

ETHICS OF EXCLUSION AND ITS IMPACT ON NIGERIA'S TRUDGE TO DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Over the past century, one of the catalysts for the growth of liberal democracy is its efforts at allowing the bestriding influence of inclusive tendencies goad its principles and operations. As motes are attracted to honey combs, the West swum on all that vivifies liberalism and its promise of endless universal progress and peace. But a critical analysis of this trajectory recognizes an apparent paradox, namely – the existence of fundamental influence of exclusionist practices within states that pride themselves as having embraced liberal inclusive ideology. We found that since exclusion is required to buttress a sense of selfhood as defined by communal membership, to seek for its complete elimination is a melancholic attempt to sustain the possibility of an impossible object of desire. We also identified that the abuse of human rights, denigration of political opponents and the collapse of the populace into ethnic cleavages in Nigeria, which in turn have stunted her democratic progress, are among the dangers of stretching the ethics of exclusion beyond reasonable bounds.

Keywords: Ethics, Inclusivity, Exclusion, Liberal democracy, Political rascality.

Introduction

The terms inclusion, exclusion, acceptance, discrimination, etc., are often bandied to delineate societies that are steadily creating peace or conflict, and in consequence, on the path to progress or disintegration. Amongst them, 'exclusion' especially in terms of policy implementation, does have a strong negative connotation—a fact not helped much by its historically dire consequences on societies. This significantly reinforces much of liberal hysteria over exclusionist tendencies.

For sure, most people would cringe at the thoughts of excluding individuals or groups from harnessing their common patrimony based on accidents of history. Were this to happen, it of course, should be a subject for adjudication by courts of competent jurisdiction. But what happens when the exclusion is done in order to help one or society focus? Might one be judged harshly when in attempt to strike

balance in a lopsided society, an administrator excludes 'other' sections in order to concentrate and develop a 'particular' section? Does one not need to exclude many issues in research so as to concentrate on specific questions and create a clear focus for investigation? Depending on its degree of manifestation, and the level of damage it seeks to remedy, it is obvious that there lurk, within each individual or state, vestiges of exclusionist influences, even among those that pride themselves as having embraced liberal inclusive ideology.

In point of fact, 'exclusion' is an idea which even progressives both loath at some point, and require at another, for proper human functionality: after all, it is essential for bolstering a sense of selfhood as defined by communal membership. To seek for its complete elimination in real life situations is a melancholic attempt to sustain the possibility of an impossible object of desire.¹ But to hanker on it and pretend to hide under its inevitability in social engineering would lead to abuse of human rights, denigration of political opponents, and the elevation of unsavoury identity politics into a new paradigm which have been the bane of democratic progress in Nigeria. The dominance of these negative tendencies that have stunted the nation's democratic progress is among the dangers of stretching the ethics of exclusion beyond reasonable bounds.

Inclusivity, the Growth of Liberal Democracy, and Social Progress

In its current usage, the term inclusivity—the quality or state of being inclusive, has a relatively short history, having sprung at the close of the 20th century. This is not to imply that the idea of inclusiveness or the effort at including as many different types of people as possible and treating them all fairly and equally within a polity, is something novel. From the rise of Greek civilization in the 6th century BC, Athenian direct democracy appeared to be far more inclusive and perhaps more transparent than many modern liberal systems. All citizens had a voting right and participated in the Assembly, which met roughly thrice in a month to decide military, financial, religious and sundry matters. The Greek historian Herodotus romanticized about what he called "that most splendid of virtues, equality before the law." But by hindsight, one cannot adjudge participation in Athenian democracy as reflecting modern spirit of equality as was idealized. For instance, in *The Laws*, Plato delineates the inhibitions for slaves and freedmen within the polity and even proposed the arbitrary treatment of slaves by their owners.² Aristotle, in turn, did not have qualms in regarding a slave as "a living possession", calling servants "instruments" which merely take priority of

¹ Toth, Josh. 2018. *Stranger America: A Narrative Ethics of Exclusion*. Virginia: University of Virginia Press.

