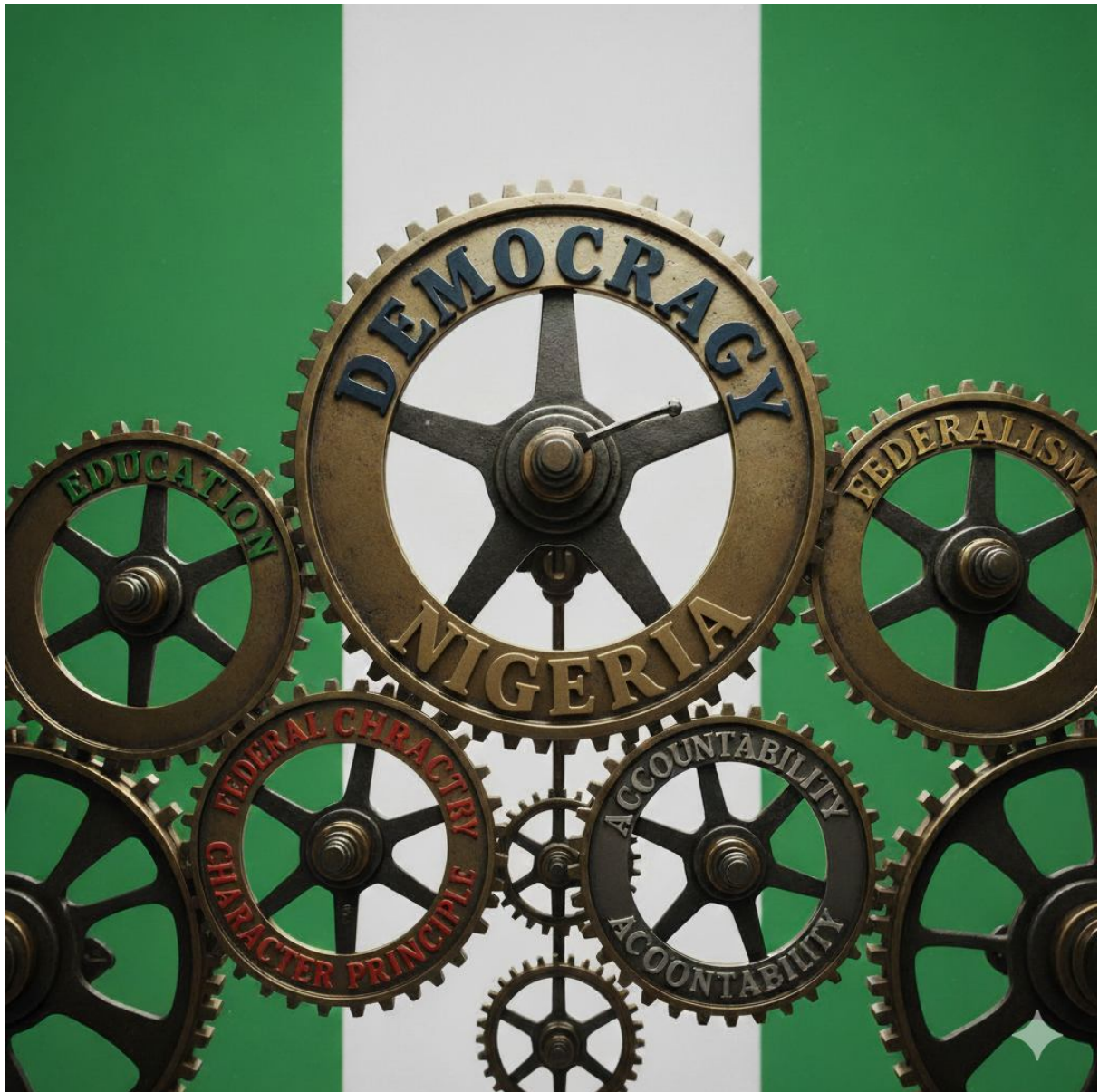


Inaugural Lecture Paper



Bespoke Solutions: Reimagining, Reifying and Realigning the Wheels of the Nigerian State

By

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Protocol

Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrar, Provosts and Deans, Heads of Departments, distinguished colleagues, revered traditional leaders, members of the academic community, family, friends, media and esteemed guests.

Preamble

It is with a profound sense of humility and gratitude that I stand before you today to deliver this inaugural lecture. I am grateful to the Lagos State University for giving me the opportunity to present my Inaugural Lecture. Being the first graduate of the Department of History and International Studies to present an Inaugural Lecture in the University, the first graduate of the Department to become Head of the Department of History and International Studies, and the

first graduate from the Department to become a Professor of History and International Studies, I am extremely grateful to all my teachers for making today a reality. Your tutelage, commitment, and dedication to my development and growth—first as your student and later as a young colleague—have led me to this podium today.

My research over the years has always been multi and inter-disciplinary. I have employed the techniques and methodologies of various disciplines to interrogate, analyze, and provide possible solutions to the different nation-building challenges faced by our dear country. My training, first as a Historian and later as both an International Relations scholar and a Strategist, has uniquely positioned me to provide crucial insights into Nigeria's political developments in the past, present, and possible future. It is this training, coupled with my overriding desire to see a better Nigeria, that inspired me to choose this topic for my Inaugural Lecture.

My topic, **“Bespoke Solutions: Reimagining, Reifying, and Realigning the Wheels of the Nigerian State,”** stems from my enduring desire to contribute meaningfully to the crafting of a new, viable, cohesive, and stable Nigerian state. This aspiration has consistently guided the trajectory of my academic research over the years. My various studies and scholarly works eloquently attest to this commitment. Kindly note that this lecture represents just one facet of my broader specialization. In addition to General and Nigerian History, I have published extensively in the fields of International Relations, Strategic Studies, Terrorism Studies, War Studies, and Intelligence Studies.

My theoretical orientation is rooted in Realism, a framework that informs much of my scholarly output. Notably, the flagship journal of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) published my critically acclaimed work, “The Theoretical Foundation of Realism” (Falode, 2009). Significantly, I have proposed a definition of ‘Intelligence’ in “Found: A Definition of Intelligence” (Falode, 2021), which has gained wide acceptance within the field of Military Studies. In addition, I developed foundational typologies for 21st-century terrorism in “Terrorism 4.0: A Global and Structural Analysis,” (Falode, 2018) which have become core references in contemporary Terrorism Studies. Other notable contributions include: a co-authored work: “Countering Terrorism and Criminal Financing in Nigeria: Strategic Options,” (Falode & Nnamani, 2022); a study on small arms and light weapons: “Small Arms and Light Weapons and Transnational Crime in Africa” (Falode, 2020); a policy-oriented paper on Nigeria's cybersecurity policy: “Cybersecurity in Nigeria: A Tool for National Security and Economic Prosperity” (Falode, 2021); a co-authored work on artificial intelligence and Nigeria: “Artificial Intelligence: The Missing Critical Component in Nigeria's Security Architecture” (Falode, Faseke & Ikeanyichukwu, 2021); a co-authored article on intelligence in Nigeria's wars: “The Art of the Impossible: Intelligence and Nigeria's Boko Haram war, 2010-2021 ” (Falode & Faseke, 2022); a co-authored work on illicit firearms and organized crime in Africa: “Illicit Firearms Markets and Organized Crime in Africa” (Falode & Balogun, 2025); and a major work on counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria: “Hybrid Doctrine: The Grand Strategy for Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Operations in Nigeria” (Falode, 2019), published in the flagship journal of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which further established my bona fides in the area of Military Strategy.

I have cited these works not for self-glorification, but to underscore the multi- and inter-disciplinary nature of my scholarship and its alignment with the critical issues shaping contemporary Nigeria.

However, the overriding questions in my research over the years are: why is Nigeria the way it is? And, importantly, how can Nigeria be made into the way we want it to be? These are the two important questions that this Inaugural Lecture addresses. So, strap on your seatbelts and let me take you on a whirlwind journey through the checkered history of the Nigerian state.

Beginning...



