



CITIZENS DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

POSITION PAPER

ON THE

**PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF
GOVERNMENT**

**BUILDING A MORE ACCOUNTABLE, EFFICIENT AND
REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY FOR NIGERIA**

PREPARED BY

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CITIZENS DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE OFFICIAL POSITION PAPER ON THE PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

PREAMBLE

The Citizens Democratic Alliance (CDA) is a progressive social democratic political party committed to building a just, prosperous, democratic, and inclusive Nigeria. We believe that government exists to serve the people, protect their rights and freedoms, promote equal opportunity, reduce inequality, and create the conditions for every citizen to live in dignity and realise their full potential. These aspirations can only be achieved through democratic institutions that are transparent, accountable, responsive, and firmly anchored in the rule of law.

Social democracy recognises that democracy must extend beyond periodic elections. It requires institutions that enable continuous public accountability, broad political participation, responsible governance, and policies that advance the common good. A constitutional system should empower citizens, strengthen representative institutions, encourage consensus-building, and ensure that those who exercise public authority remain answerable to the people at all times.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that Nigeria's constitutional architecture must reflect these values. While the presidential system has sustained democratic continuity since 1999, its operation has also revealed structural weaknesses that have contributed to excessive concentration of executive power, costly governance, adversarial politics, weak legislative oversight, policy discontinuity, and limited accountability between elections. These institutional shortcomings have undermined public confidence in government and constrained Nigeria's capacity to achieve sustainable development.

CDA therefore maintains that Nigeria's governance challenges require thoughtful structural reforms rather than incremental adjustments. Constitutional design is not merely a legal question; it is a fundamental determinant of how power is exercised, how public resources are managed, and how governments respond to the needs and aspirations of citizens. Democratic institutions must be designed to promote cooperation over conflict, accountability over impunity, inclusion over exclusion, and service over privilege.



Consistent with its progressive social democratic philosophy, the Citizens Democratic Alliance advocates the adoption of a parliamentary system of government as part of a comprehensive programme of constitutional and democratic reform. Together with Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) Representation, strengthened federalism, independent institutions, local government autonomy, judicial reforms, and other governance measures contained in the CDA Governance Blueprint, parliamentary democracy offers a more accountable, representative, efficient, and responsive framework for governing a diverse federation like Nigeria.

This policy paper articulates the constitutional, democratic, economic, and governance case for parliamentary democracy. It examines the limitations of the existing presidential system, draws lessons from successful parliamentary democracies around the world, presents the CDA's proposed parliamentary model for Nigeria, and outlines a practical pathway for constitutional transition.

For the Citizens Democratic Alliance, parliamentary democracy is not an ideological end in itself, but a democratic instrument for advancing good governance, social justice, national unity, economic transformation, and shared prosperity. It reflects our enduring commitment to building a Nigeria where government remains continuously accountable to the people, public institutions serve the national interest, and democracy delivers tangible improvements in the lives of all citizens.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Citizens Democratic Alliance (CDA) is a progressive social democratic political party committed to building a democratic state that promotes accountable governance, social justice, inclusive economic growth, equal opportunity, and the welfare of all Nigerians. We believe that the quality of governance is shaped not only by the integrity and competence of elected leaders but also by the constitutional institutions within which they operate. Strong democratic institutions are indispensable to national stability, economic development, and the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms.

Since the restoration of democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has operated the presidential system continuously for nearly three decades. Combined with the country's earlier experience during the Second Republic (1979–1983), Nigeria has accumulated sufficient constitutional experience to objectively assess the effectiveness of the presidential model in advancing democratic governance and national development. While the system has ensured regular democratic transitions, it has also revealed structural weaknesses, including excessive concentration of executive power, weak political accountability, adversarial executive-legislative relations, high costs of governance, policy discontinuity, and limited opportunities for broad-based political representation.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that these challenges require structural constitutional reforms rather than incremental adjustments. Accordingly, the Party advocates the adoption of a parliamentary system of government as a central pillar of a broader programme of democratic renewal. This proposal forms part of the CDA Governance Blueprint and is complemented by Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) Representation, strengthened federalism, judicial and electoral reforms, local government autonomy, and other institutional measures designed to deepen democracy and improve governance.

This policy paper argues that parliamentary democracy offers a more accountable, representative, and efficient framework for governing a diverse federation such as Nigeria. By ensuring that the executive derives its mandate from and remains continuously accountable to Parliament, the parliamentary system strengthens democratic oversight, encourages consensus-building, enhances policy coordination, and enables governments to respond more effectively to changing national circumstances. When combined with proportional representation, it also promotes greater political inclusion by expanding opportunities for women, young people, persons with disabilities, and historically underrepresented groups to participate meaningfully in governance.



The paper reviews Nigeria's constitutional evolution, examines the comparative strengths and limitations of presidential and parliamentary systems, and analyses the experiences of successful parliamentary democracies across different regions of the world. It concludes that no constitutional system is perfect; however, a well-designed parliamentary democracy, adapted to Nigeria's unique federal structure and social diversity, is better positioned to promote responsible government, political stability, fiscal prudence, and inclusive national development.

Accordingly, the Citizens Democratic Alliance proposes a distinctly Nigerian parliamentary model that preserves federalism, constitutionalism, judicial independence, separation of powers, and democratic representation while introducing a Prime Minister accountable to Parliament, a non-executive President as Head of State, strengthened legislative oversight, constructive votes of no confidence, and robust constitutional safeguards against political instability.

This policy paper therefore calls for a national constitutional conversation founded on evidence, comparative experience, and the shared aspiration to build a democratic system that truly serves the Nigerian people. Parliamentary democracy is not presented as an end in itself, but as a constitutional instrument for advancing good governance, social justice, national unity, economic transformation, and shared prosperity. It reflects the Citizens Democratic Alliance's enduring commitment to making government more accountable, more representative, more efficient, and better equipped to meet the aspirations of present and future generations of Nigerians.



Citizen Tamunotonye Samuel Solomon Inioribo
Founder/National Chairman
Citizens Democratic Alliance

1. INTRODUCTION

Constitutions are more than legal documents; they establish the framework within which political authority is exercised, public institutions operate, and citizens relate to the state. The choice of a system of government is therefore one of the most consequential decisions a nation can make. It determines how executive power is acquired and exercised, how public officials are held accountable, how political conflicts are managed, and how effectively government responds to the needs and aspirations of the people.

For a diverse federation such as Nigeria, constitutional design is particularly important. The country's political institutions must not only uphold democratic principles but also foster national unity, accommodate diversity, promote inclusive representation, strengthen public accountability, and create an enabling environment for sustainable economic development. Where constitutional arrangements fail to achieve these objectives, democratic governance becomes less effective, public confidence in institutions declines, and national development is constrained.

Nigeria's constitutional journey reflects a continuous search for a governance framework capable of addressing these challenges. At independence in 1960 and under the Republican Constitution of 1963, Nigeria operated a parliamentary system of government. Following years of military rule, the country adopted the presidential system under the 1979 Constitution, a model that was retained, with modifications, under the 1999 Constitution and has remained in operation since the return to democratic rule in 1999.

