as falsely claimed. Rather, ex-gratia payments were made only to those who were able to satisfy a mystery committee set up by the government that they had savings in Nigerian banks prior to the Civil War. Onyekpe Nkem, an Associate Professor of History at the University of Lagos in a physical interview rehearsed the following with a Newspaper excerpt: "Rather than dispute this claim, allow me to offer what

Chief Awolowo himself said on the subject when he was interviewed by a group of journalists at a town hall meeting in Abeokuta in 1983":

*"That's what I did, and the case of the money they said was not given back to them, you know during the war all the pounds were looted, they printed Biafran currency notes, which they circulated, at the close of the war some people wanted their Biafran notes to be exchanged for them. Of course I couldn't do that, if I did that the whole country would be bankrupt. We didn't know about Biafran notes and we didn't know on what basis they have printed them, so we refused the Biafran note, but I laid down the principle that all those who had savings in the banks on the eve of the declaration of the Biafran war or Biafra, will get their money back if they could satisfy us that they had the savings there, or the money there. Unfortunately, all the banks's books had been burnt, and many of the people who had savings there didn't have their saving books or their last statement of account, so a panel had to be set up".*

He went further to say *"I didn't take part in setting up the panel, it was done by the Central Bank and the pertinent officials of the ministry of finance, to look into the matter, and they went carefully into the matter, they took some months to do so, and then made some recommendation which I approved. Go to the archives, all I did was approve, I didn't write anything more than that, I don't even remember the name of any of them who took part. So I did everything in this world to assist our Ibo brothers and sisters during and after the war."*

The prolonged economic exploitation of the people of the oil-rich Niger Delta would not have happened if Nigeria had learnt the right lessons from the Biafran War. The writer Ken Saro-Wiwa and his Ogoni compatriots were unjustly hanged in 1995 because Nigeria had conveniently forgotten the import of Biafra (Ndibe, 2011, p. 28). Today, the resurgence of ethnic militia in Nigeria is as a result of Nigeria's inability to build a lasting socio-political cohesion for national integration and development.

### ***Ethnic Conflict and Militias***

The heterogeneous nature of Nigeria population contribution to ethnic conflict and cultural diversity is an important factor in determining how the country has experienced violent ethnic conflict persistently. The Nigerian government is battling with the problem in every part of the country. Ethnic conflict is a disagreement, misunderstanding, whether violent or non violent between or among various ethnic groups. Scholars explains that "ethnic conflicts emerge as a result of common group awareness to live or urge to achieve some objectives that are seen to be of great value and which are perceived as being hindered or stopped". Ethnicity encourages segregation, discrimination and polarization of the society characterized by "We" or "Them", according to, Usman (1987. 2). "The emerging ethnic conflicts has its origin from the past due to mistrust, suspicion, selfishness, poverty, envy, ignorance and unemployment between/among ethnic groups, in Nigeria". Ethnic conflict is very sensitive, complex and difficult to resolve because the affected persons experienced loss of lives and property which are traceable to some people or individuals. Because the victim still see the perpetrators when justice is not meted on them, this may lead to the victim having having grudges, nursing an ambition of revenge, hatred towards the

perpetrators of such violent ethnic conflict. This result to counter attack, and the reemergence of unbearable ethnic conflict.

Ethnic conflicts have affected the government and the people generally and have resulted to political and economic instability, weakened patriotism, bred suspicion, lack of trust and true relationship among different ethnic groups in the country. It is believed that a responsive and responsible government would restore confidence among the population and promote de-ethnicization policy among the competing ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ethnic conflicts also reveal that violence against women, the aged and children are devastating. These outcomes of these violence also include emotional and physical injuries, rape as a traumatic injury, sexually transmitted diseases, maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion and the use of child soldiers in conflict zones. All these exacerbate violence and discourage socio-political cohesion and national development. Some examples of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are: Jukun/Tiv conflict, Umuleri/Aguleri conflict, Zango Kataf/ Fulani conflict, Ikwo/Calabar conflict in Ebonyi state, the Plateau state ethnic conflict, etc.

### ***Youth Unemployment***

The theoretical standpoint of this paper is basically influenced by functionalists' school of thought, with bias for European school of on modernism as an integration theory which argues that youths play a vital and central role in overall survival of Nigeria. Ignoring the political, economic and social roles that they play amounts to threatening te very survival of Nigeria as a nation.

In plural societies like Nigeria, unemployment is a causative agent for the polarization of the unemployed youths into ethno-religious groups for the purpose of fostering sectional interests. These groups have wrecked the stability of the country both in the past and in the present. Also, unemployment is a major obstacle to workers solidarity against exploitation and oppression. With employment, workers can form trade union organizations through which interests of workers can be canvassed and represented and consequently forestall instability in the work place in particular and the country in general thereby fostering socio-political cohesion and national integration.

