



POLICY-MAKING AND SOCIAL TENSION IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF PRESIDENT TINUBU ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of policy-making and social tension in Nigeria during the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which began in 2023. The research explores how government policies, particularly in the economic sector, have influenced social stability and unrest. The historical context of Nigeria's political landscape, shaped by colonial history, ethnic diversity and economic disparities, is critical to understanding the current challenges faced by the nation. Utilising Social Conflict theory as the theoretical framework, the study analyses the implications of key policy decisions, such as the removal of fuel subsidies and the liberalisation of the foreign exchange market on societal tensions. The research employs secondary data sources, including government reports, policy documents, academic literature and reputable media publications, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between governmental actions and social unrest. The findings reveal that the disconnection between policy intentions and the socio-political realities experienced by ordinary Nigerians has resulted in increased hardship and discontent, threatening national unity and development. Ultimately, the study highlighted the need for a more equitable and inclusive approach to policy-making that addresses the underlying inequalities contributing to social tensions in Nigeria.

Keywords: Policy-Making, Policy Response, Tinubu Administration, Governance

Introduction

Dung (2016) submitted that the boardroom is a space where critical decisions are formulated either by private or public sector actors. To him, the National Executive Councils in Nigeria, for instance, meet in a boardrooms or chambers; it is in these spaces in the ministries, departments or agencies that executives meet to formulate policies. It is upon this definition of boardroom by Dung that this work hinges upon.

Nigeria's political landscape has been shaped by its colonial history, ethnic diversity and economic disparities. Since gaining independence in 1960, the country has experienced a series of political upheavals, military coups and democratic transitions (Falola, 2021). The amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into a single entity by the British colonial administration in 1914 laid the groundwork for contemporary challenges, with ethnic and regional divisions exacerbated by colonial policies. These divisions persisted into the post-independence era, leading to significant conflicts such as the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), which highlighted the fragile nature of national unity (Achebe, 2012). Moreover, Nigeria's economy, heavily reliant on oil exports, constitutes a significant portion of government revenue and foreign exchange earnings. This economic structure has led to vulnerabilities, particularly during periods of low oil prices, contributing to the "resource curse" phenomenon, which has resulted in widespread corruption and mismanagement of resources (Sala-i-Martin & Subramanian, 2013). Efforts to diversify the economy have been inconsistent and often undermined by poor governance and policy implementation. For instance, the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) launched in 2011 aimed to boost agricultural productivity but faced challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and access to finance for smallholder farmers (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2022). These issues highlight the complexities of translating policy intentions into tangible outcomes. Social tensions in Nigeria are multifaceted, often rooted in ethnic, religious and economic disparities. The Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, which began in 2009, has caused significant loss of life and displacement, exacerbating humanitarian crises in the region. The group's violent campaigns are driven by a mix of ideological and socio-economic factors, including poverty and lack of education (Blanchard, 2016). Similarly, the conflict between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt region is fueled by competition over land and resources, further aggravated by climate change and population growth, resulting in thousands of deaths and strained inter-communal relations (Adelakun, 2020). The administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which began in 2023, inherited a country fraught with these long-standing issues. Tinubu, a prominent political figure and former governor of Lagos State, had campaigned on the platform of economic reform, improved security and national unity. His administration's policy priorities have included economic diversification, infrastructure development and enhancing security measures (Eze, 2023). One of the key initiatives under Tinubu's administration is the continuation and expansion of the National Social Investment Programmes (NSIP), aimed at alleviating poverty and empowering vulnerable groups. This includes programmes such as N-Power, which provides job training and employment opportunities for young Nigerians, and the Conditional Cash Transfer programme, which supports the poorest households (National Social Investment Office, 2023). In the economic sphere, Tinubu has pushed for reforms in the oil and gas sector, including the implementation of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), which aims to attract investment and improve governance in the industry. The administration has also focused on improving infrastructure, with projects such as the rehabilitation of major highways and the expansion of the rail network (Eze, 2023). Despite these efforts, Nigeria continues to face significant social tensions. The EndSARS protests of 2020, which called for an end to police brutality and broader social reforms,

highlighted deep-seated frustrations among the youth. Although the protests predated Tinubu's administration, the underlying issues of governance, accountability, and economic opportunities remain relevant (Ojo, 2023). Additionally, ethnic and religious tensions continue to pose challenges. For example, the Southern Kaduna region has witnessed recurrent violence between different ethnic and religious groups, leading to loss of lives and displacement. Such conflicts are often driven by historical grievances and competition for resources (Adebayo, 2023). The Tinubu administration's policy responses have been mixed in their effectiveness. While initiatives like NSIP have had some positive impact, issues such as corruption, inadequate infrastructure and limited access to finance continue to hinder progress. The administration's efforts to reform the oil sector through the PIA have faced criticism for slow implementation and perceived lack of transparency (Ojo, 2023).

In the realm of security, the administration has increased military operations against insurgent groups and sought international support to tackle terrorism. However, the persistence of Boko Haram and other violent groups indicates that a purely military approach may not be sufficient. Addressing the root causes of insecurity such as poverty and lack of education remains crucial (Blanchard, 2016). The Tinubu administration so far has been marked by heightened social tensions, posing a threat to Nigeria's unity and development. Despite efforts to implement policies aimed at economic growth and security, the persistence of social unrest indicates potential shortcomings in the policy-making process. The problem this study addresses is the apparent disconnection between governmental policies and the socio-political realities faced by ordinary Nigerians. This study therefore, examines the dynamics of policy-making and social tension in Nigeria under Tinubu's administration. By focusing on this recent period, the research aims to understand how governmental decisions impact societal peace and stability. This study employs a secondary research method, relying on existing data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the Tinubu administration's policies on social tension in Nigeria. Secondary research involves the use of already existing data collected by other researchers, organisations, and institutions. The data sources for this study include government reports, policy documents, academic articles and reputable media publications.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative secondary research methodology to analyse the impact of the Tinubu administration's policies on social tension in Nigeria. The approach involves the systematic review of existing literature, government reports, policy documents, academic articles and reputable media publications to gather relevant data and insights. The secondary research method allows for the comprehensive examination of previously collected data, providing a broader understanding of the socio-political context in Nigeria during the Tinubu administration. The selected data sources are critically analysed to identify patterns, themes, and correlations between governmental policies and societal reactions. This methodology enables a nuanced exploration of the complexities surrounding policy implementation, social inequalities and the resultant tensions faced by Nigerian citizens. By relying on established literature and reports, the study aims to provide a well-rounded perspective on the dynamics of policy-making and social tension in contemporary Nigeria.