After nearly three decades of uninterrupted democratic governance under the presidential system, complemented by Nigeria's earlier experience during the Second Republic (1979–1983), the country has acquired sufficient practical experience to undertake a comprehensive assessment of whether the existing constitutional framework remains the most suitable for achieving democratic stability, accountable governance, inclusive representation, and sustainable national development.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that constitutional reform should never be driven by sentiment, political expediency, or institutional imitation. Rather, it should be informed by empirical evidence, comparative constitutional experience, Nigeria's historical realities, and the overarching objective of building institutions that serve the public interest. As a progressive social democratic party, the CDA is committed to constitutional arrangements that distribute power responsibly, strengthen democratic accountability, encourage political inclusion, protect fundamental rights, and ensure that government remains responsive to the people it serves.



This policy paper presents the Party's case for adopting a parliamentary system of government as part of a broader programme of constitutional and democratic reform. It argues that parliamentary democracy, particularly when combined with Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) Representation and complementary governance reforms, provides a stronger institutional foundation for accountable government, effective policymaking, fiscal responsibility, political inclusion, and national cohesion.

The objectives of this policy paper are to:

- Examine Nigeria's constitutional evolution and the historical context of its systems of government.
- Assess the strengths and limitations of the current presidential system in light of Nigeria's democratic and developmental experience.
- Explain the principles, characteristics, and operation of parliamentary democracy.
- Evaluate comparative experiences from established parliamentary democracies and draw lessons relevant to Nigeria.
- Present the Citizens Democratic Alliance's proposed parliamentary model for the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Outline the constitutional, legislative, and institutional reforms required to facilitate a smooth and orderly transition.
- Demonstrate how parliamentary democracy advances the Party's progressive social democratic vision of accountable governance, social justice, inclusive development, and democratic participation.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance recognises that constitutional reform is neither simple nor sufficient on its own to solve Nigeria's challenges. Effective leadership, ethical public service, sound economic management, strong institutions, and active civic participation will always remain indispensable. Nevertheless, constitutional design profoundly influences the incentives, relationships, and accountability mechanisms that shape governance. Reforming those structures is therefore an essential step towards building a democratic state that is capable of delivering peace, security, prosperity, justice, and equal opportunity for all Nigerians.

This policy paper is intended to contribute constructively to Nigeria's ongoing constitutional discourse. It is offered as an evidence-based policy proposal for lawmakers, constitutional reform bodies, civil society organisations, academia, development partners, political stakeholders, and citizens committed to strengthening Nigeria's democracy and building a more accountable, inclusive, and effective system of government.



2. NIGERIA'S CONSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION: FROM PARLIAMENTARY TO PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY

2.1 Historical Context

Nigeria's constitutional development reflects the country's continuous search for a system of government capable of promoting democratic governance, national unity, political stability, and sustainable development. Since attaining internal self-government and subsequently independence, Nigeria has operated two principal democratic systems; the parliamentary system and the presidential system. Each emerged within a distinct historical context and sought to address the political realities of its time.

At independence in 1960, Nigeria adopted the Westminster parliamentary system, inherited from the British constitutional tradition but adapted to the country's federal structure and multicultural character. Under this arrangement, executive authority was exercised by a Prime Minister and a Council of Ministers drawn from Parliament, while the Governor-General, and later the President under the Republican Constitution of 1963, served as the ceremonial Head of State. The executive remained continuously accountable to Parliament and could only govern while enjoying the confidence of the elected legislature.

The parliamentary system functioned during Nigeria's First Republic from 1960 until the military intervention of January 1966. Although that period witnessed significant political tensions, many of the factors that contributed to the collapse of the First Republic, including electoral malpractice, regional rivalries, ethnic mistrust, constitutional disputes, and military intervention, extended beyond the institutional design of parliamentary government itself. The premature termination of the First Republic therefore did not provide sufficient opportunity for parliamentary democracy to evolve, mature, and develop indigenous democratic traditions comparable to those of long-established parliamentary democracies.

Following thirteen years of military rule, Nigeria embarked upon a comprehensive constitutional review that culminated in the 1979 Constitution. Influenced largely by the constitutional experience of the United States, the Constitution Drafting Committee and the Constituent Assembly recommended the adoption of a presidential system intended to promote national integration, provide stable executive leadership, strengthen the separation of powers, and reduce the intense regional competition associated with the First Republic.

The presidential system was first implemented during the Second Republic (1979-1983), but that democratic experiment was interrupted by another military coup in December 1983. Following a prolonged period of military governance, the

presidential model was retained in the 1999 Constitution, under which Nigeria has now experienced nearly three decades of uninterrupted democratic rule.

The experience of the Fourth Republic has provided Nigeria with its longest sustained period of constitutional democracy since independence. It has also generated substantial evidence regarding the strengths and limitations of the presidential system in practice. While democratic elections have become increasingly institutionalised and constitutional transfers of power have been successfully achieved, persistent governance challenges, including executive dominance, expensive government, weakened legislative independence, policy inconsistency, adversarial politics, and declining public confidence in democratic institutions, have prompted renewed national debate regarding the suitability of the existing constitutional framework.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance considers this debate both legitimate and necessary. Constitutional systems should not be regarded as immutable. Mature democracies periodically review their institutions to ensure that they continue to reflect changing political realities and national aspirations. Constitutional reform should therefore be viewed not as an admission of failure but as an expression of democratic maturity and a commitment to continuous institutional improvement.

It is against this background that the Citizens Democratic Alliance proposes a transition to a parliamentary system of government. This proposal is not motivated by nostalgia for the First Republic nor by a desire to replicate any foreign constitutional model. Rather, it is founded upon a careful assessment of Nigeria's democratic experience, lessons from comparative constitutional practice, and the Party's progressive social democratic commitment to accountable governance, inclusive representation, responsible public finance, and effective democratic institutions.

The following sections examine the structural characteristics of the presidential and parliamentary systems, assess their respective strengths and limitations, and present the case for a uniquely Nigerian parliamentary democracy that is better suited to advancing the country's democratic and developmental aspirations in the twenty-first century.

3. WHY NIGERIA MUST RETHINK THE PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM

3.1 The Case for Constitutional Reassessment

No democratic system is perfect. Every constitutional model possesses strengths and weaknesses, and no system can guarantee good governance in the absence of competent leadership, strong institutions, and active citizen participation. Nevertheless, constitutional arrangements shape political incentives, determine how public power is exercised, and influence the quality of democratic governance.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance recognises that Nigeria's development challenges cannot be attributed solely to the presidential system of government. Corruption, weak institutions, insecurity, economic mismanagement, and political culture have all contributed to the country's difficulties. However, constitutional structures can either mitigate these challenges or reinforce them. After nearly three decades of uninterrupted democratic governance under the 1999 Constitution, it is both legitimate and necessary to assess whether the existing institutional framework continues to serve Nigeria's democratic and developmental aspirations.

The CDA believes that several persistent governance challenges are not merely incidental but are linked, at least in part, to the structural incentives created by the presidential system. These challenges warrant careful constitutional reconsideration.

3.2 Excessive Concentration of Executive Power

The Nigerian President combines the roles of Head of State, Head of Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and chief executive of the Federal Government. This concentration of constitutional authority places immense political and administrative power in a single office.

Although the Constitution provides checks and balances through the legislature and the judiciary, the practical operation of the system has often resulted in executive dominance over public institutions. Significant influence over appointments, budgeting, security agencies, and policy direction has contributed to an imbalance that weakens institutional independence and reduces effective oversight.

From a progressive social democratic perspective, democratic governance is strengthened when power is dispersed across institutions and when executive authority remains subject to continuous democratic accountability.



