
The State and Dilemma of Post-Colonial Nigeria: An Explanatory Perspective of Security Governance Failure

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Abstract

The post-colonial Nigerian state has experienced series of internal political altercations due to the consistent and persistent behavioural patterns of the political elites, whose inordinate political ambitions have often revolved around appropriating state apparatuses as well as primordial forces for their personal aggrandisement, against the majoritarian vital primary interest of the downtrodden. To this effect, governance has suffered over the years in the hands of the recycled dominant political class that has produced and manipulated institutions of government, thereby deepening copiously and rapaciously spatial social and economic inequalities between the elite and masses. In view of this circumstance, the study is aimed at x-raying the explanatory contradictions responsible for security governance failure in Nigeria after decades of political independence. The study adopted qualitative-descriptive method and relied on secondary sources of data collection. The “theory of post-colonial state” is employed as the main underpinning analytical construct that scientifically studies the society as a whole, and takes into consideration the convergence of ‘unity of the opposites’.

Keywords: Institutional Revolution, Political Power Struggle, Post-Colonial Nigeria, Security Governance Failure, State.

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Introduction

The unification of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 gave birth to an entity called Nigeria. It is common knowledge that this artificial contraction and imposition orchestrated by the colonial powers provided an ample opportunity for artificial interaction between the north and south during the colonial and post-colonial eras of Nigeria. The interplay between political power and elite domination did not actually manifest conspicuously during the colonial era. However, post-colonial Nigeria has witnessed a state-centric approach to issues of national concerns. Thus, the struggle for power among the political elites has often been geared towards power accumulation for domination and the primitive accumulation of wealth. The Nigerian state has therefore, transcended into an instrument of exploitation and suppression of one class (the masses) by the other (the oligarchs). This is antithetical to the notion that the state is an active agent of shaping and reshaping society. Class consciousness prevalent in Nigeria has negatively affected accountability. This is due to primary interest in primitive accumulation of illegitimate wealth from the public treasury in order to maintain primordial and parochial influence. Thus, politics in Nigeria becomes a class struggle among the political elites, to capture state power, and to use same for personal aggrandisement (Obikaeze, 2019). This has undermined the ability of the state to deliver public goods and services, not to mention that it has deepened political corruption and the politics of prebendalism and patrimonialism (Lewis, 2011).

For instance, in Peter Ekeh's two publics where there is existence of primordial and civic publics, the primordial public, which attracts influence and accolades enjoyed by the politicians, has no direct economic reward. It is only used to gain respect and security (Ekeh, 1975). On the other hand, the civic public provides an ample opportunity for illegitimate economic gain, thus, accountability and responsibility are found wanting. As such, there is scarcity of morality in the discharge of public duties and this has remained the dilemma of the Nigerian state since independence. Over dependence on consumption of wealth accumulated through foreign earnings has explained the fact that Nigeria is truly a rentier state (a state that depends on external petro-dollars). Mahdavi (1970) considers rentier states as those states that receive, on a regular basis, substantial amounts of petro-dollars as an external rent. The problem is that the oil revenues received by the governments are not transparently accounted for by the 'compartmentalised elites' in various segments of the state. The consistent and persistent behavioural patterns of the political elites whose political ambitions are inordinate have often revolved around appropriating state apparatuses as well as primordial forces for their personal aggrandisement against the majoritarian vital primary interest of the downtrodden. Thus, the state is separated from the masses, thereby creating two major classes. Zahirinejad (2016) argues that the rents empower the state and break linkages between the people and the state, making rentier states independent from society.

It is apparently obvious that Nigerian citizens live in a state of uncertainty due to the combined forces of hunger, poverty, unemployment and insecurity (physical, psychological, spiritual and financial). The humanitarian crises in the country are quite alarming and have far-reaching consequences. According to the United Nations Report on Nigeria's Common Country Analysis (CCA), the unemployment rate in Nigeria has been rising from 14.2% in 2016 to 23.1% in 2018 and further to 33.3% at the end of 2020 (UN Reports, 2022). Further, youth unemployment is particularly challenging with 53.4% of young people unemployed and 31.4% of youths not in education, employment, or training. How would security be guaranteed in this situation? There is no gainsaying that the pathological defective administrative system in Nigeria has remained pronounced in our polity after years of political independence. Thus, effective governance in various sectors, security sector inclusive, is yet to be realised. Consequently, the study investigates how governance failure has contributed to the emergence of security threatening non-state groups and concomitant pervasive insecurity in Nigeria.