When the first locomotive, the predecessor to today's automobile, was invented in the eighteenth century, nobody could have known that its modern incarnations in the 21st century would still retain some of its major defining features: round wheels (Sekon, 1899). Round, and not square or oblong, wheels have always been a fundamental part of human inventions to aid movement from one location to another. Carts and wagons, wheelbarrows and bicycles, and later their technologically superior iterations—cars, airplanes, trains, and motorcycles—have all retained this essential roundness. Always round. From era to era, civilization to civilization, epoch to epoch, and period to period, modern vehicles—be it Toyota from Japan, Mercedes-Benz from Germany, GAC from China, Ford from the United States, or Innoson from Nigeria—rely on round wheels. Internationally renowned tire makers such as Dunlop and Michelin, despite the billions of dollars they have invested in research and development over the years, have adhered to this essential characteristic of the wheel: roundness. What becomes obvious in the history of transportation across all ages is the centrality of the wheel to humanity's best and brightest efforts to create the most effective means of transportation. But then, what exactly is the function of the wheel? It is the primary means of motion and movement for all vehicles—mechanical, analog, digital, and electric. Elon Musk's Tesla would flounder without it. Toyota's brilliance would fail to shine, and, of course, Daimler's vaunted engineering prowess would amount to mere technical skill without societal applicability. Even Innoson's considerable efforts in Nigeria would come to naught.

Just as the wheel is central to the existence and functionality of any vehicle, so is the nature, function, and characteristics of the wheel pivotal to the destiny of over two hundred million Nigerians currently striving to create a viable, cohesive, and functional state. What, then, is that wheel in the case of Nigeria? Has Nigeria's wheel always been round, or has it been square since the state's creation in 1960? What is the nature, form, and characteristic of the wheel in Nigeria's case? Will Nigeria have to reinvent the wheel to survive as a state? Or will Nigeria's wheel be elliptical, spherical, or even hexagonal? To answer these important questions and explain why Nigeria has found it extremely difficult to fulfill its potential among the comity of nations and satisfy the yearnings and aspirations of its citizens, one must define, clarify, and examine the nature of this wheel.

Conceptual Clarification: The Wheel

Madam Vice-Chancellor, there is a distinction between Nigeria and Nigerians: Nigerians are the citizens—the living beings—residing within the non-living entity known as the state called Nigeria. The state is the vehicle responsible for numerous functions, including the provision of security, education, economic well-being, and other essential services collectively referred to as political goods. The *wheels*, in the context of this lecture, refer to the various mechanisms, strategies, instruments, political systems, and constitutional provisions that have been employed since 1960 to transform the country into a stable, cohesive, and economically viable entity. Nigeria's history since independence, as will be shown, has been a long and winding journey of attempts at realigning, readjusting, and reinventing the wheel. Yet, these varied efforts have failed to turn Nigeria into a cohesive, politically stable, and economically viable polity. The reasons for these failures, and the consequent misalignments and maladjustments in the state's long, winding journey since 1960, will be explained in subsequent sections of this lecture.

The Wheel Invented: Origins and Development

Nigeria became an independent state in 1960, and since then the rulers of the country have employed different wheels to transform it into a viable polity. However, long before independence, in the precolonial period, Britain, the country's colonial master, first used a uni-wheel (Northern Protectorate), then a bi-wheel (Northern and Southern Protectorates), and finally a tri-wheel (Northern, Eastern, and Western Protectorates) to steer the affairs of the country. This situation prevailed until 1914, when Britain decided to legalize and institutionalize the aforementioned three-wheeled arrangement to govern the country. This was the vaunted Amalgamation that would eventually culminate in independence in 1960. When the British observed that primordial ethnic, political, and religious rivalries were undermining the overall well-being of their contraption, they introduced measures such as Indirect Rule, as well as constitutional instruments including the Clifford (1922), Richards (1946), Macpherson (1951), and Lyttleton (1954) constitutions, to address the obvious misalignment in the polity (Falode, 2017).

However, all these changes and additions to the wheels failed to correct the structural misalignments that would later become the bane of the country at independence. Realizing that their policies and actions had failed to realign the wheels or reset the trajectory of their fledgling creation, Britain granted Nigeria independence in 1960. This meant that from 1960 onwards, Nigerians themselves had the opportunity to tinker with the wheels they inherited from Britain, wheels that were already misaligned and maladjusted, and fashion out new ones that could culminate in the emergence of Nigeria as an economically viable and politically stable polity. It is this enduring desire to create a functional state that has occupied the minds of Nigeria's best and brightest, who have since independence experimented with different kinds of wheels,

even attempting, at times, to reinvent the wheel, in order to make the country a viable and functional polity.

One should note at this point that long before the Europeans came with their wheel of colonialism to add to the country's axle, the different ethnic groups had employed various bespoke wheels to effectively govern themselves. For example, in the eastern part of the country, the Igbo used a decentralized system of administration to govern themselves effectively (Falola & Heaton, 2008). This system not only promoted social harmony and integration but also ensured the economic sustainability of every household. In the northern and western parts of the country, the Hausa, Fulani, and Yoruba employed centralized systems of governance—emirate and monarchical, respectively—to rule within their domains (Falode, 2017). These traditional wheels not only promoted social cohesion and inter-group relations but also ensured that the people within such polities were effectively represented in the traditional systems of governance. There were effective mechanisms of checks and balances on the power of the rulers, and the obligations of the ruled were usually spelled out in their norms and traditions. All these were swept aside with the advent of Amalgamation, colonial rule, and Indirect Rule. The foreign intervention, of course, threw the country's alignment askew. On the eve of independence in 1960, knowing the ethnic composition of the country and how combustible the issue of ethnicity could be, the Nigerian elites opted for federalism to realign the country's wheel and set it on a course for greatness. From the foregoing, one can see that the wheels Britain introduced into Nigeria—namely colonialism and Indirect Rule—disrupted the country's socio-economic and political development. Since then, Nigeria has been struggling to reinvent, reify, or realign the wheel.

The Wheel Unspooled: The Civil War Interregnum



**Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa
Prime Minister 1960-1966**

With independence in 1960, Nigeria's rulers began to realign and reify the wheels needed to steady the Nigerian ship. At the point of independence, the state was confronted with multiple

challenges: governance, ethnic and religious tensions, minority rights, political participation, and economic development (Falode, 2019a). With three dominant ethnic groups—the Hausa/Fulani (North), Yoruba (West), and Igbo (East)—alongside a cornucopia of over 250 other minorities such as the Ijaw, Nupe, and Tiv, Nigerian nationalists opted for federalism, regionalism, parliamentarianism, a multi-party political system, and a written constitution as the mechanisms to steer the country toward economic growth, political stability, and democratic development. In hindsight, this political arrangement would have provided the perfect framework for realigning the already faltering tyres of the state. Federalism, in particular, is a system of government well-suited to multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria. After all, by 1960, several multi-ethnic states across Africa, Europe, and Asia had already adopted federalism as the most appropriate system for managing the challenges inherent in plural societies (Fenna & Schnabel, 2024). It can thus be deduced that this was the rationale behind its adoption in Nigeria at independence. Had Nigeria’s post-independence leaders adhered to the principles of federalism—adjusting and refining the system to meet local realities where necessary—the malalignments and maladjustments that later derailed the country’s journey toward democratic stability might well have been avoided.

With the adoption of regionalism, three political parties came to dominate the Nigerian political landscape: the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) in the North, the Action Group (AG) in the West, and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the East (Osaghae, 2017). This ethnic siloing created challenges that impacted the creation of a national identity. First, the dominance of these three political behemoths, and their subsequent destructive competition for control of the federal centre, played a crucial role in the collapse of the First Republic. Second, the “minority question” emerged as another critical issue that destabilized the state. Throughout the First Republic, the government could not adequately address the aspirations of minority groups seeking greater representation in the federation. This was despite the formation of two minority-driven parties: the United Middle Belt Union (UMBU) in 1962 and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) in 1964, both of which sought to advance this cause. A third destabilizing factor was the parliamentary system adopted at independence. While the arrangement created the positions of both President and Prime Minister, it rendered the presidency merely ceremonial, devoid of executive powers. Yet paradoxically, the system required that the Prime Minister could only form a government if invited by the President to do so. This arrangement generated tension between Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa (NPC) and President Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC), whose overarching ambitions and mutual distrust effectively paralyzed governance at the federal level.

