



Shaping Nigeria's National Security: The Role of Ethnic Diversity

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ABSTRACT

Shaping Nigeria's National Security the Role of Ethnic Diversity reflects Nigeria nature for its mosaic and vast ethnic diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups that faces persistent national security challenges, rooted in the complex interplay of ethnicity, nepotism, and identity politics. Ethnic diversity, while a source of cultural richness, has often been manipulated for political gain, leading to marginalization, resource-based conflicts, and weakened national cohesion. The prioritization of ethnic group identity over national citizenship has resulted in secessionist movements, increased crime rates, and recurring ethno-religious violence, thereby, undermining Nigeria's stability and development. This resonates frequently in the forms of ethnic crises often experienced in the course of interactions and access to public goods. This study is grounded in secondary data from scholarly articles, policy reports, and qualitative analyses, investigates on how ethnic diversity shapes Nigeria's security landscape. The research employs Group Theory, which explains how collective identities influence political behavior, and Securitization Theory, which examines how issues are framed as security threats by political actors, to analyze the dynamics at play. Part of the key findings includes, that, Ethnic Fragmentation is a strong factor militating against national security, emphasis on ethnic divisibility poses a major hindrance to national integration and by implication, affects national security and Weaken Institutions, this makes it easy for people to perpetuate crime and Conflicts thereby becoming a threat to national security. The paper recommends among others, the promotion of inclusive governance, urgent need to address inequality, strengthen institutions and the enhancement of sincere intergroup dialogue in the political system.

Key words: National Security, National Integration, Ethnic Fragmentation and Inclusive Governance



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, often referred to as the "Giant of Africa," is renowned for its profound ethnic diversity, with over 250 ethnic groups, including the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo as the largest. While this diversity enriches the nation's cultural heritage, it also presents persistent challenges to national unity and security. National security in Nigeria encompasses not only military defense but also the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and citizen safety from both internal and external threats. The country's security landscape is shaped by complex issues such as terrorism, insurgency, communal conflicts, and organized crime, many of which are exacerbated by ethnic divisions.

The roots of Nigeria's ethnic challenges can be traced to colonial amalgamation and policies that reinforced ethnic identities and rivalries, complicating post-independence nation-building efforts. Ethnic diversity has influenced governance, resource allocation, and social relations, often resulting in the prioritization of ethnic group interests over national identity. This dynamic has fueled secessionist movements, perceptions of marginalization, and rising insecurity, all of which threaten the stability of the state. The persistent tension between ethnic diversity and effective national security policy formulation remains a critical research problem.

Historically, ethnicity has shaped Nigeria's political and social dynamics, from pre-colonial independent structures to post-independence ethnic-based political parties and resource competition. Policy responses such as federalism, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), and the federal character principle have aimed to promote inclusivity and equitable resource distribution. However, challenges such as nepotism, favoritism, and weak institutions continue to undermine these efforts, perpetuating insecurity and eroding trust in public institutions. Contemporary security threats including Boko Haram insurgency, Niger Delta militancy, and farmer-herder clashes, often rooted in or worsened by ethnic divisions, necessitating security policies sensitive to Nigeria's diversity.

In light of these complexities, this study sets out to achieve the following objectives: to ascertain the extent to which ethnic fragmentation impacts national security; to interrogate how inequality in the political system affects Nigeria's security; to investigate whether Nigeria's



federal structure can mitigate ethnic security threats; and to assess the impact of cross-ethnic civil society initiatives on security outcomes. Accordingly, the study is guided by these research questions: How does ethnic fragmentation impact national security? To what extent does inequality along ethnic lines drive insecurity? Can Nigeria's federal structure mitigate ethnic security threats? And how do cross-ethnic civil society initiatives impact security outcomes?

1.1 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

National Security

National security concept resolves round an assumed state of being secured, that is, if it is not in a situation where it loses its state sovereignty and independence. In this sense, the core values, as well as its wishes to deter aggression or to be victorious in war if unavoidable. Conceptualizing national security, Akpuru-Aja (2009) argued that, national security presupposes the existence of a nation with shared consciousness, a people who have agreed to live and work together. Security is the direct opposite of insecurity and it refers to a situation of being insecure, unsafe and frightened with danger and the want of security or stability around the political system. Nigeria's national security objectives can be itemized as consisting of the following concerns: as emphasized by Jega (2007) peaceful coexistence, food security, sustainable socio-economic development; and democratic development, which involve strengthening the rule of law; creating a democratic Political culture and nurturing civility suitable for democratic sustenance.