Boardroom and the economy of Nigeria

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and incumbent President Bola Tinubu inherited some of the most challenging economic conditions in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. According to World Bank data, Obasanjo faced an economy with an average GDP growth rate of 2.4% and an inflation rate of 30.1% in the four years before his administration. Similarly, Tinubu inherited



a sluggish GDP growth rate of 1.8% and an inflation rate of 15.1%. These figures illustrate the severe economic difficulties both administrations encountered upon taking office. Low GDP growth and high inflation, as highlighted by the World Bank, can significantly erode purchasing power, deter investment and increase poverty levels. Obasanjo's administration responded to these challenges with a series of strategic economic reforms. One notable initiative was the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) introduced in 2004, which focused on the private sector as the main engine for growth, wealth creation, employment generation and poverty reduction. This strategy was in line with modern economic theories that advocate for market-driven growth, as articulated by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012). Obasanjo's success in assembling a technocratic cabinet during his second term, including prominent figures like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who played a pivotal role in debt relief and economic reforms, underscored the importance of skilled leadership in addressing economic challenges. This approach aligns with the argument by Rodrik (2008) that technocratic expertise is crucial for effective policy implementation. Another significant reform under Obasanjo was the overhaul of the public pension system into a contributory pension scheme. This reform transformed the pension system from a fiscal liability to a substantial asset, with pension assets growing to N18.4 trillion by December 2023. This reform mirrors global best practices in pension management, as noted by Barr and Diamond (2008). Additionally, Obasanjo's commitment to ethnic diversity in his appointments helped foster political stability, which is vital for implementing difficult but beneficial economic reforms in a diverse country like Nigeria. Ake (1996) argues that embracing diversity is essential for political stability, particularly in ethnically diverse nations. Balancing external advice with local realities was another hallmark of Obasanjo's administration. While international institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund provided valuable guidance, Obasanjo ensured that their recommendations were adapted to local contexts to avoid social backlash. Stiglitz (2002) emphasises that reforms should be tailored to local conditions to ensure their success and mitigate social unrest. In contrast, President Tinubu has shown a commitment to market-driven reforms, echoing some of Obasanjo's strategies. Tinubu inherited a sputtering Nigerian economy, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates for 2022 at 3.1% and for the first quarter of 2023 at 2.31%. Nigeria's recovery from COVID-19-induced trade deficits has also been slow. The 2022 trade surplus at only \$2.85 billion pales in comparison to 2014's \$54.1 billion. Foreign direct investment into Nigeria's economy fell from \$2.2 billion in 2014 to \$0.47 billion in 2022. The budget deficit has risen by 370.54% from 2016 to 2023, and the cost of debt servicing has exceeded public revenues as public debt has grown tenfold in a decade. Total public debt as of June 2013 was N7.93 trillion. It is now at around N77 trillion. During this period, external debt grew by 473% and domestic debt by 7 029%. The Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) undisciplined lending to the federal government is argued to have contributed to high inflation rates – 22.41% since May, 2025. These pressures, as well as insecurity, have contributed to higher food prices, while 63% of the country lives in multidimensional poverty. The unemployment rate was 33.3% in 2020 and KPMG estimates this to climb to 40.6% 2025.

After the swearing-in ceremony, Tinubu's immediate removal of the fuel subsidy aligns with recommendations from economic experts, including the African Development Bank, which argues that subsidies often benefit the wealthy and distort the economy. By reallocating funds from subsidy removal, Tinubu aims to redirect resources to more productive sectors, a strategy supported by the International Monetary Fund (2023). Additionally, Tinubu's decision to unify the naira exchange rate to enhance transparency and reduce economic distortions reflects a commitment to market-driven policies, as advocated by Friedman (1953). Tinubu's track record as the former Governor of Lagos State, where he successfully increased internally generated



revenue from N600 million monthly in 1999 to over N52 billion by the end of his tenure as the Governor of Lagos State in 2007, demonstrates his ability to implement effective revenue generation frameworks. This success indicates the potential for similar strategies at the national level. However, the effectiveness of these policies will ultimately depend on their execution and the administration's ability to adapt lessons from past experiences to contemporary realities.

Impact of the boardroom activities on Nigerians

On May 29, 2024, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu marked one year in office since his inauguration as Nigeria's President and Commander-in-Chief. One of his first major decisions was the abrupt announcement of the stoppage of fuel subsidies during his inauguration speech at Eagle Square. While the issue of fuel subsidies had been a contentious topic, the timing and suddenness of Tinubu's announcement took many Nigerians by surprise. This immediate decision led to a significant hike in fuel prices and, consequently, the prices of almost all goods in the market, causing widespread economic shock before Tinubu had even officially entered his office at Aso Rock. As Tinubu administration marked two years, it is crucial to assess the impacts of his policies on the citizens, particularly the workers. Comrade Gbenga Komolafe, a veteran activist and General Secretary of the Federation of Informal Workers Union of Nigeria (FIWON), voiced strong criticism of Tinubu's twin policies of fuel subsidy removal and foreign exchange liberalisation. He argued that these policies have been extremely devastating for all working people, particularly those in the informal sector of the economy. Komolafe highlighted that the exponential increases in fuel prices and the sharp decline in the value of the naira have made it difficult for informal businesses to replenish old stock and manage escalating input costs. This situation has resulted in the collapse of millions of small businesses in the informal economy. According to data from the Central Bank of Nigeria, the inflation rate spiked to 22.4% in March 2024, significantly impacting the cost of living (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2024). Komolafe's observations underscore the adverse effects of these policies on the informal sector, which is a critical part of Nigeria's economy, providing employment and livelihoods for a significant portion of the population (Ake, 1996). The informal sector's struggles reflect broader economic issues that need urgent attention. The government's decision to simultaneously increase the cost of electricity has further exacerbated the situation, making it even more challenging for informal business operators as all sources of energy become prohibitively expensive. The escalating costs of basic necessities, such as food and education, have added to the burden on working people. Healthcare, which was already hardly affordable, has also seen spiraling cost increases. These rising costs have placed immense pressure on households, reducing their purchasing power and leading to increased poverty and inequality. The Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) reported that nearly 800 manufacturing companies closed down between August 2024 and February 2025, with thousands more operating under distressed conditions (Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, 2024). This industrial downturn has had a cascading effect on the informal businesses that depend on these larger companies within their respective value chains, further intensifying economic hardship. The much-touted social intervention programme, designed to mitigate the impact of government policies on vulnerable populations through conditional cash transfers, has been marred by corruption scandals. Komolafe pointed out that the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Betta Edu, and her officials allegedly embezzled a substantial portion of the funds meant for this programme (Saltlove, 2024). This corruption has undermined the programme's effectiveness and left many vulnerable Nigerians without the promised support.

