



## **The Political Objectives of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended) and the Tinubu Administration**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines Nigeria's 1999 Constitution as a national policy document and evaluates the performance of the Tinubu Administration (2023–2025) in implementing its Section 15 on Political Objectives. The Constitution, as the supreme legal and political framework, outlines the guiding principles for governance, national unity, and social justice. The study conceptualizes the Constitution as both a contractual and co-ordinational instrument binding public officials to its provisions while shaping institutional relationships. Drawing comparative insights from the constitutional experiences of the United States, Ethiopia, and other federal systems, the paper situates Nigeria's constitutional evolution within its colonial and postcolonial context, tracing the recurring challenges of implementation across successive regimes.

Using qualitative analysis, the paper assesses the Tinubu Administration's adherence to the constitutional motto of "*Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress*," and its compliance with subsections on national integration and the duties of government in promoting unity, mobility, residence rights, inter-marriage, and inclusive associations. Findings reveal that while the administration has made rhetorical and partial policy efforts toward unity such as infrastructure expansion, digital connectivity, and interfaith engagement, its performance is constrained by insecurity, economic hardship, perceived ethno-regional bias, and limited institutional reforms. Initiatives promoting inclusive governance and grassroots development remain largely symbolic rather than structural.

The paper concludes that the Tinubu Administration's implementation of Section 15 is moderate but insufficient, with an overall performance rating of 40%. It recommends that the administration move beyond declaratory support to concrete institutional, legal, and socio-economic measures that advance genuine national integration and constitutional fidelity ahead of the 2027 elections.



## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The constitution of any country serves as the fundamental legal and political framework that provides guiding principles for governance and the promotion of citizens' welfare. In heterogeneous societies, constitutions often adopt federal structures to mitigate inter-ethnic friction, foster inclusiveness, and promote national unity. By its very nature, a constitution is the supreme national policy and strategy document to which all other plans, including party manifestos, are subordinated. Elected leaders, appointed officials, and public servants ranging from civil administrators to members of the military and security services are bound by oath to defend, uphold, and implement its provisions.

In principle, the constitution itself is sufficiently robust to serve as a political mandate; candidates for office may legitimately campaign solely on their commitment to its spirit and letters. Constitutions can therefore be described as both contractual binding officers to sworn obedience of its provisions and co-ordinational, guiding relationships among officeholders, institutions, and arms of government. The United States Constitution of 1787 exemplifies this duality, combining enforceable obligations with mechanisms for institutional coordination (US National Archives and Records Administration, 2020).

The U.S. Constitution embeds five enduring principles: republicanism, federalism, limited government, checks and balances, separation of powers, and popular sovereignty. When viewed as a policy document, these principles represent constitutional objectives, the level of whose implementation may be used to evaluate governmental performance. For example, the Trump Administration was assessed as average in its constitutional performance, with Gallup Polls recording a 37% approval rating in July 2025 (Brenan, 2025).

African countries with federal constitutions similarly use them as instruments of national integration. Ethiopia, South Africa, Somalia, and South Sudan stand out, despite the political



challenges that federalism has posed in some of these contexts (Yimenu, 2023). Ethiopia's 1994 Constitution is particularly instructive, emphasizing democracy, equality, federalism, self-determination, peace, security, and environmental protection. The early successes of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who won the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize for reconciling with Eritrea, once aligned with these objectives. However, subsequent reversals in peace and governance explain the decline in his approval rating from 89% in 2018 to 77% by 2021, and later to "average" perceptions in recent years (Bikus, 2023; UNDP Ethiopia Quarterly Economic Profile, 2025).

Nigeria's constitutional evolution reflects its colonial history and political struggles. The 1914 Constitution amalgamated Northern and Southern Nigeria. The 1922 Clifford Constitution expanded legislative representation in the South, while the 1946 Richards Constitution established regionalism. The 1951 Macpherson Constitution, notable for its indigenous input, introduced a federal house with regional representation. Ethnic tensions prompted the 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, which granted autonomy to the regions and facilitated independence. The 1960 Independence Constitution introduced a parliamentary system, expanded legislative structures, and provided for a federal senate and regional houses of chiefs. The 1963 Republican Constitution further expanded legislative authority and established a ceremonial presidency and a Supreme Court. However, poor implementation by the Balewa Administration led to Nigeria's first military coup in January 1966.