In essence, peace, stability, socio, political and economic development coupled with other factors revolves round a strong political culture that emphasizes the rule of law. Such political system creates an environment that is conducive for individuals and groups to live their lives to the fullest, without fear and intimidation. This is why McNamara (1968) noted that, the security of any nation lies not solely or even primarily in its military capability, but equally in developing relatively stable patterns of economic and political growth. National security has also been defined in terms of capacity to achieve reconciliation among diverse groups in the society (Nabon 2012: Nweze 2004). Both scholars laid credence to the indices of a state's national security; which includes preservation, protection and guarantee of the safety of life, property, wealth of the citizenry and measures to guard against threat to national sovereignty. Therefore,



every aspect of the society is saddled with the responsibility to promote security. Hence, the nation's security is the concerns of the state institutions as well as individuals, associations, political parties amongst others. This is why Reilly (2001) advocated an amalgamated measure enhanced by states, aimed at achieving mutual survival, coexistence and safety within and outside the state. The concept entails that all segments of the society are responsible in ensuring that security is achieved in the political system.

National security is therefore, an all-encompassing condition in which citizens can live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance, enjoy the protection of fundamental human rights; have access to resources and necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is conducive to their health and well-being. Although total security is rarely possible, but it must be noted that. Nigerians deserve a strong nation with her fundamental values intact and her institutions and people secured. Part of the means for achieving these, all efforts must be geared towards the protection of values, independence of both territorial and consciousness and projects good humanity in the political system. Ethnic diversity in Nigeria, while a potential source of national strength, has historically complicated national security frameworks. With over 250 distinct ethnic groups, Nigeria's socio-political landscape is marked by competing identities that often supersede national unity (Oriabure, & Ojo, 2024). This fragmentation fuels perceptions of marginalization and resource-based disputes, creating fertile ground for security threats (Nweke & Okoronkwo, 2014). The constitutional emphasis on federal character and quota systems inadvertently institutionalizes ethnic divisions, diverting attention from merit-based governance and undermining cohesive nation-building (Nweke & Okoronkwo, 2014; Undiyandeye & Ekeng, 2023).

The security manifestations of ethnic fragmentation include secessionist movements, ethno-religious conflicts, and widespread criminality. Boko-Haram insurgency in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest, and IPOB-led agitations in the Southeast exemplify how ethnic grievances escalate into national security crises (Okonkwo, 2024). These conflicts stem from historical injustices, economic disparities, and political exploitation of ethnic identities, resulting in over 34 of Nigeria's 36 states requiring military deployment. ((Undiyandeye & Ekeng, 2023).



National Integration

National integration represents the process of fostering unity and shared identity among diverse groups within a nation, particularly crucial for culturally fragmented societies like Nigeria. National integration denotes "the awareness of a common identity among citizens" that supersedes ethnic, religious, or regional affiliations (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). It involves creating a "feeling of togetherness or oneness" through shared values and citizenship. Haloi & Ghimire, (2017), identifies three foundational elements: Effective state control over violence, Centralized resource allocation, Dominant political identification among citizens (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). (Mazrui cited in Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019) further expands this through five dimensions: cultural fusion, economic interdependence, elite-mass gap reduction, conflict resolution, and shared experiences (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019).

Key features include territorial unity that binds disparate groups (Patil, 2018) and integrative behavior enabling collective goal pursuit (Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019). The Indian National Integration Council 1961 outlines essential pillars: shared citizenship, religious liberty, economic justice, and secularism. (Patil, 2018). Crucially, integration requires voluntary emotional attachment rather than state imposition (Haloi & Ghimire, 2017: West African Examination Council, 2018). Nigeria employs institutional frameworks like the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) deploying graduates nationwide to foster cross-cultural bonds (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). Unity Schools deliberately mix students from diverse states (WAEC, 2018), while the Federal Character Principle mandates equitable public sector representation (Nweke, 2007). The National Orientation Agency promotes cultural exchange through language learning and shared traditions (WAEC, 2018).

Persistent challenges include religious extremism and deep-seated ethnic loyalties that fragment national identity (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). Resource-based conflicts, particularly in the Niger Delta, exacerbate regional tensions (Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019). Indigene-settler divides within states and political manipulation of identity further hinders cohesion (Nweke, 2007). Economic disparities and historical grievances also perpetuate fragmentation (Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019).



