ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Behind the Democratic Facade: Corruption, Prebendalism, and Human Rights in Nigeria

Ellen Drejza, Bachelor of Arts, 2026

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In 1999, Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule following sixteen consecutive years of military dictatorship. In this regime transition, the government modeled its structure after the United States, establishing a structural democratic republic at the beginning of the nation's Fourth Republic. However, by examining the 1999 election and constitution, and subsequent presidential elections in 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023, it is evident that the military's influence on the 1999 transition led the nation's centralized government structure to persist into the Fourth Republic, thereby supporting prebendal politics. This thesis will answer the following research question: How has Nigeria's centralized government structure contributed to systemic corruption and the development of a structural, rather than functional, democratic republic, leading to political instability and human rights violations? Using structural functionalism and interdependence, this thesis examines the macro- and micro-level relationships within Nigeria's political system, as government corruption directly stems from the government's centralized structure, and political instability and human rights violations stem from corruption. My findings suggest these conditions interact within Nigeria's political structure, preventing its government from functioning as a democracy. This thesis reveals that the Nigerian government is a structural democratic republic but does not function as a democracy due to its centralized structure, which perpetuates ongoing corruption, political instability, and human rights violations.

Behind the Democratic Facade:
Corruption, Prebendalism, and Human Rights in Nigeria

By

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the people of Nigeria who have suffered from and fought against systemic corruption and injustice. The bravery they have demonstrated through their ongoing struggle for human rights is inspiring.

"... But unless and until Nigeria itself is democratic and respects human rights, it too may well be a source of much greater instability as political repression limits the ability of the people of Nigeria to achieve their full potential".[1]

- Susan Rice, Former United States Ambassador to the United Nations, 2021

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[1] Enough Is Enough Nigeria. "Press Statement: Incarcerated #EndSARS Protesters." September 22, 2021.

your support throughout this year has been invaluable. To my family, Mom, Dad, John, and Frankie, thank you for your unwavering support throughout my academic journey. I am eternally grateful for your patience and sense of humor. To my roommates, Ashlyn, Elise, Meredith, and Remy, thank you all for believing in me and cheering me on. Living with you all has made senior year the best year ever, and I cannot thank you enough for your empathy, kindness, positivity, and support. To Maya, I have always admired your calm energy and strong work ethic. You have inspired me in more ways than I can count; thank you for believing in me since our days in Bursley. To my friends from Down Under, Hayden, Jackie, Kath, and the "Fellas", thank you for making me less serious and filling my life with endless joy, fun, and intramural sports. To my compassionate coworkers at the International Institute and the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, thank you for your daily check-ins on my thesis and for your continued support of my goals throughout my time at Michigan. You have all taught me how to be a better student, friend, classmate, and human being; thank you for touching my life and helping me grow. Go Blue!

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List of Abbreviations

Nigerian Political Parties

AD: Alliance for Democracy

ANPP: All Nigeria People's Party

APC: All Progressives Congress

LP: Labour Party

NNDP: Nigerian National Democratic Party

PDP: People's Democratic Party

Additional Abbreviations

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

DPR: Department of Petroleum Resources

ECA: Excess Crude Account

EFCC: Economic and Financial Crimes Commission

ICPC: Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission

IGR: Intergovernmental relations

INEC: Independent National Electoral Commission

IOs: International organizations

IOCs: International Oil Companies

JV: Joint venture

MEND: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta

NEC: National Economic Council

NEITI: Nigeria Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative

NGOs: Nongovernmental organizations

NLNG: Nigeria Extractive Liquefied Natural Gas

NNPCL: Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited

NCSSR: Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room

OPEC: Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PTF: Petroleum Trust Fund

SPDC: Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited

Chapter 1: Nigeria's Historical Background and Introduction to the Research Question

1.1 Introduction

"... Political corruption spread from the official sphere into wider circles of daily life, making law-breaking a routine practice detached from any particular moral opprobrium for substantial numbers of people".[2]

Nigeria is a nation on the western coast of Africa that was previously a British colony.[3] During British colonial rule in Nigeria, Sir Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator, created a governing system known as Indirect Rule, in which indigenous rulers governed under the direction of British officials. This system was more widely implemented in the North because the British respected the conservatism and centralized, hierarchical structure implemented under a Muslim aristocracy.[4] Indirect rule was not as easy for the British government to implement in the South because the region had fewer centralized institutions.[5] The difference in how Indirect Rule was implemented in Northern and Southern Nigeria by the British government paved the way for the divided Federal Republic of Nigeria that exists today, with sharp development, religious, and ethnic differences between the North and South.[6] The British government divided Nigeria into three administrative regions, headquartered in Enugu (East), Ibadan (West), and Kaduna (North),[7] to facilitate efficient resource extraction, including coal production in Enugu.[8] The North and South were divided into six geographical state clusters, implemented in Nigeria as a result of British indirect rule, including: 1. emirate states; 2. Borno and environs; 3. Middle Belt minorities; 4. Yoruba states; 5. Igbo states; and 6. southern minorities (1-3 are in the North,

[2] Ellis, Stephen, 75.
[3] Ellis, Stephen. *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organised Crime*. Hurst and Company, 2018.
[4] Ellis, Stephen, 13.
[5] Ellis, Stephen, 13.
[6] Ellis, Stephen, 19.
[7] Ellis, Stephen, 5.
[8] Falola, Toyin. "Introduction." Part. In *Understanding Colonial Nigeria: British Rule and Its Impact*, 1–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024.

4-6 are in the South).[9] These zones were divided based on ethnic and religious lines (North being predominantly comprised of Muslim, Hausi-Fulani, and Kanuri, and the South being mostly Christian, Yoruba, and Igbo, with both North and South having minority ethnic groups) to ensure ethnoreligious conflicts were extinguished by local and state governments without developing into a national conflict.[10] The cultural and historical characteristics of this six-cultural zone model continue to influence Nigerians' contemporary pushes for national unity and a functional democratic government, and the model is viewed as a template for the six geopolitical zones that were formed in Nigeria in the 1990s: North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East, and South South.[11]

Even before Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960, there were early contributions to the culture of corruption and a lack of national unity, as colonial policy focused on increasing Nigeria's production of export commodities.[12] Corruption developed in Nigeria before the colony became an independent nation, as public officials viewed political power as an opportunity for self-advancement and lacked a sense of responsibility to serve their own people. This notion of public officials having limited connection to the state they are ruling falls under the classification made by Peter Ekeh's classic work, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", in which he states that the public sector feels little connection to the state because the Europeans instilled the idea that the state is a font of resources to be acquired.[13] Corruption and bribery became ingrained in Nigeria's governmental culture during colonial rule, as the 1951 election had prevalent corruption, and African governmental customs

[9] Rotberg, Robert I., 23.
[10] Rotberg, Robert I., 23-24.
[11] Rotberg, Robert I., 23-25.
[12] Ellis, Stephen, 45.
[13] Ekeh, Peter P. "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975): 91–112. http://www.jstor.org/stable/178372.

were undermined by British rulers who wanted to increase trade for their own economic gain.[14] Beginning after World War II and before Nigeria became an independent nation on October 1, 1960, Great Britain attempted to export the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy, modeled after the United Kingdom, to British colonial Nigeria.[15] The implementation of the Westminster parliamentary system was designed by the British to transition Nigeria from an autocratic colonial rule to a liberal democratic state because the British believed their established political system was the most stable system for self-government.[16] However, this political structure did not last long and failed in 1966 due to a lack of national unity and political instability.[17] There was corruption and mismanagement among public officials who implemented this system, developing political unrest and dissent among civilians who began to see the benefit of military intervention.[18] Corruption, a prevalent force of electoral malpractices and public office mismanagement, did not subside after colonial rule ended and continued to grow when Nigeria transitioned to military rule in 1966.

Before the nation became an autocratic military regime in 1966, Nigeria began its first federal republic in 1963 with Nnamdi Azikiwe as the first president and head of state, and Abubakar Balewa continuing to serve as prime minister and head of government.[19] However, this first republic did not last long, as inter-ethnic violence ensued in the nation, and Balewa was killed in 1966 in an unsuccessful military coup.[20] Following the widespread violence, Major General J.T.U Aguiyi-Ironsi took over power for six months before being overthrown in a

[14] Ellis, Stephen, 54.
[15] Blood, Hilary Rudolph Robert. *Parliament as an Export*. Allen and Unwin, 1966.
[16] Blood, Hilary Rudolph Robert. *Parliament as an Export*. Allen and Unwin, 1966.
[17] Tendi, Blessing-Miles. *"The Westminster Model Failed Africa."* The Guardian, May 19, 2010.
[18] Precious, Aimiton. *"How Nigeria's First Republic Collapsed: Elections, Violence, Corruption, and Census Controversies."* Historical Nigeria, January 14, 2026.
[19] Hoffmann, Leena Koni, and Jamie Wallace. *"Democracy in Nigeria."* Chatham House, June 29, 2022.
[20] Hoffmann and Wallace. *"Democracy in Nigeria".*

military counter-coup, and supplanted by Yakubu Gowon, beginning a decades-long cycle of autocratic military rule.[21] Military rule and the implementation of a centralized government structure have been prevalent in Nigeria since 1966 and into the 1990s; this autocratic regime type works as a political structure not limited by law, including constitutional and legal restrictions and legislative and judicial oversight.[22] Following a coup on January 15, 1966, the Nigerian military passed its first law, "the Constitutional (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 1 of 1966", which centralized power by giving all executive and legislative power to the head of state at the federal level, and to governors of individual regions, now states.[23] This law created a political structure in which military decrees could not be challenged by Nigeria's courts, instilling a system of government in which the president holds absolute power and ignores the needs of citizens. Decree No. 1 of 1966 was further developed by the Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers Decree No. 28 of 1970, which only supported the aspects of the 1963 constitution that upheld Decree No. 1; additionally, the 1984 and 1994 amendments suspended parts of the 1979 Constitution, the Constitution of which the 1999 Constitution was modeled after, that challenged military authority.[24] This centralized political structure, established in 1966, created a government in Nigeria in which the head of state, or president, is unaccountable to citizens and views public office as a means of absolute power and personal gain; this political structure has caused decades of public sector corruption that continue to erode democratic institutions following the transition to civilian rule in 1999.[25] Following the establishment of

[21] Hoffmann and Wallace. *"Democracy in Nigeria".*
[22] Nwabueze, B. (1994). *Nigeria '93: The Political Crisis and Solutions*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 4.
[23] Osaghae, Eghosa E., 'The Long Shadow of Nigeria's Military Epochs, 1966–79 and 1983–99', in Carl Levan, and Patrick Ukata (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian Politics*, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 Nov. 2018).
[24] Osaghae, Eghosa E., 'The Long Shadow of Nigeria's Military Epochs".
[25] Joseph, R. A. (1996). "Nigeria inside the Dismal Tunnel," *Current History* 95 (601): 193–200.

military rule in 1966, military governments built alliances with elite civilians, developing a corrupt political structure by co-opting elites and buying support for their military regime.

The military government presented itself as an impermanent and corrective ruling body, with the intent to correct Nigeria's problems of the past before the nation could return to civilian rule, with governance of the state by elected officials outside of the military.[26] The first military head of state, General J.T.U Aguyi-Ironsi, stated that the military government intended to maintain the law, "until such a time when a constitution is [produced] according to the wishes of the people".[27] After correcting Nigeria's past problems and establishing a foundation for a more prosperous Nigeria with improved national unity and infrastructure development, the military was supposed to return power to civilians. The military government was intended to improve political stability and economic and infrastructure development;[28] yet corruption became endemic to Nigeria's political structure under military rule, and infrastructure development for the benefit of all Nigerian citizens never came to fruition. In this thesis, I will argue that the enduring influence of the military-political structure in Nigeria has created endemic corruption in the nation's government, resulting in underdeveloped infrastructure, political violence, and human rights violations.

Since 1996, Nigeria has been made up of thirty-six states, plus the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), and the North and South and was divided by General Sani Abacha during his military rule into six geopolitical regions, North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West, to facilitate better resource distribution and political power

[26] Hutchful, E. (1986). "New Elements in Militarism: Ethiopia, Ghana and Burkina Faso," *International Journal* 41 (4): 802–830.
[27] Federal Ministry of Information Release and Government Notice, No. 148/1966, 2.
[28] Oyediran, O. (ed.) (1979). *Nigerian Government and Politics under Military Rule, 1966–1979*. London: Macmillan.

sharing.[29] As aforementioned, this geopolitical divide originated from the regions being divided to mitigate ethnoreligious conflict during British indirect rule. The nation is divided between North and South primarily because the North has a predominantly Muslim population, while the South has a predominantly Christian population. Inequalities across regions lead to division and a lack of coordination within the nation, resulting in power imbalances that make it difficult to restructure a divided nation with instilled autocratic military rule into a functional democratic federal system. As corruption has been pervasive in the nation's public sector, the government has not been properly restructured to a functional democracy, restricting economic and infrastructure development and hindering civil liberties and human rights. Corruption is ubiquitous in Nigeria's government, and my thesis serves to introduce policy solutions, including the restructuring of Nigeria into a federal system, to improve civil liberties, economic development, government transparency, and reduce mass inequality in the nation, in addition to contributing to future research on the relationship between democracy and corruption in Nigeria as derivatives of the nation's government structure with ingrained centralized power and wealth for public officials. In this thesis, I will present democracy as a *dependent* variable of the social, economic, and political conditions in Nigeria,[30] which serve as the *independent* variables,[31] as political instability, civil unrest, and endemic corruption rooted in Nigeria's centralized government structure have prevented Nigeria from restructuring into a functional democracy.

[29] Okoli, Chijioke et al. "Geographical and socioeconomic inequalities in the utilization of maternal healthcare services in Nigeria: 2003-2017." *BMC health services research* vol. 20,1 849. 10 Sep. 2020, doi:10.1186/s12913-020-05700-w.
[30] Rustow, D. A. (1970). Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model. Comparative Politics, 2(3), Article 3, 342.
[31] Lipset, Seymour Martin, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review*, LIII (March 1959); idem, *Political Man*; Philips Cutright, "National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis," American Sociological Review, XXVIII (April 1963).

This thesis is framed by the presidential elections in the Fourth Republic from 1999 to 2023. I will first focus on the 1999 Nigerian Presidential Election and the subsequent 1999 Constitution, as scholars have regarded the 1999 Presidential Election as when Nigeria transitioned to civilian and democratic rule.[32] The 1999 election was carried out by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) following insistent pressure from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), human rights activists, and the majority of Nigerian citizens, who demanded Nigeria's transition to a democratic republic after years of military rule and human rights violations under General Abacha.[33] I will then describe how the 1999 Election and Constitutional was successful in transitioning Nigeria to civilian rule and making the nation a democracy in structure, or in name; however, the widespread use of electoral malpractices and corruption in the 1999 Election paved the way for twenty years of continued corruption, hindering democracy in Nigeria from being functional. Corruption stems from Nigeria's established centralized government structure and has developed since the 1970s, as Nigeria evolved into a petrostate, or a state with an economy reliant on oil. The centralized structure allows corruption to flourish in the public sector, leading to the misallocation of funds by the government and underdeveloped infrastructure in oil-producing states.

1.1.1 Research Question

My research question is: How has Nigeria's centralized government structure contributed to systemic corruption and the development of a structural, rather than functional, democratic republic, leading to political instability and human rights violations? To answer this question, I define public sector corruption, the most prevalent form of corruption in Nigeria, and describe how the nation's oil-reliant economy and centralized government structure have fueled

[32] Oyeranmi, Olusoji Samuel. *"Democracy Returns to Nigeria."* EBSCO Research Starters, 2023.
[33] U.S. Department of State, "Nigeria," *1998 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 1999.

corruption among public officials. I then describe how corruption among public officials has prevented post-1999 Nigeria from acting as a functional democracy, despite being a structural democratic republic; I define the distinction between structural and functional democracy. Corruption became embedded in Nigeria's government during its colonial period, and substantial reforms to Nigeria's government structure, including the regime transition in 1999, have not succeeded in reducing it, hindering the nation's ability to function as a democracy. Corruption hindering the development of democracy will be analyzed through the lens of structural functionalism, as corruption has become an inherent feature of the larger political structure in Nigeria. This has enabled public sector officials to carry out corruption for several consecutive regimes due to a lack of substantial reforms.[34]

1.1.2 Literature Review

Since the regime transition from military to civilian rule in 1999, scholars have debated the legitimacy of Nigeria's democratic republic. Most scholarly work focuses on either anti-corruption methods that have been unsuccessful in Nigeria or the undemocratic electoral malpractices that have remained prevalent in the Nigerian government. There is limited literature describing Nigeria as a structural, instead of a functional democracy, because of its centralized federal structure. My thesis aims to address these gaps in the literature while analyzing how the government structure and corruption have perpetuated human rights violations and instability. By analyzing nondemocratic practices following the 1999 constitution and election, as well as growing insurgencies in the Niger Delta region, this thesis will describe how these internal conflicts stem from the nation's centralized government structure.

[34] Igbakpa, Ben R., and Prof. Kelly Bryan Ovie Ejumudo. 2023. "Corruption and the Effectiveness of the Legislative Oversight Responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria's Fourth Republic". *BW Academic Journal*, November, 11.

While scholars agree that Nigeria has a flawed democracy, including vote buying, electoral violence, political apathy, and diminished voter turnout, they differ in how they label its flawed democracy.[35] Some scholars (Hameed 2022, Madueke 2025) argue that Nigeria functions as an anocracy, or hybrid regime, structurally a multiparty democracy that holds regular elections, while experiencing challenges to the consolidation of democracy and ridding the nation of autocratic principles.[36] While Ukiwo (2003) described Nigeria as a "nascent democracy" when democracy was fragile and unstable following the regime transition, this term is no longer applicable following two decades of structural democracy.[37] Scholars argue that politicians' self-interest in control over resource production has developed government corruption and hinders their ability to serve the citizens of the nation because the voice of citizens is not represented (Buchanan & Tullock 1965; Shaw 2002; Igwe, Nwocha, Steve 2019, Emegwa 2023). The lack of influence citizens have on the government leads to a decrease in voter turnout, as citizens feel voter apathy because of the government carrying out corrupt practices based on its own self-interest, resulting in human rights violations and political instability in the nation. While substantial literature has established that Nigeria's democracy is flawed, my thesis will contribute to existing literature by describing how Nigeria exists as a structural, instead of functional, democracy, because the government retains its centralized structure established by previous military rule, perpetuating public sector corruption in the nation, leading to ongoing human rights violations and political instability.

[35] Ogu, S.C. (2021). Understanding Nigerian politics, Nigerian Army Welfare Printing Press. Garki Abuja.
[36] Hameed, Dr. Muntasser. "Hybrid regimes: An overview." *IPRI Journal*, vol. 22, no. 01, 30 June 2022, pp. 1–24.
[37] Ukiwo, U. (2003) Politics, ethno-religious conflicts and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. *Journal of Modern African Studies*: 115–138.

1.2 Key definitions

The following subsections define key terms I use throughout this thesis and the literature encompassing them.