Subsequent military interventions disrupted Nigeria's constitutional order. General Ironsi's unitary decrees dismantled regional autonomy and triggered a counter-coup in July 1966. The Gowon regime was later ousted for reneging on its transition promise, while Murtala Mohammed's reformist purge provoked the failed 1976 counter-coup that claimed his life. His successor, Olusegun Obasanjo, oversaw the adoption of the 1979 Constitution, which introduced the American-style presidential system. Yet, weak implementation contributed to the Shagari



government's overthrow in 1983. The cycle of coups continued through the Buhari and Babangida regimes, culminating in the 1999 Constitution, crafted under General Abdulsalami Abubakar, which has since guided Nigeria's return to democracy.

The 1999 Constitution has so far produced five civilian administrations: Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan, Buhari, and Tinubu, with each facing challenges of adherence and implementation. Repeated tensions, including impeachment threats against Obasanjo, Yar'Adua's failure to transmit power during his illness, Jonathan's controversial constitutional breaches, and Buhari's repeated clashes with the National Assembly, reflect the persistent gap between constitutional ideals and executive practice (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), 2023; Agbom, 2024). Amnesty International (2008) and other watchdogs have consistently criticized these administrations for failing to deliver constitutional guarantees of rights, transparency, and accountability.

Against this backdrop, the Tinubu Administration, inaugurated in May 2023, presents a critical test of Nigeria's democratic resilience. With a midterm approval rating of 37% (Eagle Badger Data Analytics, 2025), Tinubu's government faces pressing questions about its fidelity to the Constitution's objectives. The unique contribution of this paper is to treat the 1999 Constitution as a national policy document, using its provision at Section 15 on Political Objectives as a benchmark for evaluating governance by the Tinubu Administration.

The overarching objective of this paper is therefore to assess the Tinubu Administration's performance in implementing the provisions of Section 15 on Political Objectives of the 1999 Constitution (as amended). By systematically evaluating each subsection against the administration's record, the paper not only gauges the government's constitutional compliance but also contributes to the broader literature on governance, constitutionalism, and democratic accountability in Africa. Section 15 on the Political Objectives is broken down into three



subsections: Subsection (1) is on the motto of the country; Subsection (2) is on encouragement of national integration and non-discrimination; and Subsection (3) covered duties of the government to achieve national integration. These three subsections are discussed one after and the performance of the Tinubu Administration in implementing them is assessed.

### **1.1 SUBSECTION (1) OF SECTION 15: MOTTO OF NIGERIA**

Subsection (1) of Section 15 states that the motto of Nigeria is: “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress”. At every turn the Constitution tries to promote the national core values of “Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress.” President Tinubu said “a united, prosperous Nigeria is a must” (Nkwocha, 2025). President Bola Ahmed Tinubu issued a statement on the second anniversary of his administration on 29 May 2025 titled: “We have made undeniable progress”. He said the administration has strengthened the social fabric to have a strong and united country: “Under our Renewed Hope Agenda, our administration pledged to tackle economic instability, improve security nationwide, reduce corruption, reform governance, and lift our people out of poverty” (Tinubu, 2025). Here, the President himself has set the parameters for the assessment of his administration on the motto of Nigeria: Unity and faith, Peace and Progress.

The Tinubu administration has demonstrated efforts to implement Nigeria's motto of "Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress" through various policies and initiatives across different sectors. However, the impact of these efforts on the lives of average Nigerians is a subject of ongoing debate, with concerns about the rising cost of living, persistent insecurity, and issues of inequality and governance. The administration remains optimistic about its ongoing reforms and their potential to deliver a stronger and more inclusive Nigeria.