The failure of such social programmes highlights the need for greater transparency and accountability in the administration of government initiatives intended to assist the poor and



vulnerable. In addition to the federal policies, state governments have also implemented measures that adversely affect the poor and vulnerable informal sector workers. For instance, widespread demolitions of informal workspaces and evictions in the name of urban renewal projects in Plateau and Lagos states have aggravated precarity and desperation among working people and their families (Ayodeji, 2024). These actions reflect a broader trend of prioritising urban development projects over the livelihoods of informal sector workers, which can have significant social and economic consequences. Komolafe argued that all working people in both formal and informal sectors need to find common ground to resist what he termed "the frenzied implementation of neo-liberal economic policies." He claimed these policies, often influenced by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are eroding the social fabric of the country and increasing desperation, violent crimes, and conflicts (Harvey, 2005). Neo-liberal economic policies, which advocate for market liberalisation, deregulation and reduction in government spending, have been controversial in their implementation and effects in many developing countries. Critics argue that such policies can exacerbate inequality and social unrest if not carefully managed and adapted to local contexts (Rodrik, 2008).

Adding to the discourse, Barrister Emeka Iheonu, a Lagos-based lawyer, noted that the All Progressives Congress (APC) government under President Tinubu has continued many of the policies from former President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. Iheonu argued that these policies have been largely anti-people, exacerbating the cost of living and economic instability. He emphasised that the economy is in worse condition than it was in 2024, with inflation rates higher than those under Buhari's government (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2024). The increased cost of living has placed significant strain on Nigerians, who are struggling to afford basic necessities. Iheonu pointed out that the current government has focused on increasing revenue through the imposition of various taxes rather than finding ways to ease the financial burdens on citizens. The tripling of fuel prices within a year of Tinubu's administration, coupled with the unavailability of fuel at many stations, has intensified the economic struggles of ordinary Nigerians. Iheonu suggested that the government's refusal to reduce the cost of governance is a major factor contributing to the continued high cost of living. The high cost of governance, characterised by excessive government spending and inefficiency, has long been a problem in Nigeria, diverting resources away from essential public services and development projects (Friedman, 1953). Rexkennedy Saltlove, a human rights activist, questioned the sincerity of the government in ensuring the welfare of its citizens. He argued that the government's actions, such as the hike in electricity tariffs and the introduction of cyber security charges on bank transactions, demonstrate duplicity. According to Saltlove, these measures are designed to appear as if the government is addressing citizens' welfare but actually serve to further burden them. The simultaneous introduction of wage increases and additional charges reflects a lack of genuine commitment to improving the living conditions of Nigerians (Saltlove, 2024). Saltlove highlighted the need for the government to explore alternative sources of income, such as mining and refining natural resources, rather than imposing additional taxes on citizens. Nigeria is a highly endowed nation, with significant natural resources that could be harnessed to generate substantial revenue and reduce the economic burden on its citizens (International Monetary Fund, 2023).

The government's focus on taxing citizens and increasing tariffs, particularly on critical utilities such as fuel and electricity, has had a detrimental impact on the average Nigerian and the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that rely on these resources. The total removal of subsidies on fuel and electricity has led to significant increases in operational costs for these businesses, threatening their viability and exacerbating unemployment and poverty. Saltlove

argued for a gradual approach to tariff hikes to allow households and businesses to adjust without severe economic dislocation (Stiglitz, 2002). A gradual and transparent implementation of such policies, coupled with efforts to enhance productivity and economic resilience, could mitigate some of the negative impacts. Comrade Ajilore Ayodeji, the State Auditor of the African Action Congress (AAC), highlighted another contentious issue: the introduction of a new taxation plan, the cyber security levy, which imposes a 0.5% charge on all electronic transactions. This policy has sparked public outrage, as it disproportionately affects poor Nigerians who are the majority. Ayodeji pointed out that exemptions for pilgrimage trips, diplomatic transactions, and stock purchases appear to favour the wealthy, while ordinary Nigerians bear the brunt of the tax. This policy has been criticised for adding to the financial burdens of everyday citizens, raising questions about the government's priorities and its commitment to equitable taxation (Ayodeji, 2024). The controversies surrounding these policies reflect broader concerns about governance and economic management in Nigeria. The government's focus on revenue generation through taxation, rather than implementing policies that could stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty, has drawn criticism from various quarters. The economic policies adopted by the Tinubu administration, which align with neo-liberal principles, have had significant social and economic repercussions. The impacts on the informal sector, the increased cost of living and the challenges faced by MSMEs highlight the need for a more inclusive and balanced approach to economic reform.

Theoretical framework

Social Conflict theory posits that societal tensions and conflicts arise primarily from the unequal distribution of resources and power, and the inherent competition among social groups to gain and maintain these resources (Marx, 1848; Coser, 1956). Karl Marx, one of the foundational figures in this theory, argued that history is a series of class struggles between the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the proletariat (the working class), with the former exploiting the latter to sustain their dominance (Marx, 1848). Dahrendorf (1959) expanded this view, suggesting that conflicts in modern industrial societies are not just economic but also relate to authority and power structures within various institutions. Marx's critical evaluation of capitalist society emphasises the economic inequalities and class struggles, suggesting that social change is driven by these inherent conflicts. Marx believed that the capitalist system is inherently exploitative, as the ruling class (bourgeoisie) benefits from the labour of the working class (proletariat) without equitable compensation leading to a perpetual state of tension and potential revolution. Coser (1956) added that conflict has functional aspects, arguing that it can strengthen group identities and lead to social change by addressing inequities. Dahrendorf (1959) further developed the theory by focusing on power struggles within institutions, suggesting that authority and control are central to understanding social conflicts. The rationale behind these postulations is that social structures are inherently unequal, and this inequality breeds discontent and conflict. By highlighting these conflicts, the theory seeks to uncover the underlying power dynamics and push for a more equitable redistribution of resources and power. Social Conflict theory is highly relevant to the present study as it explains how policy decisions can exacerbate existing inequalities and lead to heightened social tensions. For instance, the removal of fuel subsidies and the liberalisation of the foreign exchange market by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration have led to significant economic hardships for many Nigerians, particularly those in the informal sector. The abrupt removal of fuel subsidies has led to a dramatic increase in fuel prices, which in turn has caused a spike in the prices of goods and services (Komolafe, 2023). This policy decision disproportionately affects lower-income groups, leading to widespread discontent and social tension. According to Gbenga

Komolafe, this has resulted in the collapse of many small businesses in the informal economy, exacerbating poverty and economic insecurity (Sunday Independent, 2024).

