

Democracy in Heterogeneous Societies: Consociational Option for Nigeria's Development Challenges

by

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Abstract

The paper focused on the potency of consociationalism in resolving the challenges of a breakdown or near breakdown of democratic processes and development in a multi-cultural or pluralistic country. Nigeria provides a useful example because it is divided by ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages, promoted by primordial sentiments. In order to examine the potency of consociationalism as a strategy to solve democratic and development challenges, three specific objectives and three research questions were raised and addressed by both secondary and primary data generated from secondary and primary sources respectively. While elite theory was the major theoretical frame of reference. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select 150 knowledgeable persons in areas of social engineering and politics. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data and to measure appropriate variables in order to achieve the goal of the paper. Findings revealed that adoption of consociational method suggest a non-democratic approach. In other words, to solve the problem of diverse interest for the sake of stability, a non-democratic dimension (consensus) must be introduced. It is recommended among others, adoption of peace-oriented approach for democratic sustainability in Nigeria even if it is at variance with the democratic norms and values.

Key words: Democracy; Heterogeneity; Society; Consociational Option; Challenges; Development.