Democracy

Democracy can be defined as a system of government that allows electorates, or voters, to select public officials through free, fair, and credible elections; electorates are given the power to determine their representatives.[38] Democracy is commonly classified under two categories: minimalist (electoral) and maximalist (liberal) democracy. The minimalist view focuses on elections as sites of inclusion and contestation. In contrast, the maximalist view is not limited to elections; it includes values such as freedom, liberty, equity, human rights, and direct citizen involvement that are necessary for a government to be considered democratic. There is substantial literature on different definitions of democracy, classifying it as either minimalist or maximalist. In this thesis, I argue that decentralizing Nigeria's government will help the government operate as a functional, or maximalist, democracy, make it more accountable for its actions, reduce corruption, and reduce human rights violations used by the government to repress dissent.[39]

Minimalist, Structural, and Illiberal Democracy

Schumpeter (1942) defines democracy as a system in which competitive elections select public officials. He argues that democracy is a method for selecting leaders and requires competitive, or contested, elections for political leadership. Schumpeter developed what is commonly known as the "pluralist elitist equilibrium model" of democracy.[40] Popper (1962) defines democracy as the only system in which citizens can get rid of governments without

[38] Adisa, Olufemi Peniel. "Nigerian Government and Governance: Democracy or Kleptocracy?" *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, vol. X, no. 10.3, 2019, pp. 1–13.
[39] Carey, Sabine C., Mark Gibney, and Steven C. Poe., 132.
[40] Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942.

bloodshed, and how political organizations can be organized to prevent bad rulers from doing too much damage.[41] Przeworski (1999) defines democracy as a regime that only exists if rulers are selected through contested, free, and open elections, in which incumbents can and do lose elections. Przeworski defines it as a system *only* defined through elections, and that including other social and economic factors into the definition makes it less effective.[42] Schmitter and Karl (1991) define democracy as "a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives".[43] Schmitter and Karl state that there are many types of democracy, and they vary depending on a country's socioeconomic conditions and its established state structures and policy practices.[44] By identifying three types of political culture in their work, participant, subject, and parochial, Almond and Verba (1963) define democracy as requiring a balanced political and civic culture, having a participant culture (i.e., letting citizens be actively involved in political life), while still maintaining a subject culture of citizens who obey the laws created by the government.[45]

Maximalist, Functional, and Liberal Democracy

Dahl (1971) defines democracy as a system where the government is responsive to its citizens and considers citizens, or electorates, its equals.[46] He defines democracy as a "polyarchy," a realistic yet imperfect system characterized by competition and participation. Under his maximalist definition, he includes eight "required guarantees for citizens and the state

[41] Popper, Karl R. *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962.
[42] Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
[43] Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl. "What Democracy Is... and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 3 (1991): 4-16.
[44] Schmitter, Philippe C., and Terry Lynn Karl, 4.
[45] Almond, G. A., & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
[46] Dahl, Robert A. 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

to have preferences weighted equally in government: 1. Freedom to form and join organizations, 2. Freedom of expression, 3. Right to vote, 4. Eligibility for public office, 5. Right of political leaders to compete for support, 5a. Right of political leaders to compete for votes, 6. Alternative sources of information, 7. Free and fair elections, 8. Institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference".[47] Dahl (1971) definition is supported by scholars Andreev (2005), Brettschneider (2006), Collier and Levitsky (1997), and Przeworski et al. (1995), who describe the fundamental rights section as essential to the 1999 Constitution to support the nation functioning as a democracy. Diamond (1999) defines democracy as a political system with four key, interconnected elements, including free and fair elections, active civil society groups, human rights protections for all citizens, and equal application of law to all citizens.[48] Diamond advocates for a liberal democracy with reduced corruption and democratic consolidation, which is the acceptance of democratic norms by public officials, large institutions, and citizens of a nation.[49] The maximalist definition of democracy is most applicable in chapter three, because when Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule following the 1999 presidential election and implementation of the 1999 Constitution, the nation tried to become a maximalist, or liberal, constitutional republic modeled after the United States.[50]

Structural versus Functional Democracy

In this thesis, I will describe the distinction between structural and functional democracy and the relevance of this distinction in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. I argue that since Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian rule in 1999, the nation has been a structural democratic

[47] Dahl, Robert A., 3.
[48] Diamond, Larry. "What Is Democracy?" *Diamond Democracy*, 21 Jan. 2004, diamond-democracy.stanford.edu/events/lecture/what-democracy#:~:text=Past%20Event,apply%20equally%20to%20all%20citizens.
[49] Diamond, Larry. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
[50] Fasakin, Akinbode, 300.

republic, not a functional democratic republic. Structural democracy most aligns with the minimalist, or illiberal, definition of democracy, while functional democracy aligns with the maximalist, or liberal, definition of democracy. Section 2(2), 3(1), and 3(6) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution establish Nigeria as a structural democratic republic, the "Federal Republic of Nigeria", consisting of thirty-six states and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), with 768 local governments.[51] Sections 4, 5, and 6 outline the separation of powers by dividing the government into three distinct branches: the Legislative branch (National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly), the Executive branch (President, Vice President, Cabinet, and Governors), and the Judicial branch (Courts). Sections 77(2) and 117(2) establish the right to vote and to be voted for in Nigeria, thereby promoting democratic participation. Section 14(2)(a) and (c) grants the power to civilians to elect government officials, and for the state to ensure citizen participation, to establish free and fair elections. In this thesis, I argue that Nigeria is a structural democratic republic but does not function as a democracy due to endemic government corruption entrenched in its centralized government structure, and a weak legislature and judiciary that remain subordinate to the executive branch, or president. Since the establishment of the Fourth Republic, the Nigerian government has struggled to function as a democracy because the dominant political party engages in organized crime,[52] resulting in poor governance as the government fails to contribute to economic and infrastructural development for citizens, resulting in ongoing violence and civil unrest, political instability, poor civil liberties, and human rights violations in the nation.[53]

[51] "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999." *Constitute*, 5 May 1999, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_1999.

[52] Defined on Page 24, organized crime describes the endemic corruption in the Nigerian state. Nigerian practices of organized crime include, but are not limited to, electoral malpractice, document fraud, embezzlement, and smuggling, and typically originate in the public sector and have connections to the state; Ellis, Stephen, 4.

[53] Hoffmann, Leena Koni, and Jon Wallace. *"Democracy in Nigeria."* Chatham House. June 29, 2022.

Corruption

Corruption in Nigeria is more prevalent in the public sector, or among public officials, who view public offices as a way to enrich themselves financially rather than serve the nation.[54] Private sector corruption relates to corruption carried out by ordinary citizens (not in public office), while public sector corruption is performed by government officials.[55] Public sector corruption thrives in nations like Nigeria, where there is widespread poverty, weak civil society, and few institutional checks on power.[56] It violates the guidelines of a public role because of private, status-related motivations.[57] Public sector corruption in Nigeria includes embezzlement, fraud, cronyism, bribery, influence peddling, and extortion carried out by public officials.[58]

The corruption in Nigeria can also be defined as grand corruption because the misconduct involves large sums of money. Corruption has hindered infrastructure development within the nation, resulting in poor quality of roads, power supply, and education, and increased political insecurity and instability.[59] Most scholars view corruption as an endemic problem within Nigeria, as Ogundiya (2009), Omorotionmwan (2017), and Osaghae (1988) describe corruption as beginning during colonialism.[60] Ladipo (2002) defines corruption as the misuse of official office for unofficial ends, applicable to Nigeria, where public funds, largely from oil revenue, are diverted to private accounts of public officials.[61] Lipset and Lenz (2000) define corruption as an

[54] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale. "An assessment of the factors of economic and financial corruption by public officials in Nigeria." *Journal of Economic Criminology*, vol. 10, Dec. 2025, p. 100188, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100188.
[55] Lewis, Peter, 190.
[56] Arowolo DE (2022), 2.
[57] Nye, J. S. (1967). Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *American Political Science Review*, 61, 417-427. https://doi.org/10.2307/1953254.
[58] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale, 2.
[59] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale, 2.
[60] Arowolo DE (2022), "Ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria". *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 29 No. 1 pp. 246–257, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-06-2020-0106.
[61] Adamolekun, L. (2002). Africa's Evolving Career Civil Service Systems: Three challenges—State Continuity, Efficient Service Delivery and Accountability. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *68*(3), 373-387.

effort to secure wealth or power through illegal means,[62] while Kaufmann (2001) states that corruption is the abuse of public power for private benefit.[63] Osinbajo (2017b) states that corruption has damaged the image of Nigeria and is a hindrance to the restructuring of a functionally democratic, transparent, and accountable government.[64]

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism, as defined by Gabriel Almond (1966), builds on David Easton's (1953) systems theory and definition of political systems as networks of structures, political parties, and legislatures that perform functions to maintain control; the structural functionalism framework can be used to analyze political systems.[65] Structural functionalism describes how individual political institutions work together to perform roles that maintain order and stability in a society. In this thesis, I apply structural functionalism to my theoretical framework to describe how Nigeria's centralized government structure has led to public sector corruption,[66] which, in turn, has caused human rights violations and political instability. This term is relevant to my thesis because it will describe how the National Assembly of Nigeria, or legislative body, is less effective in upholding the rights of citizens because of corruption among public sector officials in the nation.[67]

Interdependence

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[62] Lipset, S. M., & Lenz, G. S. (2000). Corruption, Culture, and Markets. In L. E. Harrison & S. P. Huntington (Eds.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (pp. 112–126). New York: Basic Books.
[63] Heilman and Kaufmann. "Confronting the challenge of state capture in transition economies." *Finance and Development* 38, no. 3 (2001): 31-35.
[64] Arowolo DE (2022), "Ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria". *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 29 No. 1 pp. 246–257, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-06-2020-0106.
[65] Fisher, John R. "Systems theory and structural functionalism." *21st Century Political Science: A Reference Handbook*, 2011, pp. 71–80, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412979351.n9.
[66] Popoola, Olusoji, Isibhakhomen Ogunbor, and David Popoola Olusoji. "Application of Structural Functionalism Theory to the Evaluation of Federal Government Anti-Corruption War in Nigeria." *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences (JASS)* 4, no. 1 (October 2022): 26.
[67] Igbakpa, Ben R., and Prof. Kelly Bryan Ovie Ejumudo. 2023. "Corruption and the Effectiveness of the Legislative Oversight Responsibilities of the House of Representatives in Nigeria's Fourth Republic". *BW Academic Journal*, November, 11.

Interdependence refers to the relationships among the parts of a system. For example, when parts of a system are interdependent, it means that when the properties of one component in a system change, all the other parts, and the system as a whole, are affected.[68] If one part of a system changes in quantity or quality, the other parts respond and are transformed, and the system's equilibrium is eventually reestablished. This definition of interdependence in a system with interacting parts is relevant to my thesis, which argues that the relationship between corruption and democracy in Nigeria is interdependent. This definition is applicable because systemic corruption within Nigeria has hindered the development of a functional democratic republic. Weak institutions fail to combat corruption. If Nigeria were to properly restructure into a functional democracy, with free and fair elections and active civil society organizations, electoral accountability would allow citizens to remove corrupt officials from office. The concept of interdependence extends beyond corruption and democracy in Nigeria; within democracy, there is an interdependent relationship between declining voter turnout and diminished democracy, which will be elaborated on in chapter four, which discusses the presidential elections in Nigeria from 1999 to 2023.

Authoritarianism

Gandhi and Przeworski (2006) describe how authoritarian dictators have two instruments of maintaining power: policy concessions or rent sharing. These instruments are only present in authoritarian regimes, including dictatorships with seemingly democratic institutions. Policy concessions include adjusting policies to gain cooperation, while rent sharing includes distributing material rewards to co-opt opposition.[69] In my thesis, I will argue that the Nigerian

[68] Almond, Gabriel A. "A Developmental Approach to Political Systems." *World Politics* 17, no. 2 (1965): 183–214. https://doi.org/10.2307/2009347.
[69] Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski. 2006. "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion Under Dictatorships." *Economics & Politics* 18 (1): 1–26.

government co-opts potential opposition to keep it under the dominant party's control, preventing it from rebelling during elections and thereby maintaining regime stability. In Nigeria, corruption exists in the public sector, among government officials who control the nation's oil revenue and distribute it among other public officials to avoid rebellion, a common practice in rentier, or resource-rich, states. Boix and Svolik (2013) define different types of authoritarian regimes, including dictatorship, tyranny, and non-tyrannical autocracy. Boix and Svolik define a dictatorship as a regime where there are either no free and competitive elections or no executive accountable to citizens, a tyranny as a dictatorship that does not have a legislature, and a non-tyrannical autocracy as a dictatorship with a legislature.[70]

Electoral authoritarianism

Electoral authoritarianism is defined by Schedler (2006) as a regime in which elections are only held as a transitional ritual,[71] and citizens have little or no control over election outcomes. This has been the case in Nigerian elections, compromising the democratization process.[72] Nigeria is a structural democratic republic, yet its centralized government structure perpetuates public sector corruption, preventing the government from functioning as a functional democratic republic; instead, the nation functions as an electoral autocracy.

Organized Crime

Organized crime is defined as criminal activity associated with an identifiable group of people and existing for a substantial period.[73] This term describes the endemic corruption in the Nigerian state. Nigerian practices of organized crime include, but are not limited to, electoral

[70] Boix, Carles, and Milan W. Svolik. "The Foundations of Limited Authoritarian Government: Institutions, Commitment, and Power-Sharing in Dictatorships." *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2 (2013): 300–316. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381613000029.
[71] Schedler, Andreas. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006.
[72] Schedler, Andreas. (2015). Electoral Authoritarianism. *In Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (eds R.A. Scott and S.M. Kosslyn). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0098.
[73] Ellis, Stephen, 4.

malpractice, document fraud, embezzlement, and smuggling, and typically originate in the public sector and have connections to the state.[74] In this thesis, the term corruption is often used to refer to acts carried out by the state's public officials; the description of acts carried out by public sector officials is contained in this definition of organized crime. Corruption carried out by government officials facilitates organized crime and destabilizes government institutions.[75] This thesis argues that the prevalence of corruption and organized crime stems from the government's centralized structure.

Kleptocracy

A government ruled by corrupt politicians, or kleptocrats, who use their power to exploit citizens and the natural resources of their own state, for the benefit of their personal wealth and political power, often at the expense of citizens and national development, including the embezzlement of funds.[76] Kleptocratic governments are common in autocracies, oligarchies, nepotistic dictatorships, and military juntas; they are most prevalent in developing countries with economies based on the export of natural resources, such as Nigeria's, which is dependent on oil revenue. Nigeria is an example of a kleptocratic government disguised as a democracy because it holds elections.

State

The state is defined as a set of shifting practices, more so a collection of individual human beings connected by a complex set of relations; it is not the same thing as government.[77] The state consists of several entities that interact within an interdependent political system. This

[74] Ellis, Stephen, 4.
[75] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *"Explainer: How Corruption Facilitates Organized Crime."* November 2024.
[76] Adisa, Olufemi Peniel. "Nigerian Government and Governance: Democracy or Kleptocracy?" *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, vol. X, no. 10.3, 2019, pp. 1–13.
[77] Trouillot, Michele-Rolph., 2001. The anthropology of the state in the age of globalization: Close encounters of the deceptive kind. *Current anthropology*, *42*(1), pp.125-138.

definition of the state, which characterizes it as a collection of individuals in power, is relevant to how public officials in Nigeria constitute the state and engage in corruption.

Political system

The political system is defined by David Easton (1953) as a system with three components: 1) The political system allocates values (by means of policies); 2) The political system's allocations are authoritative; and 3) its authoritative allocations are binding on the society as a whole.[78] The political system is the order-maintaining system in a society, and it determines how power is organized and distributed internally within a state;[79] the state is the structure in which the political system operates. In this thesis, the terms state and political system will be used to describe how the centralized political system constructed by the military in 1966, during Decree No. 34, or the "unification decree", which created centralized power and resource revenue, is the system that has created systemic corruption in Nigeria's state, which remains persistent today.[80] This thesis will detail how the centralized government structure has allowed public officials to have exclusive powers over Nigeria's oil revenue, resulting in corruption as public officials struggle for power, leaving oil-producing states underdeveloped.[81]

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Civil society organizations (CSOs), as defined by Kew (2008), are the multitude of public-oriented associations that are not formal parts of the governing institutions of the state, including community associations, religious institutions, trade unions, nongovernmental organizations, such as human rights groups, relief organizations, development organizations,

[78] Easton, David. *The Political System: An Inquiry into the State of Political Science*, New York, 1953, 130.
[79] Almond, Gabriel A., and James Smoot Coleman. 1960. *The Politics of the Developing Areas*. Princeton University Press. EBSCOhost.
[80] Wodu, Nkasi. "Nigeria's Unitary Federalism." *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 16, 2020.
[81] Wodu, Nkasi. "Nigeria's Unitary Federalism."

conflict resolution groups, business associations, and professional associations.[82] The purpose of civil society organizations is to promote the interests and perspectives of a specific group in society.[83] CSOs have had a substantial role in Nigeria's democratization process, which began with the implementation of the Fourth Republic in 1999, in which CSOs pressured the military to surrender power to the civilian government.[84] Chapter four will describe the role CSOs have played in Nigerian presidential elections since 1999, particularly in the 2015 and 2019 elections.[85]

Human Rights Violations

According to the United Nations, human rights are fundamental and are entitled to all humans, and include "the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education".[86] Human rights violations occur when either a human actor or the state misuses power and violates the personal integrity of the nation's citizens.[87] Actors outside of the government violate fundamental human rights, including guerrilla groups, rebels, and terrorist organizations. The upholding of human rights, a feature of the maximalist view of democracy, is often neglected in autocracies and anocracies because there is no robust protection of civil liberties under strong democratic rule of law. Many nations that claim to be democratic, such as Nigeria, have illiberal democratic structures.

Prebendal politics, or prebendalism

[82] Kew, Darren, and Anthony Wanis-St. John. "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion." *International Negotiation*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2008, pp. 11–36, https://doi.org/10.1163/138234008x297896.
[83] Kew, Darren, and Anthony Wanis-St. John, 15.
[84] Sule, Babayo, et al. "Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) and electioneering process in Nigeria (2015–2019)." *Sage Open*, vol. 11, no. 2, Apr. 2021.
[85] Sule, Babayo, et al. "Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) and electioneering process in Nigeria (2015–2019)." *Sage Open*, vol. 11, no. 2, Apr. 2021, 1.
[86] "Human Rights." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights.
[87] Carey, Sabine C., Mark Gibney, and Steven C. Poe. *The Politics of Human Rights : The Quest for Dignity*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Prebendal politics, or prebendalism, as defined by Richard Joseph, refers to patterns of political behavior that allow for state offices to be competed for by elites and used for the economic benefit of officeholders.[88] Prebendal politics is distinct from other forms of patronage because government offices become a source of wealth to those who hold them, a structure rooted in British colonialism that grew following the development of the oil industry in the 1970s.[89] In Nigeria, elected officials and government workers feel entitled to use public offices to divert state resources and revenue for their personal benefit.[90] Public office is seen by elites as a method of gaining control of public resources for private ends. This thesis will describe how prebendalism in the Nigerian state increased following the development of the petroleum industry in Nigeria, which contributed to the increase and centralization of oil revenues for public sector officials.[91] The origin of prebendalism, or systemic corruption, in Nigeria is rooted in the structure established by indigenous and pre-colonial chieftaincies during Indirect Rule established during the British colonial period.[92]

***Shari'a* law**

Shari'a law, or Islamic law, is a set of ethical and religious laws derived from the Quran that governs Muslim people; it has been implemented in Northern Nigeria since the nation transitioned to civilian rule in 1999.[93] In Nigeria, 50% of the population is Muslim, and the full application of *shari'a* law in Northern Nigeria has contributed to the nation being a divided state because the population in Southern Nigeria is predominantly Christian.[94] The Christians in the South refuse to be governed by *shari'a* law because of their different religious beliefs; however,

[88] Joseph, Richard A., 30.
[89] Pierce, Steven. *Moral Economies of Corruption: State Formation and Political Culture in Nigeria*, 106-107.
[90] Leopold, Wendy. "Is 'Prebendalism' a Global Phenomenon Today?" *Northwestern Now*, January 17, 2014.
[91] Joseph, Richard A., 32.
[92] Ellis, Stephen, 4.
[93] Olajide, Adekunle. (2023). "Sharia Law in Nigeria: Challenges and Strategies for Effective Implementation". University of Ilorin.
[94] Olajide, Adekunle, 3.

their refusal to accept the application of *shari'a* law has been met by violence from Islamic militant groups.[95] In chapter three, I will detail how the implementation of this set of laws has increased discrimination, political violence, human rights violations, including extrajudicial punishments, and hindered national unity in Nigeria since 1999, as some Nigerians have argued it goes against the 1999 Constitution, which was intended to establish a secular state and "guarantee freedom of religion".[96] Chapter three will expand on the discrimination non-Muslims and women have faced in Nigeria since the implementation of *shari'a* law in 1999, in addition to the relationship between Islam and the structural democratic republic in Nigeria.[97]

1.3 Argument

This thesis argues that Nigeria has not been able to restructure its government into a functional democracy because of public sector corruption within the nation's centralized political structure. Centralized rule leads to the prevalence of political instability and human rights violations in the nation, as the head of state is focused on ascertaining personal profits from public funds, instead of serving the nation by prioritizing civil liberties and human rights. A democratic government structure includes improved civil liberties and reduced corruption, which aid infrastructure development and reduce poverty in Nigeria. Because of the prevalence of public-sector corruption, public officials have taken public funds for their own private gain, rather than investing them in the nation's development.

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[95] Oraegbunam, I. K. E. (2011). Sharia Criminal Law, Islam, and Democracy in Nigeria Today. *Ogirisi: A New Journal of African Studies, 8*(1), 172-190. DOI: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/og/article/view/71768/60724.
[96] Sections 10 and 38 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibit state religion and guarantee freedom of religion, respectively; "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999." *Constitute*, 5 May 1999, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_1999.
[97] Oraegbunam, I. K. E, 182-183.

This thesis does not assume that restructuring Nigeria's government into a functional democratic federal system and the implementation of successful anti-corruption agencies will be simple reforms. Systemic corruption in Nigeria has existed since the colonial period; it is ingrained in the centralized power structure, in which public sector officials compete for power and patronage in the winner-take-all partisan environment, resulting in violence and voter apathy, preventing the government from functioning as a democracy.[98] The purpose of this argument is not to claim that civil society groups have not pushed for reforms to improve the quality of life for Nigerian citizens, but rather to highlight the persistent corruption among public officials that has prevented those reforms from succeeding. Government anti-corruption efforts have been surface-level and have not curbed the autocratic and corrupt practices used by public officials to gain power and wealth.