3.3 Limited Democratic Accountability Between Elections

Under the presidential system, citizens directly elect the President for a fixed constitutional term. While elections remain the ultimate mechanism of democratic accountability, the system provides limited constitutional means of responding to persistent loss of public confidence or ineffective governance before the next general election.

Impeachment is deliberately designed as an exceptional constitutional remedy for grave misconduct rather than for political or policy failure. Consequently, governments may remain in office despite prolonged legislative deadlock, declining public confidence, or ineffective policy performance.

The CDA believes democratic accountability should be continuous rather than periodic. Governments should remain accountable not only during elections but throughout their tenure.

3.4 Costly and Expansive Government

Nigeria's presidential system requires the maintenance of separate executive and legislative institutions at the federal and state levels, each supported by extensive political and administrative structures.

Beyond constitutionally mandated offices, governance has increasingly been characterised by the proliferation of political appointments, advisory positions, special assistants, and overlapping administrative structures. This has contributed to rising recurrent expenditure, reducing the resources available for investment in education, healthcare, infrastructure, social protection, agriculture, and economic development.

The CDA believes public resources should primarily finance public services rather than political administration. A constitutional system should encourage efficiency, prudent expenditure, and responsible management of public finances.

3.5 Executive–Legislative Confrontation

The presidential system deliberately separates the executive and legislative branches. While this separation protects institutional independence, it may also encourage prolonged political confrontation where cooperation is essential.

Nigeria's democratic experience has frequently witnessed disputes over budget approval, ministerial confirmations, oversight responsibilities, and policy implementation. Such confrontations can delay government programmes, create uncertainty, and reduce the effectiveness of public administration.

A constitutional framework should encourage constructive collaboration while preserving democratic oversight and institutional independence.

3.6 Winner-Takes-All Politics

The direct election of a single executive President inevitably concentrates political competition around one office. Electoral contests therefore become exceptionally high-stakes, often intensifying political polarisation, regional mobilisation, and zero-sum calculations.

This dynamic may discourage compromise and weaken incentives for coalition-building across political, ethnic, and regional divides. In highly diverse societies, constitutional systems should encourage consensus rather than permanent political exclusion.

3.7 Weak Political Party Development

In theory, political parties are the principal vehicles of democratic representation. In practice, however, the presidential system has increasingly personalised politics around individual candidates rather than strengthening political parties as enduring democratic institutions.

Campaigns frequently revolve around personalities instead of coherent policy programmes. Internal party democracy may consequently weaken, while elected executives often exercise greater political influence than the parties on whose platforms they were elected.

The CDA believes healthy democracy requires strong, programmatic, and ideologically grounded political parties capable of sustaining policy continuity and democratic accountability.

3.8 The Need for Constitutional Renewal

The Citizens Democratic Alliance does not contend that parliamentary democracy is a cure for every governance challenge confronting Nigeria. Rather, it argues that constitutional design should create incentives for responsible leadership, continuous accountability, cooperation among democratic institutions, prudent public finance, and inclusive political participation.

Constitutional reform should therefore be understood not as a rejection of Nigeria's democratic achievements since 1999 but as a logical progression in the country's democratic evolution. After nearly three decades of practical experience under the current system, Nigeria possesses sufficient evidence to evaluate alternative

constitutional arrangements capable of better advancing accountable governance, social justice, national unity, and sustainable development.

It is on this basis that the Citizens Democratic Alliance advocates a transition to a parliamentary system of government as part of a broader programme of democratic and constitutional renewal.



4. WHY PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY?

4.1 Understanding Parliamentary Democracy

Parliamentary democracy is a system of government in which the executive derives its democratic mandate from the legislature and remains accountable to it throughout its tenure. Unlike the presidential system, where the executive and legislature are elected separately and operate with distinct democratic mandates, the parliamentary system integrates the executive and legislative branches while maintaining constitutional checks, judicial independence, and the rule of law.

In a parliamentary democracy, the Head of Government, usually the Prime Minister, is chosen from among elected members of Parliament and serves only for as long as he or she retains the confidence of the legislative majority. Ministers are ordinarily appointed from Parliament and are collectively responsible for the decisions and performance of government. This principle of collective responsibility ensures that executive authority is exercised transparently and remains subject to continuous parliamentary scrutiny.

The Head of State performs constitutional, ceremonial, and unifying functions, distinct from the day-to-day management of government. This separation of symbolic national leadership from executive administration contributes to institutional stability while reducing the concentration of political authority in a single office.

Parliamentary democracy is not a single uniform model. Around the world, parliamentary systems have evolved in different constitutional forms to reflect national histories, cultures, and political realities. Successful parliamentary democracies demonstrate that the system is adaptable and can be effectively implemented in both unitary and federal states, as well as in societies characterised by significant ethnic, linguistic, religious, and regional diversity.

4.2 Continuous Democratic Accountability

One of the defining strengths of parliamentary democracy is its emphasis on continuous accountability. Governments remain accountable to Parliament every day they hold office, not merely during periodic elections.

The Prime Minister and ministers are expected to appear before Parliament regularly to answer questions, defend government policies, explain public expenditure, and justify administrative decisions. Parliamentary committees exercise ongoing oversight of ministries and public institutions, while legislative debates provide continuous opportunities for scrutiny and public engagement.

Where a government loses the confidence of Parliament, constitutional mechanisms exist to replace it without necessarily precipitating prolonged political crises. This reinforces the democratic principle that executive authority must continually retain the confidence of the people's representatives.

For the Citizens Democratic Alliance, this model reflects the social democratic principle that public office is a public trust, requiring constant accountability rather than periodic electoral validation alone.

4.3 More Responsible and Collective Government

Parliamentary democracy encourages collective decision-making. Because ministers are members of Parliament and are collectively responsible for government policy, executive decisions are subject to greater internal deliberation and legislative scrutiny before implementation.

This collective responsibility reduces excessive personalisation of executive authority and encourages policy decisions that command broader political support. It also strengthens cabinet government, where responsibility for governance is shared rather than concentrated in a single individual.

Such institutional arrangements are consistent with CDA's commitment to democratic leadership, responsible governance, and collaborative policymaking.

4.4 Stronger Political Parties and Policy-Based Politics

Parliamentary systems generally strengthen political parties by making them central to government formation and legislative governance. Elections are therefore more likely to focus on competing policy platforms, ideological programmes, and party manifestos than solely on individual personalities.

Strong political parties promote policy continuity, internal democratic development, leadership renewal, and greater accountability to voters. Governments are expected to implement the programmes upon which their parliamentary majority was elected.

As a progressive social democratic party, the CDA believes that stronger programme-based political parties are essential to democratic consolidation and sustainable national development.

4.5 Consensus and Inclusive Governance

In plural societies, parliamentary democracy encourages dialogue, negotiation, coalition-building, and compromise. Particularly where no single party commands an



outright parliamentary majority, parties are encouraged to cooperate in forming governments and advancing legislative agendas.

Such arrangements foster more inclusive governance by ensuring that broader segments of society participate in public decision-making. They reduce the incentives for zero-sum politics and encourage governments to pursue policies capable of attracting wider parliamentary and public support.

For a country as diverse as Nigeria, constitutional incentives for cooperation may contribute to national cohesion and democratic stability.

4.6 Greater Fiscal Responsibility

The parliamentary system generally operates with a leaner executive structure than presidential systems. Because ministers are drawn from Parliament, governments typically require fewer parallel political offices and duplicated administrative arrangements.