Ethnic Fragmentation

Ethnic fragmentation remains a critical factor shaping Nigeria's socio-political landscape, presenting both challenges and opportunities for national cohesion. This review examines the conceptual framework of ethnic fragmentation, analyzes Nigeria's unique manifestations, and explores its implications for governance and development. The analysis draws on scholarly research to define key concepts, identify structural features, and evaluate the root causes and consequences of ethnic divisiveness in Africa's most populous nation. Ethnic fragmentation refers to the degree of diversity within a population where distinct ethnic groups coexist, often measured by the probability that two randomly selected individuals belong to different ethnic groups (Fiveable, 2024). This fragmentation manifests through linguistic, cultural, and religious differences that create complex identity mosaics within national boundaries (Ajayi, 2014). In institutional economics, such fragmentation complicates governance by challenging the development of inclusive institutions that can equitably manage resource distribution and political participation (Fiveable, 2024). The concept extends beyond mere diversity to encompass how these differences influence political mobilization, economic competition, and social cohesion. Nigeria exemplifies extreme ethnic fragmentation with over 250 distinct ethnic groups and 120 languages, creating a complex social ecosystem (Osadola, 2012). This diversity centers around three dominant groups Hausa-Fulani (28%), Yoruba (20%), and Igbo (17%) who form a triple power structure around which smaller minority groups cluster (Accord, 2016).

This configuration generates persistent mobilization along ethnic lines, where political allegiance and resource competition frequently align with ethnic identity (Ajayi, 2014). The colonial legacy of segregated settlements "Sabon-Gari" quarters, further entrenched divisions by preventing cultural assimilation and fostering parochial consciousness over national identity (Ajayi, 2014). The roots of Nigeria's ethnic fragmentation trace directly to colonial boundary demarcations that forcibly merged distinct ethnic nations into a single administrative entity without regard for cultural integrity (Osadola, 2012). Post-independence, this fragmentation was exacerbated by three key factors: Resource competition: Government decisions on infrastructure development, scholarship allocation, and political appointments became viewed



through ethnic lenses, fueling perceptions of marginalization (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). Political engineering: The creation of 36 states to appease ethnic interests instead intensified competition for federal resources and political dominance (Ezeobi, Mbachu & Chukwuji, 2019). Economic disparities: Regional development gaps, particularly between the oil-rich south and impoverished north, created fertile ground for ethnic resentment (Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019). The socio-political consequences of Nigeria's ethnic fragmentation manifest in multiple dimensions: Governance challenges: Ethnic loyalties undermine merit-based appointments, leading to nepotism and lopsided representation in public institutions (Fiveable, 2024). Conflict dynamics: Over 80% of violent conflicts in Nigeria have ethnic dimensions, resulting in displacement, economic disruption, and loss of life (Ajayi, 2014). Secessionist movements: Fragmentation fuels recurring secessionist agitations, exemplified by the Igbo-led Biafra movement, driven by perceptions of marginalization (Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019). Economic impacts: Ethnic distrust impedes cross-regional investment and collaborative development initiatives, while resource competition stifles economic diversification (Osadola, 2012).

1.3 GAP IN LITERATURE

Despite the depth of the discourse by several scholars on the impact of divisive ethnic groups influence on national security policies, several gaps emerge that warrant further scholarly attention. First, while the discourse acknowledges ethnic diversity's role in complicating national security, there is limited exploration of how emerging digital technologies and social media influence ethnic mobilization and security dynamics in Nigeria. The rapid spread of information and misinformation via digital platforms could exacerbate or mitigate ethnic tensions, a dimension not sufficiently addressed. Second, the discussion on national integration focuses largely on state-led institutional mechanisms but lacks a detailed examination of grassroots and civil society roles in fostering integration and peace building. Third, although economic disparities are identified as a root cause of ethnic fragmentation, there is scant analysis of how informal economies and urbanization trends intersect with ethnic identities and security outcomes. This paper beamed its search light on these areas to deepen understanding and inform national security policy.