² Plato. *The Laws*, Bk. XI: CH. 22, 914-915.

value over other material instruments.³ Seen as 'tools' then, slaves, women, peasants and foreigners were excluded from Athenian body of legal residents⁴ and in consequence denied equality of opportunities. As a result, it did not take long for this sort of democracy in the Greek City States to crumble.

The age of free City States was replaced by the Hellenistic, and subsequently the Roman period which prepared victory for Christianity. In the Hellenistic world, the East was not accustomed to any form of government except that of a divine king, and Alexander felt very much fitted to perform this task.⁵ This gave vein to the flourishing of aristocracy up from then to the time of the Roman Empire and even beyond. The oppressive and divisive nature of aristocracy meant that everyone's wellbeing and happiness depended on the whims of the monarch or on the (mis)fortune of surviving frequent dynastic wars / palace revolutions. The notions of equality and inclusivity were remote, and individuals were not provided with some degree of protection against risks beyond their control. On the contrary, they were given or denied opportunities based on accidents of history, such as birth place or blood lineage. This created a dire situation for ordinary people to the point that they began, as the historian Russell noted, to seek respite by worshipping the goddess of Luck.⁶

However, the intellectual evolution of the Enlightenment marked the turning point in the quest for inclusivity and growth of liberal democracy. Learned individuals broke from previous habit of adroit adulation of often ignorant royal witticisms for some measure of luxury, and began to question old traditions about societies and governments. These individual efforts eventually coalesced into powerful revolutionary movements that in time brought down various forms of monarchical establishments. The Enlightenment itself was given impetus by the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England which, by limiting the constitutional power of the monarch, affirming parliamentary supremacy, passing the 'Bill of Rights' and establishing the principle of 'consent of the governed', laid the foundations for the rise of modern liberal democracy.⁷ The Revolution was termed Glorious not just because it challenged the divine right of Kings, but significantly for dismantling the authority of aristocracy by granting peasants – people whom, until then, the aristocracy had only viewed as servants, equality of rights before the law.

³ Aristotle. *Politics*, Bk. I: CH. 3, 1253

⁴ Aristotle. *Politics*, Bk. VII: CH. 8 & 9, 1328-1329

⁵ Russell, Bertrand. 1946. *History of Western Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 230.

⁶ *Ibid*, 234.

⁷ History of Liberalism. Accessed 6/5/19. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_liberalism

Many decades later in 1776, the New World was founded on liberal principles, and her independence declaration pointed at the equality of creation of all men and their endowment, by their creator, with certain inalienable rights, which include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness⁸. These ideals re-echo the Lockean phrase “life, liberty, and property” – values for which he deployed his expertise to the service of the Whigs (the political party that engineered the revolt) during the Glorious Revolution. Later in 1789, the French Revolution promoted liberty of the individual within fraternity of equals, overthrowing hereditary aristocracy, and making France the first nation in history to grant universal male suffrage.

Like a raging storm, the force of inclusivity in modern era swept across the West: from England to Germany; and from the United States to France. Adopting the economic blueprints of Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill which espoused the importance of free markets and *laissez-faire* governance, liberal governments expanded the frontiers of social harmony, democracy and growth. And within the span of few generations, it (liberalism) created an atmosphere under which tremendous breakthroughs were achieved.

As we noted in the essay: “Intellectual Censorship in Liberalism, Ethical Concerns,”⁹ no one can undervalue, in the history and development of modern science and technology, the significance of conducive environment for freedom of inquiry created by liberal inclusive culture. Being a political and moral philosophy based on liberty, equality, and hostility to dictatorship, Liberalism espouses a wide array of views which are generally supportive of civil rights, democracy, secularism, inclusivity and all forms of equality, cultural distaste for conservatism and for tradition in general, internationalism, freedom of speech, press, religion, and free markets.^{[10][11]} With the spread of inclusive policies and the emergence of Civil Liberty Organizations in the West, it was a tremendous opportunity for more people to freely deploy their energies to ‘ravenous’ intellectual pursuit. Given impetus by the newly established constitutional

⁸ United States. 1920. *The Constitution of the United States of America*. Washington: Government printing office.