Matters were further complicated by the Federal Government’s alliance with the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), through which it sought to penetrate the Western Region and weaken the opposition AG. These political intrigues, coupled with the instability that engulfed the Western Region following the disputed 1964 federal elections, pushed the wheels of the state dangerously close to breaking off their axle. With the failure of the political class to rein in their excesses and correct course, the military carried out the first in a series of putsches in 1966 (Falode, 2011).



Major General Aguiyi Ironsi
Head of State
January 1966–July 1966

General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, who emerged as head of the junta after the first coup in January 1966, sought to completely reinvent the wheel by transforming Nigeria into a unitary state. This move did not sit well with many in the North, as well as with certain sections of the military of northern extraction. The widespread unease, combined with other factors, culminated in the counter-coup of July 1966, during which General Ironsi was killed. Following Ironsi's death, General Yakubu Gowon assumed power as Head of State. He promptly dismantled the "unitary wheel" introduced by his predecessor and introduced new wheels, most notably that of state creation, in the hope of balancing and realigning the political order. The assumption was that these measures would correct the malalignment and maladjustment that had derailed the Nigerian state, setting it once again on the right course. Unfortunately, this was not to be. Instead, the coups, counter-coups, and subsequent policies further destabilized the polity, pushing the wheels of state dangerously out of alignment and sending the country careening into disorder, civil strife, privation, and economic retardation. This downward spiral culminated in the Nigerian Civil War that began with Lt. Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu's declaration of secession in 1967 (Falode, 2011).

Among the underlying causes of the Civil War was the Federal Government's failure, under General Gowon, to address decisively the issues of the Eastern Region's marginalization and the North's disproportionate share of national resources. Lt. Col. Ojukwu believed these imbalances had gravely undermined the stability and direction of the Nigerian state. The refusal or inability of the Gowon regime to realign and adjust the wheels of governance convinced him that reconciliation was impossible. In essence, Nigeria and Biafra went to war because both sides recognized that the maladjusted and misaligned wheels of the federation had to be fixed

if Nigeria was to return to the path of socio-political and economic development. Paradoxically, the Civil War itself became another wheel, albeit a tragic and bloody one, added to the Nigerian project of building a strong, cohesive, democratic, stable, and economically viable nation (Falode, 2011).

I argued, persuasively, I daresay, in my work “The Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970: A Revolution?” (Falode, 2011) that the Civil War, like other civil wars in world history, should have jump-started Nigeria’s drive toward greatness. I demonstrated that the rapid development and modernization of countries such as the United States, Britain, Russia, and China all began in the aftermath of their respective civil wars. This was the trajectory that the end of Nigeria’s Civil War ought to have taken. The conclusion of the war should have served as a catalyst propelling the nation toward the fulfillment of its great destiny. Alas, this was not the case! The reasons for the failure of this ultimate wheel to realign the state’s trajectory, despite the immense blood and sweat expended, were both varied and numerous. These reasons shall form the crux of the remaining sections of this lecture.

The Maladjusted Wheels: Post Civil War

The Civil War ended in favour of Nigeria with the announcement of Biafra’s surrender by Lt.-Col. Phillip Effiong in 1970 (Falode, 2011). The title of this section, “The Maladjusted Wheels,” cogently capture the nation’s struggle to reconcile its fragmented identity with the demands of national integration and unity. The war left the country devastated, burdened with severe economic, social, and political challenges that significantly hampered post-war nation-building. Nation-building obstacles such as corruption, ethno-religious conflict, democratic instability, and the perennial problem of fiscal federalism confronted the state in the aftermath of the war (Falode, 2019a). The post-war years were characterized by attempts at reconstruction, integration, and political stabilization, all aimed at fostering a stronger sense of national identity among Nigerians (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Falode, 2019a). Successive governments, both military and civilian, employed four major mechanisms, conceived as “wheel realignment tools”, to redirect the trajectory of the state and set the country on the right course. In my book *The State and Nation-Building in Nigeria, 1960–2007: An Analysis* (2017), I argued that since 1970, Nigerian leaders have relied on institutional, constitutional, praetorian, and conceptual wheels as critical instruments of nation-building (Falode, 2019b). How these wheels were utilized by successive leaders will form the thrust of the next four sections.

i. General Yakubu Gowon, 1966-1975



General Yakubu Gowon
Head of State
July 1966-1975

General Yakubu Gowon, who led Nigeria through the civil war, was eager to re-integrate and unify the country at the end of the conflict. Being mindful of the various factors responsible for the civil war, Gowon initiated three conceptual mechanisms known as the “3Rs” — Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation - to tackle the division the civil war had wrought (Osaghae, 1998; Falode, 2013). This was his first attempt at realigning the wheel; 3R policy was implemented to reintegrate the aggrieved Eastern Region, rebuild infrastructure across the nation, and heal ethnic divisions. Gowon took the reconciliatory step of declaring an amnesty for all Biafran troops with his ‘no victor, no vanquished’ mantra. In addition to the three Rs policy, a nine-point programme for transition to civilian rule was further developed to address the issue of governance, corruption and democracy (Falode & Bolarinwa, 2019). However, the military’s reluctance to return to the barracks and Gowon’s dilly-dallying on the issue of a workable constitution for the country effectively threw a spanner in the wheels.

Interestingly, Gowon sought to resolve the issue of fiscal federalism through extra-constitutional means, creating a serious misalignment in the wheel of the nation’s finances. To this end, the Dina Commission was established in 1970 to review revenue allocation. By centralizing control in the federal government, granting it jurisdiction over disbursements from the expanded Distributable Pool Account (DPA), principal taxes, receipts, and oil royalties, the Commission reshaped the debate on fiscal policy. Although its report was never formally adopted, it became the unofficial foundation for most revenue allocation and fiscal reforms between 1970 and 1975, with effects that lasted well beyond.

Moreover, Gowon established the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1973 as an institutional mechanism to address ethnic divisions in the country (Falode, 2017). The NYSC was intended to inculcate patriotism and promote ethnic tolerance among young graduates. Federal Government Colleges, now known as Unity Schools, were also established across the twelve states of the federation. These schools were designed to foster a sense of unity and nationalism among Nigerian youths, irrespective of ethnicity. Additionally, Gowon used the

praetorian mechanism to tackle the challenges of federalism, aggressive ethno-regionalism, and governance that beset the state between 1970 and 1975 (Falode & Bolarinwa, 2019). A central feature of this effort was the creation of twelve new states in 1967 from the existing four regions. By fiat, Gowon established the North-Western State, North-Eastern State, Kano State, North-Central State, Benue-Plateau State, Kwara State, Western State, Lagos State, Mid-Western State, Rivers State, South-Eastern State, and East-Central State. This state-creation exercise was a pivotal step in political re-engineering, aimed at correcting structural imbalances and anomalies in Nigeria's federal system. However, despite these efforts, Gowon ultimately failed to address the pressing issues of corruption, ethnicity, governance, and revenue allocation before his removal in 1975.

ii. Murtala/Obasanjo and the Reimagination of the Wheels



General Murtala Muhammad, July 1975- February 1976



General Olusegun Obasanjo, February 1976-Sept. 1979

Following Gowon's overthrow in 1975, General Murtala Mohammed (July 1975-February 1976) and General Olusegun Obasanjo (February 1976-October 1979) took over as leaders of Nigeria. Murtala Mohammed met a Nigeria that was already disillusioned with itself and the state. A country that was so riven with corruption and indiscipline, that it tethered precariously on the edge of total collapse. The Murtala/Obasanjo regime introduced multi-modal wheels that were designed to tackle specific nation-building challenges that confronted the country. The first wheel introduced was the one designed to tackle indiscipline – War-Against-Indiscipline - in public and private life (Falola, 1999). The second wheel was the creation of