The liberalisation of the foreign exchange market has led to a sharp decline in the value of the naira, further increasing the cost of living. This policy benefits those with access to foreign currencies and international markets but harms those who rely on local currency and local markets (Iheonu, 2023). The resultant economic strain has led to increased social tension as the majority of Nigerians struggle to meet their basic needs. Following Coser's (1956) perspective, the social tension resulting from these policies could potentially lead to positive social change. The widespread discontent may galvanise various social groups to demand more equitable policies and greater government accountability. However, the immediate effect has been increased hardship and instability, which can have destabilising effects on society. Dahrendorf's (1959) focus on authority and institutional power is also evident in Nigeria's current situation. The policies of Tinubu's administration reflect a power struggle within the government and between the government and international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank. These institutions often advocate for neoliberal policies, which can exacerbate social inequalities and tensions (Saltlove, 2023). Social Conflict theory provides valuable insights into the dynamics of social tension. For example, the removal of fuel subsidies by Tinubu's administration led to immediate protests and social unrest. The policy disproportionately affected the poor, who rely heavily on subsidised fuel for transportation and household energy. The resultant increase in living costs sparked widespread discontent and protests, illustrating how policy decisions can lead to social conflict (Komolafe, 2023). The liberalisation of the foreign exchange market led to a devaluation of the naira, making imports more expensive and driving up inflation. This policy has widened the gap between the wealthy, who can afford foreign goods and services, and the poor, who cannot. The economic strain on the lower-income groups has fueled social tension and unrest (Iheonu, 2023). The increase in electricity tariffs has also sparked protests and social tension. Higher electricity costs disproportionately affect small businesses and low-income households, further exacerbating economic inequalities. This policy decision reflects the power dynamics within the government and its relationship with international financial institutions, which often push for such reforms (Saltlove, 2023).

While Social Conflict theory provides valuable insights into the dynamics of social tension, it has been criticised for several reasons. Critics argue that the theory overemphasises conflict at the expense of understanding social cohesion and cooperation. Not all social interactions are conflictual, and many societies maintain stability despite inequalities. The theory's deterministic view of social change through conflict can be limiting. It suggests that conflict is inevitable and necessary for social change, ignoring other pathways to social progress, such as negotiation, reform and collaboration. Social Conflict theory often underestimates the agency of individuals and groups in shaping their circumstances. It tends to portray individuals as passive victims of structural forces, rather than active participants capable of effecting change through various means. The focus on class struggle can be seen as too simplistic in explaining complex social dynamics. Modern societies have multiple intersecting lines of conflict, including race, gender, ethnicity and religion, which the theory may not fully account for. The emphasis on conflict and inequality can lead to a pessimistic outlook on social progress. By focusing on the negative aspects of social structures, the theory may overlook positive developments and the potential for peaceful change.

Boardroom and social unrest in Nigeria



President Tinubu's economic policies in Nigeria have precipitated profound social tensions across various facets of the Nigerian society. These policies, characterised by austerity measures and neoliberal reforms, have exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, leading to widespread discontent and unrest among the populace. One critical area of concern is the escalating unemployment rates, which have remained stubbornly high despite economic reforms. Ojo (2020) posits that the lack of job opportunities has engendered a sense of hopelessness, particularly among the youth demographic, amplifying social discord. Moreover, income inequality has widened significantly under Tinubu's administration, deepening social stratification and fostering resentment among different socio-economic groups (Oxfam Nigeria Report, 2024). The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few elites has further fueled feelings of injustice and inequality among ordinary Nigerians, contributing to social tension. This economic polarisation has not only widened the wealth gap but has also strained social cohesion by exacerbating divisions between the haves and the have-nots. Access to essential services such as healthcare and education has continued to face significant challenges under President Tinubu's administration, despite increased budgetary allocations in 2025. The federal government allocated ₦2.48 trillion to the healthcare sector, representing 5.18% of the total ₦47.9 trillion budgets. This allocation, while higher in absolute terms compared to previous years, still falls short of the 15% benchmark set by the 2001 Abuja Declaration for healthcare funding in African countries. ([Vanguard News](#), 2024) In the education sector, the 2025 budget saw an allocation of ₦2.52 trillion, marking a 133.33% increase from the ₦1.08 trillion allocated in 2023. Despite this significant increase, the allocation remains below the recommended 15–20% of the national budget suggested by UNESCO for education in developing countries. The underfunding continues to impact the quality and accessibility of education across Nigeria. ([Tribune Online](#), 2025). While these increased allocations indicate a commitment to improving healthcare and education, the percentages relative to the total budget suggest that these sectors are not yet receiving the prioritisation needed to effect substantial improvements. The continued underfunding contributes to the persistent challenges in accessing quality healthcare and education services, thereby exacerbating social tensions within the country.

The resultant disparities in access to basic services have heightened feelings of disenfranchisement and exacerbated social tensions. Furthermore, Tinubu's policies have had detrimental effects on small businesses and the informal sector, favouring large corporations at the expense of smaller enterprises. Okafor (2024) argues that neoliberal reforms have intensified market competition and market consolidation, marginalising small-scale entrepreneurs who struggle to compete with larger, better-resourced firms. This economic marginalisation has engendered a sense of economic exclusion and disenchantment among small business owners, contributing to social unrest. Ethnic and regional tensions have also been inflamed by Tinubu's policies, particularly in terms of resource allocation and distribution. Okonkwo (2024) points out that unequal distribution of resources across different regions has heightened inter-group rivalries and conflicts, posing significant challenges to national unity and stability. These tensions underscore the complex interplay between economic policies and socio-political dynamics in Nigeria, highlighting the need for policies that promote inclusivity and equitable development. In addition to economic grievances, Nigeria faces myriad other sources of social tension, including political instability marked by corruption and governance challenges, secessionist movements in certain regions, and environmental degradation issues. These multifaceted challenges underscore the intricate landscape of social tension in Nigeria, where economic policies play a pivotal role in shaping societal dynamics and exacerbating existing tensions. For instance, secessionist movements like the Indigenous People of Biafra

(IPOB) in the Southeastern region advocate for independence, citing marginalisation and dissatisfaction with the central government's policies. This movement has periodically clashed with security forces, reflecting deep-seated grievances and aspirations for self-determination (Okonkwo, 2024). Ethnic conflicts, such as those between Fulani herdsman and farmers in central Nigeria, are exacerbated by competition over resources and political influence, resulting in violence and displacement (Okafor, 2024). These conflicts highlight the impact of economic policies on local dynamics, as resource allocation issues intensify inter-group tensions. Moreover, nationwide strike actions organised by groups such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) protest economic policies perceived as detrimental to workers' welfare, disrupting economic activities and underscoring widespread discontent (Ojo, 2024). Kidnapping activities across Nigeria, particularly in southern and northern regions, reflect broader societal breakdowns exacerbated by economic hardships and insecurity. Criminal gangs exploit vulnerabilities, further undermining social stability and trust in governance (Adeleke, 2024). Similarly, cybercrimes have proliferated, exploiting technological advancements amid economic challenges. These crimes highlight vulnerabilities in cybersecurity and governance, contributing to broader societal anxieties and undermining efforts to foster trust and stability (Okonkwo, 2021).