⁹ Ogbujah, Columbus. 2019. “Intellectual Censorship in Liberalism, Ethical Concerns”, *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 1/2, 93-107.

¹⁰ John Dunn. 1993. *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹ Sheldon S. Wolin 2004. *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

guarantees, and buoyed by the prospects of seemingly limitless freedom to challenge conventions, more and more ordinary individuals made themselves into a People, dared to escape the languid and unadventurously subservient living, and plunged themselves into positions of control of their destiny. In the process they shaped the basis for a social order that was essential for the flourishing of Industrial Revolution—a primary factor driving liberal democracy and the growth of human civilization ever since.

A cursory look at history since the advent of liberal inclusive democracy in the past three and half centuries indicates a meteoric rise in the curve of human development. Classical liberalism underlines inclusivity, free markets, and democratic self-government as keys to social progress which in turn lead to scientific-technological breakthroughs, rise in living standards, and unprecedented upward social mobility.¹² Edward Younkins acknowledges this positive correlation while noting that the libertarian institutional framework is what guarantees individuals the ability to use their rationality and free will to evaluate, choose, create, innovate, and integrate all the values, virtues, and goods that can lead to their personal well-being.¹³

The ‘Valence’ of Exclusionist Web in Liberal Inclusive Ideology

From its modern inception in the seminal works of Locke¹⁴ to the erudite works of Rawls¹⁵ in contemporary time, liberalism has trumped on issues that pertain to ideals such as liberty, equality, rights, democracy, individuality, tolerance, etc. Such values, though sometimes pitted against each other, inaccurately present a posturing that seems to isolate and relegate negative tendencies only to competing ones. This is inaccurate and flustering because there is no such thing as perfect ideology, and history is replete with the vulnerability of extremes of ideals to abuse and deformity.

One can, without the risk of falling into crass relativism, rightly identify some positives in ideals as *ethics of exclusion*, which is roundly denounced by left-liberal ideologues. Viewed from the prism of eliciting divisions, the penchant for exclusion is loathed by all irrespective of ideological leanings. But when the

¹² Holmes, Kim R. 2016. *The Closing of the Liberal Mind: How Groupthink and Intolerance Define the Left*. New York: Encounter Books

¹³ Younkins, Edward. 2000. "Technology, Progress, and Freedom," in Richman, S. (Ed.). *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty* - January 2000, pp. 28-30.

¹⁴ Locke, John. 1690. *Two Treatises on Government*. London: A. Churchill.

¹⁵ Rawls, John. 2005. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

loathing is infused with politics, it flaunts a ridiculously sham moral grandstanding that pits the other's behaviour as utterly vile and distasteful, while absorbing oneself, as if life can be meaningfully lived without some form of exclusivity. As a matter of fact, the journey of human life starts with the mergence of a sperm cell, in exclusion of millions of others, with an ovum. Going forward, all life's projects become directional when one wriggles oneself out of the amorphous cloud of anonymous "we" in the discovery of oneself. In research too, one has to exclude many issues in order to focus on the few that would lead to one's research goal; in relationships, the values of exclusive marriage / partnership and the dangers of communal sexual associates are quite obvious; in organizations, some sort of exclusion is required to buttress one's sense of identity and membership.