### **International Politics of Post-Civil War Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation**

When the Nigerian Civil War ended, the number of dead in the former Eastern Region from hostilities, disease, and starvation during the 30-month civil war was estimated at between one million and three million (Ogbuagu, 2017, p. 5). The end of the fighting found more than three million Igbo refugees crowded into a 2,500 square-kilometre enclave. Prospects for the survival of many of them and for the future of the region were dim. There were severe shortages of food, medicine, clothing, and housing. The economy of the former Eastern Region was shattered. There was widespread destruction of infrastructure with extensive damages to cities, roads, bridges, power plants, schools, hospitals, utilities, and transportation facilities were destroyed or inoperative.

Against this background, many International Non Government Organizations (NGOs) and Foreign governments were ready to help and be part of the federal government demobilization, rehabilitation, reconstruction and reintegration. But in a broadcast on November 11, 1970 General Gowon made a nationwide broadcast where he said to the international organizations thus:

*"These are the governments and organizations which sustained the rebellion. They are thus guilty of the blood of thousands who perished because of prolongation of the futile rebel assistance. They did not act out of love for humanity. Their purpose was to disintegrate Nigeria and Africa and impose their will on us. They may still harbour their evil intentions. We shall therefore not allow them to divide and estrange us again from one another with their dubious and insulting gifts and their false humanitarianism" (Ojeleye, 2010, p. 223).*

This declaration by Gowon laid out the road map for international involvement in DDR in Nigeria as the country according to a United States Central Intelligence Agency memo posited that "the country emerged from civil war with a heightened sense of national pride mixed with anti-foreign sentiment" (Akinyemi, 1979, p. 14). The result of this was that hope on the side of the vanquished in the conflict that had looked up to the international community and other foreign organizations for help were dashed. These foreign governments and organizations cannot offer their help if they are not wanted. This again dashed the hope for a future and integrated national cohesion strategy.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, key findings from the researcher's interviews on social cohesion coupled with Nigeria's Social Cohesion Index of 44.2% that is below the average social cohesion global threshold, point to the fact that Nigeria is not as socially cohesive as it ought to be. In recent times, the country has become more divided along social, political, economic, ethnic and religious cleavages, thereby questioning the root of our social fabric and co-existence as a people. The increasing rise of socio-political incoherence in the country can be plausibly linked to several factors including outright disconnection from the social contract, deep perception of inequality and suspicion, increasing poverty level, high unemployment rate, marginalization, heightened insecurity, exclusion etc. Hence, the following recommendations will go a long way to shape policies that will revitalize the frightening challenges currently bedeviling the state of socio-political cohesion in Nigeria (Jorre, 1072, p. 84).

### Recommendations

- There's need for the Federal Government to create a National Cohesion Commission of Nigeria (NCCN), one with the crucial responsibility of ensuring that all policies and activities of government have components within them that create a sense of belonging, promote trust, foster inclusive governance and continuously offer citizens opportunities for upward mobility. The government should also

instruct public sector institutions to develop a social cohesion framework for public service delivery (Cronje, 1972, 98).

- There's need to forge a new national movement for Nigeria and Nigerians. One which inhibits centrifugal tendencies that cause or promote conflicts, division or separatism, but strengthens centripetal forces that promote unity, oneness and peaceful co-existence amongst citizens. Like a new Nigerian Dream, this movement needs to be stimulated by the government and marketed to the citizens. For instance, showcasing exceptional inter ethnic and inter religious marriages, and successful corporate partnerships of citizens from different parts of the country. The National Orientation Agency, the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), the Voice of Nigeria (VON) and other governmental agencies will be useful in disseminating this information.
- The leaders should mitigate against hate speech, discrimination and hostility at the community levels since they are closer to the people and earn more trust of the people than the government.
- There is need for religious and traditional leaders/rulers to collaborate with other key stakeholders including the Nigerian government to fashion out policy initiatives that seek to gain better understanding of issues, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence and interdependence. Overall, these leaders must be transparent, honest, accountable and inclusive in their engagements.
- Religion and ethnicity play a huge role in fueling crisis and civil unrest. The religious and traditional institutions are key instruments to resolving local conflicts in communities since many Nigerians have been found to trust these institutions, as they also identify strongly with their ethnicity and religious affiliations (Ihua, 2021, p. 19).
- Finally, there's need to strengthen the National Social Investment programme (NSIP) for sustainability and effective performance. Hence this is a programme that targets the poor and vulnerable, (children, women, persons with disabilities, the elderly and indigent groups). The programme needs the inclusion of all and any exclusion will bring social disharmony and impede national socio-political cohesion (Langer, 2018, p. 112). These groups constitute a significant proportion of citizens across the country that hold deep resentment for state institutions and organized leadership, arising from feelings of exclusion, deprivation and marginalization.

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