Legislative decisions and their contributions to social unrest in Nigeria

Decisions, made by lawmakers in Nigeria significantly shape the nation's political and social landscape. These decisions, while often intended to promote national growth and stability, can sometimes generate social tensions due to the perceived imbalance between policy outcomes and the immediate needs of the populace. The relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government, especially under the administration of President Bola Tinubu, has been a critical factor in how these decisions impact the public. Legislative decisions during this period have stirred public debates, protests and unrest, particularly in areas that directly affect the economic well-being of Nigerians. One of the most notable decisions that has caused widespread social tension is the legislative support for the removal of fuel subsidies. President Tinubu, in his inaugural speech on May 29, 2023, announced the removal of fuel subsidies, a move that has been historically contentious in Nigeria. The legislature, through its approval of budgetary provisions, effectively endorsed the policy. While the subsidy removal was framed as necessary for long-term economic recovery, the immediate impact on fuel prices led to sharp increases in the cost of transportation, and goods and services. This caused significant hardship, particularly for the working class and those living in poverty. In response, labour unions such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) mobilised strikes and protests to demand a reversal of the policy. This is a vivid example of how legislative support for controversial economic reforms can trigger social tension. According to Okoye (2021), fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria has long been a source of social unrest, as it tends to disproportionately affect low-income earners. The protests that followed Tinubu's announcement underscore the public's resistance to policies that are perceived as insensitive to their immediate economic struggles.

Another critical area of legislative decision-making that has ignited social unrest in Nigeria is taxation policy. In mid-2023, the National Assembly approved a set of aggressive tax reforms aimed at boosting government revenue under President Bola Tinubu's economic agenda. A notable component of these reforms was the increase in the Value Added Tax (VAT) from 7.5% to 10%, along with the introduction of new levies on telecommunications, digital transactions, beverages and imported goods (Federal Inland Revenue Service, 2023). While the government defended these policies as essential for funding infrastructure and social development



programmes, the actual implications for citizens have been severe. On a microeconomic level, the increase in VAT directly translated into higher retail prices for everyday goods and services. This disproportionately impacted low- and middle-income households, which spend a larger percentage of their income on consumption. For instance, a basic household food basket that previously cost ₦30,000 per month could now cost upwards of ₦33,000 or more, an increase that appears marginal but becomes burdensome when compounded by existing inflationary pressures. More critically, the informal sector, which makes up over 65% of Nigeria's labour force (NBS, 2022), has been hit hardest. Many small-scale traders, artisans and transport operators lack the capital buffers to absorb or pass on these additional costs. As a result, their profit margins have shrunk significantly, forcing some businesses to reduce staff or shut down operations altogether. According to a report by the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2023), the new tax regime contributed to the closure of approximately 11% of microenterprises in urban centres within the first quarter following the reforms. At the macroeconomic level, the implications are equally worrisome. While the government may record a short-term uptick in revenue collection, the long-term consequences could be contractionary. The higher cost of living, compounded by inflation which stood at over 33% in early 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024), has reduced consumer purchasing power and dampened aggregate demand. In turn, this can lead to slower GDP growth, reduced industrial output, and a further decline in employment rates. Moreover, the tax reforms may discourage domestic investment and entrepreneurship. Investors are less likely to take risks in an environment where operating costs are volatile and returns are unpredictable. International trade has also been affected, as import levies raise the landing cost of goods, leading to further inflationary spirals. In essence, what was designed as a fiscal remedy has, in practice, deepened the economic malaise. Adetayo (2024) emphasises that in developing economies, tax policies often generate social tension when perceived as regressive i.e., when they disproportionately affect the poor and are implemented without sufficient compensatory mechanisms like subsidies or social safety nets. This perception has gained traction among Nigerians who argue that lawmakers prioritise revenue generation while failing to address underlying structural inequities such as unemployment, poor access to healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure. The socio-political fallout from these tax reforms has been considerable. Protests and nationwide strikes, particularly by labour unions and market associations, underscore the growing frustration among citizens. These reactions reflect a broader loss of faith in the government's economic strategy, particularly when the promised improvements in public service delivery remain largely unseen.

The issue of wage policies, particularly the national minimum wage, is another area that has contributed to social unrest, though it is important to clarify the institutional process involved. In Nigeria, the review and proposal of a new minimum wage typically originate from the executive arm, particularly through the National Minimum Wage Committee, which includes representatives from the federal government, labour unions, and employers' associations. Once the executive concludes its recommendations, the proposal is forwarded to the National Assembly for legislative formalisation, as the wage structure must be enacted into law to become binding across the federation (National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, 2023). In recent times, considerable debate has ensued regarding the need to increase the national minimum wage to help Nigerians cope with rising living costs, especially following fuel subsidy removal and persistent inflation. However, delays either in the executive's submission of a wage review proposal or in legislative ratification have sparked discontent among labour unions and the general public. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has consistently demanded a higher minimum wage to preserve workers' purchasing power. Yet,



the slow response across the relevant institutions, whether in initiating, reviewing or formalising the policy, has strained relations between government actors and the working class. This situation echoes Adebayo's (2019) argument that wage policies in developing countries are frequently a source of social tension, especially when inflation steadily erodes real incomes. The recent waves of industrial actions by labour unions, including protests and nationwide strikes demanding a meaningful wage increase, highlight the real-life consequences of institutional delays and perceived insensitivity to workers' economic realities.

Electoral reforms also stand out as a critical decision area for the Nigerian legislature, especially under Tinubu's administration. Nigeria's electoral process has frequently come under scrutiny for being marred by irregularities, violence, and allegations of manipulation. During this administration, the National Assembly has been tasked with passing laws that strengthen the electoral system, ensure transparency and foster democracy. However, delays in passing key reforms, or the perception that these reforms are skewed to favor incumbents, have heightened political tensions. For instance, the 2023 general elections were marked by controversies over the efficiency of the electoral process, particularly in relation to the introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS). While some hailed BVAS as a step forward in ensuring transparency, others criticised its implementation, citing technical failures that allegedly disenfranchised voters. Omotola (2017) argues that flawed electoral reforms contribute to public mistrust in the political process and can lead to widespread protests. The disputes surrounding the 2023 elections, with claims of rigging and electoral malpractice, have led to political unrest and legal challenges that have further polarized the Nigerian society.