Although constitutional design alone cannot eliminate wasteful expenditure, parliamentary systems often encourage more efficient government structures and stronger legislative scrutiny of public finances.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that prudent management of public resources is a moral and constitutional obligation. Savings achieved through more efficient governance should be redirected towards education, healthcare, infrastructure, social protection, security, innovation, and job creation.

4.7 Flexibility Without Instability

Critics sometimes argue that parliamentary systems are inherently unstable because governments may change before the expiration of parliamentary terms. Modern constitutional practice demonstrates that this concern can be addressed through carefully designed safeguards.

Many parliamentary democracies now provide mechanisms such as constructive votes of no confidence, fixed parliamentary terms subject to defined constitutional exceptions, and transparent procedures for government formation. These safeguards promote stability while preserving democratic accountability.

The CDA supports a parliamentary model that combines governmental stability with constitutional flexibility, ensuring that ineffective governments may be replaced through democratic processes without undermining constitutional order.



4.8 Parliamentary Democracy and the Progressive Social Democratic Vision

For the Citizens Democratic Alliance, parliamentary democracy is not merely an institutional preference; it is a constitutional framework that advances the Party's progressive social democratic ideals.

A parliamentary system promotes accountable government over personalised rule, cooperation over political confrontation, representation over exclusion, responsible stewardship over excessive concentration of power, and public service over political privilege. It strengthens democratic institutions while ensuring that executive authority remains firmly anchored in the confidence of the people's elected representatives.

When combined with Mixed-Member Proportional Representation and the wider constitutional reforms proposed in the CDA Governance Blueprint, parliamentary democracy offers Nigeria an opportunity to build a political system that is more inclusive, more accountable, more efficient, and better equipped to deliver sustainable development and social justice.

For these reasons, the Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that parliamentary democracy represents the constitutional model most consistent with its vision of a democratic, prosperous, and equitable Nigeria.



5. COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES: LESSONS FROM PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACIES

5.1 Learning from Comparative Constitutional Practice

Constitutional reform should be informed by evidence, experience, and context. No nation should adopt another country's constitutional model without careful adaptation to its own history, political culture, and institutional realities. At the same time, comparative constitutional experience offers valuable lessons on how different democratic systems operate in practice and how institutional design influences governance outcomes.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that Nigeria can benefit from studying established parliamentary democracies across the world. These countries differ in geography, culture, history, economic development, and constitutional traditions, yet many have successfully used parliamentary government to promote political stability, democratic accountability, economic growth, and social cohesion.

The experiences discussed below demonstrate that parliamentary democracy is a flexible constitutional framework capable of serving both federal and unitary states, homogeneous and diverse societies, and developed and developing economies.

5.2 Germany: Stability Through Constructive Accountability

Germany operates a federal parliamentary democracy in which the Federal Chancellor serves as Head of Government while the Federal President performs largely ceremonial constitutional functions.

One of Germany's most significant constitutional innovations is the constructive vote of no confidence. Parliament cannot remove a Chancellor without simultaneously electing a successor who commands majority support. This mechanism promotes governmental stability while preserving democratic accountability.

Germany also combines parliamentary government with a proportional electoral system, encouraging coalition-building, consensus, and inclusive representation. The country's experience demonstrates that parliamentary systems can provide stable government in a federal state with diverse political interests.

5.3 New Zealand: Responsive and Inclusive Democracy

New Zealand transformed its electoral system by adopting Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) representation while retaining parliamentary democracy.



The reform produced a Parliament that more accurately reflects the diversity of society and encouraged governments to build broader political consensus. Coalition and confidence-and-supply agreements have become normal features of governance, demonstrating that inclusive politics can coexist with effective government.

For the Citizens Democratic Alliance, New Zealand illustrates how parliamentary democracy and proportional representation can strengthen democratic legitimacy, improve representation, and encourage cooperation rather than political exclusion.

5.4 South Africa: Parliamentary Democracy in a Diverse Society

South Africa provides an especially relevant example for Nigeria because of its constitutional commitment to diversity, inclusion, and democratic transformation.

The President is elected by the National Assembly and remains accountable to Parliament. The country's proportional representation system has facilitated the inclusion of women, young leaders, and historically marginalised communities in national politics.

South Africa demonstrates that parliamentary institutions can function effectively within a multicultural African society while promoting constitutionalism, judicial independence, and democratic accountability.

5.5 India: Parliamentary Government in a Large Federal Democracy

India is the world's largest democracy and one of the most culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse countries.

Since independence, India has maintained a parliamentary system under a federal constitution. Despite periods of political change, coalition governments, and regional diversity, parliamentary democracy has provided a framework for peaceful transfers of power, legislative accountability, and democratic continuity.

India's experience illustrates that parliamentary government can successfully accommodate extensive diversity within a complex federal structure.

5.6 Canada and Australia: Federal Parliamentary Democracies

Both Canada and Australia combine federalism with parliamentary government.

These countries demonstrate that parliamentary democracy is fully compatible with constitutional federalism, independent courts, bicameral legislatures, and strong provincial or state governments. Their constitutional arrangements also illustrate

how executive accountability can coexist with effective decentralisation and respect for regional autonomy.

Their experience challenges the misconception that federal states necessarily require presidential systems.

5.7 Sweden: Transparent and Accountable Governance

Sweden has long combined parliamentary democracy with transparent public administration, strong local government, and comprehensive social welfare policies.

The Swedish experience demonstrates how parliamentary institutions can support responsive governance, effective public financial management, and high levels of public trust in democratic institutions.

Although constitutional design alone does not create good governance, institutions that promote accountability and transparency contribute significantly to long-term democratic success.

5.8 Lessons for Nigeria

Comparative constitutional experience reveals several common lessons relevant to Nigeria.

First, parliamentary democracy is not confined to any particular region, culture, or level of economic development. It has been successfully adapted in Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and North America.

Second, parliamentary government is fully compatible with federal constitutional arrangements, independent judiciaries, bicameral legislatures, and strong constitutional safeguards.

Third, stable parliamentary democracies invest heavily in strong political parties, legislative oversight, constitutional conventions, and respect for democratic institutions. Their success is therefore not attributable solely to constitutional design but also to political culture and institutional maturity.

Fourth, proportional representation and coalition politics often encourage broader inclusion, consensus-building, and more representative governments, particularly in plural societies.

Finally, constitutional reform is most successful when institutions are adapted to national realities rather than copied wholesale from foreign jurisdictions.



5.9 CDA's Constitutional Perspective

The Citizens Democratic Alliance does not propose adopting the constitutional arrangements of Germany, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Canada, Australia, Sweden, or any other country in their entirety. Nigeria's constitutional future must be designed by Nigerians and for Nigerians.

However, the experiences of these democracies demonstrate that parliamentary government can provide effective, accountable, stable, and inclusive governance across diverse societies. They also show that constitutional systems can evolve over time in response to changing national needs.

Accordingly, the CDA proposes a distinctly Nigerian parliamentary democracy that reflects the country's federal structure, demographic diversity, constitutional traditions, and developmental aspirations while incorporating internationally recognised principles of democratic accountability, responsible government, political inclusion, and institutional stability.



6. THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY MODEL FOR NIGERIA

6.1 Guiding Principles

The Citizens Democratic Alliance proposes a parliamentary system specifically designed for Nigeria's constitutional, political, and social realities. The objective is not to replicate the constitutional arrangements of another country but to establish democratic institutions that promote accountability, inclusiveness, efficiency, stability, and national cohesion.