Theoretical Analysis of the Post-colonial State

The study is anchored on the theory of post-colonial state, which is an off-shoot of the Marxist theory of the state. It is used in the social sciences to explain the prevailing conditions in the developing world, especially in Africa, where colonialism is seen as being responsible for shaping the nature and character, and conditions of the post-colonial state. The theory arose as a counter to the proposition of the Western liberal theory that the State is an independent force and an impartial arbiter that not only caters for the overall interest of every member of the society but also equitably regulates their socio-economic transactions and processes. As popularised by scholars such as Alavi (1973), Ake (1985), Ekekwe (1985), Ibeanu (1998; 2015) and others, the major contention of the theory is that the post-colonial state is a creation of imperialism and as such, has followed a developmental strategy dictated by the interest of imperialism and its local allies rather than that of the majority of the indigenous population. This argument is built on the premise that the relationship between the Western capitalists and petty-bourgeoisie has continued to keep African countries underdeveloped despite formal political independence of countries in the region. However, the ruling class in the developing countries is held responsible by the masses for governance failure.

The theory contends that the post-colonial state is constituted in such a way that it has a very limited autonomy both internally and externally. This lack of relative autonomy means that the state enjoys limited independence from the hegemonic social class within the state itself, as well as also from their external allies. The post-colonial state is also constituted in such a way that it reflects and mainly caters for a narrow range of interests, that is, the interest of the rapacious political elites in comprador and subordinate relationship. This, for Ake (1981), is a

consequence of the low level of the development of the state. According to him, the level of state formation is very low in Nigeria to the extent that it can be argued that the state has not emerged. The determinants of decision making and wealth accumulation are members of a small powerful group, who directly or indirectly corner and capture the state in a most dangerous manner for their personal aggrandisement. This post-colonial state that is still in its process of making is implicated by Ibeanu (2015) as the reason for Nigeria's governance maladies, human insecurity, poverty, unemployment, corruption and population displacement (which includes the population's urge to migrate). Population displacement is multi-dimensional and presupposes that the masses are suffering social, economic, political and psychological displacement. Therefore, any study of displacement in its entirety in Nigeria must include a proper problematisation of the role of a captured state in this regard. The post-colonial state in Nigeria is, therefore, implicated in the human security challenges.

Explanation of State Failure and Disillusionment

The term 'state' as adopted in this paper is not used as a country with a definite territorial boundary, but it is conceptualised as a machinery or agency that has a defined and consistent behavioural pattern, which manages the affairs of the people through law/policy making, implementation and adjudication. Based on this, the state manages, regulates and coordinates the affairs of the people in the state (i.e. an entity with a defined territory). It also manages material resources, coordinates domestic economy and conducts international relations. The general character of the state as an analytical construct determines how it can effectively achieve a successful public administration, so as to fulfill the expectations and aspirations of the people.

The character of Nigerian political system has more or less led to confidence crisis due to inherent internal contradictions that inhibit socio-economic and political development in the country. Nigerian political system (i.e. a pattern of administrative processes and behaviour within a clearly defined analytical construct) must be able to ensure the interactions and reciprocity of interrelated component units, to meet the aspirations of the people. Consequently, the relationship between the political system and the external environment determines the reaction and attitude of the citizens to the government. The failure of the Nigeria state over the years has remained the source of disillusionment, agitations and separatism. The existential antagonism and disunity of interests between the state and the people is the source of perpetual conflict between the former and the latter.

Class struggle and domination has contributed to the above mentioned challenges. The recycling of political elites who have been exploring state institutions and resources to enrich themselves at the expense of the masses stands

as an autonomous source of conflicting and antagonistic relationship between the state and the citizens. Class consciousness in Nigeria has really been exacerbated as a result of the socio-economic conditions of the masses. This study's choice of Marxist-oriented approach is influenced by the fact that the theory scientifically studies the society as a whole and takes into consideration the convergence of 'unity of opposites' which gives rise to exploitative and antagonistic social relations. The antagonistic class relations between the 'dominant class' (political elites) and the 'dependent class' (masses) have contributed to unending class struggles. As Marx and Engels (1977) put it, the history of all hitherto existed society, is the history of class struggle. Thus, the analytical framework of the approach best underpins the endemic pauperisation and the struggle between the exploiters (the government) and the exploited (the masses). The thinking is that the perpetual domination and subsequent suppression of the exploited would one day be negated and transformed to a better society.