### **1.2 SUBSECTION (2): NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

Subsection (2) of Section 15 states that: National integration is to be vigorously encouraged, while discrimination based on sex (gender), origin, socioeconomic status, religion professed,



ethnic or linguistic ties or association is prohibited. The Tinubu administration's performance in achieving national integration is a mixed record, marked by both initiatives aimed at fostering unity and persistent criticisms over policies and appointments. Whereas the government has officially stated its commitment to national integration through the "Federal Character Principle," substantial concerns persist about alleged unfairness in appointments, extending regional, religious and ethnic divisions, inflamed by persistent insecurity in affected parts of the country. Concerns and criticisms regarding national integration efforts of the Tinubu administration has been expressed by several groups and individuals.

The Tinubu administration faces frequent criticisms over its performance in constitutionally mandated national integration that include: Alleged lopsided appointments that favours Christians and the Southwest/Yoruba ethnic group. Sustained criticism concerning the bias in political appointments by many argue that the country's diversity is not reflected. For example, a senator and others have accused the president of violating the federal character principle by allegedly favouring the South-West. In 2024, a coalition of people with disabilities also accused the administration of discrimination over ministerial appointments in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs.

The administration has been accused of deepening ethnic and regional divisions: Several commentators and political figures have accused the administration of further entrenching ethnic and religious divisions. Elder statesman Edwin Clark, for instance, has openly accused the government of discrimination against the Igbo ethnic group. Many Nigerians feel that governance is being run by a single ethnic group, rather than with a national, all-inclusive mind set. Ongoing insecurity, including banditry in the North-West, farmer-herder clashes in the Middle Belt, and continued insurgency in the North-East, undermines a sense of national belonging and government protection for all citizens. Harsh economic policies, including the



removal of fuel subsidies, have disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, potentially widening social inequality and exacerbating regional frustrations.

The government has undertaken several initiatives to address division and promote unity such as: The administration has stated its commitment to adhering to the Federal Character Principle in its appointments, which is designed to ensure that the diversity of Nigeria's population is reflected in public service positions. Projects like the Host Community Trust Fund in the Niger Delta and the establishment of new development commissions are intended to address regional grievances and integrate marginalized areas into the national development plan. The government has promoted sports as a tool for national integration, with President Tinubu endorsing the National Sports Festival as a platform for athletes from across the country to interact and compete. The Nigerian education loan fund and other social investment programs are positioned as tools to promote dignity and reduce the economic desperation that can fuel corruption and societal division. However, expert and civil society perspectives have noted trust deficit between the government and the populace. Many Nigerians believe the ruling class uses ethnic and religious sentiment for political gain, further eroding national unity. Therefore early in the administration experts advised Tinubu to introduce national reconciliation policies and mainstream equity, diversity, and inclusion to address growing divisions. This was in response to the polarized results of the 2023 elections. In response to criticism, the government has defended its appointments, asserting they adhere to the Federal Character Principle and that claims of bias are unfounded. The presidency has also stated that a comprehensive analysis of all appointments, including later ones, would show balanced representation.

While the Tinubu administration has verbally emphasized national integration and implemented some programs with inclusive goals, its practical performance has been heavily debated. Critics point to what they perceive as biased appointments, persistent insecurity, and economic hardship



as evidence of a failure to promote unity. The government, in turn, defends its actions and points to inclusive policies. The differing viewpoints suggest that progress toward national integration is, at best, incomplete and contested, with significant challenges still undermining the constitutional provisions for a united, non-discriminatory Nigeria.

### **1.3 SUBSECTION (3): DUTIES OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTING NATIONAL INTEGRATION**

Subsection (3) of Section 15 states that: For the purpose of promoting the desired national integration mandated in Subsection (2) above; it shall be the duty of the government to: (a) Provide free mobility facilities; (b) Secure complete residence rights; (c) Encourage inter-marriage and (d) Promote national associations. Tinubu administration's performance on these provisions are discussed in successive paragraphs below one after the other.