The proposed model is guided by the following principles:

- Democratic accountability and responsible government.
- Constitutional supremacy and the rule of law.
- Separation of constitutional powers with effective checks and balances.
- Federalism and respect for the autonomy of states.
- Inclusive political representation.
- Fiscal responsibility and efficient governance.
- Protection of fundamental rights and judicial independence.
- National unity through democratic inclusion.

6.2 Structure of the Executive

The CDA proposes a dual executive comprising:

The President (Head of State)

The President shall serve as the constitutional and ceremonial Head of State, representing the unity, sovereignty, and continuity of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The President shall:

- Perform ceremonial and constitutional functions.
- Assent to legislation passed by Parliament in accordance with the Constitution.
- Appoint public officers where constitutionally required, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister or other constitutionally designated bodies.
- Serve as Commander-in-Chief in a constitutional capacity, while operational control of government policy remains with the elected executive.
- Safeguard constitutional continuity during government transitions.

The President shall remain politically impartial and shall not participate in day-to-day governance.



The Prime Minister (Head of Government)

The Prime Minister shall be the Head of Government and chief executive authority of the Federal Government.

The Prime Minister shall:

- Be the leader of the party or coalition commanding the confidence of the House of Representatives.
- Direct government policy.
- Appoint ministers in accordance with the Constitution.
- Coordinate national administration.
- Present government programmes and budgets before Parliament.
- Remain continuously accountable to Parliament.

6.3 Formation of Government

Following parliamentary elections:

- The political party or coalition commanding a majority in the House of Representatives shall form the Government.
- The President shall formally appoint as Prime Minister the person who demonstrates the confidence of the House.
- Where no party commands an outright majority, parties may negotiate coalition agreements or confidence-and-supply arrangements.
- Government formation shall be transparent and completed within constitutionally prescribed timelines.

This process encourages negotiation, compromise, and inclusive governance while preserving democratic legitimacy.

6.4 Cabinet Government

The Cabinet shall constitute the principal executive decision-making body.

Ministers shall ordinarily be appointed from among Members of Parliament, although Parliament may approve the appointment of a limited number of qualified technocrats where specialised expertise is required.

Cabinet decisions shall be governed by the principle of collective responsibility. Once decisions are adopted, ministers shall publicly support government policy or resign from office.

This promotes coherent government, disciplined policymaking, and collective accountability.



6.5 Parliament

The National Assembly shall remain the central institution of democratic representation and accountability.

Under CDA's proposed Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system, Parliament shall reflect both constituency representation and proportional representation, ensuring that election outcomes more accurately correspond to the votes cast by Nigerians.

Parliament shall exercise:

- Legislative authority.
- Budget approval.
- Oversight of the executive.
- Confirmation of constitutionally designated appointments.
- Public financial scrutiny.
- Investigation of government activities through committees.
- Approval of declarations of war and national emergencies, subject to constitutional safeguards.

Regular Prime Minister's Questions and ministerial question periods shall strengthen direct democratic accountability.

6.6 Vote of No Confidence

To balance accountability with political stability, the CDA proposes adopting a constructive vote of no confidence.

Under this mechanism:

- Parliament may remove a Prime Minister only by simultaneously electing a successor who commands majority support.
- A simple vote to remove a government without identifying an alternative administration shall not be sufficient.
- This prevents unnecessary political instability while ensuring governments remain accountable to Parliament.

The constructive vote of no confidence has proven effective in maintaining both accountability and continuity in several parliamentary democracies.

6.7 Federalism and Parliamentary Government at the State Level

The Citizens Democratic Alliance affirms its commitment to Nigeria's federal system of government. The adoption of parliamentary democracy at the federal level should be complemented by parliamentary governance in the states to ensure constitutional coherence, strengthen democratic accountability, and promote efficient governance throughout the Federation.

Accordingly, each state shall operate a parliamentary system under the Federal Constitution and its own State Constitution, while retaining constitutionally guaranteed autonomy over matters within its legislative competence.

The Governor

The Governor shall serve as the constitutional, non-executive Head of State of the State. The office shall symbolise the unity, continuity, and constitutional authority of the State and shall remain politically impartial.

The Governor shall:

- Represent the unity and dignity of the State.
- Formally appoint the Premier following confirmation that he or she commands the confidence of the State House of Assembly.
- Assent to bills duly passed by the State House of Assembly.
- Perform ceremonial and constitutional functions as prescribed by the Constitution.
- Exercise only those discretionary powers expressly provided by the Constitution.
- Act, in all other matters, on the advice of the Premier or as otherwise constitutionally required.

To preserve the political neutrality of the office and avoid competing democratic mandates, the Governor shall be elected by the State House of Assembly for a fixed constitutional term.

The Premier

The Premier shall be the Head of Government of the State and shall exercise executive authority on behalf of the State Government.

The Premier shall:

- Be elected by the State House of Assembly from among its members.
- Be the leader of the political party or coalition commanding the confidence of the Assembly.



- Form the State Executive Council.
- Direct the administration and policy of the State Government.
- Present the annual budget and legislative programme.
- Remain continuously accountable to the State House of Assembly.

State Executive Council

Commissioners shall ordinarily be appointed from among members of the State House of Assembly, although a limited number of qualified technocrats may be appointed where specialised expertise is required, subject to legislative approval.

The State Executive Council shall operate under the principle of collective responsibility, ensuring that executive decisions reflect collective deliberation and that commissioners remain accountable both individually and collectively for government policy.

Accountability and Stability

The Premier and the State Executive Council shall remain in office only while enjoying the confidence of the State House of Assembly.

To promote governmental stability while preserving democratic accountability, a Premier may only be removed through a constructive vote of no confidence, whereby the Assembly simultaneously elects a successor who commands majority support.

Strengthening Federal Democracy

A parliamentary system at both the federal and state levels will create a coherent constitutional framework that promotes responsible government, legislative accountability, efficient public administration, and closer cooperation between the executive and the legislature.

By separating the offices of Governor and Premier, executive authority will no longer be concentrated in a single individual. Instead, constitutional leadership and executive governance will be clearly distinguished, strengthening democratic institutions, reducing winner-takes-all politics, and ensuring that state governments remain continuously accountable to the elected representatives of the people.

This model reflects the Citizens Democratic Alliance's progressive social democratic commitment to accountable government, constitutionalism, inclusive democracy, and effective federal governance.



6.8 Independent Institutions

Parliamentary democracy must be supported by strong independent institutions.

The CDA therefore reaffirms its commitment to:

- An independent judiciary.
- An impartial electoral management body.
- Independent anti-corruption institutions.
- A professional and politically neutral civil service.
- Independent security oversight institutions.
- Strong public audit and accountability mechanisms.

Institutional independence remains essential regardless of the constitutional system adopted.

6.9 Inclusion and Representative Democracy

Consistent with its progressive social democratic philosophy, the Citizens Democratic Alliance believes democratic institutions must reflect the diversity of Nigerian society.

The proposed parliamentary system, together with Mixed-Member Proportional Representation, is intended to:

- Increase the representation of women.
- Expand opportunities for young people.
- Improve inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Encourage representation of minority communities.
- Strengthen issue-based political participation.

A Parliament that more accurately reflects the composition of society is likely to produce more responsive and inclusive public policy.

6.10 Constitutional Safeguards

The CDA parliamentary model incorporates safeguards designed to ensure constitutional stability, democratic accountability, and protection against abuse of power.

These safeguards include:

- Constitutional supremacy.
- Judicial review.