Each chapter of my thesis contributes to answering my research question: "How has Nigeria's centralized government structure contributed to systemic corruption and the development of a structural, rather than functional, democratic republic, leading to political instability and human rights violations?", by describing how the military-established centralized government structure has contributed to systemic corruption in Nigeria's public sector and hindered the nation's attempts toward democratization. This thesis establishes the causes of corruption by outlining the centralized government structure and development of the nation's oil industry, in addition to the concurrent establishment of government-run oil companies, which hold joint ventures with international oil companies (IOCs), which is relevant to understanding the public sector corruption and prebendalism that has remained prevalent in Nigeria's public sector from 1999 to 2023.

[98] Rotberg, Robert I., 22.

1.4 Contributions

This thesis will describe the relationship between corruption and democracy through the lens of structural functionalism in the nation's political structure. By examining corruption and undemocratic principles in the government because of the nation's political structure, my thesis will describe how corruption is a symptom of malfunctioning political institutions within the centralized government and misallocated funds, which fail to perform their intended functions, therefore destabilizing democracy. Viewing this relationship through structural functionalism paints a comprehensive picture of how public sector officials, through bribery, electoral malpractice, and violence, hinder functional democracy and thereby promote internal instability. Analyzing the relationship between corruption and democracy through this lens will build on existing scholarship by describing how political structure, corruption, and democracy interact as a system of structural functionalism in Nigeria. This thesis aims to describe the formation and continued prevalence of corruption in the nation, which largely stems from its political structure and monolithic economy centered on oil revenues. It will draw connections between the nation's oil-dependent economy, corruption in the public sector, and unsuccessful democratic restructuring. Lastly, this thesis will describe how the nation's failure to restructure into a functional democracy has limited civil liberties, creating ongoing political instability at all levels of government and persistent human rights violations.

1.5 Relevant Context

Nigeria is a rentier state, a nation that derives most of its wealth from oil exports. This wealth is collected by government-run oil companies, which then distribute it among public officials. Since exports generate the nation's wealth, public officials are less loyal to the state or

its citizens because the money comes from international actors. Nigeria, with an oil-dependent economy, has fostered endemic corruption among public officials, who use these funds for personal gain rather than investing in citizens' needs. In addition to its oil-focused mono-economy, Nigeria's government is still centralized from the previous military rule, despite the regime transition to civilian rule in 1999. The drafting of the most recent 1999 Constitution, which was heavily influenced by the military, did not concern the needs of the citizens, and Nigeria has continued to exist as a corrupt state where public officials possess immense wealth, and many citizens are left living in destitute conditions marred by poverty, pollution, and violence.[99] This thesis sheds light on the reality of living conditions in Nigeria, shaped by corruption and a lack of democratic restructuring. This thesis describes the human rights violations and ongoing political instability that stem from Nigeria's centralized government structure and endemic government corruption, respectively. These conditions continue to weaken civil liberties and the quality of life for Nigerians. This thesis serves to draw attention to this ongoing human rights crisis, contribute to future research, and provide policy recommendations to decentralize Nigeria's government structure, reduce corruption, and improve civil liberties and fundamental human rights for Nigerians.

1.6 Methodology

The thesis uses a historical and qualitative research method, with primary and secondary sources primarily from past government organizations, research papers, literature, and news articles, to construct a historical narrative describing *how* and *why* Nigeria's governmental structure has perpetuated endemic corruption in Nigeria's public sector, preventing the nation's democracy from being functional in addition to being structural. In chapter three, I focus on the

[99] Kashi, Ed. *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*. PowerHouse, 2010.

1999 presidential election, which was intended to transition the nation into civilian rule and allow the government to function as a democracy. In this chapter, I analyze books, government documents, and newspaper articles to describe how the 1999 election continued the established military government structure and passed it on to Nigeria's newly developed civilian rule, making the nation a democracy only in name. In chapter four, I analyze the presidential elections from 2003 to 2023 to examine how authoritarian practices and electoral malpractices have persisted, preventing the government from functioning as a democracy following the 1999 regime transition from military to civilian rule. I chose to analyze the 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 presidential elections to assess how corruption affects proper democratic functioning, and to examine how the 1999 election failed to deliver the governmental restructuring citizens had celebrated. It instead led to continued political instability and human rights violations that continue today. There is substantial literature on Nigeria's public sector corruption and democratic deficits following its regime transition to civilian rule in 1999 that I include in this thesis.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied in this thesis centers on the concepts of structural functionalism and interdependence. Structural functionalism is a *macro-level* theory that describes how institutions work together as interrelated parts to perform roles to maintain order and stability in the societal system.[100] Each part of the system, including government, economy, education, and religion, serves a specific role that contributes to the system's stability and continuity.[101] In Nigeria, conflicts within the system cause parts of it to function poorly. These

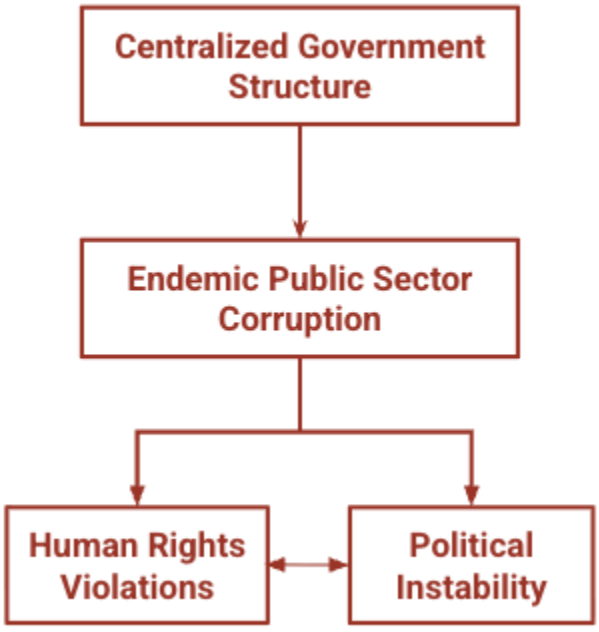
[100] Structural functionalism is defined on pages 14-15.
[101] McMahon, Maureen. "Structural Functionalism." *EBSCO Research Starters: Social Sciences and Humanities*.

conflicts include public sector corruption, which serves the interests of elites and government officials, resulting in instability rather than unity. Structural functionalism applies to my thesis because Nigeria is a democratic republic in structure, but its centralized federal structure and corruption prevent institutions from working together to maintain stability. Interdependence is a *micro-level* theory that describes how, when one component of a system changes, all other parts, and the system as a whole, are affected.[102] There is an interdependent relationship between corruption and democracy, as corruption has hindered the development of a functional democratic republic in Nigeria.[103] Human rights violations, including suppression of free speech and withholding fundamental human rights, such as education, healthcare, and security, have an interdependent relationship with political instability in the nation. Political instability is a driving force in human rights violations in the nation, including electoral violence, corruption, and protests, which stem from the centralized, weak government structure that does not take accountability for human rights violations occurring in the nation.[104] Figure 1, found below, illustrates this relationship within the theoretical framework of structural functionalism and interdependence.

In Nigeria, interdependence is primarily defined in literature as intergovernmental relations (IGR), in which the different levels of government are intertwined through public sector corruption, or the allocation of oil revenues to various levels of government, stemming from the centralized federal executive, and hindering national development.[105] According to the systems theory, defined by Parsons (1951), Easton (1957), Almond (1956), Mitchell (1968), and

[102] Interdependence is defined on pages 15-16.
[103] Almond, Gabriel A. "A Developmental Approach to Political Systems." *World Politics* 17, no. 2 (1965): 183–214. https://doi.org/10.2307/2009347.
[104] Amnesty International. *Nigeria: Accountability for Human Rights Violations Remains Elusive*. Index AFR 44/6970/2023. July 2023.
[105] EjimeAgidi, Pally. "Intergovernmental Relations in Nigerian Politics: Evaluating Revenue Allocation." *Journal of Political Discourse* 3, no. 1, no. 2 (March 2025): 278.

Rapoport (1968), the internal structure of a political system includes the relationship between those in power and citizens not in power. Those in power determine resource allocation and the distribution of power in the state.[106] A political system contains interdependent relationships; if the economy were to struggle, or, in the case of Nigeria, if oil revenue decreased, this would not only affect those in power but also the citizens who depend on these public funds. The system theory states that for the political system to survive, each institution that is part of the political system must cooperate and contribute to the system.[107] This theory applies to the Nigerian state because different institutions within its political system (i.e., government, economic structures, social and ethnic groups) must cooperate to maintain stability. Conflict in one part of the system (i.e., political instability, corruption, human rights violations, sectarian violence) spreads throughout the system, resulting in state instability and weakened regime legitimacy.



[106] Mitchell W. C.(1968) "Political systems". In SillsD. L. (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Vol. *5*, pp. 473–479). New York: Macmillan.
[107] Olaniyi, O. (2001). Foundation of public policy analysis. Sunad Publishers Limited, 57.

Figure 1: Diagram of the Structural Functionalism Model of Interdependence applied to Nigeria's Centralized Government Structure

1.8 Composition

Chapter two argues that corruption in Nigeria stems from its being a mono-economy and petrostate dependent on oil revenues, which public officials then misallocate, leaving oil-producing communities, such as the Niger Delta, living in destitute conditions with underdeveloped infrastructure. Chapter three argues that the 1999 presidential election was *unsuccessful* in restructuring the nation into a functional democracy due to corruption and electoral malpractice; the nation became a structural democratic republic, or a democracy in name only. This chapter discusses the government's drafting of the 1999 constitution, which did not hold a constitutional convention or consider citizens' wants and needs, despite its attempt to transition to civilian rule. Chapter four argues that corruption and electoral malpractices have not subsided in the twenty years following the 1999 election, and political instability persists. It describes the anti-corruption agencies established after the 1999 election, which were unsuccessful in combating public-sector corruption and in implementing sufficient reforms.

In chapter five, I argue that restructuring Nigeria into a democratic federal system could lead to constitutional amendments and the implementation of policies by the National Assembly of Nigeria,[108] which could increase infrastructure development in the Niger Delta states, diversify the nation's economy, reduce electoral malpractices, improve voter education, and improve government transparency and civil liberties. By increasing civil liberties, human rights violations (i.e., inadequate education, extreme poverty, and voter suppression) would decrease in the nation. The chapter will introduce further research on Nigeria's flawed government structure,

[108] International IDEA. "Nigeria's Constitutional Reform Process: The Quest for a People-Driven Constitution." *ConstitutionNet*, October 18, 2017.

which has created systemic corruption and a structural, but not functional, democracy. Finally, I will address the limitations of creating these reforms: the National Assembly is established as an independent legislative entity,[109] yet the federal executive, or president, influences the Assembly. I argue that reforms benefiting the citizens of Nigeria have not been made because it is in the states' or public sector officials' best interest to maintain the centralized system of government, where corrupt practices allow control and yield the nation's oil revenue, for the personal benefit of public sector officials.[110]

1.9 Conclusion

This thesis examines the relationship between corruption and democracy in Nigeria, which was entrenched in the nation's centralized government structure in 1966 when the first military regime began. Public sector corruption continues to affect Nigerian society today because the government structure has not been reformed to support democratic characteristics necessary for a functional democratic republic. The prevalence of public sector corruption prevents wealth, gained from Nigeria's leading export, oil, from being distributed equally to all citizens. Inadequate anti-corruption campaigns have failed to combat corruption, resulting in ongoing political instability within the divided nation, with citizens following their state government more closely than the national government. Endemic government corruption, stemming from the centralized government structure, perpetuates political instability and human rights violations in the nation. While substantial reforms have not been implemented by international organizations or the Nigerian state to reform Nigeria's government structure, this

[109] Chapter five of the 1999 Constitution provides legislative power of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Assembly of Nigeria (i.e., Senate and House of Representatives).
[110] Okoi, Obasesam, and MaryAnne Iwara. "The Failure of Governance in Nigeria: An Epistocratic Challenge." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, April 12, 2021.

thesis will conclude in chapter five by providing policy recommendations to decentralize the nation's government structure to improve civil liberties and human rights in Nigeria.

Chapter 2: Nigeria's Political Economy: The Petrostate, the Resource Curse, and Economic Deprivation in the Niger Delta

"... Many oil-producing nations remain highly centralized, even authoritarian, as oil revenues tend to follow trickle-down patterns and there is a political premium on access to central power".[111]

2.1 Introduction

In 1830, British explorers Richard and John Lander led the exploration of the Niger Delta region and discovered that the Niger Delta flows into the Atlantic Ocean, creating a trade route between Great Britain and interior Africa and allowing the British to export raw materials for industrial use.[112] Following their discovery of the Niger Delta as a source of commerce, the British government quickly worked with missionaries and commercial entities to develop the Niger Valley region and educate indigenous Nigerians. The British government had economic motivations, as the government's interest in expanding the Niger Delta was to expand trade and commerce in the region and gain access to more resources.[113] The British amalgamated Nigeria in 1914 and formed a centralized administration.[114] The centralized government structure made it easier for the British government to develop infrastructure to support its methods of extractive capitalism, or the exploitation of land, resources, and indigenous people in the colony.[115] The British employed colonial environmentalism by controlling resource production and increasing

[111] Rotberg, Robert I., 18.
[112] Hallett, Robin, ed., *The Niger Journal of Richard and John Lander* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965).
[113] Dike, Kenneth O., *Origins of the Niger Mission 1841–1891* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1962).
[114] Fagbule, Fola and Fawehinmi, Feyi, Formation: *The Making of Nigeria from Jihad to Amalgamation* (Abuja: Cassava Republic Press, 2021).
[115] Ochonu, Moses, *Colonial Meltdown: Northern Nigeria in the Great Depression* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009).

the extraction of natural resources, including oil, marginalizing indigenous communities, and creating lasting environmental degradation.[116]

The Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), formally known as Shell D'Arcy, began exploring for oil in the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1937 when the company was given the sole concessionary rights to search for oil in the colony's territory.[117] Shell D'Arcy discovered crude oil deposits in the territory in 1956, and that same year, Shell D'Arcy was renamed Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited, after becoming a joint venture between Shell D'Arcy and British Petroleum (BP).[118] The oil industry expanded in the 1970s and progressed quickly, and the Nigerian government joined the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971 and established the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) in January 1977.[119] OPEC standardizes petroleum policies among its twelve member countries, serving to stabilize the oil market by managing oil production through assigning maximum production levels to stabilize oil prices.[120] Joining OPEC solidified Nigeria's status as a major global oil exporter, making oil its main source of revenue, yet the standard of living for most Nigerian citizens did not improve; between 1970 and 2000, the number of citizens surviving on less than one dollar per day grew from 36% to more than 70%, from 19 million to 90 million Nigerians.[121]

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[116] Mustapha, Abdul Raufu, 405.
[117] Ogbuigwe, A. Refining in Nigeria: history, challenges and prospects. *Appl Petrochem Res* 8, 181–192 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13203-018-0211-z.
[118] Ogbuigwe, A, 181.
[119] Wapner, Abraham. "Downstream Beneficiation Case Study: Nigeria." *Columbia Center on Sustainable Investment*, Mar. 2017, ccsi.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/our%20focus/Nigeria-Case-Study-May-2017_CCSI-Final-2.pdf.
[120] "Brief History", *Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries*, www.opec.org/brief-history.html.
[121] Subramanian and Sala-i-Martin. "Addressing the Natural Resource Curse: An Illustration From Nigeria", *IMF Working Papers* 2003, 139 (2003), accessed 3/15/2026, https://doi.org/10.5089/9781451856064.001.

The oil boom strengthened the trend toward state control of the economy by increasing the profitability of public office.[122] Elite competition developed in Nigeria because it became an oil-rich state; as public sector officials receiving oil revenue had plentiful power and wealth, while the larger population in Nigeria did not have access to abundant resources.[123] As oil revenue increased, elite competition for power over it also increased, while communities in the Niger Delta, where the oil was extracted, remained marginalized and underdeveloped.[124] As a government-run organization, the NNPCL works to control the government's shares of international oil operations and is managed by a board of directors appointed by the President of Nigeria.[125] Since the end of military rule in Nigeria in 1999, the nation has experienced a rise in oil prices, which has resulted in increased oil revenue despite a negligible increase in oil production.[126] Nigeria's oil production profits are estimated to be over $1.5 billion every week, making it the sixth-largest producer of oil in the world.[127] While oil revenue generates wealth for the nation, it is not directed towards infrastructure investment to improve the quality of life for Nigerian citizens.

The corruption complex in Nigeria, or the interdependent relationship between the rise in corruption and the continuation of undemocratic government practices, as a result of the centralized government structure, developed following the rise in the nation's oil wealth.[128] Nigeria can be described as a state with "prebendal" politics, in which public-sector officials use

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[122] Kew, Darren, 91.
[123] Adunbi, Omolade. "The Petrostate in Africa." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, 13 Dec. 2023, 1.
[124] Adunbi, Omolade. "The Petrostate in Africa," 4.
[125] Wapner, Abraham, 2.
[126] Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Oil Rent and Corruption" The Case of Nigeria", *Etudes de l'Ifri*, November 2018.
[127] Kashi, Ed, 36.
[128] Pierce, Steven. "Oil and the 'Army Arrangement': Corruption and the Petro-State, 1970–1999." In *Moral Economies of Corruption: State Formation and Political Culture in Nigeria*. Duke University Press, 2016. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.2307/jj.33610751.8, 107.

their offices for personal gain and provide patronage, or rents, to their supporters. In Nigeria's case, public office became a method for citizens to gain wealth, rather than serve the state.[129] As oil wealth in Nigeria increased, it became a central funding agent for the government, and in 1969, oil made up 16.6 percent of federal revenue; in 1970, this increased to 25.9 percent, and five years later, by 1974, oil was 80.8 percent.[130] Oil revenue increased the government's funding by over ten times what it was in 1969 in only five years.[131] The surge in public funding from oil revenue was controlled by government officials, who misallocated the funds for their own profit, perpetuating public sector corruption as officials could maintain control through patronage or paying rents to opposing elites.

From the oil industry's early days of prosperity in Nigeria, the government made premature promises of infrastructure development, stemming from the nation's newfound wealth. In January 1977, six years after Nigeria joined OPEC, Olusegun Obasanjo, Military Head of State and Grand Patron of Festac, hosted the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (Festac '77) in Lagos, signaling the nation's beginning as a significant player in global capitalism.[132] Nigeria's oil industry quickly became the nation's predominant industry, and cash crops, such as cocoa in western Nigeria, palm oil in eastern Nigeria, and groundnuts and cotton in northern Nigeria, became overshadowed by the rise in petro-dollars yielded from oil.[133] The development of oil capitalism caused Festac's president, Chief Anthony Enahoro, to declare Nigeria a political and economic leader in Africa, introducing plans for economic growth, infrastructure development in the public sector, and modernization.[134] Instead, Nigeria's

[129] Pierce, Steven, 107.
[130] Pierce, Steven, 119-120.
[131] Pierce, Steven, 120.
[132] Apter, Andrew. "The Pan-African nation: Oil-money and the spectacle of culture in Nigeria." *Public Culture* 8, no. 3 (1996): 442.
[133] Helleiner, Gerald K. *Peasant Agriculture, Government, and Economic Growth in Nigeria*, 1966.
[134] Apter, Andrew, 443.

government dispersed oil funds among public sector officials, looting oil revenues from the Niger Delta region where oil is sourced.[135] Chapter two will describe how these plans for an improved Nigeria never materialized because political conflict and ongoing government corruption led to the mismanagement of oil funds, preventing infrastructure development in the Nigerian states most in need, especially the nine states in the Niger Delta region.