#### **1.4 Subsection (3) (a): Provide Sufficient Facilities throughout the Federation**

Subsection (3) (a) states that: The government shall provide sufficient facilities throughout the Federation and encourage free mobility of persons, goods and services. The Tinubu administration's performance in providing infrastructure for and encouraging the mobility of people and goods is characterized by an ambitious agenda but has significant implementation challenges. While the government has launched high-profile projects and policies, progress is hampered by persistent insecurity, economic hardship, and concerns over funding and project distribution (Simon, 2024; Erunke, 2025; Augé, 2024). The Tinubu Administration has highlighted several "Legacy Road Projects" under construction to integrate different parts of the country (Erunke, 2025). These include: The 750 kilometre Lagos–Calabar Coastal Highway; the 1,068 kilometre Sokoto–Badagry Superhighway with 378 kilometres in progress; and the Abuja–Kaduna–Kano Road. However, critics have questioned the transparency of contract awards,





project costs, and regional equity of the projects. There are persistent concerns over chronic poor maintenance culture.

The Tinubu administration in March 2024, announced its intention to establish a nationwide broadband connectivity and 3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT) training programme. The federal ministry in charge of communications is at work to create broadband connectivity in all the Local Government Area (LGA) secretariats in the country, based on existing infrastructure. The 3MTT programme is focused on up skilling digital literacy of youths in order to enhance the country's digital economy (Ngelale, 2024a). Progress of the broadband connectivity project according to Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (2025) is that 50 LGAs have been connected as at May 2025. Since the completion date is 2027 the rollout speed needs to be stepped up to cover all the 774 LGAs. Therefore the 3MTT programme is rated at  $(490,000/3m)$  16%, requiring an 84% boost to meet the 2027 deadline.

For rail transportation, the administration is speeding up work on inherited projects such as the Kano-Maradi line and resuscitating the Port Harcourt to Maiduguri Eastern Corridor rail line. The Kano-Maradi line has been improved to 67% from 5% completion. Developments in the aviation sector infrastructure include the boosting of revenue generation and procurement of equipment as approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC). Tolls are to be paid at all federal airports with no exemptions for military personnel and VIPs; and aviation equipment to aid disabled aircraft recovery at Murtala Muhammad Airport (MMA) in Lagos is to be purchased at the cost of N4.2 billion (Maritime Bits, 2024). These FEC approvals were on 26 May 2024. News of the award of the disabled aircraft recovery contract and non-payment of tolls has not been reported as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025. Therefore, the disabled aircraft recovery contract is not assessed and the collection of tolls is assessed at 100%.



The Tinubu Administration's Renewed Hope (Local Government) Development Programme is an initiative that aims to make available, funding for economic undertakings at the local or grassroots level to address poverty. This initiative includes the approval of a \$125m infrastructure grant for Abia State during one of the weekly FEC meetings (SYMFONI, 2025). The precious time of the weekly FEC meetings should be saved by treating the approvals of all the States at once. Therefore the Tinubu Administration's Renewed Hope (Local Government) Development Programme for funding grassroots economies implementation performance rating is put at 10%. The Tinubu Administration supports the advocacy for local government autonomy and has welcomed the Supreme Court judgment upholding local governments' financial autonomy, which is anticipated to support grassroots development (Ngelale, 2024b). However, as of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025, a significant gap exists between the legal victory and the practical implementation of the local governments' financial autonomy. While the local governments' Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) accounts are ready, direct payments by the Tinubu Administration is stymied allegedly by objections from state governors, leaving the Supreme Court judgment largely unfulfilled (Hanafi, 2025). Therefore, the Tinubu Administration is assessed at 10% to be boosted to 100% when all the 774 local governments get direct payments and administrative autonomy.

Next is the issue of free mobility which is mandated in the Constitution which is challenged by persistent insecurity and removal of fuel subsidies. Despite government efforts, widespread insecurity continues to threaten the free movement of people, goods, and services (Augé, 2024). Insecurity raises the cost of doing business and has displaced many Nigerians, impacting agricultural production and supply chains. The removal of fuel subsidies and the floating of the naira have led to significant economic hardship, increased transportation costs, and high inflation. The average Nigerians' shrinking purchasing power has constrained free mobility by



making transportation more expensive. A notable success has been the clearing of the backlog for passport issuance, which had previously hindered the mobility of Nigerians abroad.