- Fixed parliamentary terms, subject only to constitutionally defined exceptions.
- Constructive votes of no confidence.
- Transparent government formation procedures.
- Strong parliamentary committee oversight.
- Protection of fundamental rights.
- Independent constitutional commissions.
- Public financial accountability.
- Free and fair elections under an independent electoral commission.

6.11 A Nigerian Parliamentary Democracy

The Citizens Democratic Alliance does not advocate a return to the parliamentary system of the First Republic in its original form. Nigeria has changed significantly since 1966, and its constitutional institutions must evolve accordingly.

The CDA therefore proposes a modern parliamentary democracy that reflects contemporary democratic standards, Nigeria's federal character, and the aspirations of a new generation of citizens. It combines responsible government with constitutional stability, inclusive representation with effective decision-making, and democratic accountability with institutional resilience.

This model is intended to create a government that is closer to the people, more transparent in its actions, more prudent in its use of public resources, and better equipped to deliver security, economic opportunity, quality public services, and social justice for all Nigerians.



7. EXPECTED BENEFITS OF THE CDA PARLIAMENTARY MODEL

7.1 Introduction

The Citizens Democratic Alliance does not present parliamentary democracy as a constitutional cure-all for Nigeria's governance challenges. No system of government can substitute for ethical leadership, strong institutions, prudent economic management, or active civic participation.

However, constitutional design significantly influences how governments are formed, how power is exercised, how public resources are managed, and how leaders are held accountable. By creating better institutional incentives, parliamentary democracy can improve the quality of governance and increase the likelihood of achieving sustainable national development.

The CDA believes that the adoption of its proposed parliamentary model will produce significant democratic, economic, and governance benefits.

7.2 Stronger Democratic Accountability

A parliamentary system ensures that the executive remains accountable to Parliament throughout its tenure rather than primarily during periodic elections.

Regular questioning of the Prime Minister and ministers, committee oversight, legislative scrutiny, and the possibility of a constructive vote of no confidence create continuous democratic accountability. This encourages governments to remain responsive to public concerns and legislative priorities.

7.3 Lower Cost of Governance

One of the most significant advantages of the proposed parliamentary model is its potential to reduce the cost of governance.

By eliminating the need for separately elected executive offices at the federal and state levels and reducing the proliferation of political appointments, government can operate more efficiently.

Savings realised from leaner executive structures should be redirected to national priorities such as:

- Quality education.
- Universal healthcare.
- Security.
- Infrastructure.
- Agricultural development.



- Social protection.
- Innovation and technology.
- Youth employment.

The CDA believes public expenditure should prioritise public services rather than political administration.

7.4 Better Policy Coordination

Because the executive is drawn from Parliament, parliamentary systems generally experience fewer institutional conflicts between the executive and the legislature.

Government policies are more likely to receive timely legislative consideration, budgets can be processed more efficiently, and ministers remain directly involved in legislative debates concerning their portfolios.

This closer relationship between policymaking and legislation contributes to more coherent governance.

7.5 Stronger Political Parties

Parliamentary democracy places political parties at the centre of democratic governance.

Parties must develop credible policy platforms, maintain legislative discipline, and demonstrate their ability to govern effectively.

This encourages ideological development, stronger internal democracy, leadership succession, and greater policy consistency.

For the CDA, strong political parties are indispensable to democratic consolidation.

7.6 More Inclusive Representation

Combined with the CDA's proposed Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system, parliamentary democracy will produce a legislature that more accurately reflects Nigeria's diversity.

The model expands opportunities for:

- Women.
- Young people.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Minority communities.
- Professionals and subject-matter experts.



A more representative Parliament is more likely to produce policies that reflect the interests and aspirations of all Nigerians.

7.7 Reduced Winner-Takes-All Politics

Because governments are formed through parliamentary majorities rather than a single nationwide executive election, political competition is more likely to encourage coalition-building, negotiation, and compromise.

This reduces incentives for excessive political polarisation and promotes more inclusive governance.

For a country as diverse as Nigeria, institutions that reward cooperation are essential to strengthening national unity.

7.8 Greater Political Stability

The CDA's proposal incorporates constructive votes of no confidence, ensuring that governments cannot be removed without an alternative administration ready to assume office.

This balances democratic accountability with governmental continuity.

Political transitions can therefore occur constitutionally without prolonged institutional crises or executive paralysis.

7.9 Improved Public Confidence

Citizens are more likely to trust democratic institutions when governments remain visibly accountable for their decisions.

Regular parliamentary scrutiny, transparent legislative proceedings, collective cabinet responsibility, and stronger oversight contribute to greater openness in government.

Improved public confidence strengthens democratic legitimacy and civic participation.

7.10 Better Economic Governance

Stable institutions, accountable governments, and predictable policymaking create a more attractive environment for domestic and foreign investment.



Efficient governance improves investor confidence, strengthens fiscal discipline, and enables governments to implement long-term development strategies with greater consistency.

The CDA believes constitutional reform should support, not replace, sound economic policy.

7.11 Advancing Progressive Social Democracy

The proposed parliamentary model reflects the Citizens Democratic Alliance's progressive social democratic philosophy.

It strengthens democratic accountability, promotes inclusive representation, encourages consensus-building, supports prudent management of public resources, and places public service above personal political power.

These institutional reforms complement the Party's broader Governance Blueprint, including electoral reform through Mixed-Member Proportional Representation, strengthened federalism, judicial independence, local government autonomy, and evidence-based public policymaking.

Together, these reforms seek to build a democratic state that protects liberty, promotes equality of opportunity, delivers high-quality public services, and ensures that economic growth benefits all Nigerians.

7.12 Conclusion

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that parliamentary democracy offers Nigeria an opportunity to strengthen democratic governance while improving governmental efficiency, accountability, inclusion, and institutional stability.

Although constitutional reform alone cannot solve every national challenge, it can create the institutional foundations upon which effective leadership, sound public policy, economic transformation, and sustainable development are built.

For these reasons, the CDA considers parliamentary democracy to be an essential pillar of its vision for a more democratic, prosperous, and inclusive Federal Republic of Nigeria.

8. ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

8.1 Introduction

Constitutional reform inevitably generates vigorous public debate. This is both natural and desirable in a democratic society. The Citizens Democratic Alliance welcomes informed discussion on the future of Nigeria's constitutional system and recognises that proposals for a transition to parliamentary democracy will raise legitimate questions.

Many concerns expressed about parliamentary government arise from Nigeria's historical experience during the First Republic, while others are based on assumptions that parliamentary systems are inherently unstable or unsuitable for a large, diverse federation. These concerns deserve careful consideration.

The CDA believes that most of these challenges can be addressed through sound constitutional design, strong democratic institutions, and adherence to constitutional principles.

8.2 "Nigeria Already Tried Parliamentary Democracy and It Failed"

This is perhaps the most frequently advanced argument against parliamentary democracy.

The First Republic lasted from 1960 to 1966, a relatively short period in the life of a newly independent nation. Its collapse resulted from a complex combination of factors, including disputed elections, regional political rivalries, ethnic tensions, constitutional disagreements, weaknesses in electoral administration, and ultimately military intervention.

It would therefore be inaccurate to conclude that parliamentary democracy itself caused the collapse of the First Republic. Constitutional systems should be evaluated in light of the broader political, historical, and institutional environment within which they operate.