Corruption, or the existence of a kleptocratic and neopatrimonalist state with prebendal politics, is at the root of Nigeria's immense wealth inequality, as the domestic political system is personalistic and includes self-interested public officials who utilize public funds for their personal gain.[136] Public officials withdraw large sums of public funds to fuel their personal endeavors. An example of this is the 2014 allegation that $2.2 billion was withdrawn from Excess Crude Account (ECA), of which $1 billion was allegedly approved by former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (2010-2015) to fund his presidential reelection campaign without the knowledge of the National Economic Council (NEC), which advises the president on economic affairs, is run by the vice president and all 36 state governors.[137] Corruption is widespread amongst public officials within Nigeria who maintain a lack of transparency, leading to an unequal distribution of wealth, preventing growth and development within the nation, as public funds are misallocated.[138] In Nigeria, election to public office is seen as a way to gain large-scale capital, commonly derived from Nigeria's leading industry, oil, instead of as a place to serve the nation.[139] The misappropriation of public funds among Nigerian public officials hinders

[135] Apter, Andrew, 443.
[136] Pierce, Steven, 201.
[137] Arowolo DE (2022), "Ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria". *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 29 No. 1 pp. 246–257, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-06-2020-0106.
[138] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale. "An assessment of the factors of economic and financial corruption by public officials in Nigeria." *Journal of Economic Criminology*, vol. 10, Dec. 2025, p. 100188, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100188.
[139] Oyebanji and Omale.

infrastructure development and exacerbates systemic poverty and socioeconomic inequality within the country, especially in the Niger Delta region.[140] Insecurity within the nation stems from the extraordinary gap between the wealthy public officials in Nigeria, who have access to oil money, and everyone else who does not.[141] This chapter will contribute to answering my research question by addressing the embedded corruption in the nation's economic structure, which causes widespread inequality and erodes democracy by centralizing wealth and power to the federal executive, or head of state, leading subordinate public sector officials to compete for power and wealth.

2.2 Key definitions

The following subsections define key terms I use in chapter two and the literature surrounding them.

Colonial environmentalism

Colonial environmentalism stems from colonial intervention in Nigeria's environment, including the introduction of new farming techniques to attempt to make the agricultural practices of local indigenous groups subordinate.[142] British colonial authorities managed the environment and the agricultural industry in Nigeria, using European farming techniques instead of traditional local methods. Colonial authorities reduced indigenous communities' autonomy over their land by claiming that local communities were depleting farmland soil; therefore, environmental policy in Nigeria was shaped by a "colonial mentality".[143]

[140] Oyebanji and Omale.
[141] Pierce, Steven. *Moral Economies of Corruption: State Formation and Political Culture in Nigeria*. Duke University Press, 2016.
[142] Mustapha, Abdul Raufu (2003) Colonialism and environmental perception in Northern Nigeria, Oxford Development Studies, 31:4, 405-425, DOI: 10.1080/1360081032000146609.
[143] Mustapha, Abdul Raufu, 405.

Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA)

The Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) was a government-run department, established in 1970, that had the responsibility to give licenses to prospective oil companies and regulate gas and oil activities.[144] In 2021, the DPR was replaced by two new regulatory agencies: the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA). President Muhammadu Buhari signed the NUPRC and NMDPRA into law by signing the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), a change intended to develop the oil industry.[145]

Downstream Petroleum

Petroleum can be defined as being upstream (crude), midstream (refineries), or downstream (gas station). This thesis will focus on the downstream petroleum industry, or refined petroleum products sold internationally. The downstream petroleum industry is controlled by the Nigerian federal government, which has different government-run agencies, such as the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), resulting in endemic public sector corruption and the creation of an oligopolistic industry.[146]

Ecocide

[144] "Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR)." *Upstream Nigeria Oil & Gas and Energy Directory*, 18 May 2018, upstreamnigeria.com/department-of-petroleum-resources-dpr/.
[145] Udegbunam, Oge. "Nigeria Scraps DPR, PPPRA, PEF as New Oil Agencies Take Off." *Premium Times - Nigeria Leading Newspaper for News, Investigations*, 19 Oct. 2021, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/490561-nigeria-scraps-dpr-pppra-pef-as-new-oil-agencies-take-off.html#:~:text=Minister%20of%20State%20for%20Petroleum,the%20Senate%20on%20October%206.
[146] Olujobi, Olusola Joshua. "Deregulation of the downstream petroleum industry: An overview of the legal quandaries and proposal for improvement in Nigeria." *Heliyon*, vol. 7, no. 4, Apr. 2021, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06848.

Ecocide is defined as the destruction of a natural environment through negligent human actions. An example of this is the oil spills, gas flaring, dead fish, and barren fields in the Niger Delta region since the oil industry has expanded in Nigeria.[147]

Extractive capitalism

Extractive capitalism is defined as the extraction of natural resources for the aim of profit for dominant groups in a society, resulting in the exploitation of indigenous groups and land (i.e., the land and people in the Niger Delta region).[148] Extractive capitalism means taking resources using violence, without means of reciprocity for the people and land the dominant group is taking resources from; the dominant group in society believes they can use indigenous people's land for more important reasons, such as economic growth.[149] Extractive capitalism thrives on attempts at dehumanization and is often met with resistance from local communities.

Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI)

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) was launched in Nigeria in 2004 during President Olusegun Obasanjo's regime as the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) to combat corruption and ensure that international oil companies and the Nigerian government are transparent about how much each company pays to the state.[150] The state does not run the NEITI, and the NEITI does not disclose how public officials use oil revenue.

Joint venture (JV)

[147] Peša, Iva. "Anthropocene narratives of living with resource extraction in Africa." *Radical History Review*, vol. 2023, no. 145, 1 Jan. 2023, pp. 125–138, https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-10063818.
[148] Dulhunty, Annabel. "When extractive and racial capitalism combine–Indigenous and caste based struggles with land, labour and law in India." *Geoforum* 147 (2023): 103887.
[149] Dulhunty, Annabel, 2.
[150] El Hamad, Walid, et al. "Staging transparency: The Nigerian Extractive Industries transparency initiative (NEITI) and the spectacle of Nigeria's Extractive Industry." *The Extractive Industries and Society*, vol. 26, June 2026, pp. 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exis.2026.101859.

A joint venture can be defined as an agreement between two or more companies or governments (i.e., the joint venture between the Nigerian government via the NNPC and international oil companies, such as Shell) where the institutions collaborate and share resources for a defined period of time to achieve a business goal.[151] A JV between the Nigerian state and multinational oil corporations ensures that the state and corporations share profits from oil.[152]

Ministry of Petroleum Resources (MPR)

The Ministry of Petroleum Resources (MPR) is a government-run institution responsible for managing environmental issues, such as gas flaring,[153] which contribute to climate and land degradation in resource-rich regions such as the Niger Delta. The MPR is the central federal executive power in charge of regulating oil industry practices and implementing petroleum resources policies; it controls the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) and the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC).[154] The MPR is relevant in chapter two because policy enforcement surrounding gas flaring and climate change mitigation has been slow in Nigeria due to internal political conflict and weak governance.

Monolithic, or mono-economy

Nigeria hosts a monolithic economy, meaning most of its government revenue is obtained from one resource, in this case, oil, or petroleum.[155] The term monolithic, or mono-economy, is relevant in this chapter because, before the oil industry boomed in the 1970s, Nigeria was still a mono-economy, yet it was based on agriculture instead of oil.[156] The concept of a mono-

[151] Gilstein, Julia. "Joint Venture (JV): Business and Management: Research Starters: EBSCO Research." *EBSCO*, 2024, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/joint-venture-jv.
[152] Adunbi, Omolade. "The Petrostate in Africa," 2.
[153] Aigbe, Godwin O. et al. "Gas Flaring in Nigeria: A Multi-level Governance and Policy Coherence Analysis." *Anthropocene Science* vol. 2,1 (2023): 31–47. doi:10.1007/s44177-023-00045-5.
[154] Aigbe, Godwin O. et al. "Gas Flaring in Nigeria".
[155] Arowolo DE (2022), "Ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria". *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 29 No. 1 pp. 246–257, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-06-2020-0106.
[156] Adunbi, Omolade. "The Petrostate in Africa," 3.

economy is not new to Nigeria, but the oil boom in the 1970s signaled a transition from an agrarian mono-economy to an oil-focused mono-economy.

Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC)

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) works to identify rural development projects in the Niger Delta region and monitor the locals' socioeconomic well-being, which includes nine states in Nigeria: Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Rivers, Ondo, Imo, Abia, and Edo.[157] The NDDC is relevant in chapter two because development projects in the Niger Delta region have seldom impacted the lives of citizens living in destitute conditions in the region.[158]

Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL)

The Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) is a government-run company that operates as a commercial business in Nigeria, including making payments to the Nigerian federal executive, which has power over the NNPCL (Section 44(3) 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that the state owns all natural resources, including oil and gas).[159]

Petrostate and Rentier State

A petrostate can be defined as an oil-rich state where oil and oil money are vital for the legitimacy of the state.[160] A petrostate is a kind of rentier state, or a nation with an economy reliant on external revenue from petroleum extraction,[161] in Nigeria's case, exporting oil

[157] Onoyemeakpo, Awhereoghene Joseph (PhD). 2023. "Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and its Challenges Towards Development Administration in the Niger Delta Region: An Assessment". *International Journal of Social Science Research and Anthropology* 2 (2). https://taapublications.com/tijssra/article/view/103.
[158] Onoyemeakpo, Awhereoghene Joseph (PhD). 2023. "Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC)".
[159] Borha, David Oladeji, and Olusola Joshua Olujobi. "An examination of the Petroleum Industry Act 2021: Prospects, Challenges, and the way forward." *National Library of Medicine*, vol. 12, 16 Aug. 2023, p. 551, https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.132539.2.
[160] Lyall & Valdivia (2019): The Speculative Petro-State: Volatile Oil Prices and Resource Populism in Ecuador, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, DOI: 10.1080/24694452.2018.1531690.
[161] Adunbi, Omolade, 2.

internationally, instead of having substantial domestic production.[162] While economists initially created the term rentier state in the early twentieth century to describe European states extending loans to non-European governments,[163] the term's current meaning is a state that receives revenue, or rents, from foreign, or external, individuals and governments.[164] The rents paid to rentier states are generally directed to the state, resulting in corruption by public sector actors who distribute rents among themselves.[165] The premise is that oil gives public sector officials the resources to relieve social pressures by buying political support and repressing dissent; the conclusion is that states with oil wealth tend to be less democratic than states without oil wealth because it gives them the power to carry out authoritarian principles of governance.[166]

Petroleum Industry Act (PIA)

The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), passed in 2021, was intended to restructure Nigeria's oil and gas industry by increasing government transparency and revenue and financial stability,[167] and focusing on sustainable development in main communities where oil is extracted, such as the Niger Delta, which holds the largest number of extraction sites based on PSCs.[168] The PIA introduced regulatory reforms, improving institutional stability and sustainable investment by ensuring Nigeria has uninterrupted oil production and long-term growth.[169]

Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF)

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[162] Lewis, Peter. "Nigeria: Elections in a Fragile Regime." *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (2003): 131-144. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.0054.
[163] Lenin, V.I. "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Lenin Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).
[164] Mahdavy, Hussein. "The Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," in M. A. Cook, ed., *Studies in Economic History of the Middle East* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 428.
[165] Beblawi, Hazem. "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, eds., *The Rentier State* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), 51.
[166] Mitchell, T, 400.
[167] Olawuyi, D. S., & Abe, O. (2022). *Business and Human Rights Law and Practice in Africa*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
[168] Isallah, Haruna. 2023. "The Impact of the Petroleum Industry Act on Corporate Social Responsibility and Taxation in Nigeria's Upstream Oil and Gas Sector: A Path towards Sustainable Development" *Sustainability* 15, no. 21: 15538.
[169] Ucho, Clement, Basil U. Eze, and Kingsley Ikechukwu Ezeh, 4268.

The Nigerian Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) is a government-run institution that was established by the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in 1999 and can be defined as an organization that engages in unequal oil revenue allocation by distributing oil funds to certain regions, while marginalizing the Niger Delta, where the gas and oil are extracted.[170] The federal government, working as the PTF, has marginalized the Niger Delta by providing communities with fewer funds for infrastructure development.[171]

Producer Economy

A producer economy is defined as a nation (i.e., Nigeria) that is a large oil and gas exporter internationally, and a nation that is reliant on revenues from hydrocarbons (i.e., crude oil) to finance a large portion of its national budget, or projected government revenue and spending.[172]

Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs)

A Production Sharing Contract (PSC) can be defined as an agreement between the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and international oil companies (IOCs) with the purpose of the exploration and production of oil in both deep offshore (oil below a water depth of 200 meters), and inland, or sedimentary, basins, such as Anambra, Benin, or Benue,[173] all reserves are owned by the Nigerian government.[174]

Resource Curse, or Paradox of Plenty

The Resource Curse, or Paradox of Plenty, theory describes countries that are rich in natural resources often have less developed economic progress than economies with fewer

[170] Ibaba, Samuel Ibaba, 45.
[171] Ibaba, Samuel Ibaba, 46.
[172] IEA (2018), *Outlook for Producer Economies*, IEA, Paris https://www.iea.org/reports/outlook-for-producer-economies, Licence: CC BY 4.0.
[173] Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC). *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004*.
[174] Ucho, Clement, Basil U. Eze, and Kingsley Ikechukwu Ezeh, 4261.

natural resources.[175] This term refers to a nation that has extensive wealth from a resource but still experiences economic distortions, institutional instability, violent conflict, ecological degradation, and persistent inequality.[176] Furthermore, there is an interdependent relationship between economic growth, oil dependence, and the quality of political institutions; when a state has weak and corrupt political institutions, such as Nigeria, the oil dependence serves as a curse to the nation because the wealth is unequally distributed.[177] Additionally, resource abundance (i.e., large oil revenue) increases public sector corruption in states with poor democratic governments, but not in countries with stable democratic governments.[178] Nigeria is an example of a resource-cursed state because it has generated substantial oil revenue since the 1970s. Yet, it struggles with fragile and poor infrastructure, mass unemployment and poverty, and systemic corruption that erodes state legitimacy and prevents the state from being restructured into a democracy.[179]

2.3 The Petrostate

While corruption, or the use of funds for personal gain amongst public officials, has existed in Nigeria since before the oil industry blossomed in the 1970s, the increase in public funds generated by oil revenue created a new dimension to corruption: seeking election to public office stemmed from the desire to gain control over oil money.[180] The oil boom was the catalyst

[175] Olujobi, Olusola Joshua. "Deregulation of the downstream petroleum industry: An overview of the legal quandaries and proposal for improvement in Nigeria." *Heliyon*, vol. 7, no. 4, Apr. 2021, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e06848.
[176] Obakhume, Kaseem Abidemi. "Local content development and the resource curse in Nigeria: Comparative lessons and policy reform pathways." *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, vol. 13, June 2026, p. 102291, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102291.
[177] Antonakakis, Nikolaos, et al. "Oil dependence, quality of political institutions and economic growth: A panel VAR approach." *Resources Policy*, vol. 53, Sept. 2017, pp. 147–163, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2017.06.005.
[178] Bhattacharyya, Sambit, and Roland Hodler. "Natural Resources, democracy and corruption." *European Economic Review*, vol. 54, no. 4, May 2010, pp. 608–621, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2009.10.004.
[179] Obakhume, Kaseem Abidemi, 4.
[180] Lewis, Peter, 136.

for subsequent decades of military-run government and public government assets used for the personal benefit of those in power.[181] This enables corruption because those who have control of the oil money are prosperous, while four out of ten Nigerians live in extreme poverty,[182] on less than $1.90 (USD) a day.[183] The political instability in petrostates, such as Nigeria, stems from the distribution of oil wealth. Oil revenue in Nigeria is distributed in four mechanisms: the federal account, oil rents appropriated directly by the federal government;[184] a state derivation principle, the right of each state in Nigeria to a portion of the taxes its citizens are thought to have contributed to federal exchequer, or Nigerian National Treasury;[185] the Federation Account (or States Joint Account), allocates oil revenue to different states based on need;[186] and a Special Grants Account, which is supposed to designate a portion of money for the Niger Delta region, which was corruptly managed by the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) until 2001;[187] it is now managed by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).[188]

As outlined in the 1999 Constitution, the federal government owns the nation's oil and gas production, engaging in joint ventures (JVs) and production sharing contracts (PSCs) with and controlling the process of granting oil contracts to multinational oil corporations, and is entitled to the majority of revenue from these resources.[189] Under Section 162(2) of Nigeria's

[181] Pierce, Steven, 206.
[182] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale. "An assessment of the factors of economic and financial corruption by public officials in Nigeria." *Journal of Economic Criminology*, vol. 10, Dec. 2025, p. 100188, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100188.
[183] World Bank. *Global Poverty and Equity Database: Nigeria (POVEQ NGA)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2020.
[184] Watts, Michael. "Empire of oil".
[185] Watts, Michael. "Empire of oil".
[186] Watts, Michael. "Empire of oil".
[187] Watts, M. (2007). Petro-insurgency or criminal syndicate? Conflict & violence in the Niger Delta. *Review of African Political Economy, 34*(114), 642.
[188] Kashi, Ed, 45.
[189] Hanson, Stephanie. *"Nigeria's Creaky Political System."* Council on Foreign Relations, April 12, 2007.

1999 Constitution, or the Derivation Formula, the Federation Account must allocate no less than 13% of the nation's oil revenue to the producing states, as compensation for the ecocide in Nigeria, which has grown as the oil industry has expanded.[190] Funds to the producing states (in the Niger Delta) are collected in the Federation Account and distributed monthly through another federal executive body, the Revenue Mobilization, Allocation, and Fiscal Commission.[191] Between 2000 and 2004, oil-producing states received an increase in revenue from the federal government, and the governors of the states have remained corrupt and misallocated funds because they do not have accountability to the citizens they represent. State representatives and militant groups have pushed for funds to be allocated to the Niger Delta region, including the militant group, MEND, which has demanded up to 50% derivation to fund infrastructure development in the Niger Delta region.[192] While the federal government allocated more funds to oil-producing states between 1999 and 2002, as the 13% derivation formula allocated more funds to oil-producing states than non-oil-producing states, the citizens of oil-producing states do not believe the funds they receive are sufficient reparations for the environmental degradation to their land, and Nigerians in the South South geopolitical region have pushed for oil-producing states to have "full control" over the resources their states produce.[193] The federal government has not met the citizens' demands, and has instead included laws restricting citizens' land ownership to centralize land ownership in the public sector. Citizens demand the repeal of laws giving control over land and resources to the federal government,[194] including Section 315(5) of the 1999 Constitution, which implements the Land Use Decree, stating that "all subsoil minerals,

[190] Hanson, Stephanie. *"Nigeria's Creaky Political System."*
[191] Hanson, Stephanie. *"Nigeria's Creaky Political System."*
[192] Hanson, Stephanie. *"Nigeria's Creaky Political System."*
[193] Human Rights Watch. *"Nigeria."* In *World Report 2002*.
[194] Human Rights Watch. *"Nigeria."* In *World Report 2002*.

including oil, belong to all the people of Nigeria, not just those from the area".[195] This decree designates all land in a state to the State Governor, replacing private ownership of land with state control of land management to regulate ownership.[196] Citizens protest this decree by stating that it imposes on their constitutional right to own property and centralizes power over land to public sector officials; yet, this decree cannot be reformed without a constitutional amendment, which would require a special procedure outlined in Section 9 of the 1999 Constitution, and would require cooperation from the federal executive and local governments, which is unlikely.[197]

Corruption seeps into the distribution of oil revenue among public sector officials in the state; where there is oil money, there is often poor economic management and corruption, and rentier states tend to be the nations with the most corruption.[198] The "Rentier Effect" describes three common mechanisms describing the link between oil exports and authoritarian rule: the "taxation effect", "spending effect", and "group formation" effect.[199] The "taxation effect" describes governments that obtain sufficient profits from oil sales taxing their populations less heavily, making citizens of the nation unlikely to seek representation in government, and making the nation less democratic.[200] The second part of the "Rentier Effect" is the "spending effect", where a nation with large oil revenue spends more of its wealth on patronage, or granting jobs for political loyalty, making the government more corrupt and eroding democracy.[201] The third aspect is the "group formation" effect, where the government distributes its wealth to prevent the

[195] Rotberg, Robert I., 21.
[196] Rotberg, Robert I., 21.
[197] Akobella, Tommy Joshua, and Eunice Gandiba Tali. *"An Overview of the Constitution Amendment Procedures in Nigeria and Ghana."* Integrity Journal of Arts and Humanities 6, no. 1 (February 2025): 43–47.
[198] Kashi, Ed, 40.
[199] Ross, Michael L. "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?" *World Politics* 53, no. 3 (2001): 325–61. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1353/wp.2001.0011.
[200] Ross, Michael L, 332.
[201] Ross, Michael L, 333.

formation of independent civil society groups that could create political dissent and protests.[202] The findings of the "Rentier Effect" state how a state's financial policies influence what type of regime it is, as governments that are funded through oil profits and have larger national budgets are also more likely to be authoritarian than states that are funded through taxes, which are likely democratic.[203] Nigeria is no exception to these findings. Despite Nigeria having an oil-focused mono-economy, with oil being Nigeria's primary source of government revenue and export earnings over the past fifty years, and oil revenue currently making up 20% of the nation's GDP, 95% of export earnings, and 65% of government proceeds,[204] the state remains unable to forge a stable, functional democracy, reduce corruption, and invest oil revenue in infrastructure development. This leaves citizens in Niger Delta oil communities struggling to earn a living and with limited access to education and healthcare, while government officials amass immense wealth from the oil derived from the Niger Delta region.[205] There is a long-term relationship between Nigeria's oil revenue and economic growth, as Nigeria's economy remains vulnerable to volatility in oil prices because the government has not taken measures to diversify its economy.[206] Public sector officials are not promoting the diversification of Nigeria's economy, which is synonymous with the government failing to promote economic development,[207] resulting in a resource curse existing in Nigeria. Nigeria continues to endure problems with economic and infrastructural development because of corruption in the government, impacting oil revenue allocation, as resource production is controlled by public sector officials because of

[202] Ross, Michael L, 334.
[203] Ross, Michael L, 335.
[204] Samuel, Sunday Eneojo, and Reza Kouhy. "Paradox of oil revenue allocation and utilisation in resource-rich countries: The case of nigeria." *Resources Policy*, vol. 111, Dec. 2025, pp. 1.
[205] Egbe, Godwin. "Assessing the impact of socioeconomic disparities on criminal behaviors in oil producing communities in Niger Delta Nigeria." *Journal of Economic Criminology*, vol. 7, Mar. 2025.
[206] Samuel, Sunday Eneojo, and Reza Kouhy, 2.
[207] Mehrara, Mohsen, and Kamran Niki Oskoui. "The sources of macroeconomic fluctuations in oil exporting countries: A comparative study." *Economic Modelling*, vol. 24, no. 3, May 2007, pp. 365–379.