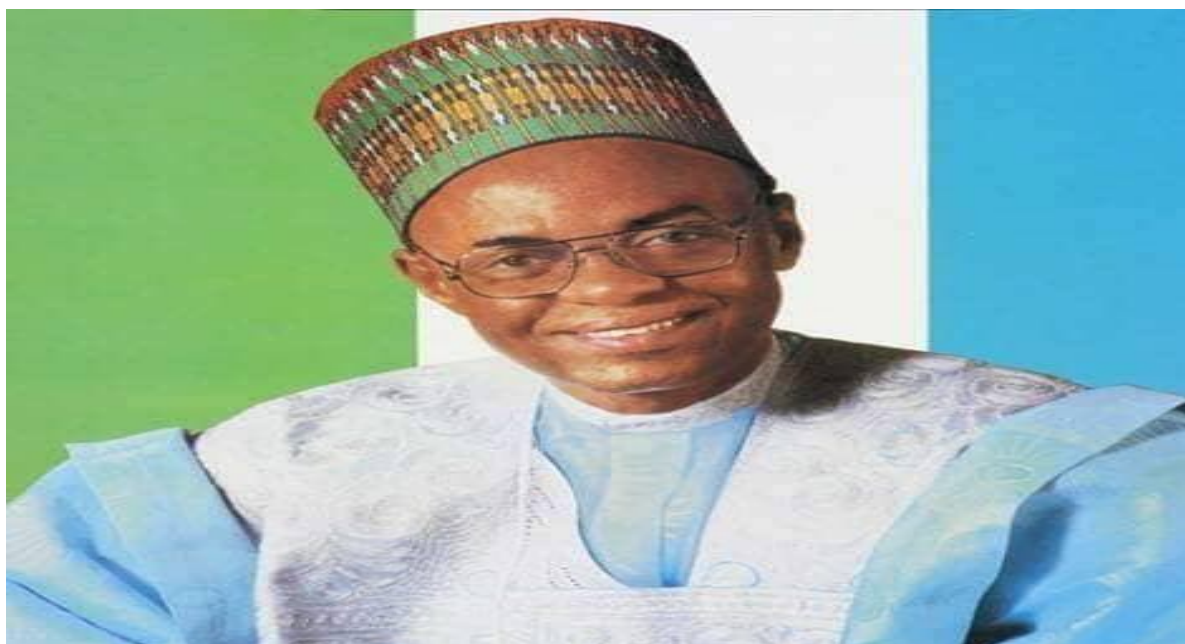
seven additional states – Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Imo, Niger, Ogun and Ondo – and local governments to tackle the minorities question and bring governance closer to the grassroots (Suberu, 1991). A third wheel was designed to specifically tackle corruption head on – Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and Special Tribunal. One can argue that this was the precursor to the ICPC that Obasanjo later established in 2007.

Most importantly, the regime decreed Abuja into existence as the new Federal Capital Territory, following the recommendation of the Aguda Panel. This singular act was intended to foster unity, purpose, and cohesion among Nigeria's disparate ethnic groups. From these initiatives, it is evident that the Murtala/Obasanjo regime relied heavily on institutional, conceptual, and especially praetorian wheels to straighten the course of the state. Despite these efforts, the regime's wheels failed to resolve many of the nation-building challenges. For instance, it was unable to devise a sustainable solution to the anomaly in the derivation formula, resorting instead to extra-constitutional measures, much like its predecessor. Furthermore, a vital wheel that could have greatly aided economic, political, and social planning — a national census — was conspicuously absent.

In 1975, the regime established a fifty-member Constitution Drafting Committee, headed by Chief Rotimi Williams, to craft a new wheel to address the persistent misalignments. The committee completed its work, and the draft was later adopted by the military as the '1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria'. This constitution, which ushered in the Second Republic, was itself a critical wheel, containing important provisions (or sub-wheels) such as the Federal Character Principle, a presidential system with an executive president, the creation of local governments as the third tier of governance, and the strengthening of federalism. These sub-wheels were added to the axle of the state to tackle more entrenched problems of nation-building, including corruption, ethno-religious crises, and the minorities' question.

In retrospect, the end of the first phase of military rule in 1979 provided Nigeria with the perfect opportunity to realign its wheels and set the nation on a path toward greatness. This assertion rests on the argument that, had the civilian leaders who succeeded the military faithfully implemented the provisions of the 1979 Constitution — an omnibus wheel — many of Nigeria's most persistent nation-building challenges might have been resolved.

Trying to Reinvent the Wheel: The Second Republic



Alhaji Shehu Shagari, October 1979-December 1983

The shift to civilian governance in Nigeria in 1979 marked a pivotal moment in the nation's history, signifying a return to democratic rule after an extended period of military control. Shehu Shagari, candidate of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), emerged victorious in the presidential election, bringing with him aspirations for stability and progress (Falode, 2019). His administration introduced several wheels to the axle, particularly in the areas of agriculture and social services. One of the central policies of Shagari's tenure was the promotion of agricultural development through the **Green Revolution initiative**. This wheel sought to boost food production by promoting modern farming methods and improving farmers' access to high-yield seeds and fertilizers (Adebayo & Adebisi, 2022). In addition, the government introduced various credit schemes to provide financial support for farmers, thereby enhancing productivity and increasing rural incomes (Ogunleye & Ojo, 2021). Beyond agriculture, Shagari's administration also recognized the importance of industrialization in diversifying Nigeria's oil-dependent economy. Equally significant was its focus on education as a driver of long-term socio-economic development.

A major cog that misaligned Shagari's wheels was the fluctuation in international crude oil prices. This economic challenge significantly hindered the execution of his administration's economic and social policies. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Nigeria enjoyed a surge in oil revenues, which greatly shaped government expenditure and policy direction. However, this heavy dependence on oil rendered the economy highly vulnerable to global market volatility. The glut in the international oil market drove prices down, drastically reducing government revenue and undermining the national budget in the early 1980s. The resulting financial shortfall restricted funding for critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure (Adebayo, 2022). The downturn also fueled soaring inflation, eroding citizens' purchasing power. Public dissatisfaction with Shagari's administration grew as basic necessities became unaffordable. In response, the government resorted to both domestic and international borrowing. Yet, this unrestrained borrowing proved to be another spanner in the works, further skewing the wheels of the state and deepening economic malalignment.

Political shenanigans further complicated the trajectory of development under Shagari. Infighting within the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and resistance from opposition

parties such as the UPN, NPP, and PRP turned the political arena into a minefield of instability. Factionalism and partisanship weakened collective support for national policies, as self-interest took precedence over the pursuit of national development. Indeed, enlightened self-interest has been a recurring malaise across all Nigerian republics, a defect that has not only misaligned the wheels but also ensured that the country lurches from pothole to crater on its tortuous path to political stability. This political instability ultimately created fertile ground for military intervention, culminating in General Muhammadu Buhari's coup, which toppled Shagari's administration in 1983.

The Wheel Unspooled

This section examines the different wheels employed by the regimes of Generals Muhammadu Buhari, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, Sanni Abacha, and Abdulsalami Abubakar, as well as the short-lived administration of Ernest Shonekan, in their attempts to correct the serious misalignment and maladjustment of the Nigerian federation. These leaders deployed a mix of institutional, constitutional, and praetorian mechanisms to address the challenges of nation-building. After the federal elections of 1983, it became evident, even to the most blasé observer, that the Nigerian vehicle, badly misaligned on its wheels, was on course for a destructive crash. To arrest the situation and correct the worsening misalignment, the military intervened once more in December 1983. The junta, led by General Muhammadu Buhari, brought the Nigerian state to a screeching halt mid-course, removed all the wheels—suspending the Constitution and banning politicians and political activities—and then introduced new wheels intended to steer the country toward economic, social, and political recovery.

i. General Muhammadu Buhari



General Muhammadu Buhari, December 1983-August 1985

On December 31, 1983, General Muhammadu Buhari seized power through a military coup, driven by widespread discontent with President Shehu Shagari's civilian government that was perceived as corrupt and ineffective. Buhari's rise to power marked a critical turning point in Nigeria's governance. He presented himself as a disciplinarian committed to restoring integrity and order. His regime pledged to confront corruption head-on and to implement policies for economic recovery. Yet his emergence also reflected the broader pattern of military coups in

Nigeria's political history, where military interventions were often seen as remedies for political instability. At the time of Buhari's ascension, Nigeria was beset by severe socio-economic problems. Corruption was endemic across both the public and private sectors, with government officials frequently implicated in embezzlement and the misuse of resources intended for development projects. Weak accountability systems further enabled abuses of power among politicians and civil servants. Meanwhile, healthcare and education suffered chronic underfunding, leaving many Nigerians with limited access to essential services.