Moreover, the parliamentary model proposed by the Citizens Democratic Alliance is not a restoration of the 1960 or 1963 constitutional arrangements. It is a modern parliamentary system incorporating contemporary democratic safeguards, constructive votes of no confidence, stronger independent institutions, judicial oversight, enhanced electoral integrity, and broader political inclusion.



8.3 "Parliamentary Governments Are Unstable"

Some critics argue that parliamentary governments change too frequently.

While parliamentary systems allow governments to be replaced without waiting for the next general election, this should not be confused with constitutional instability. A government may change while the constitutional order remains intact and public administration continues uninterrupted.

Modern parliamentary democracies have introduced safeguards such as constructive votes of no confidence, fixed parliamentary terms subject to limited exceptions, and transparent government formation procedures.

The CDA's proposed model incorporates these safeguards to balance accountability with governmental stability.

8.4 "Nigeria Is Too Diverse for Parliamentary Democracy"

Nigeria's ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional diversity is often cited as a reason for retaining the presidential system.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance respectfully disagrees.

Many of the world's most diverse democracies successfully operate parliamentary systems. Diversity is not an obstacle to parliamentary government; indeed, parliamentary institutions often encourage coalition-building, negotiation, compromise, and power-sharing among different political interests.

When combined with Mixed-Member Proportional Representation, parliamentary democracy can provide broader representation and reduce the zero-sum nature of political competition.

8.5 "The President Provides Strong Leadership"

Strong leadership is essential to effective governance. However, constitutional systems should distinguish between strong leadership and excessive concentration of power.

The CDA's proposal does not weaken executive leadership. Rather, it ensures that executive authority is exercised collectively through a Cabinet led by a Prime Minister who enjoys the confidence of Parliament.

Leadership becomes more accountable without becoming less effective.



8.6 "Constitutional Reform Is Too Expensive"

Constitutional transition will inevitably involve administrative and legislative costs.

However, these costs should be viewed as an investment in building stronger democratic institutions capable of reducing the long-term costs of governance, improving public accountability, and increasing governmental efficiency.

The financial costs of constitutional reform are likely to be outweighed by the long-term benefits of more efficient and accountable governance.

8.7 "The Problem Is Leadership, Not the System"

Leadership unquestionably matters.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance agrees that no constitutional system can guarantee good governance in the absence of ethical leadership, competent public administration, and active civic participation.

Nevertheless, institutions shape incentives.

Good constitutional design encourages responsible leadership, strengthens accountability, limits abuses of power, and reduces opportunities for institutional failure. A sound constitutional framework cannot guarantee good leaders, but it can make good governance more likely and poor governance more difficult.

For this reason, the CDA believes that leadership reform and institutional reform must proceed together.

8.8 "Will Parliamentary Democracy End Corruption?"

No constitutional system can eliminate corruption.

Corruption is influenced by political culture, institutional integrity, law enforcement, transparency, public ethics, and civic engagement.

However, parliamentary democracy provides additional mechanisms for oversight through regular parliamentary scrutiny, ministerial accountability, committee investigations, public questioning of government, and stronger legislative engagement.

These mechanisms increase transparency and improve opportunities for democratic accountability.



8.9 CDA's Position

The Citizens Democratic Alliance recognises that parliamentary democracy is not a perfect system, nor does it claim that constitutional reform alone will solve Nigeria's challenges.

Rather, the Party believes that constitutional institutions should create incentives for responsible government, democratic accountability, prudent public finance, political inclusion, and effective policymaking.

The proposed parliamentary model should therefore be understood as one component of a comprehensive programme of democratic renewal, working alongside electoral reform, judicial independence, strengthened federalism, local government autonomy, economic transformation, and institutional capacity-building.

8.10 Conclusion

Healthy democracies evolve by evaluating their institutions honestly and reforming them where necessary.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that Nigeria has reached a point in its democratic development where an objective national conversation on constitutional reform is both timely and necessary.

The Party's proposal is offered not as a rejection of Nigeria's democratic progress since 1999, but as a constructive contribution to building a more accountable, inclusive, efficient, and resilient democratic system capable of meeting the aspirations of present and future generations of Nigerians.



9. ROADMAP FOR THE TRANSITION TO PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

9.1 Introduction

The Citizens Democratic Alliance recognises that constitutional reform is a profound national undertaking that must be pursued through democratic, lawful, and inclusive processes. The transition from the presidential system to a parliamentary system should not be viewed as a partisan project but as a national constitutional endeavour requiring broad public participation and political consensus.

The CDA therefore advocates a gradual, transparent, and constitutionally compliant transition that preserves democratic stability while establishing a more accountable and effective system of government.

9.2 Guiding Principles

The transition should be guided by the following principles:

- Constitutionalism and the rule of law.
- Broad national consultation.
- Democratic legitimacy.
- Federalism and respect for state autonomy.
- Peaceful and orderly implementation.
- Protection of fundamental rights and democratic freedoms.
- Institutional continuity and administrative stability.

These principles should guide every stage of the constitutional reform process.

9.3 National Constitutional Dialogue

The first stage of reform should be a comprehensive national dialogue involving all major stakeholders.

Participants should include:

- The Federal Government.
- The National Assembly.
- State Governments and State Houses of Assembly.
- Registered political parties.
- Civil society organisations.
- Professional bodies.
- Labour organisations.
- Traditional and religious leaders.
- Women's organisations.
- Youth organisations.



- The Nigerian diaspora.
- Academia and constitutional experts.
- Persons with disabilities and other historically underrepresented groups.

The purpose of the dialogue should be to build broad national consensus on the structure and content of the proposed constitutional reforms.

9.4 Constitutional Review and Drafting

Following national consultations, a Constitutional Review Commission should be established to prepare the necessary constitutional amendments or, where appropriate, draft a new Constitution reflecting the agreed parliamentary framework.

The review process should address, among other matters:

- The structure of the executive.
- The composition and powers of Parliament.
- Federal-state relations.
- The electoral system, including Mixed-Member Proportional Representation.
- The judiciary.
- Independent constitutional commissions.
- Fiscal federalism.
- Local government governance.
- Transitional provisions.

The draft should be published for public scrutiny before final adoption.

9.5 Democratic Approval

Because constitutional reform affects the fundamental structure of the Nigerian state, the Citizens Democratic Alliance supports securing the broadest possible democratic legitimacy for the transition.

Subject to the Constitution, this may include:

- Approval through the constitutional amendment procedures prescribed by the Constitution.
- Ratification by the required number of State Houses of Assembly.
- Where constitutionally provided or subsequently enabled, approval through a national referendum.

The objective is to ensure that the new constitutional order enjoys widespread public acceptance and democratic legitimacy.



9.6 Institutional Preparation

Once the constitutional reforms are adopted, adequate time should be provided for institutional preparation before full implementation.

This phase should include:

- Revision of electoral laws.
- Delimitation of constituencies where necessary.
- Establishment of the Mixed-Member Proportional electoral framework.
- Civic and voter education.
- Training for legislators, public servants, electoral officials, and the judiciary.
- Review of parliamentary procedures and legislative rules.
- Administrative restructuring of executive institutions.

A carefully managed transition will minimise uncertainty and strengthen public confidence.

9.7 Transitional Arrangements

The CDA does not support disrupting existing democratic mandates.

Accordingly:

- Incumbent elected officials should ordinarily complete the terms for which they were elected, unless otherwise provided by a constitutionally adopted transition framework.
- The parliamentary system should take effect following the next scheduled general election after the constitutional transition has been completed.
- Transitional provisions should clearly define the conversion of existing executive institutions into the new parliamentary framework.