Nigeria's centralized government structure, granting government officials the ability to use public oil funds for their own profit, instead of contributing to economic and infrastructural development.[208]

Petrostates are more prone to corruption because leaders in power use rent-sharing when confronted with political dissent and cooptation when the opposition is stronger.[209] Nigeria has acted as a petrostate, maintaining regime control by distributing rents, or oil money, to public officials in power. To reduce this corrupt economic model, Nigeria would need to develop an economy with multiple sources of production and wealth, so that those who control oil are not the only ones with wealth, as they have been since the oil boom.[210] In the nation's current economic model, weak institutions uphold the law, corruption thrives, and public officials use public office for private gain.[211] By restructuring the Nigerian government into a democratic system that represents the people of Nigeria through free and fair elections, corruption could be reduced. Reduced corruption could increase infrastructure development by preventing funds from being diverted for the personal gain of public officials.[212]

2.4 The Resource Curse

Behind the prosperous Petrostate lies the Niger Delta, which faces environmental degradation, immense poverty, and underdevelopment of infrastructure, as funds are stripped from the region by the Nigerian government, leaving the local communities in destitute

[208] Mehrara, Mohsen. "The asymmetric relationship between oil revenues and economic activities: The case of oil-exporting countries." *Energy Policy*, vol. 36, no. 3, Mar. 2008, pp. 1164–1168.
[209] Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski. "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships." *Wiley Online Library*, Mar. 2006, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-0343.2006.00160.x.
[210] Lewis, Peter, 136.
[211] Lewis, Peter, 217.
[212] Lewis, Peter, 212.

conditions.[213] In Nigeria's South-South geopolitical zone, located within the Ibo Plateau and the Cross River valley, and amounting to twelve percent of Nigeria's surface area and hosting a population of twenty-eight million Nigerians,[214] the Niger Delta produces the bulk of the oil revenue, as over 90 percent of the nation's oil production occurs here,[215] fueling the nation's earnings.[216] The Niger Delta is composed of nine states: Delta, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Rivers, Ondo, Imo, Abia, and Endo states, which contain many oil reserves and plants, such as the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) plant, which is one of the largest natural gas plants in the world, and is operated by the government-run NNPC.[217] Multinational oil corporations, such as Shell, which first discovered oil in the Delta in 1956, benefit financially from oil revenue from the region.[218] However, Nigerians in the region live in destitute conditions, with underdeveloped infrastructure, high rates of unemployment, marginal accessibility to healthcare and education, and an abundance of pollution.[219] Decades of oil and gas extraction have permanently damaged what used to be a lush landscape, destroying mangroves, which used to make up a hotspot for global biodiversity.[220] Nigerians in the Delta region can no longer fish and farm because oil pipelines and flow stations have taken over their land, resulting in the decline of their agrarian communities that were soon relabeled as "oil-producing communities".[221] The Delta, once known for dried fish and palm oil, is now famous

[213] Ibaba, Samuel Ibaba. "The SPDC and sustainable development in the Niger Delta." *International Journal of Development Issues*, vol. 7, no. 1, 27 June 2008, 41.
[214] Kashi, Ed, 40.
[215] Ibaba, Samuel Ibaba, 42.
[216] Kashi, Ed. *Curse of the Black Gold: 50 Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*. PowerHouse, 2010.
[217] Kashi, Ed, 20.
[218] Ratcliffe, Rebecca. "'This Place Used to Be Green': The Brutal Impact of Oil in the Niger Delta." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 6 Dec. 2019, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/06/this-place-used-to-be-green-the-brutal-impact-of-oil-in-the-niger-delta.
[219] Dike, Jude. "Niger Delta".
[220] Peša, Iva, 130.
[221] Adunbi, Omolade. "Mythic oil: Resources, belonging and the politics of claim making among the ÌLÀJẸ yorùbá of Nigeria." *Africa*, vol. 83, no. 2, May 2013, pp. 293–313, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0001972013000053.

for international oil and gas exports. As wealth is stripped from locals in the region, years of violence and protests have surfaced from a history of exploitation by large corporations, the NNPC, and politicians.[222] Nigerians living in the Delta protest against the overdominance of oil companies because they are not beneficiaries of the immense wealth it brings; the overdependence on oil in Nigeria has made communities poorer by stripping them of the natural resources and products their land brings.[223] In the Bayelsa and Delta regions, there is one doctor for every 150,000 Nigerian citizens.[224] Oil wealth has wrought poverty, state violence, and a dying ecosystem, and fifty years of governmental neglect following the oil boom in these regions have prevented citizens from trusting public officials,[225] posing a challenge to the government's restructuring into a functional democratic republic. The Delta people's land is exploited for oil, which generates revenue for public officials and wealthy states in Nigeria, while the people in the Delta region live in impoverished villages.

The people of the Niger Delta have been robbed of the wealth generated in their native land, leading to political instability and insurgent attacks in the region by militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF),[226] and the Niger Delta Freedom Fighters.[227] These groups have made political demands to the Nigerian government for freedom, education, infrastructure development, and drinkable water.[228] In December 2005, MEND members introduced themselves as a "union of all relevant militant groups" and began their militant protests by

[222] Kashi, Ed, 27.
[223] Kashi, Ed, 35.
[224] Watts, Michael. "Empire of oil: Capitalist dispossession and the Scramble for Africa." *Monthly Review*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1 Sept. 2006, https://doi.org/10.14452/mr-058-04-2006-08_1.
[225] Watts, Michael. "Empire of oil".
[226] Watts, M, 645.
[227] Watts, M. (2007). Petro-insurgency or criminal syndicate? Conflict & violence in the Niger Delta. *Review of African Political Economy*, *34*(114), 637-660.
[228] Berends, A. (Director). (2012). *Delta Boys* [Film]. Journeyman Pictures.

attacking the Opobo pipeline in Nigeria's Delta State. MEND is the largest and most prominent militant group in the Niger Delta, serving as an umbrella group for other militant groups in the region. MEND has called for international oil workers to evacuate the Niger Delta,[229] threatening government officials with violence, as part of their mission to push Nigeria's public sector to give oil revenue back to the people of the Delta to support infrastructure development and education. MEND's acts of dissent include destroying oil pipelines, flow stations, and loading platforms, kidnapping oil workers, and a promise to reduce Nigerian oil exports by 30% using violence.[230] MEND carried out these acts of dissent in response to the failure to meet their outlined demands. MEND's demands include: "Immediate and unconditional release of Alhaji Asari-Dokubo, Governor Alamieyeseigha, youth leader Joshua MacIver, demilitarization of the Niger Delta, and immediate payment of $1.5 billion compensation from Shell approved by the Nigerian National Assembly covering four decades of environmental degradation".[231] While the militant group does not explicitly push for the Nigerian government to restructure into a democracy, MEND spokesperson Jomo Gbomo stated that the Nigerian government 'knows nothing about rights or justice'.[232] Gbomo argues that reducing public-sector corruption in Nigeria by sharing oil revenues with the people of the Niger Delta would improve the rights and civil liberties of locals in the Niger Delta, making the nation more unified.

2.5 Economic Deprivation in the Niger Delta as a Human Rights Violation

Since Nigeria's regime transition to democracy in 1999, the Niger Delta region has remained plagued with violence, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic inequality, as

[229] Watts, M, 645.
[230] Watts, M, 646.
[231] Watts, M, 646.
[232] Watts, M, 646.

the Nigerian government, in addition to multinational oil corporations, has neglected the environmental degradation the region experiences by not providing indigenous communities with proper financial support for infrastructure development in the region.[233] The economic gap that exists in Nigeria, primarily between wealthy states such as Lagos and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and states in the Niger Delta region, has hindered national unity as political instability and weak infrastructure development in the region stem from Nigeria's centralized government structure, perpetuating government corruption and misallocated public funds that could contribute to infrastructure development in the region. Wealthy states, such as the FCT and Lagos, have access to premium education, healthcare, and employment resources, while states in the Niger Delta have access to underdeveloped infrastructure, including limited schools, weak healthcare, and high rates of unemployment.[234] While the 1999 election was intended to transition the Nigerian government to a democratic structure that empowers citizens' voices, social and political inequality, and human rights violations remain ever-present in the Niger Delta, resulting in immense inequality that has eroded indigenous groups' trust in the government.[235] Endemic corruption among public officials has continued to perpetuate human rights violations and political instability in the Niger Delta region, as oil revenue is centralized under the power of government officials, who use public oil funds for their own profit. While oil revenue can be used to support economic and infrastructural development, in the Niger Delta, the oil industry has resulted in environmental degradation and ecocide, negatively impacting citizens' access to healthcare and societal participation because their fundamental human rights,

[233] Akpan NS, Akpabio EM (2003), "Youth restiveness and violence in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: Implications and suggested solutions". *International Journal of Development Issues*, Vol. 2 No. 2 pp. 37–58.
[234] Egbe, Godwin, 2.
[235] Wilkinson, R., & Pickett, K. (2010). *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*.

including access to food, shelter, health, and education,[236] are not upheld due to government neglect.[237]

2.6 Conclusion

Although oil accounts for 65% of Nigeria's government revenue and 85% of its exports,[238] the government's mismanagement of public funds has prevented substantial investment in infrastructure development, leaving many Nigerians, specifically those living in the states of the Delta region, in destitute conditions. However, public officials use revenue amassed from the Niger Delta's oil to develop wealthier states, such as the FCT and Lagos.[239] The corruption carried out by the public officials, including the sharing of rents to retain power, prevents the nation from being more than a democracy in structure and developing into a functional democracy with free and fair elections and improving civil liberties and fundamental human rights for citizens.[240] Nigeria is a petrostate, functioning as more of an autocracy than a democracy because power and resource production remain centralized to the federal executive, which retains control over political dissenters by distributing rents, or revenue from oil.

Chapter 3: The 1999 Election, Constitution, and Questionable Foundation of Democracy

"Human rights and pro-democracy activists argued that any transition program under the control of the military could not lead to genuine elections, and that the new Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), despite its name, would necessarily remain subject to the military's wishes".[241]

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[236] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). "Poverty."
[237] Nkem, Augusta C et al. ""Economic exclusion and the health and wellbeing impacts of the oil industry in the Niger Delta region: a qualitative study of Ogoni experiences"." *International journal for equity in health* vol. 23,1 183. 12 Sep. 2024.
[238] "Nigeria." *EITI*, eiti.org/countries/nigeria
[239] Berends, A. (Director). (2012). *Delta Boys* [Film]. Journeyman Pictures.
[240] Gandhi, Jennifer, and Adam Przeworski. "Cooperation, Cooptation, and Rebellion under Dictatorships".
[241] Human Rights Watch. *"Nigeria."* In *World Report 1999*.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that the 1999 election and subsequent Constitution were unsuccessful in restructuring Nigeria's government into a functional democratic republic because of corruption and electoral malpractices used by the public sector, comprised of the President, Governors, Senators, Members of the House of Representatives, State House of Assembly, Local Government Chairmen, Counsellors, and the Military,[242] who wanted to retain power, following years of military dictatorship, and voter apathy from the electorate, who distrusted the legitimacy of the nation's election process.[243] Free and fair elections, with inclusion (or voter participation) and contestation, are the most basic indicators of the minimalist view of democracy.[244] Yet, in Nigeria, elections pose one of the largest challenges to the nation's democratization process.[245] This chapter identifies the electoral malpractices and methods of corruption present in the 1999 election and drafting of the constitution, preventing the government from becoming a functional democratic republic and paving the way for electoral violations in Nigeria's elections following their transition to civilian rule.[246] Given the numerous factors that contributed to the flawed regime transition and later influenced subsequent presidential elections, resulting in partial or diminished forms of democracy, understanding the electoral violations that occurred during the February 27, 1999, election is imperative to understanding the continuation of autocratic principles, electoral malpractice, and systemic corruption that have not subsided in Nigeria.[247] In this chapter, I will describe the irregularities, flaws, and malpractice that occurred during the

[242] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday, 1.
[243] Ihonvbere, Julius O. "The 1999 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Unresolved Issues." *Issue* 27, no. 1 (1999): 59–62. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167008. (1999, published by Cambridge University Press 2021).
[244] Dahl, Robert A. "Democratization and Public Opposition." *Polyarchy Participation and Opposition*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1971, pp. 1–16.
[245] J. Shola Omotola, Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic, *African Affairs*, Volume 109, Issue 437, October 2010, Pages 535–553, https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq040.
[246] Pierce, Steven. *Moral Economies of Corruption: State Formation and Political Culture in Nigeria*. Duke University Press, 2016.
[247] J. Shola Omotola, 543.

1999 election and subsequent drafting of the new constitution for the Fourth Republic. Both the election and drafting of the constitution were heavily influenced by the previous military regime, which continued the centralized government structure, despite the transition to civilian rule, leading to the democracy being functional, instead of structural, during the Fourth Republic.

In Nigeria, corruption is most commonly associated with the public sector, including the president, governors, legislators, and military officials, who use their positions of power to gain wealth and status, instead of serving Nigeria by investing funds in infrastructure development.[248] For a democracy to be stable, the public officials in the nation must commit to democratic values or rules.[249] The structures of authority in a nation, including businesses and trade unions, must operate democratically, or without corruption, for the government to be congruent with their processes.[250] There must be congruence between political culture and political structure in a nation for a strong democracy and national unity. However, in Nigeria, there is an incongruence, as citizens do not trust the government due to decades of public-sector corruption. Corruption allows public officials to break laws for their own financial gain. Public officials commit organized crime by diverting public funds from oil revenue for their own profit, instead of funding infrastructure development and education funding. Nigeria's centralized government structure perpetuates government corruption, reinforcing lasting poverty by concentrating wealth in a small group of public officials who carry out kleptocratic governance through bribery, embezzlement, and lack of transparency.[251] While the prevalence of oil within Nigeria resulted in

[248] Oyebanji, Oluwafemi Adesina, and Don John Omale. "An assessment of the factors of economic and financial corruption by public officials in Nigeria." *Journal of Economic Criminology*, vol. 10, Dec. 2025, p. 100188, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100188.
[249] Rustow, D. A. (1970). Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model. Comparative Politics, 2(3), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.2307/421307, 338.
[250] Eckstein, Harry, *The Theory of Stable Democracy* (Princeton, 1961) and *Division and Cohesion in a Democracy* (Princeton, 1965).
[251] Arowolo DE (2022), "Ethnicisation of corruption in Nigeria". *Journal of Financial Crime*, Vol. 29 No. 1 pp. 246–257, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JFC-06-2020-0106.

significant earnings for the nation and gross domestic product (GDP) growth, corruption among political officials prevented the money from being properly managed.[252] The election of Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 opened the path toward democratization in Nigeria, but failed due to a corrupt public sector and the ongoing military presence. This chapter will demonstrate that electoral turnover is not always indicative of democratization.[253]

3.2 The Push for Democratization Leading up to the 1999 Presidential Election

The 1999 presidential election was intended by Nigerian Head of State General Abdulsalami Abubakar to restructure Nigeria into a "democratically elected civilian government".[254] Yet, Nigeria, being a functional, instead of solely structural, democratic republic, remains questionable within the nation.[255] The 1999 election aimed to restructure the nation into a liberal, or maximalist, democracy, improving political stability, national security, and infrastructure development.[256] Part of Nigeria's attempt to democratize in 1999 goes back to the nation's 1993 presidential election. On June 12, 1993, following Nigeria's most free and fair election and a developed attempt at restructuring to civilian rule, M. K. O. Abiola was declared the new president; yet, shortly after, the election was annulled by General Ibrahim Babangida, the reigning military Head of State.[257] During Babangida's rule, the state's main mission was to

[252] Adamolekun, Ladipo. "Africa's Evolving Career Civil Service Systems: Three challenges—state continuity, Efficient Service Delivery and Accountability." *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 68, no. 3, 1 Sept. 2002, pp. 373–387, https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852302683005.
[253] Little AT, Meng A. 2024. "Measuring Democratic Backsliding." *PS: Political Science Politics*. 57(2): 149-161.
[254] "Nigeria to Return to Democratic, Civilian Government by May 1999, Head of State of Nigeria Tells General Assembly | UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." *United Nations*, United Nations, 24 Sept. 1998.
[255] Fasakin, Akinbode. "State and Democratization in Nigeria." *Democracy and Security* 11, no. 3 (2015): 298–317. https://www-jstor-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/stable/48602375.
[256] Fasakin, Akinbode, 299.
[257] Opeibi, Tunde, *Discourse, Politics and the 1993 Presidential Election Campaign in Nigeria: A Re-invention of June 12 Legacy*. Ibadan: Straight-Gate, 2009.

accumulate wealth from the nation's oil revenue for the head of state.[258] Following Babangida, his regime structure has continued in Nigeria following the transition to civilian rule in 1999, as the federal executive and oligarchs continue to profit from smuggling and embezzling public funds.[259] The annulment of the 1993 election was a failed attempt at democratic reform in a state notorious for public sector corruption and political instability, and that continues to be plagued by economic instability and political violence today.[260] The annulment created years of military tyranny and civil unrest in the nation, and the 1999 regime transition to civilian rule directly followed two consecutive military regimes, the Babangida regime (1985-1993) and the Abacha regime (1995-1998).[261] Following the failed 1993 election, there was widespread public dissent, leading to the exile of Babangida and the establishment of an interim national government led by Chief Ernest Shonekan. Following Shonekan, General Sanni Abacha became president, and was a harsh dictator, who continued Nigeria's three decades of military rule that restricted Nigerians' fundamental human rights.[262] Following years of military rule, Nigerian citizens were enthusiastic about the possibility of new political leadership under civilian rule and democratic governance.[263] Citizens expected development and improvements to Nigerian society with the beginning of the new Fourth Republic.