1.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This discourse contributes significantly to knowledge by synthesizing diverse theoretical and empirical insights into a coherent framework that links national security, integration, and ethnic fragmentation in Nigeria. It advances the understanding that security is multi-faceted, requiring inclusive political culture, equitable resource distribution, and institutional reforms that transcend ethnic quotas to meritocracy. The emphasis on “unity in diversity” as a guiding principle for sustainable security and integration is particularly valuable, offering a normative vision for Nigerian nation-building. By highlighting the socio-political and economic dimensions of ethnic fragmentation alongside institutional responses, the discourse provides a holistic foundation for policy formulation. Its recognition of both the challenges and opportunities embedded in Nigeria’s ethnic mosaic opens pathways for innovative governance models that could transform ethnic diversity from a source of conflict into a catalyst for development and cohesion.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for analyzing Nigeria's national security policy in relation to ethnic diversity can be grounded in securitization theory and group theory. Securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen School scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde in the 1990s, posits that security is not an objective condition but a social construct achieved through a performativity speech, act in which political actors frame certain issues as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). This theory emphasizes how ethnic diversity in Nigeria is securitized by political elites who portray ethnic groups as security threats, thereby justifying policies and actions that prioritize ethnic-based protection and regional vigilantism, such as the formation of groups like Amotekun and Ebubeagu. These developments illustrate the ethnic security dilemma, where ethnic groups securitize themselves and others, deepening ethnic consciousness and complicating national security governance (Nyiaaana, 2024).

Group theory complements this framework by explaining how ethnic identities form the basis of collective action and political mobilization in Nigeria’s plural society. Ethnic groups, as primary social units, often perceive threats to their survival and interests, leading to competition



and conflict over resources and political power. Shaping Nigeria's national security policies through the lens of ethnic diversity is deeply rooted in the country's complex ethnic composition, with over 250 ethnic groups, including the dominant Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba (NCTC, 2019). The group theory, which examines how ethnic groups interact and compete for political power and resources, helps explain the ethnic crises that challenge Nigeria's stability and security (Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). Proponents of this approach argue that ethnic diversity itself is not inherently a threat; rather, it is the political manipulation of ethnic identities and the resultant marginalization that fuel conflicts and insecurity (Onuoha, Nwagwu & Ugwueze, 2023). The origin of this theory lies in social and political science, focusing on group dynamics and intergroup relations to understand how ethnic affiliations influence national cohesion and security policy formulation. Effective national security policies, therefore, must incorporate inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, and interethnic dialogue to mitigate ethnic tensions and promote unity (Adewale, 2023; Ibrahim & Bala, 2018).

This interplay shapes Nigeria's national security policy by highlighting the tension between central state authority and ethnic regionalism, with securitization processes reinforcing ethnic divisions and influencing security arrangements (Okolie & Ugwueze, 2015; Nyiayaana, 2024). Together, securitization and group theories provide a robust lens to understand how ethnic diversity is both a source of insecurity and a factor shaping Nigeria's security policy responses.

1.6 EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF ETHNIC DIVISIBILITY ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

Nigeria's ethnic diversity, while a source of cultural richness, has profoundly compromised national security through entrenched divisions and conflict. With over 250 ethnic groups, the politicization of identity has fueled violence, weakened social cohesion, and diverted resources from development to crisis management. (Yinusa, 2018). Historical grievances, unequal resource distribution, and political marginalization have transformed diversity into a catalyst for insecurity, manifesting in separatist movements, terrorism, and communal clashes that strain state capacity. (Iruonagbe & Egharevba, 2015; Freidrich-Elbert-Stiftung, 2020). Ethnic fragmentation has directly enabled multiple security threats. Separatist movements like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Oduduwa Republic agitators exploit ethnic narratives



to challenge sovereignty, while herder-farmer conflicts rooted in competition for land and resources have escalated into nationwide violence. (Onuoha, Nwangu & Ugwueze, 2023). Regional vigilante groups e.g. Amotekun, Ebubeagu, established for self-protection, inadvertently deepens ethnic consciousness and animosity, creating parallel security structures that undermine national integration. These dynamics are compounded by rising crimes, kidnapping, and banditry, with military forces deployed across 34 states to contain ethicized violence. (Nyiayaana, 2024).

Systemic governance failures intensify ethnic security dilemmas. Nepotism and political patronage prioritize ethnic loyalty over merit, enabling corruption and inequitable resource allocation and unequal access to public goods in the political system, all these have negative impact on the marginalize minority groups. ((Adewale, 2023; Ibrahim & Bala, 2018). Constitutional provisions like federal character quotas institutionalize ethnic differentiation, while porous borders facilitate uncontrolled migration that exacerbates cultural tensions. (Freidrich-Elbert-Stiftung, 2020: Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma, 2019). Weak institutions fail to address root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and historical injustices, allowing grievances to metastasize into insurgencies like Boko Haram and the Niger Delta militancy (Nyiayaana, 2024). The security fallout includes diminished state legitimacy, economic disruption, and chronic instability. More so, Communication technology and social media significantly amplify ethnic mobilization in Nigeria by enabling groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to sustain separatist movements through gatekeeper-free platforms, mobilizing local and international support. Simultaneously, these tools fuel polarization through hate speech and ethnic dog whistling, heightening mutual distrust among ethnic groups and accelerating potential violent conflict.