Obviously, the distinction between political system and the economic condition of society has provided an explanatory framework that economic conditions of the people determine their social and political consciousness. This inference rests on the assumption that the economic structure of society transforms the social and political structures therein, due to their lack of autonomy. Interestingly, Ake (1981) argues that one of the critical importances of the theory is that it creates a nexus between substructure and superstructure as well as the interaction of social forces. Furthermore, the approach helps to penetrate deep into the processes and policies of the state to unveil the very essence, so as to rightly explain the concrete forms of their manifestation in various human formations.

After 60 years of political independence, politics of inclusion and exclusion has characterise the Nigerian polity. The iron law of oligarchy has taken a prominent place in the country's political history. Hence, the elite class is often willingly ready to employ instruments of force, intimidation and suppression to reinforce their positions, and to maintain the anti-people status quo. This is exemplified by the 2020 "EndSARS" protests, and the subsequent Lekki Toll Gate massacre. On the night of 20th October, 2020, members of the Nigerian Army opened fire on unarmed EndSARS protesters at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos State, killing some and leaving many injured. The 2023 presidential elections where the people's mandate was claimed to have been stolen in a broad day light by the political elites is also another form of intimidation and suppression of the will of the people. Sadly, the state through the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) becomes a partial umpire contrary to the argument of the liberal school of thought.

As the consequence of a long governance failure in Nigeria, the social contract between the state and the people has been compromised at the disadvantage of the ruled. Thomas Hobbes' social contract argues thus: man was

originally in the state of nature; life in the state of nature was summarily unbearable; men entered into agreement among themselves to have a government to better their lives (Rogers, 1995; Zagorin, 2009). However, the social contract is not revocable at the pleasure of the people. According to John Locke, men entered into agreement to establish an institution that would protect them. However, when the institution (government) fails to accomplish the original purpose upon which it was created, the people have the right to dissolve it. In his own view, Rousseau argues that men entered into an agreement among themselves to have a government where sovereignty does not belong to the state but to the people (Bertram, 2003; Wraight, 2008; Williams, 2014). However, in the case of Nigeria, the reverse has been the case in which the welfare and general wellbeing of the masses have long been neglected. Protection of lives and property has not been adequately achieved; the 'will' and wishes of the people have not manifested in policies of the government, rather the interests of the elites have usually conflicted with that of the masses. Hobbes' irrevocability thesis finds relevance in Nigeria, and successive administrations have deplored the instruments of intimidation to deny the people their right, as projected by Locke, to remove or revisit the unfavourable compact. By the very circumstance, the sovereignty of the people as postulated by Rousseau is a mere jamboree.

As a result of years of maladministration and misplacement of people's interest, frustration, which naturally leads to aggression, becomes prominent. This is usually the case, when peoples' expectations are neglected, or when the people are deprived of their rights and aspirations, especially over a long period of time. This situation drives collective violence/aggression (Gurr, 1970). However, relative deprivation can lead to aggression depending on the expectation of the aggrieved group(s), as aggression occurs based on the degree of disparity between people's expectations and what they get (Gurr, 1970). Thus, the request for 'resource control' cum violence in the Niger Delta, separatist agitations in the south east and so forth have been attributed to years of political and social exclusion.

The Immediately Post-colonial Nigerian State

Unlike some other nations that secured their independence through violence and bloodshed, it is on record that Nigeria had a peaceful process leading to independence on October 1, 1960. Unlike in many Latin American countries, independence in most African countries was granted through constitutional negotiation rather than through military actions (Oyediran, 1979). The nationalists that negotiated and fought for independence of Nigeria were very optimistic that independence of the country would bring about socio-economic and political development. The hoisting of the Nigerian flag on October 1, 1960, and the celebration of independence symbolised that Nigeria was free from colonialism. Since independence, the management and coordination of political and economic affairs of the country have been on the shoulders of Nigerians, both in the military and democratic regimes. However, those who inherited political

power from the departed colonial masters were accused of incapability to manage the affairs of the Nigerian state.