National security is another contentious area where the legislature's decisions have influenced social tension. Insecurity remains one of the most pressing issues in Nigeria, with various parts of the country facing challenges such as terrorism, banditry and kidnappings. The legislature is responsible for passing laws that empower security agencies and allocate necessary funding for security operations. However, delays in legislative action, coupled with perceived corruption and inefficiencies in the management of security resources, have heightened public frustration. For example, in northern Nigeria, the continued rise in kidnappings and bandit attacks has led to protests by affected communities, who accuse the government of failing to provide adequate protection. Aliyu (2022) has argued that legislative delays in addressing security challenges often exacerbate public anger, especially when citizens feel that their safety is being compromised. The Tinubu administration has faced criticism for not acting swiftly enough through the legislature to address these security concerns, leading to social tension, particularly in conflict-prone regions. Decisions taken by the Nigerian legislature under President Tinubu's administration have had significant social implications, often leading to unrest and protests. Legislative support for fuel subsidy removal, approval of new tax policies, delays in addressing wage issues, and indecisive action on security matters have all contributed to the current social tensions in the country. Scholars such as Okoye (2021), Adetayo (2020), Adebayo (2019), Omotola (2017), and Aliyu (2022) have all emphasised how legislative actions, particularly in sensitive areas such as economic policy and security, can generate public dissatisfaction when they are perceived as being out of touch with the needs of the people. The protests, strikes, and political unrest witnessed during Tinubu's administration are not merely spontaneous reactions but are partially rooted in institutional lapses within Nigeria's legislative framework, particularly in its oversight and responsiveness. While the legislature is not solely responsible for policy outcomes, its role in scrutinising executive decisions, facilitating timely policy responses, and enacting people-centered legislation is critical to national stability. However, several recent developments suggest a pattern of delayed or inadequate legislative interventions in the face of pressing socio-economic issues. For instance, despite growing public discontent

following the removal of fuel subsidy, a policy introduced by the executive, the National Assembly failed to initiate a timely debate or demand an impact assessment that could have influenced the pace or design of implementation. Similarly, rising food prices, worsening unemployment, and security concerns have not been met with swift or robust legislative responses, such as targeted social protection bills or emergency economic relief frameworks.

The National Assembly's delayed engagement, with the national minimum wage adjustment, as well as its approval of new tax measures without concurrent welfare safeguards, have further aggravated public frustrations. These shortcomings have allowed widespread grievances to fester, creating a fertile ground for strikes, protests, and even localized political instability. As Okoye (2021) argues, ineffective legislative oversight in Nigeria often leads to policy gaps that contribute to social unrest, as affected populations feel neglected or unheard by their representatives. Thus, the growing tension under the Tinubu administration reflects not just executive action but also legislative inertia, which has undermined the public's confidence in the democratic process and contributed to the prevailing instability.

Triggers of social unrest in Nigeria

The performance of the judiciary in Nigeria under the Tinubu administration has become a focal point of discussion, particularly regarding how judicial decisions and rulings contribute to social tension within the country. The judiciary, as an institution meant to uphold the rule of law and ensure justice, has faced scrutiny over its perceived partiality and effectiveness. Critics argue that the judiciary's inability to effectively manage high-profile cases and its slow response to pressing legal issues undermine public trust in the institution. Under the Tinubu administration, these concerns have been amplified, as several key decisions have been interpreted as reflecting political interests rather than a commitment to impartiality and justice. For instance, the judiciary's handling of electoral disputes has often led to frustration among citizens, who see the judiciary as failing to hold powerful political actors accountable. The recent 2023 governorship elections in various states, including Edo and Rivers, saw a surge in legal challenges, yet many citizens felt that the judiciary did not adequately address allegations of voter intimidation and violence. Instead, the focus was often on procedural issues, leaving unresolved the deeper concerns about electoral integrity. This lack of decisive action has created a fertile ground for social unrest, as citizens perceive a disconnection between the judiciary's actions and their expectations of fair representation in the electoral process.

Several decisions made by the judiciary under the Tinubu administration have further exacerbated social tensions. Notably, the Supreme Court's rulings regarding electoral disputes have drawn significant public criticism, particularly when the court affirmed election results despite widespread allegations of fraud and misconduct. Such rulings have raised questions about the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, with many observers arguing that these decisions appear to prioritise political stability over electoral integrity. As Adebayo (2022) asserts, when the judiciary opts to uphold contested electoral results without thorough investigations, it erodes trust in democratic institutions and fuels discontent among citizens who feel disenfranchised. This has been particularly evident in the aftermath of high-profile trials involving political figures accused of corruption, where lenient sentences or favourable rulings have contributed to public perception of bias.

Goodluck Jonathan's recent concerns about the Nigerian judiciary highlight a critical issue on how judicial decisions can contribute to social tension in Nigeria. His metaphor of democracy being like "a cone turned upside down" emphasises how fragile the political system becomes when the judiciary, a key pillar of democracy, is influenced by external forces, particularly



political interests, (Punch News 2024). This fragility becomes more evident when legal judgments deviate from principles of fairness and natural justice, causing instability not only in political parties but also in the broader social fabric. The judiciary's role in shaping political stability or instability is widely recognized. In Nigeria, the court system has often been at the centre of political controversies, especially in election matters. Judicial rulings on elections can either resolve tensions or exacerbate them, depending on how such rulings are perceived by the public. When court decisions appear to favour one political faction over another, as Jonathan hinted, it undermines trust in the judiciary, leading to increased social tension and instability (Ibeanu, 2019). Jonathan's lamentation over the "haunting" judgment regarding a Ward Chairman expelling a National Chairman of a political party exemplifies how such legal decisions can destabilise political structures. By suggesting that lower-ranked officials could unseat their superiors, the judiciary essentially disrupts established political hierarchies. This ruling has had a cascading effect on party stability, especially within the PDP and APC, leading to internal conflicts that have spilled into broader societal unrest (Punch News 2024). These decisions, while judicial in nature, reverberate throughout the political landscape, contributing to a climate of uncertainty and tension. One of the major issues Jonathan raised is the political influence that permeates the judiciary. In many instances, the judiciary's decisions have been questioned for being politically motivated rather than based on legal merits. Scholars like Akinola (2021) have argued that when courts are seen as tools of political elites, it undermines the judiciary's role as an impartial arbiter of justice. This erosion of judicial independence breeds public distrust, as citizens no longer view the courts as mechanisms for resolving disputes but rather as instruments for political gain. This sentiment can foster frustration among the populace, leading to protests, civil disobedience, or even violence, as groups feel disenfranchised by the legal system (Okeke, 2022). In societies where the judiciary is perceived as compromised, social tension escalates because citizens have limited recourse to justice. In the case of Nigeria, frequent election-related litigation, as Jonathan pointed out, creates an atmosphere of legal contestation rather than consensus-building. The resulting legal battles, often drawn out over extended periods, hinder the political process and exacerbate divisions within the electorate. As a result, the judiciary, instead of being a stabilizing force, becomes a source of discord (Fagbadebo & Ruffin, 2020).