However, non-state actors like Boko Haram and Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) exploit advanced technologies including satellite internet (e.g., Starlink) and drones for propaganda, surveillance, and coordinated attacks, undermining national security. Nigeria's weak digital sovereignty, marked by inadequate regulation and enforcement, fails to counter these threats effectively. While ICT offers potential for enhancing security (e.g., information sharing and crisis response), its benefits remain underutilized due to bureaucratic inefficiencies



and low technological capacity. Culturally, digital access correlates with declining indigenous values and rising individualism, indirectly exacerbating sociopolitical fractures.

1.7 INVESTIGATING INEQUALITY AS A FACTOR FOR NIGERIA' S INSECURITY

Inequality in Nigeria significantly fuels insecurity through disparities in political appointments, economic resources, access to education, and public goods. These inequities create systemic grievances that manifest as violence, extremism, and social unrest. Evidence shows that exclusionary governance and resource misallocation directly correlate with rising instability, threatening national cohesion and development. The following analysis synthesizes research findings on these interconnected issues and proposes evidence-based security policies. Lopsided political appointments exacerbate insecurity by marginalizing ethnic and religious groups. For instance, 90% of appointments favor a single ethnic-religious bloc, breeding resentment and fueling separatist movements like IPOB and "Ilana Omo Odua" (Olise, & Emeh, 2020; Ikhide, Udefuna, & Nnadi, 2021). This exclusion violates constitutional mandates for equitable representation cited in Abdullahi, 2025, Section 16(1) of Nigeria's Constitution, thereby eroding trust in governance. Consequently, marginalized communities resort to violence to challenge perceived injustice, as seen in farmer-herder conflicts and regional agitation (Ikhide et al., 2021).

Economic disparities between elites and citizens drive criminality and insurgency. Lawmakers earn ₦174 million annually, while 93% of workers survive on informal incomes under ₦1 million (Olise, & Emeh, 2020). Natural resource wealth is misappropriated, with \$20 trillion stolen from public coffers, diverting funds from poverty reduction. (Ikhide et al., 2021; Omoregie, Aideloje & Anathekhai, 2020). This inequality traps 133 million Nigerians in multidimensional poverty, creating recruitment pools for banditry and terrorism (Abdullahi, 2025). Urbanization concentrates diverse ethnic groups in Nigerian cities, where high unemployment drives many into the informal economy for survival. This sector fosters inter-ethnic economic networks (e.g., Igbo-Hausa-Yoruba trade ties), creating grassroots integration that counters political divisions. However, elite manipulation of ethnic identity for political gain strains these economic bonds, fueling polarization. Urban youth in informal work



transform their identities but face criminalization, sparking conflicts with authorities over urban space. Where formal security fails, informal actors (vigilantes) fill gaps but operate with limited accountability, reflecting state weakness.

1.8 INTERROGING NIGERIA FEDERAL STRUCTURE AND ETHNIC SECURITY THREATS

Nigerian federalism, designed to manage ethnic diversity, has inadvertently exacerbated ethnic security threats through structural imbalances and centralized resource control. The hyper-centralization of power and fiscal resources under military rule created an imbalanced federal structure that marginalizes minority groups and fuels secessionist movements. (Gbemudu, 2023). For instance, the Igbo in the South-East experience persistent ethnic subjugation and financial disempowerment, driving the rise of separatist groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) (Gbemudu, 2023; Jinadu, 1985). Revenue allocation disputes, particularly regarding oil wealth from the Niger Delta, have triggered violent conflicts where minority groups e.g., Ogoni and Ijaw resist federal resource monopolization. (Jinadu, 1985). Elite manipulation of ethnicity as a political tool further intensifies these tensions, transforming federalism into a mechanism of domination rather than accommodation. (Agbibo, 2017; Nwawube, Ezugworie, Igwe, Onuoha & Ediba, 2023).