The political crises that have characterised the post-colonial Nigerian state indicate that *ab initio*, there is failure of governance particularly at the national level. The alleged systemic failure in Nigeria's First Republic paved the way for military incursion into the politics of the country. Invariably, identity politics became an integral component of national political life in Nigeria. Hence, national integration became far-fetched. There is no gainsaying that post-independence politics has eroded the genuine aspirations of the people, making effective economic coordination unattainable. As a matter of fact, the imbibition of the political elites is apparently geared towards satisfaction of personal interests at the expense of national development and unity. Instead of exploiting state apparatus to re-launch the country to another level of economic and political prosperity, the politicians have been accused of exploiting ethnicity and religion to advance their primordial and parochial interests. Thus, politics of ethnicity, religion, *prebendalism* and so forth, characterise post-independence Nigeria. For instance, between 1941 and 1950, the unhealthy rivalry between the Igbo and Yoruba became so intensified even beyond the political turf that by 1948, Nnamdi Azikiwe had ceased to be Zik of Africa but Zik of the Igbo nation (Oyediran, 1979). Corruption among public office holders is one of the main pathogens that negatively affect processes of governance in the country.

Democratic Governance, Military Incursion and Disengagement

On January 15, 1966, Nigeria experienced the first military coup d'état that put an end to civilian administration in the First Republic. In August 1965, a group of Army Majors (Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu, Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Timothy Onwuatuogwu, Chris Anuforo, Don Okafor, Humphrey Chukwuka, and Adewale Ademoyega) began plotting a coup d'état against the incumbent Prime Minister, Abubakar Balewa. The coup was planned because according to the coup plotters, the men at the helm of public affairs were running Nigeria aground by their corrupt ways. Ministers under that republic were accused of living flamboyant lifestyles and looting public funds at the expense of ordinary citizens. The coup led to the death of prominent politicians in the country, such as the Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the Northern Premier, Ahmadu Bello, the Western Premier, Samuel Ladoke Akintola, the Finance Minister, Festus Okotie-Eboh and many others including ranking military officers. The intervention of the military in the Nigerian politics was initially justified by many Nigerians due to class struggle and the inherent contradictions that characterised governance patterns in the country. The military, therefore, promised to correct the wrong doings of the immediate post-colonial politicians. However, the intervention of the military in politics did not in earnest solve the protracted problems confronting the country, which the military promised to solve. Arguably, the military ended up multiplying the problems they met in general. The military threw the baby out with the bath water. This suggests that while claiming to restore the people's

confidence and bring stability to the country, the military holistically sacked democratic institutions and every element of democratic principles.

In other words, the seizure of state apparatus to perpetrate financial crime, subvert rule of law, intimidate human right activists, infringe on the fundamental rights of the people etc. attracted both national and international concerns. Tracing the matter from Major General Jonhson Aguiyi Ironsi (the first military Head of State) to Major General Abdusalami Abubakar (i.e. the last military head of State in Nigeria), it is rather evident that military regimes in Nigeria suffered colossal administrative, political and economic pathologies. The behavioural patterns of the military actually negated the basic principles of good governance. For instance, there was apparent financial embezzlement, misappropriation, mismanagement, and siphoning of the common wealth with pomposity and impunity. Human rights violation was typically exemplified during military era. The atrocities committed against the Biafrans who demanded their freedom from Nigeria leading to a civil war (1966-1970) have not been forgotten. The arrest and execution of the popular playwright, Ken Saro-Wiwa with eight (8) other Ogoni men on November 10, 1995 by the late military Head of State, Sani Abacha cannot also be forgotten in a hurry. The intimidation and suffocation of the civil society and media by the military regime is still fresh on the minds of Nigerians. In fact, it can be argued that the character of Nigerian state under the military exacerbated misuse of power, nepotism, and corruption.

Apart from the above stated fault-lines, the cumulative effects of weak value system coupled with deep-seated primordial and parochial sentiments in the military hierarchy snowballed into the thirty-month civil war during General Yakubu Gowon's administration. Attacks and killing of the Igbos in some parts of the north preceded the war. According to Dudley (1973), Igbos were attacked not because they were Igbos but because the name Igbo had become more or less synonymous with exploitations and humiliation. It was essentially an attack on a mental stereotype. The attack was in fact a preliminary action to the counter-coup of July 29, 1966, during which many Eastern (Igbo) military officers were specifically targeted and killed. In fact, the counter-coup which was carried out by northern military officers was to avenge the killing of northern politicians and military officers in the first coup presumably masterminded by the Igbos.