The overall assessment of the Tinubu administration's performance in implementing Subsection (3) (a) on providing facilities and ensuring free mobility of goods, services and persons is one of both progress and significant failures. The government has demonstrated a clear strategic vision by focusing on renovating and increasing infrastructure, particularly in digital connectivity and various modes of transport. There is projects momentum with major road projects underway, and rail development has gotten a renewed boost. Improvements in areas such as passport processing has proffered tangible results. However, the continued manifestation of violent crime and insurgency directly challenges the constitutionally mandated right to freedom of movement, creating an environment of fear and limiting economic activity. The government has initiated substantial projects and implemented some positive administrative changes, these efforts are not yet sufficient to overcome the systemic challenges of insecurity and economic hardship that profoundly limit the free mobility of persons, goods, and services in Nigeria.

### **1.5 Subsection (3) (b): Secure Complete Residence Rights for All Citizens all over the Country.**

Subsection (3) (b) states that: The government should secure complete residence rights of every citizen in any part of the country. The indigene-settler dichotomy in Nigeria is a complex issue with deep historical and social roots, impacting the rights of citizens to live in any part of the country. This issue relates to the distinction made between those considered "indigenes" of a particular state or locality and those considered "settlers" who have migrated from other parts of Nigeria (Demarest, Langer, & Ukiwo, 2020). While the Nigerian constitution guarantees the right of every citizen to move freely and reside in any part of the country, the concept of "indigene" is often used to determine access to certain rights, privileges, and resources at the



state and local government levels. This can lead to discrimination against "settlers" in areas such as employment, education, land ownership, and political participation in their place of residence (Olakunle, Joseph & Segun, 2016).

The indigene-settler dichotomy has been a source of inter-communal tensions and conflicts in various parts of Nigeria, as it can create feelings of marginalization and inequality among those considered "non-indigenes." Addressing this issue involves navigating the balance between constitutional rights, historical claims, and the need for national unity and equal opportunity for all citizens (Nwagwu, 2016). The Tinubu administration has addressed the indigene-settler crisis primarily through conflict resolution, particularly focusing on the farmer-herder conflict, but has not initiated broader reforms to address the underlying issue of the indigene clause. Actions have focused on security interventions, promoting ranching, and calling for peace, rather than directly tackling the systemic discrimination against non-indigenes (News Central TV, 2025a).

Actions taken by the administration include addressing farmer-herder conflicts through ranching and focusing on economic solutions: Recognizing that competition for land is a major driver of the indigene-settler conflict, the administration has proposed ranching as a modern, economic-based solution. President Tinubu's government is encouraging states to allocate land for ranching and to engage stakeholders to promote proper livestock management. This approach aims to minimize conflicts by moving away from open grazing. The administration is seeking to avoid the pitfalls of previous ranching initiatives, such as the Ruger settlement and NLTP, by prioritizing private sector involvement and extensive public enlightenment (News Central TV, 2025a).

Security interventions in conflict zones include directives to security chiefs: In response to violent clashes, particularly in states like Plateau and Benue, President Tinubu has given directives to security agencies to restore peace and security. After attacks in Plateau State in



April 2025, Tinubu strongly condemned the violence and charged Governor Caleb Mutfwang to address the root causes of the age-long problem, including issues surrounding ethnic and religious misunderstandings (Onanuga, 2025a). In June 2025, after a series of reprisal attacks, the president instructed security chiefs to address the situation in Benue State and charged the governor with holding reconciliation meetings (News Central TV, 2025b). High-level discussions and appeals for peace

Call for unity: The president has frequently appealed for national unity and condemned ethnic slurs and violence, particularly after the 2023 elections.

The government is exploring dialogue-based "Pulaku solutions" to address the grievances of some Fulbe communities in the North and tackle the root causes of banditry (Abiola, 2023). Areas the administration has not addressed include constitutional and systemic reform. The Tinubu administration has not taken concrete steps to challenge or amend the constitutional provisions that give rise to the indigene-settler distinction, despite long-standing recommendations to do so. The government has not introduced federal legislation to prohibit discrimination against non-indigenes in employment, education, and other matters not related to traditional leadership, as recommended by human rights organizations. Policy implementation gaps include: Lack of enforcement against discrimination. State and local governments continue to implement discriminatory policies, particularly concerning civil service employment and access to education, and the federal government has not aggressively intervened to enforce the constitutional right to equal opportunity.