Despite its theoretical aim to promote "diversity in unity," Nigeria's federal system has achieved limited success in mitigating ethnic conflicts due to inconsistent application of conflict-regulating mechanisms (Nwawube, Ezugworie, Igwe, Onuoha & Ediba, 2023; Omoregie, Itakpe & Agazuma 2019). While the creation of multiple states reduced regional polarization and empowered some minorities, the federation remains plagued by intergroup competition and indigene-settler conflicts (Jinadu, 1985). Fiscal centralization undermines state autonomy, as evidenced by the Niger Delta crisis where communities demand resource control amid environmental degradation. Restructuring the federation to ensure equitable power distribution, fiscal decentralization, and adherence to federal character principles is critical to addressing these threats to national security. Without constitutional reforms that prioritize genuine autonomy and resource equity, federalism will continue to amplify rather than resolve ethnic security challenges. (Jinadu, 2002).



1.9 EXAMINING CROSS-ETHNIC CIVIL SOCIETY IMPACT ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

The impact of Nigeria's cross-ethnic society on national security is profound and multifaceted. Ethnic diversity, while a natural feature of Nigeria's social fabric, often exacerbates political instability and security challenges due to factors such as colonial legacies, economic disparities, and the quest for power among ethnic groups. These dynamics fuel ethnic crises that manifest in violence, terrorism, banditry, and other forms of insecurity, making Nigeria appear as if it is perpetually at war with itself (Freidrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2020). The intertwining of ethnicity with nepotism further deepens national security threats by fostering secessionist movements, marginalization grievances, and increased crime rates, which prioritize ethnic identity over national unity (Oriabure, & Odunayotolulope, 2024). This ethnic fractionalization complicates governance and security efforts, as it breeds mistrust, resource conflicts, and insurgencies like Boko Haram, which have severely weakened Nigeria's security apparatus (Kaduisi, & Ojeyinka, 2020; Suleiman & Suleiman, 2019).

To mitigate these risks, there is the need to also, recognize the role of Grassroots civil society for fosters integration by enhancing participation of marginalized groups in local governance and decision-making, ensuring their voices influence social policies. They promote social cohesion through cultural exchange and mutual benefit activities that build trust across diverse communities. Civil society organizations act as bridges between citizens and authorities, improving transparency, accountability, and the implementation of inclusive policies. They facilitate access to information and raise awareness on rights and social inclusion, especially in remote areas. By mobilizing local resources and advocating for equitable development, grassroots groups strengthen community solidarity and resilience.

1.10 SUMMARY/ CONCLUSION

The study on shaping Nigeria's national security policies through the lens of ethnic diversity reveals that Nigeria's vast ethnic plurality comprising over 250 groups poses both a challenge and an opportunity for national security and nation-building. Ethnic diversity itself is not inherently detrimental; rather, the security threats arisen from political manipulation, marginalization, economic disparities, and historical grievances that fuel ethnic tensions,



nepotism, and conflicts. Effective national security policy must therefore adopt a multi-dimensional approach emphasizing inclusive governance, equitable resource distribution, meritocracy, and proactive conflict resolution mechanisms such as counseling and inter-ethnic dialogue. The research underscores that fostering unity in diversity through inclusive representation and addressing socio-economic inequalities is crucial to mitigating ethnic crises and enhancing Nigeria's stability and security. Ultimately, managing ethnic diversity with fairness and political inclusion is essential for sustainable national security and cohesive nation-building in Nigeria.

1.11 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings regarding ethnic diversity's impact on shaping Nigeria's national security policies, these ten recommendations collectively emerged as critical for mitigating ethnic tensions and enhancing national security in the political system. They address governance, economic equity, institutional integrity, and community-centric security strategies to counteract ethnic fragmentation and bolster national stability.

1. The Nigerian government should prioritize comprehensive security sector reforms that depoliticizes identity and rebuilds institutional trust by instituting merit-based recruitment, promotion, and deployment across all security agencies. This reform must include: the reorganization of national security infrastructure, Strengthening inter-agency coordination and Inclusive nation-building through strategic communications
2. Tackling Political Inequality's Effect on National Security these includes: the adoption of a well-articulated power-sharing mechanisms, the implement of policies that will reduce both actual and perceived horizontal inequalities across political, economic, and cultural domains and strengthening inclusive government structures that will mitigate conflicts, by ensuring leadership motives are reduced and socio-economic followers are addressed.



3. The national assembly should strengthen Nigeria's Federal Structure to Mitigate Ethnic Security Threats, through Pursuance of genuine restructuring through devolution of power and constitutional reforms emphasizing fiscal federalism.
4. Enhancing Cross-Ethnic Civil Society Initiatives for Security Outcomes by Providing unrestricted funding and meaningful inclusion for grassroots civil society, with accountability mechanisms for peace implementation and Creating bridges between informal community mechanisms and formal processes,

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