For the most part, the world's professional groups are exclusionary in character. At the moment, I am the national Vice President of the Association of Philosophy Professionals of Nigeria (formerly Nigerian Philosophical Association)—a group that excludes anyone who is not trained in philosophy. Now, I do not know why a nurse or a carpenter would want to join us. But if they did and are rejected, would that challenge the ethics of our group's existence? Are we not justified in excluding them? And if we are justified, might we still lay claim to be thoroughgoing adversaries of exclusionism? In all modesty, the valence of exclusionist web in liberal inclusive ideology is all too obvious to neglect. At the heart of the United States Congress, as in many Parliaments, there exist many exclusionary groups like the progressive caucus; the conservative caucus; the black caucus, etc. Oftentimes, when people feel excluded, they form their own group, and when a group becomes 'powerful', others may begin to feel envious and discriminated against. This, by no means, detracts the fact that when a group's policy is exclusionary to the point of negatively impacting on the rights of others, it needs to be challenged. But the unmistakable reality is that liberal democracy cannot function outside the valence of some 'exclusionist web'.

Evenhanded scholars have always pointed at this seeming irony. Friedman, for one, was lucid in situating the real driving force of the Glorious Revolution within the resolve of the majority Protestant block in England to reject a Catholic King. He was deeply distraught in learning that his 'heroes' of democracy were really religious extremists, whose concept of open-mindedness was restricted to assortments of Protestantism; and that the growth of rights and power for non-aristocrats arose from bigotry and from rejection of an effort to enhance religious

freedom.¹⁶ From the Enlightenment to the middle of the 20th century, the English Empire—champions of inclusivity, vanquished over a hundred million people across the globe; their American counterparts—preachers of ‘equality of creation of all men’, laid waste of much of Native American population. Slavery was a fact of life, and the slaves, who were mostly of African descent regarded as subhuman, were not accorded rights before the law. In much the same way, women and peasants were excluded from democratic processes. Thus, in the same age of liberal revivalism, not only were people at home marginalized, but those favouring reforms at home were at the same time supporting Western imperialism abroad.

In our contemporary time, a significant feature of progressivism is its blatant denunciation of exclusionist tendencies in private and public lives. But like its predecessors, it has always engaged in exclusionist tactics against those considered deficient of its purported moral rectitude. Without a doubt, it has turned into an activism under which, like the Sword of Damocles, many do not balk on any opportunity at scoring cheap political points against perceived opponents. This perhaps puts into perspective the vitriol of the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan on the President of the United States of America on his official visit to Great Britain: “Londoners have made it clear that Donald Trump is not welcome here.” He went further to reel out reasons for such disinvite, as Trump’s policies and actions being at polar to the city’s values of inclusion, diversity, and tolerance. Notwithstanding that Khan shredded diplomatic decorum in his treatment of the Queen’s guest, and lacked the requisite powers to follow through, his disinvite achieved its intent: to incite a somewhat populist backlash against the President’s visit. He exploited his position as London Mayor to assume the position of *de facto* prosecutor, jury and judge in handing out list of potentially ‘dangerous’ people *banned* from ‘his’ precious city.

One does not need to go far into history to identify similar ambivalence of attitude in our political landscape: we exclude in order to protest perceived exclusions. It is like “wanting it both ways”—a phrase we earlier used in depicting what complicates women’s fight for liberation in Africa.¹⁷ The persistence of exclusive tendencies in social engineering is much like the inevitability of conflict in human

¹⁶ Friedman, Michael B. 2015. In Praise of Liberalism: an Assessment of liberal Political thought from the 17th Century to Today. *Review of Contemporary Philosophy*, Vol. 14: 11-36.

¹⁷ Ogbujah, Columbus & Davies, Emmanuel. 2008. “Ambivalent Sexism: A Bane to True Emancipation of the Nigerian Woman.” *Journal of Gender Studies*, 2 (2), 18-30.

life. Even though both are loathed by people of diverse political persuasions, the quest for their complete elimination is an utopic attempt at sustaining the possibility of an impossible object of desire. As in conflict, the driving motif should not be muddled with issues that have complete-purging strategies (which are not workable), but the expansion of frontiers to include as many people as possible.