To address these challenges, Buhari's regime adopted drastic and often draconian measures. Convinced that the wheels inherited from Shagari were beyond repair, Buhari removed them entirely and introduced new ones. The most significant was the praetorian wheel: the deployment of military decrees as tools to confront nation-building challenges directly. For instance, the Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 1 of 1984 suspended parts of the 1979 Constitution and proscribed all political parties, reflecting the regime's belief that political elites were responsible for Nigeria's predicament. Similarly, the Banking Decree No. 3 empowered the Head of State to freeze accounts of individuals suspected of corrupt enrichment, with the aim of reclaiming illicit funds for state use. Buhari also introduced the **War Against Indiscipline (WAI)** as a mechanism for realigning the state. This campaign sought to instill discipline in the Nigerian populace and combat corruption in society. Strategies included public education campaigns, strict enforcement of laws against littering and queue-jumping, and broader appeals for ethical conduct in both private and public life (Adedeji & Oluwalogbon, 2020). On the economic front, Buhari introduced the **wheel of austerity measures**, including cuts to government expenditure, the devaluation of the naira to stimulate exports, and policies to reduce import dependency (Igbokwe-Ibeto et al., 2015). His administration placed renewed emphasis on agriculture and domestic production. Programs such as the Green Revolution was initiated to boost food output, promote self-sufficiency, and reduce reliance on costly food imports. Additionally, Buhari changed the Nigerian currency in a bid to curb currency trafficking and counterfeiting of the naira abroad.

However, Buhari's administration drew sharp criticism for its human rights record. The regime relied on press censorship and the arbitrary detention of political opponents. Notably, Decree No. 2 of 1984 permitted detention without trial for individuals deemed threats to national security, creating a climate of fear among journalists, activists, and opposition figures.

ii. General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida



General Ibrahim Babangida, August 1985-August 1993

General Muhammadu Buhari was removed from power in a military coup orchestrated by General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on August 27, 1985. Babangida and his supporters justified the coup as a necessary measure to restore order and address what they claimed was rampant corruption during Buhari's tenure. Babangida introduced five key “wheels” to tackle the pressing problems afflicting the polity. Like his predecessor, he set about reinventing the wheels of state. These included: the Political Bureau, the **Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction (MAMSER)**, the **Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI)**, the Better Life Programme, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), and the Transition to Civilian Rule Programme.

The **Political Bureau** was the central wheel, intended to guide the alignment of all others. Established in 1986 as a 16-member body, it was tasked with recasting Nigeria's political, social, and economic landscape. Its report, submitted in 1987, contained far-reaching recommendations divided into three parts: an examination of the historical character of the Nigerian state; an analysis of the political culture required to create a new Nigeria; and a proposed calendar for transition to civilian rule. The Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Reconstruction (**MAMSER**) was the ideological wheel, designed to reorient the people's mindset and instill values like patriotism and nationalism. It was Babangida's version of Gowon's “Keep Nigeria One,” “Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation,” “Shagari's Ethical Revolution,” and “Buhari's War Against Indiscipline.”

The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (**DFRRI**) was intended to strengthen local governments by granting them financial autonomy and enabling them to function as an effective tier of the federation. However, DFRRI failed to fulfill its mandate due to the stifling control of political bureaucrats overseeing its operations. Babangida's administration launched the Better Life Programme in 1987 to improve the status of women by integrating rural and urban women into the mainstream of Nigeria's political, social, and economic life. The Structural Adjustment Programme (**SAP**), introduced in 1986, was the most consequential wheel. Although imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Babangida embraced it with vigor. SAP devalued the naira, removed subsidies on essential goods and services, and promoted the privatization of state-owned enterprises. These measures caused severe hardship for Nigerians at both the micro and macro levels and further misaligned the wheels of the state.

In response to growing demands for democracy, Babangida introduced a transition programme in 1989, establishing two political parties: the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). This was the regime's final wheel, designed to realign Nigeria's democratic and federal structures. However, by annulling the June 12, 1993 elections—widely regarded as the freest in Nigeria's history—Babangida effectively dismantled all the wheels of state. His decision plunged the country into political paralysis and widespread unrest. Denying Bashorun Moshood Abiola of the SDP his victory, Babangida abruptly “stepped aside” on August 27, 1993, handing power to the Interim National Government (ING) led by Ernest Shonekan. The ING, the shortest-lived civilian government in Nigeria's history, survived only 84 days before being toppled by General Sani Abacha.

iii. Gen. Sani Abacha, 1993-1998,



General Sani Abacha, 17 November, 1993 – 8 June, 1998

Like his predecessors, Abacha relied heavily on praetorian mechanisms, particularly decrees, to reinvent the wheel of state. Instead of recognizing the presumed winner of the June 12 elections, he introduced series of programmes intended to stabilize the polity. Using his transition framework as a template, he convened the National Constitutional Conference (NCC) in August 1994 and tasked it with creating a new constitutional and political framework for the country. The NCC proposed a “modified French model” of governance to replace the American-style presidential system. In 1996, Abacha established the National Electoral Commission (NECON), which recognized five political parties: the National Centre Party of Nigeria (NCPN), Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN), Grassroots Democratic Party (GDP), United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), and Congress for National Consensus (CNC). Eventually, all five adopted Abacha as their sole presidential candidate.

Abacha also revived the old wheel of state creation, establishing **six new states**—Ebonyi, Bayelsa, Nasarawa, Zamfara, Gombe, and Ekiti—and 183 new local governments in 1996, ostensibly to address ethnic and minority concerns. Economically, he introduced Value Added Tax (VAT), still in use today as a significant revenue source. **His administration also instituted a dual foreign exchange rate policy in 1995 that persisted until it was abolished in 2024 by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.** To address infrastructure, Abacha created the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) in 1995 to rehabilitate roads, schools, hospitals, and waterworks. He also sought to improve the condition of women by establishing the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and launching the Family Support Programme (FSP) the same year. Between 1995 and 1998, Abacha organized several elections; local government (1997), state legislative (1997), and National Assembly (1998)—purportedly to prepare Nigeria for civilian rule. However, he died suddenly on June 8, 1998, before the presidential elections could be held. He was succeeded by his Chief of Defence Staff, General Abdulsalami Abubakar.

iv. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, 1998–1999



June 1998-May1999

Upon assuming office, Abubakar initiated a swift transition to civilian governance. His first wheel was the drafting of a new constitution, a process involving political parties, civil society organizations, and legal experts to ensure legitimacy. His second wheel was the creation of the Independent National Electoral Commission (**INEC**), tasked with conducting credible elections. A third wheel, the Economic Recovery Plans, focused on privatization and encouraging foreign direct investment (FDI) through tax incentives and regulatory reforms. Despite these efforts, Abubakar's transition was marred by persistent ethnic strife, political violence, and concerns about electoral integrity. Nevertheless, elections were held in May 1999, culminating in Nigeria's return to civilian rule. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was declared the winner in what was widely regarded as a credible election, especially when compared to previous experiences.