Elections are central to democracy, and in many nations, the judiciary plays a crucial role in validating election outcomes. However, in Nigeria, election-related judgments have often been a source of controversy. Jonathan noted that Nigeria differs from other countries where electoral disputes do not dominate court proceedings to the same extent. In Nigeria, pre-election and post-election matters frequently flood the judiciary, contributing to prolonged periods of political uncertainty (Umeche, 2023). The judiciary's involvement in electoral disputes is crucial for upholding the rule of law. However, when judgments are perceived as skewed, they delegitimise the electoral process, potentially inciting violence. For example, in the aftermath of several gubernatorial and presidential elections, protests and civil unrest erupted following contentious court rulings. These events underscore how sensitive judicial decisions can fuel social tensions, especially when they are viewed as undemocratic or unjust (Onyechi, 2021). Moreover, the "Christmas for lawyers" that Jonathan alluded to refers to the lucrative nature of election litigation for legal practitioners. While this provides economic benefits for those in the legal profession, it also points to a deeper structural problem: a judicial system overwhelmed by election-related cases rather than focusing on broader issues of governance and social justice. This flood of political cases detracts from the judiciary's ability to address other pressing societal concerns, contributing to a backlog of cases and a general sense of inefficiency within the legal system (Ogunye, 2020).



Judicial decisions not only affect the outcomes of elections but also have broader implications for political party stability and governance. As Jonathan remarked, the ruling that allowed a Ward Chairman to expel a National Chairman has destabilised major political parties, leading to crises within the PDP and APC. Political party instability has far-reaching consequences for governance, as parties are the primary vehicles through which candidates are elected to office. When internal conflicts within parties arise due to judicial rulings, these conflicts often spill over into the public sphere, leading to broader social unrest (Mbah, 2022). Political party instability weakens the democratic process, as it creates an environment where political actors focus more on internal party battles than on governance and public service. This, in turn, contributes to social tension, as the public becomes increasingly disillusioned with the political class. The judiciary, by rendering decisions that disrupt political hierarchies, inadvertently contributes to this instability, making it a significant player in the creation of social tension in Nigeria (Abegunde, 2021). Jonathan's critique of the judiciary also touches on the concept of natural justice. He expressed disbelief that a sub-unit like a Ward Chairman could expel a National Chairman, comparing it to the idea of a Head of Department expelling a Vice Chancellor in a university. This analogy underscores the perceived departure from the principles of natural justice in some of the judiciary's decisions. Natural justice, as a fundamental legal principle, requires fairness, equity and the proper functioning of legal processes (Eze, 2019). When judicial decisions contradict these principles, they contribute to a sense of injustice among the public, leading to increased social tension. In Jonathan's example, the court's ruling disrupts the expected order of authority, creating confusion and uncertainty within political organisations. This confusion trickles down to the electorates, who witness the instability and lose confidence in both the political and judicial systems. In a society where natural justice is compromised, the likelihood of social tension increases, as individuals and groups feel marginalised by the legal process (Adigun, 2022). Judicial decisions in Nigeria have far-reaching implications for political stability and social cohesion. Goodluck Jonathan's critique of the judiciary highlights the dangers of a politicized legal system, where judgments are seen as being influenced by external forces rather than grounded in the principles of natural justice. The judiciary, as a critical institution in upholding democracy, must strive to remain impartial and independent to avoid contributing to social tension. Election-related litigation, political party instability, and the erosion of public trust in the judiciary are all factors that exacerbate social unrest in Nigeria. For democracy to thrive, the judiciary must uphold its role as an impartial arbiter, free from political influence, to restore public confidence and reduce social tension.

The belief that judicial outcomes are influenced by political considerations has led to widespread frustration among citizens, who see the system as failing to deliver justice. The recent controversies surrounding the Rivers State local government elections serve as a poignant example, where the Supreme Court's ruling to nullify election results ignited public outrage and protests, further illustrating the link between judicial decisions and social unrest. The cumulative effect of these judicial decisions and rulings has been a significant erosion of public trust in the judiciary as an institution. When citizens perceive the judiciary as biased or ineffective, it creates a fertile ground for social tension and unrest, undermining the judiciary's role as a mediator in disputes and a guardian of rights. As Aliyu (2022) notes, this perceived bias contributes to a growing sentiment of disillusionment among citizens, leading them to question the legitimacy of the judicial system. The relationship between judicial performance and social tension is further complicated by the actions of law enforcement agencies, particularly the police. In situations where the judiciary fails to address grievances adequately, the public may resort to protests or demonstrations to express their dissatisfaction, leading to

clashes with security forces. The events in Rivers State exemplify how judicial decisions perceived as unjust can trigger social unrest and instability, as public protests against the judiciary's rulings resulted in violent confrontations with law enforcement. The situation in Rivers State highlights the profound impact of judicial decisions on social unrest. Following the controversial ruling by the Supreme Court to nullify the results of the local government elections, public outrage erupted as citizens expressed their frustration over what they perceived as an injustice. The court's decision was seen as a politically motivated move that denied the electorate their right to choose their representatives, and as protests erupted, clashes between demonstrators and security forces became increasingly common. The police response to these protests often exacerbated the situation, with reports of excessive force and violence further fuelling public anger and distrust. This escalation of tensions illustrates how judicial decisions, when perceived as unjust or biased, can trigger social unrest and instability. The perception that judicial rulings are not aligned with public interests exacerbates existing divisions within society, with different political factions exploiting judicial decisions to galvanise support for their causes. In the context of the Tinubu administration, political opponents have often framed judicial rulings as tools of oppression, leading to increased political mobilisation among citizens dissatisfied. The interplay between judicial actions and political rhetoric contributes to a climate of distrust and division, ultimately undermining social cohesion.

The role of public discourse and media cannot be underestimated in shaping perceptions of judicial performance. Social media platforms have become essential in amplifying public outrage and mobilizing citizens against perceived injustices within the judiciary. The ability of citizens to voice their opinions and organise protests through social media has changed the dynamics of how judicial decisions are received. The Tinubu administration has faced significant criticism online, with hashtags trending to highlight public dissatisfaction with judicial rulings and the perceived failures of the legal system. Media coverage of judicial decisions has also played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions, with investigative journalism exposing the connections between political elites and the judiciary contributing to a growing awareness of corruption within the legal system. This heightened awareness has fuelled public outrage and demands for judicial reform, further contributing to social tension. As Adebayo (2022) argues, a well-informed citizenry is essential for holding the judiciary accountable and fostering a culture of transparency and justice.