Political Rascality and its damage to Nigeria's Democratic Progress

One of the most touted ascriptions of democracy is Lincoln's 'government of the people, by the people and for the people.' This depiction portrays democracy as a direct offshoot of liberal inclusive tradition that thrives on the bases of the consent of the people, popularity, and public acceptance. It is the will of The People that holds sway – power belongs to the people, and they could well exercise it by bringing in, and if need be, removing from office those who abuse their common trust. But the unfolding scenario in the democratic experience of Nigerian in the last twenty-one years is that neither the consent of the people nor their acceptance has played any significant role in leadership selections. Ironically, there is in full glare forms of power alien to democratic ideals and resonating of dictatorial tendencies which are used to squeeze political dissents. Having been stripped of the 'people's power', the unfolding structure has slid into a recluse akin to modern aristocracy with little regard for 'performance' and 'popular acceptance' – ingredients without which official's behaviour easily transit to political rascality.

Political rascality is a term used to denote the roguery of political office holders that impugns the nation's trudge to social equality. Its history is as old as the nation itself. In the years following independence from Britain, political actors' indulgence with ethnic exclusion, intolerance and a flagrant disregard for the rule of law brought with it huge domestic instability. At some point, it was a sorry story of coups and counter coups, and ethnic violence which, eventually led to civil war that took the lives of more than three million people. Presently, the very conditions that led to the carnage of the late 1960s are in full display. Politicians do not seem to have learned anything from history. Their damning behaviour since the return to civil rule in 1999 – rigged elections followed by violence and endless litigations, nepotism and tacit support/inaction towards killer herdsmen are beating the drums of war again; these are the major clogs on the nation's wheel of democratic progress.

As we noted elsewhere, the political landscape of Nigeria has been one of brutish display of power and control. The politicians' crave to promote ethnic interests

over and above national unity has snowballed into a repertoire of actions that have kept the progress of the nation on her knees.¹⁸ If we term the eight year rule of General Obasanjo as the highpoint of impunity in governance, and the Yar'dua/Jonathan era as seemingly clueless, then the first five years of Buhari's administration is nothing short of disaster. Where previous regimes were more subtle, blackmailing other arms of government (Legislative and Judiciary) into submission, the present administration of Buhari is so brazen, and uses military might for the same purpose. In all, there have been instances of political assassination¹⁹, abuse of human rights and downright destruction of whole communities²⁰, ethnic cleansing by killer herdsmen²¹ and indiscreet harassment/removal of judicial officers²², etc. These seem to be orchestrated to create an aura of invincibility so as to make it much easier for the leaders to pander with the nation's treasury unimpeded.

In point of fact, whether it is the issue of unresolved political detentions and assassinations, or outright genocide in parts of the nation; or harassment and subjugation of the Legislative and Judiciary arms of government, etc., they are all linked to the use of exclusionist strategies. When an irredentist ethnic jingoist assumes control over a weak institutional framework, these are bound to happen. Instead of being bogged with the challenges of providing inclusive leadership to the people, governance becomes an escapade by which particularized and individualized interests and goals are promoted. Such corrupt use of power that bastardizes or mimics democratic ideals is the recipe for social unrest that has plagued Nigeria since return to civil rule twenty-one years ago.

Dangers of Ethics of Exclusion

¹⁸ Ogbujah, Columbus. 2016. "Power and Good Governance: Observations from Nigeria." *MELINTAS, An international Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 32 (1), 1-22.