The take-over of power by General Murtala Mohammed in 1975 led to the process of military disengagement from governance. Though Murtala Mohammed's regime was shortlived as a result of his assassination in 1976, the military disengagement process he started eventually materialised. General Olusegun Obasanjo who succeeded Murtala Mohammed, actualised the handover of power to civilians in 1979. The transition programme was made possible in September, 1978, when the government of General Obasanjo lifted the ban on political activities in the country. This, therefore, opened a floodgate of opportunity for the formation of

political parties to contest the 1979 general elections. The five (5) registered political parties were:

1. National Party of Nigeria (NPN)
2. Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP)
3. Great Nigeria Peoples Party (GNPP)
4. Peoples Redemption Party (PRP)
5. Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN)

At the end of transition process, Alhaji Shehu Usman Shagari of NPN won the 1979 presidential election to become the first Executive President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria under the presidential system of government.

In Nigeria, each time there was a military coup against a civilian government, the military officials usually claimed that their intention was to correct the excesses, maladministration, and abuse of office by the politicians. The military often seeks legitimacy by making Nigerians to believe that politicians are corrupt, hence, have squandered the people's expectations and hopes. However, could it be argued that the military is immune from these allegations, given the fact that there were also coups by the military against the military governments in Nigeria? The answer to the above question is in the negative with regard to the period held sway in Nigeria until they left the political scene in 1999. Paradoxically, the military's involvement in Nigerian politics certainly had negative consequences, which have continued to hurt Nigerians today. For instance, the military sponsored war against the eastern region of the country has continued to hurt the unity of Nigeria despite the so-called post-civil war 'No Victor, No Vanquished' proclamation of the Federal Government under General Yakubu Gowon. Also, the so-called rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation programme of that government was a scam.

Power Transition and Conflicts

Transition from one government to another has often generated conflicts of interest due to the confidence crisis in the transition process. For instance, the conduct of credible elections in Nigeria has remained an issue of national and international public discourse due to the historical antecedents of suppressive electoral processes. The colonial and post-colonial Nigerian electoral processes respectively have had challenges of credibility and acceptability. The 1959, 1964, 1979, and 1983 general elections in Nigeria attracted mixed reactions from various interests and quarters. Arguably, each of the elections was challenged by the losers, who alleged manipulation of the process. The prolonged military involvement in

Nigerian politics overshadowed the contradictions of practiced democratic rule; hence the aggressive clamour for Nigeria's return to democracy.

With the return to democracy from military rule in 1999, Nigerians, with great enthusiasm and optimism believed that civil rule in the country would engender the political rights of the people to choose their leaders and representatives through credible electoral process having learnt the hard lesson of military rule. However, after almost two decades of democracy in Nigeria, the level of political violence and ethnic rivalries has left much to be desired. The failure of the much anticipated democracy to facilitate elections that are free from rancour, acrimony and manipulation is a significant factor agitating the minds of serious minded analysts. The nature of electoral process in Nigeria has hindered election outcome that can stand as a true reflection of the will of the people. In the light of this, Jega (2015) argues that the electoral process in Nigeria is beset with challenges that not only impinge fundamentally on the capacity of the Election Management Body (EMB) to conduct credible elections but also undermine democracy in the country. Omotola (2010) asserts that elections in Nigeria even under the present democratic dispensation which began in 1999 are "characterized by ineffective administration at all stages (during, before and after elections), resulting in damagingly discredited outcomes". Juxtaposing Jega and Omotola's submissions with the existing inhibitions associated with Nigeria's elections, obviously signposts the debilitating nature of the country's democracy.