Calls for intervention by advocacy groups, like the Tiv people in Nasarawa State, have had to appeal directly to the president for intervention against land grabbing, suggesting that systemic solutions are not yet in place. While addressing security incidents and land disputes is crucial, the administration's actions have largely focused on the symptoms of the indigene-settler crisis



(violence and displacement) rather than the root cause (the constitutional and institutional basis for discrimination). However, its approach has been largely reactive and focused on the symptoms rather than the underlying systemic issues. The administration has not pursued the necessary constitutional and institutional reforms to eliminate the discriminatory indigene clause, leaving the core legal and policy framework that perpetuates the crisis untouched.

### **1.6 Subsection (3) (c): Encouragement of Inter-Marriage**

Subsection (3) (c) states that: The government should encourage inter-marriage between couples of different origin, or of different religions, linguistic or ethnic association or ties. Actions of government should promote interfaith and ethnic harmony. While not directly targeting intermarriage, the Tinubu administration's actions and public statements have fostered an environment that supports interfaith and inter-ethnic harmony:

Encouraging interfaith dialogue: President Tinubu has publicly urged religious leaders to promote love, trust, and peaceful coexistence. In May 2025, he addressed the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), commending its role in uniting leaders from Nigeria's two major religions to foster harmony (Vanguard News, 2025).

Emphasis on inclusivity: Administration spokespersons, including those from the ruling party, have repeatedly stressed President Tinubu's commitment to inclusive governance. They highlight appointments and infrastructure projects that are intended to be fair and balanced across different regions, ethnic groups, and religious beliefs.

Balanced appointments: The administration has made efforts to reflect Nigeria's diversity in its appointments, arguing that this promotes interfaith harmony and national cohesion. The Vice President and Secretary to the Government of the Federation have also called on religious leaders to promote peace and unity. There is no evidence from official sources that the Tinubu administration has implemented specific policies to encourage intermarriage, such as: Incentives



for inter-ethnic or inter-religious couples; public awareness campaigns promoting intermarriage as a means of national integration; or legislation to specifically protect or facilitate such unions. While intermarriage is seen by some as a tool for national unity, particularly at a grassroots level, it is not a primary focus of government policy. The issue is influenced more by societal norms, family approval, and individual choice. The government's efforts to promote unity and address the broader issue of ethnic and religious divisions, such as tackling insecurity, may indirectly support intermarriage by creating a more stable and accepting society.

### **1.7 Subsection (3) (d): Encouragement of the Creation of All Inclusive Associations**

Subsection (3) (d) states that: The government should encourage or promote the creation of associations which cut across linguistic, ethnic, religious and/or other sectarian barriers. In Nigeria, associations that cut across linguistic, ethnic, religious, or other sectarian barriers are organizations, movements, or institutions that are intentionally inclusive, drawing members from diverse backgrounds to promote national unity, shared goals, or collective interests. These associations can be civil society groups, professional bodies, youth organizations, religious coalitions, or socio-political platforms.

Examples of such associations include: The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) which is an umbrella organisation for labour/trade unions in Nigeria. Its cross-sectarian impact is that it unites workers from all ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds under common labour and economic interests. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) is a professional association for all lawyers in Nigeria. Its cross-sectarian impact is that membership is based on legal practice, not identity; includes individuals from all parts of the country. Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) is the union of university lecturers across Nigeria. Its cross-sectarian impact is that it unites professionals from all regions to advocate for education and academic welfare.



The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) represent the interests of Christian and Muslim communities respectively. Their cross-sectarian impact is that they often work with each other and government in interfaith dialogues and peace-building across religious divides. Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) promotes peace and inter-religious dialogue, especially in conflict-prone areas like Kaduna. Co-founded by a Christian pastor and a Muslim imam. Its cross-sectarian impact is that it builds understanding and cooperation between religious groups.

National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) is an umbrella body for women's organizations across Nigeria. Its cross-sectarian impact is that it promotes women's rights and development regardless of ethnic or religious identity. Political parties are supposed to be Pan-Nigerian claiming to have national spread and field candidates across regions, promoting unity through political inclusion. However, their actual performance on cross-sectarian unity varies as some of them have failed to attract Pan-Nigerian presence and votes.