¹⁹ Ogundamisi, K. 2012. "General Olusegun Obasanjo: A Monster as Statesman." Retrieved on June 28, 2015 from: <http://www.nairaland.com/792619/thief-obasanjo-he-wrecked-nigeria/4>

²⁰ Onishi, Norimitsu. 2001. "Nigeria Army Said to Massacre Hundreds of Civilians." *The New York Times*, Oct. 30, 2001. Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/30/world/nigeria-army-said-to-massacre-hundreds-of-civilians.html>

²¹ Onwuka, Azuka. 2018. "Herder-farmer clashes or ethnic cleansing?" *Punch*, May 1, 2018

²² Ogunye, Jiti. 2019. ANALYSIS: "Suspension of CJN Onnoghen: An illegal executive coup against a recalcitrant chief judicial officer." *Premium Times*, Thursday, May 9, 2019. Here this legal analyst argues elegantly that the suspension of the Chief Justice of Nigeria by the Executive branch is patently illegal and unconstitutional, noting that the Administration's purported use of an order of the CCT is no more than a premeditated executive act dressed up in a quasi-judicial cloak to give it legitimacy. For him, the whole procedure is akin to what the military regime of Babangida did in the annulment of June 12, 1993 Presidential election.

At the surface, it might seem ironic how ethics—principles of conduct governing individual or collective sense of rightness or wrongness, should portend dangers. But understood in the sense of ideology, one doesn't need to go far in history to identify the risks and problems associated with various forms of exclusionist policies and actions. The Greek City States were once famed for their democratic organizations which inspired cultural refinements and political victory over competing territories. But because the fundamental structure of Greek democracy eschewed equality and inclusivity—individuals were given or denied opportunities based on accidents of history, such as sex, birth place, economic status or blood lineage, it did not take long to crumble. The tale of Athens' "most splendid of virtues" quickly melted away before the forces of history. And so did the subsequent Hellenistic and Roman Empires which were aristocratic in nature.

The bloody revolutions of modern era and the two atrocious World Wars of postmodernism loudly bespeak of the dangers of ethics of exclusion. It doesn't matter whether it is on political, economic, religious or social grounds. Within conflict spectrum, any sort of exclusion breeds alienation, and alienation forces victims to band together for survival and possible reprisal, resulting in more discrimination, exclusion and insecurity.²³ This gives room to 'identity' politics which, despite the purported values, has fanned the ambers of tribalism and conflict in civic societies.²⁴

In Nigeria as in most parts of the world, politics of identity has created an unwholesome structure wherein people are caged within the infantile familial or social constrictions in exclusion of others. For long, this has been at the heart of the fight for blacks, women and ethnic minorities' liberation in the United States. After fending off restrictions from voting, feminist epistemologists now highlight the perspective relativity of knowledge because of their exclusion from much of knowledge production. This led the *Committee on Ethics of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists*, in evaluating the "Ethical Considerations for Including Women as Research Participants" to conclude that the inclusion of women in research studies is not only necessary for valid inferences, but also in order to avoid flawed conclusions arising from clinical trials on men that do not reflect biologic differences between the two sexes.²⁵

²³ Ogbujah, Columbus. 2019. "Combating Injustice and Insecurity in Nigeria with African Traditional Values," *Philosophy and Praxis*, Vol. 9, 11-23.

²⁴ Glynn, John. 2019. "The Death of the Democratic Party, Identity politics is its real killer." *The American Spectator*, May 18, 2019. Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://spectator.org/the-death-of-the-democratic-party/>

²⁵ Committee on Ethics of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. 2015. "Ethical Considerations for Including Women as Research Participants," *Opinion Number 646*, November 2015.

Already the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the UNDP had identified social exclusion and structural vulnerabilities as potent dangers to Europe's and Central Asia's growth and democracies. In the essay "The Dangers of Political Exclusion: Egypt's Islamist Problem", Kodmani was very lucid in dissecting the influence of political exclusion in exacerbating Egypt's Islamist Problems.²⁶ After the charade of an election in 2017, Raila Odinga, in a speech to the Center for Strategic and International Studies noted that the biggest problem in Kenya then was *exclusion* and that unless it was addressed, it would tear the country apart, since it had led to mounting anger and radicalization among the populace.²⁷