The level of deployment of security personnel during elections in Nigeria is a pointer to the fact that electoral violence has remained rampart in the history of Nigerian democracy. The militarisation of electoral processes in the country actually poses a fundamental question about Nigeria's readiness to embrace democracy. There is no gainsaying that elections in Nigeria are characterised by armed conflicts, 'thuggery', cultism, militancy, and other violent activities. Hence, electoral insecurity in the country's political history continues to be a colossal threat to the survival and sustainability of Nigeria's democracy. Evidently, history has recorded post-election crises in Nigeria, as Olaniyan and Amao (2015) also observe that with the exemption of isolated incidences, elections in post-colonial Nigeria have rarely been peaceful; they have become a matter of warfare that have resulted not only in killings, maiming and destruction, but also in the "death" of democracy itself. Correspondingly, Olowojolu and Ake (2015) also argue that the results of the 1964/65 general elections were what led to the political upheaval that truncated the First Republic; the Second Republic came to an abrupt end after the military overthrew President Shehu Shagari few months after the 1983 elections; and the annulment of the historic June 12, 1993 presidential election won by MKO Abiola, which was considered by many observers as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria's political history.

The 2023 general elections were adjudged to be characterised by intimidation, thuggery, ballot box snatching, killings and brazen manipulation of election results, especially, the presidential election. It was alleged that the security operatives were caught facilitating election ‘votes robbery.’ Although, election(s) in Nigeria is not the main focus of this study, it is worth mentioning that elections in Nigeria have also served as a source of conflicts and insecurity of lives and properties.

State Failure and Security Challenges

The popular thinking is that intra-state conflicts particularly in the developing countries, with particular emphasis on Africa, rose astronomically after former colonies gained their independence. For instance, in Nigeria, seven years after independence, there was a civil war, which caused unprecedented loss of both human lives and properties. After the civil war, other pockets of internal conflicts surfaced significantly. Nwadiakor (2011) observes that security challenges assumed an alarming proportion in the aftermath of the war. Also, the post-cold war developing world was believed to have witnessed increased internal agitations and armed conflicts, particularly in different parts of Africa, Nigeria inclusive.

Obikaeze and Iheke (2016) argue that in the developing countries, including Nigeria, intra-state armed conflicts increased astronomically during the cold war and after the disintegration of Soviet Union, and subsequent end of cold war. For example, there were internal armed conflicts in Somalia leading to a civil war in 1990, which claimed many lives and led to the absence of a central government; the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, which left millions of people dead; the Kosovo crisis which started in 1998 and ended on 11 June 1999; Sierra Leone civil war in 1991 that lasted for 11 years and left over 50,000 dead. There were also the first Sudanese civil war of 1955-1972 and second Sudanese civil war of 1983-2005 between the central Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army. There were also the first Liberian Civil War of 1989 to 1997, which killed about 250,000 people and the second civil war of 1999 to 2003. Furthermore, from 1990 to 1994, Rwanda was engulfed in a protracted civil war as a result of long-running dispute between the Hutus and Tutsis; that war resulted in genocide. Also, Ivory Coast, Mali, Republic of Guinea, etc. have been engulfed in armed conflicts over the same period.

These conflicts stated above were possible due to state failure to establish viable institutions of government as well as a political culture of national consciousness and unity. The partiality of the state often leads to the creation of a divide-and-rule-system, thereby exacerbating religious and ethnic tensions. Since independence, Nigeria has been confronted with one form of security challenge or another. The pervasive insecurity in different parts of the country is a pointer to the fact that there has been long-running systemic failure of institutions in Nigeria.

In fact, the level of human and national security question has manifested in different dimensions due to the character of Nigerian state, both during the military and civilian regimes. There are security challenges in the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. For instance, there is Boko Haram terrorism in the north east; there is militancy in the Niger Delta Region; armed Fulani herdsmen carry out murderous attacks in every part of Nigeria; there is rampant kidnapping for ransom across the country. The deadly crises between herdsmen and crop farmers have become one of the major insecurity problems in Nigeria (Akinsowon, 2021). The existential crisis is stressed to be only second to Boko Haram insurgency in magnitude and devastating consequences (Okoro, 2018).

The conflicts between herders and farmers have serious socio-economic implications in Nigeria. Sadly, as observed by Olakiitan (2016), the failure of the Nigerian government to decisively address herdsmen attacks has several implications for the country. Okoro (2018) further submits that herdsmen have sacked whole communities, abducted elder statesmen, burnt churches, killed priests and worshipers, killed police officers, raped, looted and perpetrated heinous crimes, while the federal government has remained mostly indifferent. Considering the crisis situations in various parts of the country, Olukunle (2018) argues that the continuous conflicts in Nigeria have caused unstable and dangerous situations, which affect individuals, groups, communities, and the entire country. Why this debilitating security situations in Nigeria? Bankong-Obi (2012) provides an answer by attributing Nigeria's intractable security challenges to government's apathy and inefficiency of the security agencies.