Adjusting the Wheel



*President Olusegun Obasanjo
1999-2007*

*President Umaru Yar'Adua
2007-2010*

*President Goodluck Jonathan
2010-2015*

*President Muhammadu Buhari
2015-2023*

In 1999, Olusegun Obasanjo came to power in Nigeria through democratic elections, marking a decisive shift from military rule to civilian governance. From 1999 to 2007, Obasanjo's

administration introduced a raft of wheels designed to realign the trajectory of the state. A cornerstone of his economic strategy was the **National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS)**, established in 2004. This initiative aimed to alleviate poverty by fostering economic growth, concentrating on critical sectors such as infrastructure, education, healthcare, and job creation (World Bank, 2005). Alongside economic reforms, Obasanjo's government made significant strides in addressing corruption. He founded several anti-corruption bodies, including the **Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)** in 2003, which was tasked with investigating financial misconduct and prosecuting offenders. Under his leadership, numerous high-profile corruption cases were pursued against both public and private officials. Furthermore, Obasanjo prioritized transparency in governance through measures such as the **Fiscal Responsibility Bill**, which was designed to promote accountability in public financial management.

Despite the persistent challenge of corruption, Obasanjo played an important role in realigning the wheel of political development. His administration implemented notable electoral reforms aimed at improving transparency and credibility in the electoral process. Among these was the introduction of **biometric voter registration systems**, intended to curb electoral fraud (Adedeji, 2021). Although allegations of rigging and manipulation persisted, these reforms laid the groundwork for more credible electoral processes in the future.

After completing his second term in 2007, **Umaru Musa Yar'Adua** of the PDP succeeded Obasanjo as President of Nigeria. Yar'Adua's election was pivotal as it represented the first civilian-to-civilian transfer of power through elections since the return to democracy in 1999. An important wheel introduced by Yar'Adua to address the protracted militancy in the Niger Delta was the **Amnesty Programme of 2009**, designed to mitigate unrest in the oil-rich region by offering militants rehabilitation opportunities in exchange for disarmament. His administration also engaged more proactively with civil society organizations than previous governments. However, Yar'Adua's presidency also exposed the fragility of Nigeria's democratic institutions, particularly during his health crisis. His prolonged illness and the secrecy surrounding it profoundly affected governance and decision-making. The opacity surrounding his health created a power vacuum, enabling political allies and aides—especially Vice President Goodluck Jonathan—to exert greater influence. This situation complicated governance as critical decisions were frequently postponed or made without Yar'Adua's direct input. The uncertainty culminated in a constitutional crisis in late 2009 when Yar'Adua was unable to formally delegate power during his medical leave (Ngwu, 2015).

Following Yar'Adua's death on May 5, 2010, Vice President **Goodluck Jonathan** was elevated to the presidency in line with constitutional provisions, which underscored the importance of constitutional compliance in leadership transitions (Okeke, 2017). Jonathan initially garnered broad support due to his perceived humility and commitment to democratic values, appealing to Nigerians who sought stability after decades of political turbulence. Jonathan's administration deployed several wheels to guide the affairs of the state. Chief among them was the **Transformation Agenda of 2010**, which provided a comprehensive strategy to enhance agriculture, education, healthcare, and infrastructure development (NBS, 2013). It also sought to reduce Nigeria's dependence on oil by encouraging diversification into agriculture and manufacturing. Furthermore, Jonathan prioritized improvements in electricity supply through initiatives such as the **Power Sector Reform Program**, which aimed to privatize state-owned electricity firms to enhance efficiency and service delivery (Isola, 2019). Despite these initiatives, Jonathan's administration faced enormous security challenges, most notably the Boko Haram insurgency. Though the group had emerged under earlier

administrations, it became a full-blown existential threat during Jonathan's presidency, launching devastating attacks on civilian and military targets across the country.

Jonathan contested both the 2011 and 2015 elections under the shadow of this insurgency. Nevertheless, his decision to concede defeat in the 2015 elections was a watershed moment in Nigerian democracy, reinforcing the principle of peaceful transitions of power (Ngonadi, 2022). The 2015 contest pitted incumbent President Jonathan of the PDP against General Muhammadu Buhari of the APC. Buhari won and was sworn in as the fourth civilian president of the Fourth Republic. As a former military leader, Buhari positioned himself as a candidate capable of restoring integrity to governance and tackling the Boko Haram menace that had plagued Nigeria since 2010 (Fadeyi, 2023). His campaign, strengthened by social media and grassroots mobilization, resonated with the youth, many of whom were disillusioned with entrenched political practices (Bari-ika et al., 2020).

Buhari introduced a series of **initiatives** to realign the state. His **Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP)** was designed to stabilize the economy in the aftermath of a recession. A key priority of the ERGP was boosting agricultural production to reduce food imports and promote local industries (Ekpenyong et al., 2023). Another important initiative was the **National Social Investment Programme (NSIP)**, established to provide economic opportunities and support to vulnerable Nigerians. Other key measures included the **Petroleum Industry Act of 2021**, the **Treasury Single Account (TSA)**, and a first in Nigeria, a **Whistleblower Policy** that was designed to expose financial corruption. Nonetheless, Buhari's presidency was beset by severe challenges such as insurgency, kidnapping, terrorism, religious tensions, banditry, and farmer-herder conflicts that undermined the alignment of the state's various wheels and hindered meaningful progress.

Tightening the Screws: Bolts and Nuts



29 May, 2023

Since assuming office on May 29, 2023, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration has introduced several wheels aimed at addressing Nigeria's pressing socio-economic and political challenges. These reforms are intended to realign and reify Nigeria's political and socio-economic structures, with the overarching goal of fostering a cohesive, functional, and sustainable state. Although some of these measures have generated significant controversy nationwide, their underlying objective is the recalibration of the Nigerian state toward inclusive nation-building, national integration, and long-term development.

One of the most notable reforms was the removal of the **fuel subsidy wheel** from the axle of the state. This policy sought to curb the entrenched corruption associated with subsidy payments. Unsurprisingly, the removal triggered a sharp increase in fuel prices and a corresponding rise in the cost of living. In response, the government introduced the **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) wheel** as a cushioning mechanism to mitigate the impact of subsidy removal on citizens (Nwoke & Nwaughu, 2024). In the **energy sector**, a major step was the signing of the **Electricity Act of 2023**, which dismantled the long-standing monopoly in electricity generation, transmission, and distribution. The Act promotes investment in renewable energy and opens the energy market to state governments and private entities, thereby fostering competition and improving service delivery. Parallel to this, the president issued executive orders targeting oil and gas sector reforms, including fiscal incentives for non-associated gas projects and a reduction in contracting costs.

The **education sector** also witnessed key reforms. Tinubu's administration revived the **student loan program**, first introduced in 1972 by General Yakubu Gowon as part of post-civil war recovery strategies. Initially known as the Nigerian Student Loans Board, the scheme was restructured under the **Access to Higher Education (Repeal and Re-enactment) Act, 2024**, and renamed the **Nigeria Education Loan Fund (NELFUND)**. By November 2024, NELFUND had partnered with 257 tertiary institutions across Nigeria, including 112 public universities, 71 polytechnics, and 74 colleges of education. Financially, it disbursed approximately ₦10 billion to beneficiaries, of which ₦9.4 billion was allocated for tuition and

₦839 million for upkeep allowances (Premium Times, 2024). Additionally, the **tax reform bill**, signed into law in June 2025, was introduced as a wheel to comprehensively address the challenges of fiscal federalism and revenue derivation.