Compared to Nigeria, the level of anger and radicalization in Kenya as a result of exclusion is perhaps, a child's play. Since independence, the skewed contraption called Nigeria has failed in all aspects of cohesion between the predominantly Southern Christians and the Muslim North. Fueled by President Jonathan's (a Southern Christian) decision to contest in the 2015 election, which was interpreted by some as an affront to the gentleman's agreement within his ruling PDP to evenly rotate power across geopolitical zones, the Muslim north formed alliance with the south west to float a new political party APC, under which they fielded one of their cult heroes—Muhamadu Buhari. The two frontline parties drew their support along religious and ethnic lines, and were engaged in unwholesome practices for cheap political gains. In the lead up to the elections, their campaigns were marked by unprecedented level of acrimony, hate speeches, defamations and violence. The election proper was bloody in some sections leading to loss of many lives. Observers have classified it as the most competitive and divisive in the annals of electoral democracy in the country.²⁸ Tension was so palpable that people literally left the country in droves in the preceding days, fearing possible breakdown of law and order in the aftermath.

Soon after elections, the ethnic coalitions and polarizations during electioneering campaigns became power blocks that induced deliberate exclusion of rival groups

²⁶ Kodmani, Bassma. Oct 13, 2005. "The Dangers of Political Exclusion: Egypt's Islamist Problem," Carnegie Papers. Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP63.Kodmani.FINAL.pdf>

²⁷ Houreld, Katharine. 2017. "Political exclusion risks tearing Kenya apart, says opposition leader,"

Reuters. November 9, 2017. Raila Odinga was Kenyan opposition leader who boycotted the second round of Presidential elections because of irregularities perpetuated by the Kenyatta administration.

²⁸ Nwangwu, C., Onah, V. C., & Otu, O. A. 2018. Elixir of electoral fraud: The impact of digital technology on the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1-19.

from political participation. Virtually, all the appointments of the new President reflected the general pattern of pre-election hate speech, which was based mainly on ethnic and religious affinities. In considering 30 key principal federal appointments, Mbah, Nwangwu & Ugwu discovered that while 26 slots were given to the Muslim north, 6 slots were allotted to the Christian south: 3 each for south west and south-south, and none for south east.²⁹ This trend was also followed in the appointment of Chairmen and Board members of various Departments and Agencies of government, and budgetary allocation for capital projects³⁰ which has often drawn the ire of southern Legislators. Perhaps, the most eloquent display of nepotism is in the appointment of heads of security agencies. In spite of public outcry on the incompetency and/or complicity of security personnel in the activities of Fulani terrorist herdsman, this current regime has continued to promote them into positions of power. At one time last year, out of seventeen (17) Security Intelligence Agencies, the south controlled only one (1), leaving the rest to Fulani Muslims. And to maintain this ethno-religious domination in the security forces, whenever there is vacancy, “anointed” candidates are often recalled from retirement. When this is not possible, preferred ones are given accelerated promotions, leading to forceful retirement of their superiors.³¹

Perhaps, no other region has felt the impact of the current government’s exclusionary actions more than the South-East. Not only is none of the principal government officials from this area, the deliberate abandonment of their public facilities to decay has caused untold hardship to the people. However, it did not take much time for this form of nepotism to cascade into the revival of separatist movements like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); to the formation of militia groups like the Armed nomadic herdsman; the resurrected and re-armed Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta; the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force; the Niger Delta Liberation Front; Niger Delta Avengers; Red

²⁹ Peter O. Mbah, Chikodiri Nwangwu & Sam C. Ugwu | Greg Simons (Reviewing editor). 2019. Contentious elections, political exclusion, and challenges of national integration in Nigeria, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 5:1, DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2019.1565615

³⁰ Umoru, Henry. 2018. Breaking: Rowdy session at Senate over Buhari’s lopsided appointments, *Vanguard*, July 19, 2018. Accessed June 23, 2019: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/breaking-rowdy-session-at-senate-over-lopsided-federal-appointments-by-buhari/>

³¹ This happened in the ousting of the Director General of Department of State Services, Mathew Seiyefa—a southern Christian, and his replacement with Bichi – a retired northern Muslim; also in the appointment of a Fulani Muslim Inspector-General Ibrahim K. Idris, who was an Assistant Inspector-General. His ascension to that position led to the absurd retirement of 21 Deputy Inspectors-General of Police and Assistant Inspectors-General of Police who were senior to him.