Based on the premises laid above, one can conclude that the performance of the judiciary under the Tinubu administration has significant implications for social tension in Nigeria. Judicial decisions and rulings that are perceived as biased or politically motivated contribute to public disillusionment and unrest, with the inability of the judiciary to effectively address electoral disputes, corruption cases and governance issues undermining public trust. The relationship between judicial performance and social tension is complex, influenced by factors such as law enforcement actions, public discourse and media coverage. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort to restore the integrity of the judiciary, ensure accountability and promote public confidence in democratic institutions. The judiciary must take steps to demonstrate its commitment to impartiality and justice in order to bridge the growing divide between the state and its citizens, fostering an environment where social tension can be alleviated and trust in governance can be restored.

Conclusion

Having discussed extensively on the topic of policymakers and economic crises in Nigeria, it becomes evident that the economic policies implemented under President Tinubu's

administration have had significant and far-reaching impacts on the country's social fabric. The austerity measures and neoliberal reforms, intended to stabilise and grow the economy, have inadvertently exacerbated pre-existing social tensions and inequalities, leading to widespread discontent and unrest among various segments of the Nigerian population. The escalation in unemployment rates, as highlighted by Ojo (2020), has left many, especially the youth, in a state of hopelessness and social discord. The widening income inequality, noted by Adeleke (2019), has deepened social stratification, fostering resentment and feelings of injustice among the lower socio-economic groups. These economic disparities have not only strained social cohesion but have also widened the gap between the affluent and the underprivileged, leading to increased social tension. Furthermore, the austerity-driven approach to public spending has severely impacted access to essential services like healthcare and education. This has marginalised vulnerable populations further, exacerbating social inequalities and heightening feelings of disenfranchisement, as discussed by Okafor (2018). The detrimental effects on small businesses and the informal sector have also been significant, with neoliberal reforms favouring large corporations and marginalising small-scale entrepreneurs, contributing to economic exclusion and disenchantment among small business owners. Ethnic and regional tensions have also been inflamed by these economic policies, particularly in terms of resource allocation and distribution. The unequal distribution of resources has heightened inter-group rivalries and conflicts, posing significant challenges to national unity and stability, as pointed out by Okonkwo (2021). These tensions underscore the complex interplay between economic policies and socio-political dynamics in Nigeria, highlighting the need for policies that promote inclusivity and equitable development. In addition to economic grievances, Nigeria faces myriad other sources of social tension, including political instability, secessionist movements, and environmental degradation issues. Secessionist movements such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the Southeastern region and ethnic conflicts such as the Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes in central Nigeria further illustrate the deep-seated grievances and aspirations for self-determination among some segments of the population. Nationwide strike actions, kidnapping activities, and the proliferation of cybercrimes have further compounded the social and economic challenges facing the country. Thus it will not be far from the truth to say that President Tinubu's economic policies have significantly contributed to the social tensions in Nigeria by exacerbating existing inequalities, fueling unemployment rates, limiting access to basic services, undermining small businesses, and intensifying ethnic and regional rivalries. Addressing these sources of tension requires a comprehensive reevaluation of current economic strategies to ensure more equitable development outcomes for all Nigerians. Policymakers must consider the socio-economic impacts of their decisions and strive to implement inclusive policies that address the root causes of social tensions and foster a more cohesive and equitable society.

Recommendations

Inclusive policy development

Engaging diverse societal groups in the policy-making process ensures that policies reflect the needs and aspirations of all Nigerians. This inclusive approach can lead to more effective and sustainable policies by incorporating a wide range of perspectives and expertise. For example, South Africa's post-apartheid era offers a compelling illustration of successful inclusive policy development. The country's transition to democracy involved extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including civil society organisations, labour unions, business groups and community representatives. The creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) allowed for a participatory process that acknowledged past injustices and aimed to build a more

inclusive society (Hayner, 2011). This inclusive approach contributed to the development of policies that addressed the diverse needs of South Africa's population and laid the groundwork for national reconciliation and development. Another example is Brazil's participatory budgeting process, first implemented in Porto Alegre in 1989. This process allows citizens to directly participate in deciding how to allocate portions of the municipal budget. It has led to more equitable distribution of resources, improved public services and increased citizen engagement in governance (Wampler, 2007). By involving citizens in decision-making, the government can better address the community's needs and priorities, leading to more effective and accepted policies.

Strengthening institutions

Enhancing the capacity and integrity of institutions responsible for policy implementation is crucial for reducing corruption and improving efficiency. Strong institutions are vital for ensuring that policies are effectively translated into action. Singapore provides a notable example of how strengthening institutions can lead to significant national progress. The city-state transformed from a developing country into a global economic powerhouse within a few decades by focusing on building a meritocratic and corruption-free public service. The establishment of institutions like the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) helped to root out corruption and promote transparency (Quah, 2011). This institutional strength contributed to efficient policy implementation, economic growth, and social stability. In Estonia, the implementation of e-governance has revolutionized the efficiency and transparency of public administration. The country's robust digital infrastructure allows citizens to access various government services online, significantly reducing opportunities for corruption and improving public sector efficiency. Estonia's success demonstrates how technological advancements can be leveraged to strengthen institutional capacity and integrity (Kattel & Mergel, 2018).

Economic diversification

Government should continue efforts to diversify the economy while ensuring that the benefits of growth are equitably distributed is essential for sustainable development. Economic diversification reduces dependency on a single sector and creates a more resilient economy. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) provides a successful example of economic diversification. Historically reliant on oil exports, the UAE has strategically diversified its economy by investing in sectors such as tourism, aviation, finance, and real estate. Cities like Dubai have become global hubs for trade and tourism, attracting significant foreign investment (Davidson, 2018). The government's Vision 2021 plan emphasises sustainable development and the equitable distribution of growth benefits, aiming to enhance social welfare and economic resilience. Another example is Malaysia's economic transformation. The country's Vision 2020 plan aimed to achieve developed nation status by diversifying its economy from a reliance on agriculture and mining to a more industrialized and service-oriented economy. Investments in education, infrastructure, and technology have been crucial to this transformation. Malaysia's efforts have led to significant economic growth, reduced poverty, and improved living standards (Jomo, 2013).

Addressing social inequalities

Implementing policies that specifically target the reduction of social and economic inequality is crucial, as inequalities are often at the root of social tension. Countries like Norway have effectively addressed social inequalities through comprehensive welfare policies and progressive taxation. Norway's social welfare system provides universal healthcare, free



education, and generous social security benefits, ensuring a high standard of living for all citizens (Hatland, 2001). The country's commitment to reducing income inequality and providing equal opportunities has resulted in high levels of social cohesion and a stable society. Rwanda offers another example of addressing social inequalities and promoting social cohesion following the 1994 genocide. The government has made significant strides in reducing social inequalities through policies focused on poverty reduction, education, and healthcare. The Vision 2020 programme aimed to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country by addressing economic and social disparities. Community-based initiatives, such as Umuganda (community work), have fostered a sense of collective responsibility and national unity, contributing to social stability and economic progress (Ansoms, 2011).

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