Following Abacha's death in 1998,[264] Nigerian citizens wanted improved human rights and a better quality of life, and advocacy for civilian rule began to increase because citizens believed that restructuring the government into a democracy would ensure the state focused on

[258] Ellis, Stephen, 137.
[259] Ellis, Stephen, 137.
[260] Apter, Andrew, 443.
[261] Omilusi, Mike, and Dada Ayoola Adekunle, 174.
[262] Fasakin, Akinbode, 299.
[263] Omilusi, Mike, and Dada Ayoola Adekunle, 174.
[264] Siollun, Max. *Nigeria's Soldiers of Fortune: The Abacha and Obasanjo Years*. C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 2019.

the needs and civil liberties of its people, and not on personal gain for public sector officials.[265] Nigerian citizens wanted a state in which they had autonomy to contribute to their governance instead of their power being undermined through public sector corruption.[266] The push for democratization in Nigeria came not only from its citizens, but from international actors, including foreign states, IOs, NGOs, and CSOs, all organizations that believed that democratization in Nigeria would promote national unity, national security, and a more equal distribution of wealth between the different states in the nation.[267] Foreign states became interested in Nigeria's democratization process largely because the nation is a major oil exporter, and international actors want their oil importers to be secure to ensure a consistent flow of energy.[268] The process of restructuring the Nigerian state into a democracy has been influenced by the characteristics and social relations of Nigerian society, where corruption among government officials is the norm.[269] This has influenced the state's actions as public state resources are viewed as sources of wealth for government officials, normalizing government officials engaging in clientelism and patronage for their personal gain of wealth and power.[270] The normalization of these corrupt practices among government officials diverts public resources away from infrastructure development in areas such as education and healthcare in under-resourced states.[271] As public sector officials carry out corruption, creating inequality and political upheaval within different states in the nation, the government cannot be restructured

[265] Fasakin, Akinbode, 299.
[266] Fasakin, Akinbode, 300.
[267] Fasakin, Akinbode, 300.
[268] Fasakin, Akinbode, 306.
[269] O'Donnell, G, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems (A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries)" (Working Paper No. 192, April 1993), 5–6.
[270] Hoffmann, Leena Koni, and Tommy Hilton. "Corruption in Nigeria." *Chatham House*, last modified October 3, 2025.
[271] Hoffmann, Leena Koni, and Tommy Hilton. "Corruption in Nigeria." *Chatham House*, last modified October 3, 2025.

into a functional democracy because public sector officials view their positions as means of personal enrichment, rather than a chance to better Nigeria.[272] Despite the push for democratic restructuring in Nigeria from national and international bodies leading up to the 1999 election, serving as a public sector official was viewed as a means to gain power and wealth,[273] as public sector officials misallocate public funds that could be used for infrastructure development for their own personal profit. However, the state has been labeled as a "democracy" since the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic following the 1999 presidential election, yet the question of the stability of its democracy remains.[274]

As defined by Olowu, Williams, and Soremekun, democratization is the process by which state power is transferred to citizens in a democracy.[275] Democratization must include pluralism, a multiparty system, elections with inclusion and contestation, respect for fundamental human rights, equal treatment of citizens, and constitutionalism.[276] There are limitations to this maximalist approach to democratization: if an authoritarian regime upheld this criterion, that would not necessarily make it democratic, and if an authoritarian regime had electoralism, that would not necessarily make it a democracy.[277] However, these are the maximalist principles of democracy that the Nigerian government promised to uphold when it transitioned to civilian rule, to become a maximalist, liberal, and functional democratic republic, modeled after the United

[272] Azarya, V. "Reordering State–Society Relations: Incorporation and Disengagement," in *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, edited by D. Rothchild and N. Chazan (Boulder: Westview, 1998), 3–21.
[273] Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators," in Rotberg, R. I. (ed.) *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 1–28.
[274] Oni, Faluyi, Asumu and Olutola (2025) Security challenges and election administration in Nigeria's fourth republic. Frontiers. Polit. Sci. 7:1458303. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2025.1458303.
[275] Olowu, Dele, Williams, A., and Soremekun, Kayode, "Introduction," in *Governance and Democratisation in West Africa*, edited by Dele Olowu, A. Williams, and Kayode Soremekun (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1999), 3.
[276] Osaghae, Eghosa, "Democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa: Faltering Steps, New Hopes," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 17, no. 1 (1999): 7–9.
[277] Ifidon, Ehimika A. "Citizenship, Statehood and the Problem of Democratization in Nigeria." *Africa Development / Afrique et Développement* 21, no. 4 (1996): 93–107. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24482770.

States.[278] Part of a state being a liberal democracy includes being representative, meaning that the state acts in the interest of its citizens.[279] A key aspect of democracy in a nation is the government being representative.[280] Nigeria has not met the aforementioned requirements of democratization in terms of respecting the fundamental human rights of its citizens; since Nigeria does not uphold the basic human rights of its people, the state has not been restructured into a functional democratic republic.[281] Nigeria's main issues in its attempt to democratize have been related to its economic struggles (i.e., misallocation of oil revenues by the public sector), poor economic growth, which prevents infrastructure development, and institutional weakness (i.e., corruption of the public sector, which causes most of the problems hindering democratization).[282]

3.3 Election Candidates

The two candidates in the 1999 election were Samuel Oluyemi Falae, backed by the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), who lost the election to Olusegun Obasanjo, backed by the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which exists as a dominant party in Nigeria, winning every president election from 1999 to 2011 by using methods of electoral malpractice to defeat opposition.[283] Obasanjo received 62.8% of the 98.6% of the valid cast votes (1.4% of votes were invalid), while Falae received 37.2%, making this a landslide

[278] Fasakin, Akinbode, 300.
[279] Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, eds. 1999. *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2.
[280] Przeworski, Adam, Susan C. Stokes, and Bernard Manin, 4.
[281] Thompson, L. A., 1994, 'Observation on the Concept Democracy and the Democratization Process', pp. 3-15 in Thompson, L A., ed., *Democracy, Democratization and Africa Ibadan*, Africa-Link.
[282] Oyovbaire,-S. E., 1987, 'The Context of Democracy in Nigeria', pp. 1-19 in Oyovbaire, S. E., ed., *Democratic Experiment in Nigeria: Interpretive Essays*, Benin, Omega.
[283] Ajia, Jide. "I Won 1999 Presidential Election, Not Obasanjo – Olu Falae." *Punch Newspapers*, 13 June 2025, punchng.com/i-won-1999-presidential-election-not-obasanjo-olu-falae/.

victory for Obasanjo.[284] Falae denied the election results and claimed that he technically won the election, but did not go to court because he wanted the nation to peacefully transition regimes, from a military dictatorship to a democracy.[285] Corruption was involved in this election, as military officers funded Obasanjo's candidacy, thereby securing positions of power and active roles in his government after he won the presidential election. Obasanjo was financially indebted to the military, making them a prominent factor in his rule and a priority over the people of Nigeria.[286]

3.4 The Role of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Corruption was involved in the 1999 election, as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) rigged the election to demonstrate military solidarity, and was reported to have ineffective administration at all stages of the election, resulting from a lack of institutional and administrative autonomy.[287] The INEC allowed for multiple kinds of voter fraud to occur, including underage voting, ballot stuffing, voter intimidation, theft of voter cards, and exclusion of opposing voters.[288] The INEC was constituted by former military leader Abdulsalam Abubakar in 1998 to conduct presidential and general elections, including governors, members of the Senate, House of Representatives, members of State Houses of Assembly, and local government chairmen and counselors in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.[289] While Abubakar attempted to be credible by creating the INEC to outline the electoral schedule and regulations

[284] Kireev, Alexander. "Nigeria. Presidential Election 1999 - Electoral Geography 2.0." *Electoral Geography 2.0 - Mapped Politics*, 6 Sept. 2007, www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/n/nigeria/nigeria-presidential-election-1999.html.
[285] Ajia, Jide. "I Won".
[286] Ihonvbere, Julius O., 60.
[287] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis of 25 Years of Steady Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2024)." *EJMSS (ESCAE Journal)*, 2025.
[288] Lewis, 141.
[289] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis".

for political parties to register, corruption, which allowed the military regime to retain power, was prevalent throughout the entire orchestration of the election.[290] Following sixteen years of military rule, the 1999 Election was the first election of the Fourth Republic held by the INEC, which has also conducted every presidential election in Nigeria every four years since. The INEC allowed for three parties in the contested election: the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and the Alliance for Democracy (AD), with the PDP having more substantial funding because of military influence.[291]

Fifty-eight million Nigerians registered with INEC to vote, but only thirty million citizens voted, a 52% voter turnout.[292] The twenty-eight million eligible registered voters who did not vote may be a result of voter apathy, which negatively affects democracy and increases within populations during periods of electoral malpractice and years of military dictatorship. A university student who voted in the 1999 Nigerian election stated, "I don't have one iota of confidence in the voting process, under a normal democratic government, the views and opinion(s) of the citizen(s) are paramount. No one expects a democratic government to put on the garb of oppression and human rights abuses. The people should not be cowed or threatened for saying the truth".[293] While the election was meant to remove the military from politics and restructure the nation into a democracy, Nigerian citizens assumed there would be a lack of credibility among the election candidates following years of military rule. The electorate often refrains from voting in elections if previous or current polls are won through rigged elections or if there is electoral violence.[294] For eligible Nigerians who voted in the election, they

[290] Lewis, 132.
[291] Lewis, 132.
[292] International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "Nigerian Presidency 1999 Election." *ElectionGuide*.
[293] Darren Kew, '"Democrazy, dem go craze, o": monitoring the 1999 Nigerian elections', I*ssue: A Journal of Opinion* 27, 1 (1999), pp. 29–33.
[294] Lewis, Peter. "Nigeria: Elections in a Fragile Regime." *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 3 (2003): 131-144. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.0054.

experienced polling with electoral malpractices; yet, polling flaws were ignored because citizens were relieved that their government had transitioned from a military autocracy to a democracy.[295] Obasanjo was sworn in as the first president of Nigeria's Fourth Republic on May 29, 1999, only one week after the military government, which had funded his campaign, put the 1999 constitution into law.[296] The military-sponsored constitution challenged democratic development and instead reinforced continuing autocracy.[297] Despite this, Nigerian citizens were confident following the 1999 election and expected improvements to human rights and civil liberties, along with an end to corruption. Since Nigeria was restructuring into a democratic government structure, both the Nigerian state and citizens thought there would be political stability and solutions to the nation's infrastructure development problems that existed during previous military dictatorships, where the needs of the people were not taken into account.[298] However, the presence of corrupt elites and the INEC, which was regarded as less credible following the 1999 election due to immense voter fraud, prevented the restructuring of democracy that many Nigerians wanted.[299]

Section 154 (3) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria states, "In exercising his powers to appoint a person as Chairman or member of the Independent National Electoral Commission, National Judicial Council, the Federal Judicial Service Commission or the National Population Commission, the President shall consult the Council of State."[300] The president of Nigeria has the power to appoint a person as Chairman or member of the Council of State, meaning that the

[295] Lewis, 133.
[296] Lewis, 133.
[297] Lewis, 135.
[298] Obi, Cyril, *No Choice, but Democracy: Prising the People Out of Politics in Africa?* (Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 2008), 25.
[299] Lewis, 140.
[300] "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999." *Constitute*, 5 May 1999, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_1999.

president of Nigeria has power over all leadership selection in Nigeria.[301] This structure, in which the president has control over all leadership, does not mirror a democracy; it could be the result of authoritarian inheritance from years of authoritarian rule before attempting to restructure into a democracy.[302] The INEC rigged the 1999 Nigerian election because it does not have administrative autonomy or impartiality.[303] Officials within the Commission argued that inadequate funding and logistics, in addition to coordination issues regarding the electoral framework, made it challenging for the electoral system to be effective for the nation.[304] As a result, the INEC is an appendage to the president, or in the case of the 1999 election, favored Obasanjo's PDP because the party had more financial support than Falae's party, due to backing from the Nigerian military.[305]

3.5 The 1999 Democratic Constitution as a Byproduct of a Military Dictatorship

When Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian rule in 1999, a new constitution was soon published, outlining the laws to be followed during the transition; it remains Nigeria's most recent constitution to date. In a meeting held at Chatham House on February 27, 2013, Hon. Emeka Ihedioha, Deputy Speaker and Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Review of Constitution, stated that, "the current 1999 Constitution was the product of a Military Decree".[306] The legitimacy of the 1999 Constitution has been questioned because it was drafted without a constitutional convention, referendum, or any involvement from Nigerian citizens.[307] The 1999

[301] "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999", Section 154 (2).
[302] Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. "Elections without democracy: The rise of competitive authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 13, no. 2, Apr. 2002, pp. 51–65, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0026.
[303] J. Shola Omotola, Elections.
[304] Lewis, 140-141.
[305] Ihonvbere, 60.
[306] Chatham House. *The Review of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution: Report of a Consultation with UK-based Nigerians (Africa Summary).* London: Chatham House, February 27, 2013, 3.
[307] Chatham House, 3.

Constitution was largely based on the 1979 Constitution when it was drafted by the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), the military governing body led by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, that supervised the nation's regime transition from military dictatorship to civilian rule.[308] The 1999 Constitution mirrors the 1979 Constitution by outlining the structure and laws of federal, state, and local governments in Nigeria, implementing a presidential federal model with separation of powers and executive, legislative, and judicial branches, imitating the United States' structure.[309] The PRC drafted the 1999 Constitution in response to local and international threats during General Sani Abacha's military regime in 1998, which was immediately followed by Abubakar's military regime. The European Union (EU) and the United States threatened to implement stricter sanctions against Nigeria because of ongoing human rights abuses and the need to transition into a democracy to improve citizens' rights in the nation.[310] General Abacha had been committing human rights abuses to retain his political power,[311] including killing those who expressed political dissent, including Nigerian activist Ken Saro-Wiwa.[312] Following Abacha's death, Abubakar maintained a military dictatorship in Nigeria, governed by the PRC, but announced his intention of democratic transition and the drafting of the constitution.[313] The EU lifted its sanctions against Nigeria once the state began the transition toward a democratic state.[314]

[308] U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Nigeria," August 2000.
[309] Rotberg, Robert I., 20.
[310] Human Rights Watch (HRW), Human Rights Watch World Report 1998 - Nigeria, -, 1 January 1998, https://www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/hrw/1998/22916].
[311] U.S. Department of State, "Nigeria," *1998 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 1999.
[312] "Sanctions on Nigeria Eased," *Tampa Bay Times*, October 31, 1998.
[313] U.S. Department of State, "Nigeria," *1998 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, 1999.
[314] "Sanctions on Nigeria Eased," *Tampa Bay Times*, October 31, 1998.

While drafting the 1999 Constitution, Abubakar appointed academics, lawyers, and retired public sector officials to revise a constitutional draft from 1995.[315] The appointed drafters, making up a Constitutional Debate Coordinating Committee, worked for two days before a draft of the Constitution was published in national newspapers.[316] Boycotts, memoranda, and protests soon followed, and the Committee eventually decided their document did not introduce democratic reforms and decided to revise the 1979 Constitution instead.[317] The 1999 Constitution was finally enacted on May 31, 1999, after Obasanjo had already been elected president.[318] The Constitution was a revision of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions, adding executive immunity for leaders of the military regime from prosecution for actions carried out while in charge of Nigeria.[319] There were many accusations of corruption in the election and drafting of the 1999 Constitution from political leaders in the South and Middle Belt of Nigeria, Nigerian citizens, activists, and political leaders following the publication of the 1999 Constitution because the amendments were not made clear to the public before publication, the needs of Nigerian citizens were not taken into account during the drafting process, and critics believed government officials were trying to preserve Nigeria's centralized government structure entrenched by the military.[320] Nigerians protested the 1999 Constitution because they believed it should have been implemented before President Obasanjo was elected; instead, it was drafted by General Abubakar's appointed panel following the election.[321]

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[315] Princeton University. *Nigeria 1999*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, Program on Conflict and Cooperation, n.d.
[316] Princeton University. *Nigeria 1999*.
[317] Princeton University. *Nigeria 1999*.
[318] Princeton University. *Nigeria 1999*.
[319] Section 308 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides executive immunity for the President, Vice President, Governor and Deputy Governor from civil and criminal legal proceedings during their tenures.
[320] Oshewolo, Segun and Olanrewaju, J. (2011) "From Hell: The Surge of Corruption in Nigeria (1999 – 2007)," Academic Leadership: The Online Journal (2003-2012): Vol. 9: Iss. 1.
[321] Freedom House. *Freedom in the World 1999: Nigeria*. New York: Freedom House, 1999.

3.6 Implementation of shari'a law in Northern Nigeria (1999-2020)

Following the 1999 election, Nigeria has continued to have sectarian violence and political dissent, including the implementation of *shari'a* law in Northern Nigeria in 1999, which escalated violent riots and tensions between the president and northern governors who disagreed on its implementation.[322] Since its implementation in 1999, *shari'a* law has contributed to political instability and human rights violations in Nigeria because Nigerian citizens disagree about whether the implementation of it abides by the 1999 Constitution, which includes Sections 10 and 38, prohibiting state religion and guaranteeing freedom of religion.[323] Section 36(12) of the 1999 Constitution states that a person cannot be convicted of a criminal offense unless the offense and penalty are clearly defined in a written law, included in Acts of the National Assembly, and state laws.[324] Section 36(12) makes the application of shari'a law unconstitutional because it prohibits the conviction of a criminal offense under laws not written or implemented by state legislatures.[325] The Kano state (North West) recommended the Sharia Administration of Justice Reform Law of 1999, which became operational in January of 2000, beginning the expansion of *shari'a* law in twelve states in Northern Nigeria.[326] The implementation of *shari'a* law has been met with resistance by some Nigerian citizens who have concerns about religious discrimination and sectarian violence in the nation. Nigerians have protested against *shari'a* law because of the human rights violations it has caused against women, as *shari'a* law discriminates

[322] Lewis, Peter, 133.
[323] Sections 10 and 38 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibit state religion and guarantee freedom of religion, respectively; "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999." *Constitute*, 5 May 1999, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_1999.
[324] *"Section 36(12) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria,"* Centre for Judicial and Academic Development, University of Nottingham.
[325] Abdullahi, M. U., Hon. Grand Kadi, 4.
[326] Abdullahi, M. U., Hon. Grand Kadi. *"Jurisdictional Issues in the Application of Islamic Law in Nigeria."* Paper presented at the All Nigeria Judges' Conference of the Superior Courts, National Judicial Institute, Andrews Otutu Obaseki Auditorium, Abuja, November 15–19, 2021, 5.

against women and non-Muslims, who face violence for not abiding by *shari'a* law.[327] Supporters of *shari'a* law argue that it should remain implemented in Northern Nigeria because it preserves Muslim religious and cultural identity.[328] The implementation of *shari'a* law in northern Nigerian states has created sectarian violence and hindered the government from functioning as a functional democratic republic. Despite the implementation of the Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) in 1999, which was designed to promote peacebuilding and prevent interfaith conflicts between states with *shari'a* law implemented and states without, overall, *shari'a* law hindered democratic governance from being functional in the nation, by marginalizing non-Muslims and women, creating a religious divide between Muslim and non-Muslim states, and weakening citizens faith in democratic governance as *shari'a* law is allowed to be implemented in northern states, despite being unconstitutional.[329]

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the 1999 election in Nigeria was unsuccessful in restructuring the nation into a functioning democracy because of the entrenched centralized government structure and norms from the military dictatorship, corruption among public officials who viewed public office as a means for personal gain, political instability, and sectarian violence, as Nigerian citizens struggled to trust the corrupt government to operate a functional democracy. The military's influence on the 1999 election and constitution allowed the centralized government structure to continue despite the regime transition to civilian rule. This allowed government corruption to continue in the Fourth Republic, as the government had control of power and resource production, allowing them to misallocate funds for their personal

[327] Olajide, Adekunle, 12.
[328] Olajide, Adekunle, 13.
[329] Indigenous People of Biafra USA, *"Democracy, Women's Rights and Sharia Law in Nigeria"*.

benefit. Chapter four will describe how the insubstantial democratization process carried out by the 1999 Constitution and subsequent presidential election failed to create a democratic government structure in Nigeria that was more than surface level, as corruption, inequality, and political violence have not subsided following the 1999 transition.

Chapter 4: Democratic Deficits and Political Instability: Nigerian Presidential Elections in the Fourth Republic Following the 1999 Regime Transition

"The optimism that accompanied Nigeria's redemocratization in 1999 quickly gave way to disillusionment as democratic institutions became tools for elite manipulation".[330]

4.1 Introduction

As covered in chapter three, the 1999 presidential election in Nigeria was intended to restructure the nation from a military autocracy into a democracy with free and fair elections, to improve Nigerians' civil liberties and human rights, and to reduce corruption. However, this was not the case; this chapter serves to delve into subsequent elections in the Fourth Republic, following the 1999 transition to civilian rule, including the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 presidential elections, which were conducted by the INEC.[331] While 1999 was supposed to be a pivotal election in restructuring Nigeria's government, the election fraud and manipulation that occurred reduced Nigerians' confidence in INEC's ability to serve as a neutral party in

[330] Madueke, Onyedikachi, 13.
[331] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis of 25 Years of Steady Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2024)." *EJMSS (ESCAE Journal)*, 2025.

subsequent elections.[332] This chapter argues that because corruption and election fraud were prominent in the 1999 election, Nigeria never restructured into a functional democratic republic. The nation's elections continued to have widespread corruption, election malpractice, violence, and a lack of national unity in the six presidential elections following 1999.[333] Chapter three described how significant structural reforms were not created in Nigeria during the 1999 regime transition, and the government remains centralized, allowing corruption and electoral malpractice to hinder the government's functioning as a democracy.

The INEC conducts presidential elections, while Nigerian eligible voters are responsible for performing their civic duties and voting politicians into power; when the voters refuse to do so, and voter turnout declines, the nation continues to struggle to form a democratic government.[334] A key characteristic of democracy is popular participation, which allows the people of a country to elect their leaders.[335] The individual citizens in Nigerian society have certain rights and privileges they should receive from the state, yet they have obligations to contribute to the state; in the case of Nigeria, that means voting in elections.[336] Since democracy is a system, voter participation in elections is necessary for it to function effectively. Democracy is a system composed of interrelated parts, which function together to reach a shared goal of increased civil liberties and the protection of individual rights.[337] In Nigeria's case, the system has been undermined by electoral malpractice in several consecutive elections, preventing the government from being restructured into a functional democracy.