Egbesu Water Lions; Asawana Deadly Force of the Niger Delta, the Adaka Boro Marine Commandos; etc. According to reports of Public Security & Safety Advocacy department of Intersociety, the number of resistant groups that took up arms against the Federal Republic of Nigeria under President Muhammadu Buhari rose from two on May 29, 2015 to 20 in August 2016.³² This reflects the level of animosity generated by his exclusionary policy thrust: a strategy that has ruined the fragile peace in the land.

In other integrated climes where political appointments are driven by merit, the ethnic or religious affiliations of an office holder, ordinarily does not elicit fear or anger because there are institutional frameworks to gauge their actions. But in a fractured multiethnic enclave like Nigeria, these always elicit fear because to be excluded from the ruling class portends ultimate ruin. The struggle for state power crudely mirrors the struggle for economic power. The business of governance is seen not as that of wealth creation but of distribution, and the distribution is often badly skewed against ethnic groups outside the axis of power.³³ More so, the apparent inertia of security agencies headed by Fulani Muslims in the face of glaring religious/ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Fulani herdsmen, fuels the suspicion that the present administration is using political power for the forceful spread of Islam. Thus, political exclusion has widened the gulf between ethnic, regional, and religious clusters, and has increasingly constricted all avenues for national integration. Nigerians are much more fractured and divided along these lines now more than ever.

Democratic governance entails the rule of law, accountability, inclusivity, consensus, transparency, responsiveness and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Anything to the contrary smacks of bad governance and is a recipe for social unrest. For the President of a country, after national polls, to divide the electorates into 97% versus 5%, claiming that in all honesty, the constituents cannot be treated equally on the basis of their voting pattern, is to revive one of the loathsome ancient ideals that justice is 'benefiting one's friend and harming one's enemy.' At first, everyone thought it was a gaffe that was perhaps occasioned by poor media handling, but after reflecting this in his appointments and distribution of national resources in the past five years, the enormity of the problems at hand

³² Mayah, Emmanuel, 2016. "18 new armed groups spring up in Nigeria," *Premium Times*, Oct 18, 2016. Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/213051-18-new-armed-groups-spring-nigeria.html>

³³Mbah, P., Nwangwu, C., & Edeh, H. 2017. Elite politics and the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. *TRAMES: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 21(2), 173-190.

is clearer. The nation is gradually sliding back to the dark years of whimsical tyranny.

To make a significant stride on the path to democracy, Nigeria needs a different approach to governance rooted in the inclusive, democratic partnerships that are central to the modern liberal practice. Minorities who have suffered persistent social exclusion need more government efforts to redress past injustices.³⁴ But the effort must be geared towards bringing equity and not to “upturn tables” as is perceived in the “disrupt and dismantle” project of the Directorate of Education Protocol for implicit-bias training in the US, which recently was accused of becoming a catalyst for hate and division.³⁵ The current system of winner-takes-it-all in Nigeria is disconcertingly divisive and is hurting the social, economic and political growth of the nation. This form of *exclusion* alienates specific segments of the society and forces victims to band together for survival and pushback, resulting in the formation of separatist groups and ethnic militia that have exacerbated security challenges. It elevates identity politics and is at the core of the shackles on the nation’s trudge to true democracy.

³⁴ Starr, Paul. March 18, 2007. “Why Liberalism Works.” Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://prospect.org/article/why-liberalism-works>

³⁵ Edelmani, Susan. 2019. “Teachers allegedly told to favor black students in ‘racial equity’ training.” Accessed June 10, 2019: <https://www.nypost.com>