In the realm of **political restructuring**, the passage of the 2024 bill establishing the **autonomy of local governments from state control** was another significant wheel designed to deliver democratic dividends to the grassroots. This reform was aimed particularly at addressing infrastructural deficits at the rural level (Alamu et al., 2025). To promote targeted and rapid socio-economic development across the country's geo-political zones, the government also established **regional development commissions** as essential wheels of the state (Ailemen, 2024). These include the North West Development Commission (**NWDC**), South West Development Commission (**SWDC**), North East Development Commission (**NEDC**), and the Ministry of Regional Development. These institutions are tasked with addressing development issues, infrastructure gaps, and socio-economic challenges peculiar to their respective regions. However, despite these reforms, Nigeria continues to grapple with persistent **security-related nation-building challenges**, including ethno-religious crises, farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, insurgency, and terrorism

Pimped Wheels: Bespoke Solutions

Manufacturers of wheels make different types of wheels for different environments and there is a reason for this. In the western hemisphere, there are wheels made by Dunlop that contain chains or studs around the edges, same for some countries in southeast Asia. This is because of the rugged or snowy environmental terrains of those regions. The same Dunlop made normal looking wheels for Nigeria in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's without add-ons. There are wheels made by Michelin that have a chain mail add-on. Again, the environment determines the additions or customizations that are made to the original round wheel that came with the vehicle. Since 1960 till now, Nigeria has not been able to tackle its nation-building challenges. A key factor responsible for this is the country's inability to domesticate or customize or localize the wheels it inherited, such as federalism and democracy to its local environment. From the foregoing, I have been able to show that the nation-building challenges that have dogged the country since independence in 1960 have been a recurring leitmotiv in the various civilian and military rules. From Tafawa Balewa's battle with inherent problems with parliamentarianism and political parties, to Ironsi, Gowon, Murtala and Obasanjo's battle with ethnic and religious divisions, to Shagari's crisis of governance and unbridled corruption, Buhari, Babangida and Abacha's battle with the crisis of transition and democratization, to Obasanjo, Yar'Adua and Jonathan's battle with militancy, insurgency and terrorism, to Buhari and Tinubu's battle with ethno-religious crises, banditry and farmer-herder conflicts have all defied the different wheels thrown at them by the various rulers to tackle them. With this, Madam Vice-Chancellor, we have now come to the crux of my lecture: what exactly can Nigeria do to resolve its myriads of challenges? Will Nigeria have to reinvent the wheel? Will the country have to completely change the shape, modify and alter the extant wheel?

To resolve challenges, Nigeria will have to realign and reify the following wheels: Education, Democracy and Federalism.

i. Democracy:



Nigeria's version of democracy is alien, expensive, wasteful, ruinous and destructive. Since its introduction, the form of democracy practiced in the country has not been able to fulfil the basic desire of the citizen for full and inclusive participation in governance. Nigeria's democracy has been elitist, exclusionary and divisive. It failed to deliver its vaunted dividends to the people during the First, Second and Third Republic and it is in dire straits in the Fourth. I am not in any way advocating for a militocracy or plutocracy or oligarchy. No. What I am simply advocating is that Nigeria's democracy should be domesticated to meet local realities. For example, the last federal elections gulped N305 billion Naira, and I am sure that of 2027 will be higher. Democracy has always been expensive in Nigeria. That of 1983 federal elections frittered away N2 billion naira and at the end of the day, the military derailed the whole process! In 1999, Nigeria budgeted 1.5 billion, N42 billion for 2011, N108.8 billion in 2015 and N242.2 billion in 2022. The monies for post-elections litigations and other incidentals are not factored into this. The shocking thing was that at the end of such elections, where humongous money had been expended, with countless lives lost and businesses destroyed, it will still take the intervention of the judiciary for the wheel of democracy to be realigned and readjusted!

It does not end there. The presumed winner will have to use upward of 2 out of the 4 years to fend off several election petitions, use five months to govern and the remaining one and a half year to prepare for their re-election for a second term. After winning the election for the second term, another set of litigations, a year for governance and the remaining is taking up by the desire to ensure that the anointed successor wins the next election. This has been the unhappy circle of every federal election in Nigeria since 1960. To break the logjam, Nigeria will have to do the following: tweak its Constitution to allow for a single term of 7 years. A variant of this is what is obtainable in Israel, the Phillipines, Singapore, Armenia, Ireland, Mexico, Japan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Egypt and Liberia. That of Liberia, Egypt and Burundi are instructive. They also had nearly identical colonial baggage as Nigeria but went ahead to domesticate or customize their democracy. Nigeria borrowed its democracy from the United States, but the country is not as affluent as the North American country. The two four-year term limit is wasteful and makes the country's political development unstable, volatile, combustible and misaligned. Nigeria should make it a single 6- or 7-year single term limit: I have already removed two years to resolve post-elections petitions, four stable years for governance and the remaining one year to campaign for the next election circle.

ii. Federalism



is the most ideal wheel to govern a multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria. This is not rocket science. Countries such as Switzerland and United Kingdom, have used this system to govern themselves effectively. The problem with Nigeria is that the leaders adopted textbook federalism hook, line and sinker. Nigeria must customise or domesticate its federalism if it hopes to correct the obvious fractures in the nation's seams. And what form will this take: I call this **competitive federalism**. This means a weak or decentralized centre with strong states. Note that this is not regionalism. I am against anything that will fracture Nigeria into different parts or that champion the idea that states should be developed in silos and independently with minimal interactions with other units in the federation. States in the country should be allowed to co-exist but based on clearly spelt out and agreed terms. Historically, the different constitutional conferences and constituent assemblies had done the job of creating a White Paper of those things that can promote unity, peace and equitable development among the disparate groups in Nigeria. What is needed is the political will to implement those decisions. The Nigerian Constitution is the best wheel to correct all the punctures, wear and tear Nigeria is experiencing. Afterall, General Obasanjo did this in the **1979 Constitution when he inserted the Federal Character Principle**. The FCP is a clever invention that was created to address the misalignment due to the neglect of minority ethnic groups in the federation. What is needed is more innovative thinking to domesticate our federalism and make it work. Nigeria is a beautiful country, and I would want it to be kept the way it is.

Additionally, fiscal federalism is an important sub-wheel that must be attached to the axle of the state. I'm glad President Bola Ahmed Tinubu is finally tackling that frontally with his **2025 Tax Reforms Bill**. This will promote equitable and competitive distribution of revenue and allow states to think outside the box on revenue generation, deepen taxation and allow states to have funds for construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of public facilities.

iii. Education:



I consider education to be the most important wheel. Education is key to national integration and political development. Madam Vice-Chancellor, education was key to Chinese social, economic and political development. I specifically picked China because it has a large Muslim minority – the Uyghurs – unknown to most people. Yet, we hardly ever hear of religious extremism or large-scale terrorist attacks in the country. Education made this possible. How? Education has allowed China to craft a unified identity and a unified language – Mandarin – for its diverse ethnicities. Apart from promoting literacy, it created a highly skilled workforce for the state that has been responsible for China's domination of the world's commanding heights. It is not just education but tailored or domesticated education. This is the way to go for Nigeria to realign its economy, reduce unemployment, promote unity and peace and spur development. Nigeria must make universal primary and secondary education free. Sending children to school must be made compulsory up to the secondary level. This will allow the state to shape the students into responsible citizens that will contribute to the development of the state. Importantly, it will be difficult for religious and ethnic extremism to flourish in a society that has deployed adequate resources to combating ignorance through quality education.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by answering King Sunny Ade's rhetorical question in the evergreen song: **Esubiribiri Bomi o** - *Iwaju lo loko yii wa mi lo*. Nigeria is presently battling with myriads of nation-building challenges. These challenges have been there since the formation of the state in 1960. My contention is that these challenges are surmountable provided the leaders and citizens are willing to realign and reify the wheels. There is nothing wrong with Nigeria that cannot be fixed. My research over the years has focused on Nigeria, not just its history and culture, but on how to, to paraphrase President Donald Trump, 'Make Nigeria Great Again.' You can see this leitmotiv running through all my research since 2012 when I had my Ph.D. from the University of Lagos. My work has always been on how to resolve specific challenges in the nation-building process and help the country to ultimately resolve the National Question. This explains the copious citation of my research in this Inaugural Lecture.

Contributions to the University

My journey with Lagos State University began in 2004, when I joined the service as an Assistant Lecturer. From that day to this moment, I have, by the grace of God, done my utmost to contribute—both as a scholar and as part of management—to the growth and development of this great institution. I am currently the most **cited scholar in the Faculty of Arts, based**

on Google Scholar Citations (H-index = 11, i10-index = 11, citations = 406). Also, my papers have the highest number of reads in the Faculty of Arts, with **155,758 reads** according to **ResearchGate**.

Today, I have the honour of serving as the pioneer **Director of the Centre for Peace and Security Studies**, a postgraduate academic centre established by our visionary Vice-Chancellor in August 2024 as part of her strategic initiatives to connect the University with the larger society. In this role, I have developed a comprehensive and interdisciplinary curriculum for the Centre's five programmes, launched an international peer-reviewed academic journal—the *LASU Journal of Peace and Security Studies (LAJOPSS)*—with both online and print editions, and organised symposia as well as Distinguished and International Lecture Series. These platforms have brought to our University high-profile scholars and internationally recognized figures whose ideas have enriched our academic community.