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[332] Lewis, Peter, 140.
[333] Lewis, Peter. "Nigeria: Elections in a Fragile Regime." Journal of Democracy 14, no. 3 (2003): 131-144. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.0054.
[334] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis".
[335] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis".
[336] Ekeh, Peter P., 106.
[337] Almond, Gabriel A. "A Developmental Approach to Political Systems." *World Politics* 17, no. 2 (1965): 183–214. https://doi.org/10.2307/2009347.

As mentioned in chapter three, Olusegun Obasanjo won the 1999 Nigerian presidential election, representing the most well-funded political party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP).[338] However, the transition to democracy in Nigeria may have been celebrated prematurely;[339] the 1999 election and the following elections every four years contained electoral fraud, unrelenting corruption, and diminished human rights and political liberties, which Nigerians were promised would improve, were instead marred by scandal, corruption amongst public officials, and instability.[340] This chapter will cover the five presidential elections following 1999, arguing that the lack of accountability and sufficient reforms demonstrates that Nigeria was restructured into a structural democratic republic yet, the nation functions as an electoral autocracy because it holds regular elections at different levels of government, yet the federal executive controls the media, the INEC, an election management organization, and the state and local governments, and can influence the results of elections through forms of corrupt electoral malpractice, including bribery, ballot stuffing, and voter intimidation. Elections can be used to disguise authoritarian rule, a term known as "electoral authoritarianism", where elections are only held as a transitional ritual, compromising the democratization process.[341] Elections can be held without democracy, yet democracy cannot be formed without free and fair elections.[342] Citizens must trust in their government to carry out free and fair elections, without feeling threatened by electoral malpractices, such as ballot rigging, election violence, and fraud, which reduce their trust in the government, resulting in a diminished voter turnout because decreased electoral legitimacy directly affects regime legitimacy. Voter turnout fluctuated in Nigerian

[338] Lewis, Peter, 132.
[339] Campbell, John. "The Legacy of Nigeria's 1999 Transition to Democracy." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, 4 Oct. 2019, www.cfr.org/articles/legacy-nigerias-1999-transition-democracy.
[340] Lewis, Peter, 133.
[341] J. Shola Omotola, "Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria under the Fourth Republic." *African Affairs*, Volume 109, Issue 437, October 2010, Pages 535–553, https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq040.
[342] J. Shola Omotola, 538.

presidential elections from the regime transition year in 1999 to 2023, increasing in 2003 and decreasing since.[343] Figure 2, found below, illustrates the decrease in voter turnout since 2003. Diminished voter turnout occurs due to public sector corruption, electoral malpractice, and poor government performance. Chapter four focuses on regime legitimacy, voters electing their candidate of choice in a free and fair democratic election, and electoral legitimacy, which is relevant to Figure 2 because it regards voters making the democratic government functional by placing their vote.[344] Regime legitimacy and electoral legitimacy have an interdependent relationship within the Nigerian state, as ongoing electoral malpractices, including electoral violence, fraud, and rigging, carried out by the INEC, diminish voter turnout, have caused citizens to distrust the federal government, reducing their perception of the regime's legitimacy and creating political instability. If electoral processes are credible, free, and fair, the stability of Nigeria's democratic regime can be reinforced. Nigeria does not have credible elections, which compromises the regime's legitimacy and stability.

4.2 Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)

Obasanjo created the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000 as an anti-corruption agency to investigate official corruption carried out by individuals and the public sector.[345] The ICPC was established following the passage of the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences (CPRO) Act, which, under CPRO Subsection 3(14), allowed the ICPC to have operational independence in enforcing transparency,

[343] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis of 25 Years of Steady Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2024)." *EJMSS (ESCAE Journal)*, 2025; Adibe, J. (2016). INEC and Challenges of free and fair elections in Nigeria. *Review of Nigerian Political economy, 5* (1 and 2), 137.
[344] Gardner, James A. *"Democratic Legitimacy Under Conditions of Severely Depressed Voter Turnout." University of Chicago Law Review Online* (2020).
[345] Lewis, Peter, 189.

preventing, and raising awareness for corruption in Nigeria.[346] This means that the ICPC Chairman reports its activities to the president, but is independent from the president's jurisdiction.[347] Furthermore, the ICPC included civil servants to strengthen its anti-corruption movement by including them in its monitoring and reporting measures by establishing the Anti-Corruption and Transparency Units (ACTU), an extension of the ICPC.[348] The ICPC's overarching goal was to uncover corrupt acts being committed and prosecute and convict offenders.[349] Despite the work of the ICPC, corruption remained prevalent in Nigeria, as the ICPC lost its ability to investigate high-profile corrupt individuals, such as public officials, creating a need for the creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2002.[350]

[346] Hassan, I. 2021. 'The EFCC and ICPC in Nigeria: overlapping mandates and duplication of effort in the fight against corruption'. *SOAS Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) SOAS University of London*. https://ace.soas.ac.uk/publication/the-efcc-and-icpc-in-nigeria-overlapping-mandates-and-duplication-of-effort-in-the-fight-against-corruption/.
[347] Hassan, I. 2021, 4-5.
[348] Hassan, I. 2021, 5.
[349] Abu, Nurudeen, and Marcin Waldemar Staniewski. 2019. "Determinants of Corruption in Nigeria: Evidence from Various Estimation Techniques." *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 32 (1): 3058–82. doi:10.1080/1331677X.2019.1655467.
[350] Hassan, I. 2021, 5.

4.3 Corruption and Decreased Voter Turnout

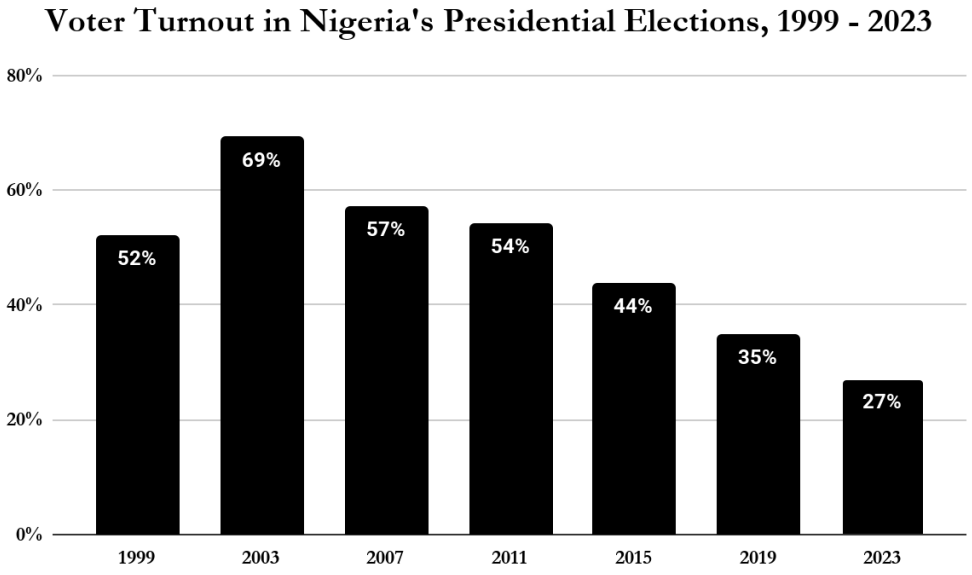

Figure 2: Chart of Voter Turnout in Nigerian Presidential Elections (1999-2023)[351]

Figure 2 shows how voter turnout increased in the 2003 election to 69%, a 17% increase from 52% during the 1999 election, likely because Obasanjo was performing well and had launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, which provided free education to Nigerian children,[352] from primary to Junior secondary school.[353] However, poor performance and electoral malpractice have caused a decline in voter turnout in all Nigerian presidential elections since 2003.[354] While voter turnout still increased, lingering distrust of the INEC persisted into the 2003 election because of electoral violations in the 1999 election, and, as electoral malpractices continued after 2003, distrust of the INEC as an accountable and

[351] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis of 25 Years of Steady Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2024)." *EJMSS (ESCAE Journal)*, 2025; Adibe, J. (2016). INEC and Challenges of free and fair elections in Nigeria. *Review of Nigerian Political economy, 5* (1 and 2), 137.
[352] International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "Nigerian Presidency 2003 Election." *ElectionGuide*.
[353] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday, 5.
[354] International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "Nigerian Presidency 2003 Election." *ElectionGuide*.

transparent institution increased. Democracy within the nation has been hindered by ongoing corruption among public officials, preventing free and fair presidential elections from being conducted.[355] Omnipresent corruption has impeded substantial reforms from being made in Nigeria, preventing unemployment, poverty, and lack of civil liberties from being improved, hindering Nigerians' confidence in the government, resulting in reduced voter turnout, harming democracy because citizens are not carrying out their civic duty of electing their representative of choice.[356] Obasanjo wanted to remain president and attempted to rig the 2003 election by meeting privately with leaders of the National Assembly to amend their drafted bill, which was intended to improve election procedures.[357] His amendment ensured that local government elections were held last in the election sequence, making new political parties ineligible to qualify for federal elections; this went against legislative procedure and prevented new political parties from being elected until 2007, essentially attempting to secure an uncontested ruling for Obasanjo and the dominant PDP.[358] However, the Supreme Court eventually overturned this issue in November 2002, preventing the INEC from enacting restrictive criteria based on the president's demands.[359] This allowed twenty new parties to have candidates for the 2003 election, yet the multitude of new parties only four months before the election, preventing them from having resources equal to the three major political parties in Nigeria, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and the Alliance for Democracy (AD).[360]

[355] Lewis, Peter, 136.
[356] Lewis, Peter, 137.
[357] Lewis, Peter, 140.
[358] Lewis, Peter, 140.
[359] Lewis, Peter, 140.
[360] Lewis, Peter, 140.

Voter turnout in Nigeria decreased from 69% in 2003 to 57% in 2007, to 54% in 2011, to 44% in 2015, to 35% in 2019, to 27% in 2023, because registered voters with the INEC lost trust in the nation's government due to electoral malpractices, corruption, and poor performance by the federal executive.[361] Voter turnout decreased as a result of voter apathy, meaning the absence of citizens' participation and unconcern for civil obligations; voter apathy is a subdivision of political apathy, and a symptom of a decline in democratic performance and poor governance.[362] The decline in voter turnout negatively affects the quality of elections conducted in Nigeria and can influence results due to limited electorates.[363] Reduced voter turnout results in risks to democratic legitimacy in the nation because it negatively affects the electoral process and the outcome of the election.[364] Democracy is healthy, and elections are supported when electorates participate, and voter turnout reflects contestation, inclusion, and participation, characteristics fundamental to developing and maintaining a sustainable and functional democratic republic.[365] The Nigerian government's widespread implementation of undemocratic norms, including corruption, electoral fraud, political violence, and human rights violations, has caused Nigerian citizens to lose trust and confidence in the legitimacy of democratic practices in the nation.[366]

4.4 Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was created in 2003 by President Obasanjo as an anti-corruption law enforcement agency to combat, investigate, and

[361] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday, 7-9.
[362] Okafor, Celestine Ogechukwu, Jude Odigbo, and Remi Chukwudi Okeke. "Two Decades of Electoral Democracy: Voter Apathy and Democratization Process in Nigeria." *Social Sciences and Education Research Review* 9, no. 1 (2022): 84–96.
[363] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday, 7.
[364] Okafor, Celestine Ogechukwu, Jude Odigbo, and Remi Chukwudi Okeke, 84.
[365] Okafor, Celestine Ogechukwu, Jude Odigbo, and Remi Chukwudi Okeke, 84-85.
[366] Akinyemi, Seun. "Voter Apathy: A Threat to Democracy in Nigeria." *Democracy in Africa*.

prosecute financial crimes.[367] The EFCC was politically advantageous to Obasanjo because he was nearing the end of his first presidential term (1999-2003) and campaigning to be reelected for a second term.[368] The EFCC helped him secure support from international actors and continue his rule as head of state because it investigated and prosecuted his political opponents; therefore, allowing Nigeria's political system to continue to reward corrupt officials, rather than punish them.[369] The EFCC officially began working on anti-corruption measures on March 23, 2004.[370] The EFCC was created after the ICPC and was allowed to investigate any person or organization suspected of economic crimes, including embezzlement, money laundering, and bribery, and holding assets that were not justified by their income source.[371] While the ICPC did not convict anyone of corruption during its first three years of operation, the EFCC made 270 convictions, recovering billions of misallocated naira between 2003 and 2007, and making steps toward attaining rectification for corruption carried out by public officials.[372] While the EFCC was created as an anti-corruption organization, it centered on private sector corruption, or private individuals defrauding others, as opposed to public sector, or governmental, corruption, which was more commonly widespread. The EFCC has convicted only four politicians, including Lucky Igbinedion, former governor of the Edo State (located in the South-South, or Niger Delta region) from 1999 to 2007, who was charged with embezzling 2.9 billion naira,[373] and was given a light sentence, as Igbinedion was able to pay a fine instead of going to jail.[374] Other politicians

[367] Watkins, M., Roy, P. 2020. 'Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission: necessary reforms for an effective anti-corruption agency'. SOAS Anti-Corruption Evidence (ACE) SOAS University of London.
[368] Lewis, Peter, 189.
[369] Human Rights Watch. *"Corruption on Trial? The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission."* August 25, 2011.
[370] Hassan, I. 2021, 6.
[371] Lewis, Peter, 189.
[372] Hassan, I. 2021, 9.
[373] Human Rights Watch. *"Corruption on Trial?"*.
[374] Ahemba, Tume, *"Convicted Nigeria Ex-Governor to Pay Fine,"* Reuters, December 19, 2008.

who have been prosecuted by the EFCC have stalled in courts for years without trial, as the judicial branch is weak and subordinate to the demands of the executive branch.[375] Nigerian citizens believed the EFCC was prosecuting corruption carried out by Obasanjo's enemies, instead of his allies in the government.[376]

4.5 1999-2003 and the Challenges of Decentralization

Transitioning from military to civilian rule in 1999 posed major challenges; the democracy dividend only partially emerged, tensions developed between the legislative and executive branches, and *shari'a* law was implemented in the twelve northern states.[377] The task of decentralizing the government proved challenging because government revenues (i.e., oil revenues) were directed toward the federal executive, leading to political instability as interorganizational conflicts developed between state, local, and federal authorities due to the entrenched centralized political structure, causing competition for power and wealth.[378] The Nigerian government maintains its overcentralized structure, which the military regime implemented during the Second Republic, and efforts by political coalitions for decentralization have been unsuccessful.[379] Since the centralized government structure remains implemented in Nigeria, the shift from military rule to a functional democratic republic has not been made; the judicial and legislative branches remain weak due to executive overreach, and corruption and organized crime continue to undermine the government from functioning as a democracy.[380]

[375] Human Rights Watch. *"Corruption on Trial?"*.
[376] Lewis, Peter, 190.
[377] Rotberg, Robert I., 20.
[378] Rotberg, Robert I., 20.
[379] Rotberg, Robert I., 21.
[380] Rotberg, Robert I., 22.

International and local observers viewed the 2003 elections as "deeply flawed", marred by irregularities and rigging, resulting in Nigerian voters questioning their credibility.[381] The 2003 election had a higher voter turnout than the 1999 election, 69%, the highest voter turnout ever recorded in the Fourth Republic. President Obasanjo (PDP) was reelected in 2003, despite one-third of Nigeria's thirty-six states having rigged election results, while another third of the states had doubtful results; the election results were still accepted by most Nigerian citizens.[382] Nigerians first registered for the 2003 elections in October 2002, yet registration centers were understaffed with missing materials, and the INEC received complaints from political parties, media, and Nigerian voters, forcing them to host a second round of registration in January 2003.[383] A month before the 2003 election, the National Democratic Institute observed that the voter registration was incomplete because many Nigerian voters had not had the chance to register. However, a week before the election, the INEC announced that it had registered 60.8 million voters, half of whom were under the legal voting age.[384] This was likely a result of at least ten million voter cards being fraudulently issued by the INEC,[385] as the INEC continued to have elections with flawed registration processes and fraudulent voter registration.[386]

4.6 The 2007 Election and the Question of a Free Press

Obasanjo was determined to win the 2007 presidential election, yet his attempt to amend the constitution to permit this third consecutive term as president was not approved, and Alhaji Musa Yar'Adua succeeded him and won the election for the PDP.[387] The INEC was once again

[381] Rotberg, Robert I., 139.
[382] Rotberg, Robert I., 141.
[383] Rotberg, Robert I., 148.
[384] Rotberg, Robert I., 148.
[385] Rotberg, Robert I., 149.
[386] Rotberg, Robert I., 150.
[387] International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "Nigerian Presidency 2007 Election." *ElectionGuide*.

involved in contributing to rigging the election, this time by disqualifying contesting candidates, including Atiku Abubakar, the presidential candidate from the main opposition party, Action Congress (AC).[388] Despite legislative reforms to the INEC following electoral malpractice in the 1999 election, the INEC still failed to conduct free, fair, and credible elections.

The 2007 presidential election was reported by internal and external observers to have had electoral irregularities.[389] According to the INEC, Yar'Adua, the PDP candidate, fairly won the election in a landslide vote;[390] Yar'Adua allegedly won almost 70% of the votes from the 57% of voter turnout.[391] However, the National Judiciary cancelled these results.[392] One of Yar'Adua's leading opposing candidates, Muhammadu Buhari, the candidate for the All-Nigeria's People's Party (ANPP), claimed that Yar'Adua had only won the election because of wide-scale voter fraud.[393] Electoral officials in Nigeria's Rivers state reported there to be a 90% voter turnout in the same communities where no ballots were cast, and Yar'Adua was reported to have won 90% of the presidential vote.[394] Similarly, in Gombe state, voting did not take place while Human Rights Watch observers were at two of the polling stations, yet at a different polling location, ballot stuffing took place in front of observers, and a public sector official refused to remove the stuffed ballots.[395] While the Nigerian public press supported the Nigerian Federal Government's claim that the elections held were free and fair, the Election Observation Mission, an independent organization that observes voting and compares the electoral process

[388] J. Shola Omotola, "Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria."
[389] Oboh, Godwin Ehiarekhian. "Reflecting on the Nigerian media, elections, and the African Democracy." *Sage Open*, vol. 6, no. 3, July 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016666886.
[390] Rawlence, Ben, and Chris Albin-Lackey. "Briefing: Nigeria's 2007 General Elections: Democracy in Retreat." *African Affairs* 106, no. 424 (2007): 497.
[391] International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). "Nigerian Presidency 2007 Election." *ElectionGuide*.
[392] Saliu H. (2008). The way forward for Nigeria's democracy. In Saliu H. A., Taiwo I. O., Seniyi R. A., Salawu B., Usman A. (Eds.), *Nigeria beyond 2007: Issues, perspectives and challenges* (pp. 383-393). Ilorin, Nigeria: Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, University of Ilorin.
[393] Pierce, Steven, 107.
[394] Rawlence, Ben, and Chris Albin-Lackey, 498.
[395] Rawlence, Ben, and Chris Albin-Lackey, 498.

against international standards, confirmed that the 2007 election was rigged.[396] The press in Nigeria has frequently backed the Federal Government's claims that the 1999, 2003, and 2007 presidential elections were free and fair.[397] However, freedom of expression is not a human right upheld by Nigeria's government, as journalists in Nigeria have been jailed or tortured for expressing their opinions.[398] Nobel laureate and Nigerian activist Wole Soyinka denounced the legitimacy of the 2007 election because of the use of ballot fraud and widespread violence that took place on election day.[399] Nigeria's elections most commonly experience electoral malpractice because public sector officials want to rig the election to favor themselves or the members of the ruling party.[400] An election being deemed as "credible" is not solely dependent on the result that the INEC states; credibility is also measured by the electorate's access to media to inform themselves about the candidates running for office and the policies of individual political parties to ensure that the electorate votes for the candidate they want.[401] The media serves to maintain transparency in the electoral process by ensuring that voters are given credible information about the candidates and that stakeholders' behavior is not corrupt.[402]

4.7 The 2011 Election and Ongoing Challenges to Credibility

While domestic and international observers viewed the 2011 election as freer and fairer than the 2007 election, there was an uproar of political violence when President Goodluck Jonathan was reelected; therefore, the INEC can do more work to ensure the credibility and

[396] Oboh, Godwin Ehiarekhian. "Reflecting on the Nigerian media, elections."
[397] Oboh, Godwin Ehiarekhian. "Reflecting on the Nigerian media, elections."
[398] Mathew, James, et al. "The mass media and elections in Nigeria: A social responsibility." *News Media and Mass Communication*, vol. 104, 31 July 2023, pp. 107–119, https://doi.org/10.7176/nmmc/104-11.
[399] Academy of Achievement. "Wole Soyinka." 3 July 2009. Last modified March 16, 2022.
[400] Oboh, Godwin Ehiarekhian. "Reflecting on the Nigerian media, elections."
[401] Balkin, J. M. (1999). How mass media simulate political transparency. *Journal for Cultural Research, 3*(4), 393-413.
[402] Norris, P. (1997). *Electoral change since 1945*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing Limited.

safety of national elections.[403] In the mass violence that took place in northern Nigeria following President Jonathan's victory, at least five hundred innocent Nigerian citizens were killed by Muslim opposition supporters of Buhari, who began rioting after Jonathan, a Christian candidate from Southern Nigeria, won.[404] Post-election violence occurred in Northern Nigeria because Buhari, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) candidate and a member of the military regime that failed to transition Nigeria into a democracy in 1983, was not elected and argued that incumbent President Jonathan had rigged the election.[405] In another election run by the INEC, Nigerian citizens described the 2011 election as having "vote rigging, ballot stuffing, and ballot box snatching".[406] Voter turnout steadily declined between the 2003, 2007, and 2011 elections, from 69% to 57%, to 54%, respectively, due to ongoing electoral malpractices.[407] While the results of the 2011 election were still affected by ballot stuffing and election violence, international and local observers regarded it as more credible, with significant improvements in legitimacy. International and local observers viewed the election as more credible than the 2007 election, which was reported by observers to have substantial electoral malpractice and election violence.[408] Observers believed government transparency would improve following the 2011 election because President Jonathan established the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in May 2011.[409] FOIA was intended to reduce corruption and improve democratic practices by guaranteeing citizens the legal right to access records from public institutions, government

[403] Okolo, Ben Simon, and R. Okey Onunkwo. *"The 2011 Nigerian Elections: An Empirical Review."* Journal of African Elections 10, no. 2 (2011): 54–72. Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA).
[404] Jones, L. 2011. 'Over 500 Dead After the Election of a Christian President in Nigeria'.
[405] Ogundele, K. 2011. 'How INEC Rigged for Jonathan in 20 States'.
[406] Okolo, Ben Simon, and R. Okey Onunkwo, 59.
[407] Chukwuma, Ogu Sunday. "An Analysis of 25 Years of Steady Democratic Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2024)." *EJMSS (ESCAE Journal)*, 2025.
[408] Adesina, Olubukola. "Monitoring and Observing Nigeria's 2011 Elections." *Journal of African Elections* 11, no. 1 (June 2012): 154.
[409] Human Rights Watch. *"Corruption on Trial?"*.

entities, and private companies performing public functions, and promoting transparency and accountability in the government.[410] While President Jonathan implemented FOIA to improve transparency in the government and the INEC, due to strong voter apathy among Nigerian voters,[411] the installation of FOIA did not increase voter turnout following the 2011 election.