The question is, to what extent has the Tinubu Administration encouraged or promoted associations that cut across linguistic, ethnic, religious, and other sectarian barriers? The Tinubu administration, since its inauguration in May 2023, has made unity and national cohesion a recurring theme in official discourse. However, the practical extent to which it has actively encouraged or promoted the creation or support of cross-sectarian associations, such as the NLC, NBA, ASUU, and others, can be analysed through several lenses: policy direction, public support, engagement, funding, legal climate, and symbolic actions.

President Tinubu and members of his cabinet have made symbolic gestures and public statements affirming national unity and the importance of inclusion:





- In multiple public speeches (e.g., at national events like Democracy Day and the National Assembly Library Inauguration), Tinubu has emphasized the unity of Nigeria's diverse groups and the need for shared national identity.
- At the 2024 National Sports Festival, Tinubu described sport as a "tool for national integration and cohesion", reinforcing the idea of platforms that bridge divides.

These rhetorical commitments symbolically encourage associations and institutions that span across ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines. However, there has been limited follow-through in the form of new policies, funding, or institutional mechanisms specifically aimed at strengthening or expanding such associations.

Positive instances of engagement with cross-sectarian associations include:

- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA):
  - Government officials, including the President, have engaged these religious bodies in interfaith dialogue, especially during religious festivals and national crises.
  - Tinubu has also acknowledged the importance of faith-based unity in speeches at conferences such as the Ansar-Ud-Deen Society's Triennial Conference.
- Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC):
  - While no direct funding or formal endorsement has been recorded, the administration has generally created an enabling environment for dialogue and peace-building efforts.
- National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) and similar women's groups have received verbal support, particularly through gender-related policy conversations.

Limited engagement with cross-sectarian associations include:



- NLC, ASUU, NANS, NBA:
  - Relations have been largely strained. The administration's response to strike actions by ASUU and protests led by NLC has often been confrontational.
  - Rather than enabling or strengthening these groups, the administration has at times sought to suppress demonstrations or limit their influence.

These bodies continue to operate as cross-sectarian institutions, but not due to direct encouragement or support from the administration.

#### Regulatory and Legal Climate:

- The administration has not introduced repressive legislation specifically targeting cross-sectarian associations.
- However, civil society watchdogs have noted increased pressure on NGOs and activist organizations generally, especially in relation to protest rights and freedom of association.

Neutral legal environment in principle. In practice, restrictions on public assembly and protests may discourage robust activism—even by cross-cutting associations.

#### Support for New Associations:

There is no record of the Tinubu administration:

- Creating new national associations aimed at cross-sectarian unity,
- Or providing seed funding or structural incentives for private individuals or organizations to establish such associations.

This contrasts with the post-civil war period when institutions like NYSC were deliberately created for national integration.

#### Political Party System and National Spread:

The ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) claims to have a pan-Nigerian structure. However:



- Voter turnout and support base in the 2023 election revealed clear regional and religious divides.
- The APC, like other major parties, has struggled to maintain true national cohesion, often relying on ethno-religious alliances in practice.

Political parties theoretically promote cross-sectarian inclusion. In reality, most parties, including Tinubu's APC, remain regionally skewed in influence and leadership.

## 1.8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Tinubu administration has verbally supported the ideals of national unity, inclusion, and cross-sectarian engagement. The administration engaged occasionally with key cross-sectarian associations, especially faith-based or humanitarian ones. It maintained a generally neutral legal environment, allowing such groups to operate. However, it has not taken active steps to: Create new associations or platforms that promote integration. Financially or structurally support existing ones in a consistent way. Institutionalize policies that strengthen these bodies or expand their reach. Overall Assessment: The Tinubu administration encourages cross-sectarian associations more symbolically than practically, and its support is passive rather than proactive. Therefore the overall assessment of the performance on Section 15: Political Objectives, by the Tinubu Administration is put at 40%. It is therefore recommended that the Tinubu administration should take practical steps to improve its performance on Section 15: Political Objectives of the Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (As Amended). This should be done well before the 2027 elections.

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