As the first alumnus to head the Department of History and International Studies between 2021 and 2024, I revived the Department's moribund academic journal, last published in 2002, renamed it the *LASU Journal of History and International Studies (LAJOHIS)*, and made it one of the most visible and most sought-after journal within and outside the country's academic ecosystem. I overhauled the M.Phil./Ph.D., MIRSS, PGDIRSS, and Diploma programmes, and introduced the Distinguished and International Lecture Series, along with public lectures addressing topical national and global issues. These initiatives brought to our Department eminent scholars, diplomats, ambassadors, and high-ranking officers—among them, Prof. Toyin Falola and **Sir Prof. Bolaji Akinyemi**. In a historic first, I organised befitting send-forth ceremonies for two senior professors—my own teachers—on the eve of their retirement, and honoured all former Heads of Department. Additionally, during my tenure as Head of Department, the Department received **FULL accreditation** from the National Universities Commission in 2022.

Also, I have served as an internal/external examiner for Ph.D. candidates in the Faculty of Law, Department of Sociology, Department of Philosophy, Department of Political Science and Department of Music.

Over the years, I have been privileged to serve the university in various capacities, including:

- Departmental Secretary, 2004 - 2006
- Staff Adviser, 2012 - 2016
- Examination Officer, 2012 - 2016
- Coordinator of the MIRSS Programme, 2015 - 2017
- Member, Departmental Curriculum Committee, 2018 till date
- Member, Local Organizing Committee 3rd Faculty of Arts Int'l. Conference, 2018-2019
- Chairman, Faculty of Arts COVID-19 Committee, 2019 - 2021
- Member, Faculty Curriculum Committee, 2021 till date
- Member, Faculty Journal Editorial Board, 2021 - 2024
- Head of Department, 2021-2024
- Editor in Chief, *LASU Journal of History and International Studies (LAJOHIS)*, 2021-2024
- Member, Senate, 2021 till date
- Chairman, Faculty of Arts Academic Committee, 2022 till date
- Member, Social and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (SHREC), 2023 till date
- Chairman, Faculty Academic Committee, 2023 till date
- Editor in Chief, *LASU Journal of Peace and Security Studies (LAJOPSS)*, 2024 till date

- Member, Faculty Infrastructural Committee, 2024 till date
- Member, Committee of Provosts, Deans and Directors (COPDD), 2024 till date
- Director, Centre for Peace and Security Studies, 2024 till date
- Member, Senate Representative on the Security Committee, 2025 till date
- Member, Ad-Hoc Committee on Breakfast Parley, 2025 till date
- Assistant Alternate Chairman, National Working Committee, African Borderlands Research Network (ABOURNE) 2025 Conference.

In 2021 and 2022, I was mandated by the Dean to organise hands-on training sessions for colleagues on using the internet to enhance academic productivity and visibility.

One of my most humbling accomplishments is in mentorship. I have had the privilege of supervising several doctoral students, and I am proud to share that two of them—Dr. Shekoni Ajibola and Dr. Ganni Momodu—have successfully completed their Ph.D. programmes under my guidance. This marks a significant milestone, as it is the first time an alumnus from my Department has achieved this distinction. I would now like to proudly invite Dr. Ajibola and Dr. Momoh to stand for recognition. In addition to my work with doctoral students, I have also supervised several undergraduate and master's students throughout my academic career. It has been an honor to support and guide the next generation of scholars and professionals

Currently, I am supervising several doctoral, master, undergraduate and diploma students at the department and the Centre for Peace and Security Studies.

Outside the University

I am on the Editorial Board of international journals such as *ARISTO*, published by Departement of Social and Political Sciences, University of Muhammadiyah Ponorogo (Indonesia) and *SOSHUM: Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* (Indonesia). I am a peer-reviewer for several international journals such as *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, *Behavioural Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, *African Security*, *African Security Review*, *Journal of Global Security*, *Security Journal* and others. Additionally, I am a certified international peer reviewer listed in the **Web of Science** peer reviewers' database.

I was invited as a Guest Speaker to Germany in 2016 to deliver a lecture at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies.

In December 2024 and November 2025, the National Universities Commission sent me as part of a team of accreditors to the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Ladoke Akintola University in Oyo State, Federal University of Ilesa in Osun State, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu University, Uli, Anambra and Enugu State University of Science and Technology.

I am external assessor to several universities in Nigeria including the University of Lagos, Federal University of Ilesa and Lagos State University College of Education.

I am the international reviewer for the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and a fellow of Academy of International Affairs (AIA) and Institute for Criminology and Strategic Studies (ICSS). I am a member of the Nigerian Society of International Affairs (NSIA), Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) and African Scientists Directory (ASD). Additionally, I am a resource person at the Nigerian Army College of Logistics and Management (NACOLM)

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I give all glory and honour to the good Lord Jesus Christ for making this day a reality. I am eternally grateful to Him who, in His infinite mercy, found me worthy in 2009 and has continued to guide my steps ever since.

With a heart full of appreciation, I extend my profound gratitude to my Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji-Bello, mni, NPOM, FSPSP. Your steadfast support over the years—first during my tenure as Head of Department and now as Director of the Centre for Peace and Security Studies—has been a pillar of my success. Thank you for always offering a listening ear, providing visionary leadership, and for making available the resources needed for me to excel in my career.

My gratitude also goes to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics), Prof. Oseni Afisi, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Prof. Toyin Enikuomehin. I likewise acknowledge the other distinguished members of the University Management: the Registrar, Mr. Emmanuel A. Fanu; the Bursar, Mr. Said Babatunde Olayinka; and the University Librarian, Dr. Omawunmi Makinde. Your collective commitment to excellence inspires us all.

I appreciate my teachers in the Department—those who have gone to their eternal rest: Profs. Deji Ogunremi and Olakunle Lawal; Drs. Charles Alade and Bose Okuntola and lately Prof. Adebayo Adeogun; those who have retired after meritorious service: Profs. Modupeolu Faseke and Dele Adeoti, Amb. Esan and Amb. Falola; and those still in active service: Profs. Abolade Adeniji, Siyan Oyeweso, and Jamiu Oluwatoki.

To my colleagues, I express my heartfelt appreciation—beginning with our HoD, Prof. Segun Adeyeri, and including Profs. Sanni Habeeb, Olawale Lawal and Bashir Animashaun; Drs. Boge Faruk, Remi Britto, Biodun Balogun, and Kola Adesuyi; Messrs. Wale Ajumobi, Oggunniyi Jacob, Samuel Asaju, Animashaun Idris, and Femi Akinola.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the wonderful administrative staff who stood by me during my time as HoD: Mr. Jubril Ayilara, Mrs. Rufai Abosede, and Mrs. Juliana Ganjo. Your dedication, diligence, and loyalty provided solid pillars of support throughout my tenure as Head of Department.

I am equally grateful to my teachers, mentors, and colleagues in the great Faculty of Arts. I am deeply indebted to the former Deans of Arts—Professors Harrison Adeniyi, Tayo Ajayi, and Taiwo Salisu—for their unwavering support and wise counsel during those dark days and months and years in the trenches. You stood firmly on my side throughout. For this, I say a big thank you, sirs.

My appreciation equally goes to the present Dean, Professor Ayo Ayodele; to Distinguished Professors Amidu Sanni and Dapo Asaju; to our senior professors, colleagues and to the spirited members of the unofficial Boys Association of the Faculty of Arts—Drs. Sidiq, GAB, Boge, Dami, Kola and Abimbola; Messrs. Tobi, Kotin, Adeoye, Jacob, Wale, Femi, Funky Alhaji Idris, Lancaster guy and of course myself; and to the damsels (never-in-distress), Profs. Bello, Oni-Buraimoh, Adeyelure, Onadipe-Shallom and others. Your companionship has been a source of strength.

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