This approach promotes constitutional continuity and political stability.

9.8 Civic Education and Public Engagement

Successful constitutional reform requires an informed citizenry.

Government, political parties, educational institutions, civil society organisations, and the media should collaborate to educate citizens on:

- The principles of parliamentary democracy.
- The roles of the President, Prime Minister, Governors, and Premiers.
- The operation of Parliament.



- The Mixed-Member Proportional electoral system.
- Citizens' rights and responsibilities under the new constitutional order.

Public understanding is essential to the legitimacy and success of constitutional reform.

9.9 Implementation and Review

Following implementation, the new parliamentary system should be subject to periodic institutional review.

The National Assembly, independent constitutional bodies, academic institutions, and civil society should evaluate the operation of the new system and recommend improvements where necessary.

Constitutional reform should be regarded as an ongoing process of democratic refinement rather than a one-time event.

9.10 Conclusion

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that constitutional reform must be lawful, inclusive, transparent, and carefully sequenced.

A successful transition to parliamentary democracy requires more than constitutional amendments. It requires political leadership, public participation, civic education, institutional preparedness, and a shared commitment to strengthening Nigeria's democratic future.

By pursuing reform through constitutional means and broad national consensus, Nigeria can build a parliamentary democracy that reflects its federal character, respects its diversity, strengthens accountability, and advances the ideals of good governance, social justice, and sustainable development.

The CDA therefore calls upon all Nigerians to participate constructively in shaping a constitutional future that places democratic accountability, inclusive governance, and the national interest above partisan or sectional considerations.



10. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Conclusion

This policy paper has argued that constitutional design matters. While no system of government can by itself guarantee good leadership, eliminate corruption, or resolve every governance challenge, constitutional institutions profoundly influence how political power is exercised, how governments are held accountable, and how public resources are managed.

After nearly three decades of uninterrupted democratic governance under the 1999 Constitution, together with Nigeria's earlier experience during the Second Republic, the Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that the nation has acquired sufficient constitutional experience to undertake a careful and objective reassessment of its system of government. Such a reassessment should not be viewed as a repudiation of Nigeria's democratic progress since 1999, but as an expression of democratic maturity and a commitment to continuous institutional improvement.

The CDA's proposal is rooted in its progressive social democratic philosophy, which places the welfare of the people, accountable government, social justice, democratic participation, and inclusive development at the centre of public policy. From this perspective, parliamentary democracy is not simply an alternative constitutional arrangement; it is a framework for strengthening representative government, dispersing political power, deepening democratic accountability, and improving the effectiveness of public institutions.

The parliamentary model proposed in this paper seeks to preserve the strengths of Nigeria's federal system while addressing structural weaknesses that have become increasingly evident under the presidential model. It provides for a non-executive President as Head of State, a Prime Minister accountable to Parliament as Head of Government, parliamentary governments in the states led by Premiers, stronger legislative oversight, constructive votes of no confidence, and a more representative legislature through Mixed-Member Proportional Representation.

The Citizens Democratic Alliance does not claim that parliamentary democracy is a perfect system or that constitutional reform alone will transform Nigeria. Rather, the Party believes that constitutional reform must form part of a broader national agenda that includes economic transformation, institutional strengthening, judicial independence, fiscal federalism, quality education, accessible healthcare, public sector reform, national security, and social inclusion.

Nigeria stands at an important constitutional moment. The choices made today will shape the quality of governance, democratic accountability, and national



development for generations to come. The CDA therefore believes that the time has come for an inclusive national conversation on the country's constitutional future, guided by evidence, comparative experience, and the shared determination to build a democratic system that better serves the Nigerian people.

10.2 Policy Recommendations

To advance this constitutional vision, the Citizens Democratic Alliance makes the following recommendations:

A. Constitutional Reform

1. Nigeria should commence a comprehensive review of the 1999 Constitution with the objective of transitioning from the presidential system to a parliamentary system of government.
2. The reformed Constitution should establish:
 - A non-executive President as the ceremonial Head of State.
 - A Prime Minister as Head of Government, elected from and accountable to the House of Representatives.
 - Parliamentary governments in the states headed by Premiers, with Governors serving as non-executive constitutional Heads of State.
3. The Constitution should incorporate a constructive vote of no confidence to ensure governmental accountability while preserving political stability.

B. Electoral Reform

4. Nigeria should adopt the Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system to ensure that legislative representation more accurately reflects the votes cast by citizens.
5. Electoral reforms should promote greater representation of women, young people, persons with disabilities, and other historically underrepresented groups.
6. Political parties should be encouraged to strengthen internal democracy, policy development, and transparent candidate selection processes.

C. Strengthening Democratic Institutions

7. The independence of the judiciary, the electoral management body, anti-corruption agencies, and other constitutional institutions should be strengthened through legal and administrative reforms.
8. Parliament should be empowered with stronger oversight mechanisms, well-resourced committee systems, and regular question periods for the Prime Minister and ministers.



9. The civil service should be professional, merit-based, politically neutral, and insulated from undue political interference.

D. Federalism and Local Governance

10. Fiscal federalism should be strengthened by reviewing the distribution of powers and resources among the Federal, State, and Local Governments.
11. Local governments should enjoy genuine democratic autonomy, financial transparency, and greater capacity to deliver essential public services.
12. States should be encouraged to deepen democratic participation and accountability through parliamentary institutions adapted to their constitutional responsibilities.

E. Civic Participation and Constitutional Education

13. Government, educational institutions, civil society organisations, professional associations, and the media should collaborate to promote civic education on constitutional governance and democratic participation.
14. Constitutional reform should be preceded by broad public consultation to ensure that the new constitutional order reflects the aspirations of Nigerians across all regions and communities.

F. National Development

15. Constitutional reform should be integrated with broader governance reforms aimed at reducing the cost of government, improving public service delivery, strengthening public financial management, promoting economic diversification, creating employment opportunities, and advancing social justice.
16. All constitutional reforms should be guided by the principles of constitutionalism, the rule of law, democratic accountability, inclusion, transparency, and the supremacy of the Constitution.

10.3 Final Reflection

The Citizens Democratic Alliance believes that the strength of a nation lies not only in its people or its resources, but also in the quality of its institutions. Democracies endure when governments remain accountable, public power is exercised responsibly, and every citizen has a meaningful stake in the constitutional order.

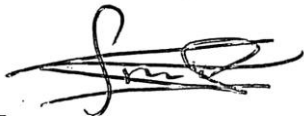
Parliamentary democracy offers Nigeria an opportunity to renew its democratic institutions, strengthen representative government, and build a constitutional system that is more responsive to the needs of its people. Together with the broader reforms contained in the CDA Governance Blueprint, it provides a pathway towards a more accountable, inclusive, efficient, and prosperous federation.



The Citizens Democratic Alliance therefore invites all Nigerians, citizens, lawmakers, civil society, organised labour, professional bodies, traditional institutions, the private sector, and political actors, to join in shaping a constitutional future founded on democratic accountability, social justice, national unity, and shared prosperity.

A stronger Constitution can help build a stronger democracy. A stronger democracy can help build a stronger Nigeria.

**Approved and Published by the
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This Policy Paper is intended to contribute to informed public discourse on governance, constitutional reform, and public policy in Nigeria. The views and recommendations contained herein represent the official policy position of the Citizens Democratic Alliance as adopted by its National Working Committee.

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