4.8 The 2015 and 2019 Elections: Civil Society Organizations and Insufficient Reforms

The Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR), a coalition of over 70 civil society organizations (CSOs), worked to improve the credibility of the General Elections in 2015 and 2019 by closely monitoring the elections before, during, and after they took place, instilling voter education, and working with the INEC.[412] While electoral malpractices still occurred in the 2015 and 2019 presidential elections, the 2015 election improved attempts at democratization because election rigging decreased, opposition was stronger, and international and local observers, including the NCSSR, accepted the results as more credible.[413] The 2015 election marked a shift from previous elections because the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which had been the dominant party for sixteen years, was replaced by the All Progressives Congress (APC), with the election of President Buhari.[414] The 2019 election had continued strides toward democratization, with pushes for electoral reform from the NCSSR and continued strong opposition between the APC and PDP. While the NCSSR pushed for electoral reforms, electoral malpractice, political violence, and diminished voter turnout remained persistent in the 2015 and 2019 elections.

[410] National Library of Nigeria. *"Freedom of Information."*
[411] Ogu and Onimisi, 10.
[412] Sule, Babayo, et al. "Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR) and electioneering process in Nigeria (2015–2019)." *Sage Open*, vol. 11, no. 2, Apr. 2021.
[413] Sule, Babayo, et al. "Nigerian Civil Society Situation Room (NCSSR)".
[414] Joseph, Richard. "Nigeria's 2015 Elections: Prologue to the Past?" *Brookings Institution*, April 13, 2015.

The 2015 and 2019 presidential elections were both won by Buhari,[415] the APC candidate and former military ruler.[416] The 2015 election had a peaceful outcome and transition of power, with no disputes about election results, and there were few irregularities, so the election's credibility was not questioned by citizens and international observers.[417] Improvements President Jonathan made during his administration, including publicly insisting that the INEC should not rig the election ballot so he could win, and declaring that Nigerians should not engage in post-election violence after he lost the election to Buhari, served to promote democratic stability, yet these statements did not make any structural reforms to the government, therefore, electoral malpractice did not subside when Buhari took power from 2015 to 2023.[418]

Democratic fatigue, or lower voter turnout, is often a result of authoritarian government structures and de facto one-party rule.[419] From 1999 to 2023, there has been democratic erosion in Nigeria, as the state has practiced competitive electoral authoritarianism.[420] Although democratic institutions, including political parties, legislature, judiciary, and election management organizations (INEC), exist, and media organizations create a facade of democracy, incumbents or elites in power manipulate elections for their own benefit by using state resources, such as oil, as a form of patronage to gain support for the regime.[421] Because of this, there have been competitive elections in Nigeria since it transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, yet these elections were riddled with electoral malpractices defying democracy, including voter

[415] BBC News, "Nigeria Election: Muhammadu Buhari Wins Presidency," April 1, 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-32139858.
[416] BBC News, "Nigeria Presidential Elections Results 2019," February 26, 2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-f0b25208-4a1d-4068-a204-940cbe88d1d3.
[417] Orji, Nkwachukwu. "The 2015 Nigerian General Elections." *Africa Spectrum* 50, no. 2 (2015): 74.
[418] Madueke, Onyedikachi. 2025. "Federated Autocracy and the Illusion of Multiparty Democracy in Nigeria: Electoral Authoritarianism in Perspective." *Regional & Federal Studies*, November, 1–29.
[419] Madueke, Onyedikachi, 12.
[420] Madueke, Onyedikachi, 13.
[421] Levitsky, Steven, and Lucan A. Way. "Elections Without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism." *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (2002): 51-65. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0026.

suppression and intimidation and ballot manipulation, making the state government undemocratic and a way for elites to retain control.[422]

4.8.1 The 2023 Election: Political Violence and an Uncertain Future

Following years of governmental corruption, undemocratic principles, and economic decline, analysts saw the 2023 presidential election as a turning point for democratic reform in Nigeria.[423] With 94 million Nigerians registered to vote, the 2023 election had 10 million additional registered voters than the previous 2019 election, including a large youth population.[424] Of the 94 million registered voters, only 25 million voted, a 27% voter turnout, the lowest turnout since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999 (see Figure 1).[425] This is a result of voters feeling political apathy following years of political parties organizing electoral violence and vote-buying.[426] Despite there being eighteen presidential candidates,[427] the two main candidates were members of the two dominant parties in Nigerian politics since 1999, the incumbent All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Bola Tinubu (APC), former governor of Lagos State from 1999 to 2007, ran against Atiku Abubakar (PDP), former Vice President of Nigeria from 1999 to 2007, and Peter Obi, a member of the Labour Party (LP), who used populism to attract supporters by denouncing corrupt political officials.[428] Despite Obi's initial lead in pre-election polls, the 2023 election was won by Bola

[422] Schedler, Andreas, ed. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, 2.
[423] Burke, Jason. "Nigeria Election 2023: What Are the Issues and Why Is This Vote Different?" *The Guardian*. February 24, 2023.
[424] Burke, Jason. "Nigeria Election 2023".
[425] Ogu, Sunday Chukwuma, and Timothy Onimisi. "The Challenges of Political Parties in Nigeria's Democratic Governance (1999–2024) and the Way Forward." *Alvan Journal of Social Sciences* 1, no. 2 (2024): 3.
[426] Ogu and Onimisi, 3.
[427] Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). *Final List of Candidates for National Elections (Presidential, Senatorial and House of Representatives).* Abuja: INEC, 2022.
[428] Ndubuisi, Olivia, and Nduka Orjinmo. "Nigeria Election 2023: Who Is Peter Obi of the Labour Party?" *BBC News*, February 23, 2023.

Tinubu, who currently serves as the fifth president of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, and was inaugurated on May 29, 2023. The 2023 election was significant because young voters in Nigeria supported Obi in hopes that political instability, economic decline, and government corruption would be addressed. However, Tinubu is a member of the powerful APC, which gave him access to a network of wealthy officials and patronage to fuel his campaign,[429] allowing the APC to be the dominant party in Nigeria since Buhari's election in 2015.

Political conflict was prevalent in Nigeria leading up to the election, as there was intense conflict among political parties, as candidates, INEC officials, and politicians were targeted before the election.[430] The election was influenced by political party militias and criminal gangs, who influenced the electoral process by suppressing opponents and trying to deter candidates from rival parties from running for office.[431] The 2023 election was different from previous elections carried out by the INEC because the INEC established the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS), INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV), and lobbied for the Electoral Act Amendment Bill to be passed to improve electoral guidelines to strengthen voters' faith in a free and fair election.[432] The IReV portal proved unsuccessful in improving election transparency because either the INEC officials did not show up, the portal did not work, or the INEC officials did not upload election sheets to the portal in some areas. The INEC officials manually tallied votes when the BVAS and IReV portal did not work, resulting in the INEC yet again being susceptible to bribes and corrupt manipulation of the results. Nigerian voters questioned the legitimacy of the election, and as predicted by human rights lawyer and Senior Advocate of

[429] Burke, Jason. "Nigeria Election 2023".
[430] Carboni, Andrea, and Ladd Serwat. *Political Violence and the 2023 Nigerian Election*. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, February 22, 2023.
[431] Carboni and Serwat.
[432] Odimegwu, Nancy. "Nigeria Decides 2023: What Went Wrong in the Presidential Election?" *BudgIT*.

Nigeria, Femi Falana, political conflict and human rights violations continued to ensue in the nation following the election, including arson, assassinations, coercion, and ballot-box snatching.[433]

4.9 Conclusion

Endemic corruption in Nigeria's public sector has prevented the state from properly restructuring into a democratic government structure, which had been promised during several consecutive presidential elections.[434] Violence, religious tensions, corruption, and electoral malpractice have not subsided in Nigeria since the transition to civilian rule in 1999. Diminished voter turnout in presidential elections in the Fourth Republic since 2003 is a result of electoral violence, vote-buying, and patronage among the dominant political parties, and poor administration of elections by the unreliable INEC.[435] The decrease in voter turnout during subsequent presidential elections in the Fourth Republic indicates that Nigerian voters do not trust the government to administer free and fair elections. Public sector corruption, stemming from Nigeria's centralized government structure, prevents the nation from functioning as a democracy. Despite the establishment of the ICPC and EFCC, corruption persists in Nigeria's public sector, impairing the nation's ability to hold free and fair elections and to restructure into a functional democratic republic. While restructuring Nigeria into a functional democracy would reduce unemployment and improve education and civil liberties for Nigerian citizens, further legislation would be needed to combat corruption effectively and lay a proper foundation for democracy.

[433] Igbintade, Wale. "Falana: 2023 Elections May Be Marred by Violence." *THISDAYLIVE*, November 28, 2022.
[434] J. Shola Omotola, "Elections and democratic transition in Nigeria."
[435] Akanmu, Temitope Olukunmi, and Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo. "Election administration in Nigeria: A factor leading to declining voter turnout." *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, vol. 8, no. 10, 30 Oct. 2025, pp. 151–158.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Multidimensional Policy Solutions Toward a Functional Democratic Federal System

"The crux of the problem is the overpoliticisation of social life .... We are intoxicated with politics: the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures to win and to maintain political power".[436]

5.1 Introduction

In exploring how Nigeria's centralized government structure has contributed to endemic corruption and the development of a structural, rather than functional, democratic state, which has caused political instability and human rights violations, this thesis aims to describe why corruption has remained prevalent in Nigeria's government, and why NGOs, human rights organizations, and civil society organizations (CSOs) have not been able to push for lasting solutions to combat corruption and improve civil liberties for citizens. Since the 1970s, Nigeria has had a reputation as a corrupt nation, largely justified by systemic corruption that has not subsided within the nation's government as public funds continue to be misallocated.[437] Systemic corruption in Nigeria's government has been perpetuated by the nation's centralized government structure, which is entrenched in Nigeria following years of military centralized power and resource production, which resulted in economic stagnation, rising poverty levels, weakened public institutions, and underdeveloped infrastructure.[438] Developing in the 1970s, the nation's over-reliance on oil earnings and misallocation of oil revenues by public sector officials created concerns of a resource curse in Nigeria because competition in the non-oil economy was reduced, and domestic currency appreciated because the domestic economy became directly

[436] See *West Africa*, 25 May 1981, 1162-3 for excerpts from Ake's address to the annual meeting of the Nigerian Political Science Association.
[437] Okonjo-Iweala, Ngozi, and Philip Osafo-Kwaako, 17.
[438] Okonjo-Iweala, Ngozi, and Philip Osafo-Kwaako, 6.

affected by fluctuations in oil revenue.[439] The nation's reliance on oil exports created macroeconomic volatility, supporting the nation's government structure and endemic corruption by centralizing political and fiscal power and creating political and fiscal instability in sub-national governments, including individual state and local governments.[440] Nigeria's infrastructure deficits are rooted in its centralized structure, and preliminary macro-level reforms must be made to the nation's structure before subsequent micro-level reforms can be implemented successfully.[441]

Reforming Nigeria from a structural democratic republic to a functional democratic republic requires more than cosmetic changes to electoral laws: the INEC must be strengthened, public sector corruption needs to be reduced, government transparency increased, and oil revenue should be distributed equally among states;[442] changes that can only be made through the devolution of the federal executive's power. The formation of a functional democratic state in Nigeria would reduce the amount of violence, corruption, and religious tensions within the nation and improve civil liberties for all citizens.[443] This chapter argues that Nigeria could be restructured into a functional democratic republic because public-sector corruption is rooted in its established centralized government structure. Policy recommendations will focus on decentralizing the power of the federal executive and distributing it equally among state governments, giving them fiscal autonomy to catalyze economic growth and development. By describing how the centralized government structure in Nigeria continues to perpetuate public

[439] Barnett, Steven and Rolando Ossowski, (2002), "Operational Aspects of Fiscal Policy in Oil-Producing Countries," Working Paper No. WP/02/177, Washington DC: International Monetary Fund.
[440] Okonjo-Iweala, Ngozi, and Philip Osafo-Kwaako, 7.
[441] Okonjo-Iweala, Ngozi, and Philip Osafo-Kwaako. *Nigeria's Economic Reforms: Progress and Challenge*. Brookings Institution, 2007.
[442] Madueke, Onyedikachi (2025) Federated autocracy and the illusion of multiparty democracy in Nigeria: electoral authoritarianism in perspective, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 22.
[443] Lewis, Peter, 134.

sector corruption in the Fourth Republic, causing political instability and human rights violations, it is possible to conclude that corruption is not the driving force behind instability and violence in the nation, and that the central catalyst behind Nigeria's ongoing internal issues lies in its government's centralized structure.

Chapter one described how structural functionalism and interdependence apply to analyzing the interrelated institutions within Nigeria's centralized government, and how human rights violations and political instability in the nation are part of an institutionalized structure of corruption and oppression. When Nigeria transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, the nation became a democracy in structure, yet corruption remained endemic within the centralized government structure, allowing public sector officials to commit organized crime, including embezzlement of public funds, bribery, electoral malpractice, document fraud, and smuggling.[444] Chapter two focused on Nigeria's development as a petrostate, as increased oil wealth within the nation's centralized government structure increased, public sector officials viewed serving in the government as an opportunity for individual profit by misallocating public funds to private accounts. In doing so, government officials ignore citizens' needs, taking advantage of their power instead of allocating funds toward infrastructure development in the states in the Niger Delta region.

Chapter three analyzed the presence of corruption in the drafting of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, following the 1999 presidential election plagued with electoral malpractice. While Nigeria became a structural democratic republic when it transitioned to civilian rule in 1999, this chapter describes the corruption that was carried out by government officials during the nation's regime transition. Nigerian citizens, international actors, IOs, CSOs, and NGOs had pushed for

[444] Adisa, Olufemi Peniel. "Nigerian Government and Governance: Democracy or Kleptocracy?" *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, vol. X, no. 10.3, 2019, pp. 1–13.

democratization to improve government transparency, national unity, and security; yet, the 1999 Constitution and election did not take the needs of Nigerians into account, and were marred by corruption and electoral malpractice, leading to violent protests and political instability following the regime transition. Chapter four described electoral malpractices in presidential elections in Nigeria's Fourth Republic after the 1999 transition, including the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023 elections, describing how electoral legitimacy continues to be damaged by electoral malpractice, poor government performance, and public sector corruption, which has damaged Nigeria's regime legitimacy because Nigerian citizens do not trust the INEC to carry out free and fair elections.

5.2 Limitations

This thesis does not aim to explain the day-to-day living conditions of a Nigerian citizen or politician in any of the Nigerian states. This thesis describes how Nigeria's entrenched centralized government structure has resulted in endemic governmental corruption and prebendalism, resulting in human rights violations and political instability. Given that corruption, political violence, electoral malpractice, and human rights violations are frequently unreported by the government, and the media is often repressed by the state, it is difficult to describe the full extent to which these violations have occurred in Nigeria.[445]

5.3 Contributions to Further Research

This thesis could contribute to future research because the Nigerian state is not the only institution that has economic motivations for corruption to continue; multinational oil

[445] Adebanwi, Wale. *Nation as Grand Narrative : The Nigerian Press and the Politics of Meaning*. Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora. University of Rochester Press, 2016.

corporations have joint ventures (JVs) and production sharing contracts (PSCs) with the state,[446] meaning they benefit financially from oil revenues, and remain complicit with government corruption, rather than opposing it.[447] More research could be done on the relationship between multinational oil corporations and state corruption. A comparative study could be done between Nigeria and states, such as Cameroon, with similar political structures and systemic corruption, to describe how these structures become entrenched in systems, or how other nations were able to combat corruption.

5.4 Policy Recommendations

Systemic prebendalism, or corruption, in Nigeria's government stems from the state's centralized government structure and has resulted in ongoing human rights violations and political instability in the nation. Due to the history of militarism in Nigeria, power and resource production are centralized, resulting in competition for power and oil revenue by elites. The central problem in Nigeria lies in its centralized government structure. In chapter one, Figure 1,[448] the centralized government is at the top of the *Diagram of the Structural Functionalism Model of Interdependence applied to Nigeria's Centralized Government Structure*. This means that for successful reforms to be made to reduce corruption, improve human rights violations, and political instability, the government structure must be decentralized, and a federal system must be created, which has only previously been implemented structurally, not functionally. To decentralize the federal executive's power, I recommend equally distributing power to the states, leaving them with fiscal autonomy to catalyze economic growth and infrastructure development. I argue that the Nigerian government's economic deprivation of the Niger Delta region is a

[446] Smith, Daniel Jordan. *A Culture of Corruption*. Princeton University Press, 2010.
[447] Human Rights Watch. *"The Price of Oil: Corporate Responsibility and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities."* January 1999.
[448] See Chapter 1, page 36.

human rights violation, because the fundamental human rights, including healthcare, education, and access to food and safe water, of citizens in the region are marginalized. By decentralizing the government, oil revenue allocation will also be decentralized, and individual states can enforce policies to improve economic and infrastructural development, to improve civil liberties and human rights for their citizens. Devolution of power and implementing an effective system of checks and balances to prevent power from being centralized in the federal executive and improve government transparency will aid the development of anti-corruption strategies, which have been largely ineffective in Nigeria, because the structure of centralized wealth and power enables prebendalism among public officials in Nigeria. As introduced in chapter three, *shari'a* law, which was implemented in twelve states in Northern Nigeria in 1999, is unconstitutional and has resulted in numerous human rights violations against women and non-Muslims since its implementation. A policy should be introduced to prevent the implementation of *shari'a* law in Nigeria, support Nigerians' constitutional right to freedom of religion, and uphold the nation as a secular state.[449] Finally, the INEC should be replaced with a new Electoral Management Body (EMB), with personal autonomy to restore trust and confidence in the electoral process. The National Assembly of Nigeria should develop laws to address electoral malpractice, including improving voter registration methods, implementing voter education policies, reducing the number of political parties, placing a ceiling on campaign funds, providing detailed voter education, and ensuring voters' safety and security before, during, and after elections.[450]

[449] Sections 10 and 38 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibit state religion and guarantee freedom of religion, respectively; "Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999." *Constitute*, 5 May 1999, www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Nigeria_1999.
[450] Okolo, Ben Simon, and R. Okey Onunkwo, 65-70.

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