Clear and continued injustices in various parts of the country have been a factor standing against human and national security. Years of governance failure in Nigeria as well as perceived neglect and exclusion of some segments of the country have had spill-over effects on the peace and security of the people. The agitations for separation, resource control, political restructuring, etc. emanating from different quarters in Nigeria are traceable to decades of state failure to ensure diversity and inclusiveness in the polity. The character of Nigeria state has been more or less oppressive, depressive, suppressive and alienating. As a result of institutionalised corruption and class domination in the country, maintenance of peace and security has remained elusive. In fact, due to structural and institutional weaknesses, the guarantee of sustainable security in Nigeria seems unattainable at the moment. The problems with security in Nigeria are not far-fetched. The systematic marginalisation of various groups and systemic impoverishment of the citizenry have made it almost impossible to entrench sustainable peace and security in Nigeria. From all indications, it appears that the government does not understand that there is a nexus between hunger and insecurity. Unemployment gives birth to hunger, and there is a long existing relationship between hunger and anger.

Table 1: Nigeria Youth Unemployment Rate - Historical Data

Year	% of Total Labor Force Ages 15-24	Annual Change
2021	19.61%	-0.06%
2020	19.67%	1.95%
2019	17.72%	1.55%
2018	16.18%	1.72%
2017	14.45%	1.32%
2016	13.14%	4.92%
2015	8.22%	-0.59%
2014	8.80%	-0.97%
2013	9.77%	0.07%
2012	9.70%	0.12%
2011	9.58%	0.00%
2010	9.58%	-0.01%
2009	9.59%	-0.02%
2008	9.61%	-0.01%
2007	9.61%	-0.01%
2006	9.62%	-0.01%
2005	9.63%	0.02%
2004	9.61%	-0.02%
2003	9.63%	0.06%
2002	9.57%	-0.09%
2001	9.66%	-0.02%
2000	9.68%	-0.03%
1999	9.71%	0.02%
1998	9.70%	0.00%
1997	9.70%	0.00%
1996	9.70%	-0.06%
1995	9.76%	-0.02%
1994	9.78%	-0.01%
1993	9.79%	0.04%
1992	9.75%	-0.06%
1991	9.81%	-0.06%

Source: World Bank, (2021)

The Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG) projects that the country's unemployment rate will hit 37 per cent in this 2023, and poverty headcount will also rise to 45 per cent. It is projected that the trend of inflation is expected to remain elevated, driven by structural, cost and monetary factors (Izuaka, 2023). Many Nigerians, especially the youths feel frustrated and invariably become aggressive, which have resulted to violent expressions and embrace of nihilism. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state has invested enormous resources (without concrete policy actions to alleviate the economic hardship of Nigerians) to protect and preserve the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country through the

adoption of physical force to coerce every aggrieved group to remain in the artificial contraption and imposition called Nigeria. The Nigerian state has wasted hundreds of innocent lives in the name of defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity against militants and separatist groups under the guise and provocative insistence that “the unity of Nigeria is not negotiable”; even in the midst of clear injustices, neglect, exclusionism, nepotism, and marginalisation (Nwolisa, 2017). Today, there are activities in Nigeria that continue to pose a colossal threat to human and national security. Cases such as cross border banditry, piracy and sea robbery, cyber-attacks, armed robbery, kidnapping, assassinations, and proliferation of small and light weapons at the centre of national security challenge. These security challenges pose a serious threat to individuals, private firms, public organisations, and have also affected businesses in the country. Other security challenges such as pipeline vandalism, ethno-religious conflicts, intra-communal or ethnic conflicts, security forces extortion and brutality, etc., remain insurmountable. Sadly, the proliferation of all these security threats is attributable to state failure.

Security architecture and intelligence gathering in Nigeria are weak and unreliable. Sadly, security of the people is not guaranteed because even security institutions that are meant to protect the citizens have been accused of posing high risk and security threat to lives and property. For instance, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) is accused by many as a formidable security threat to the citizens. Based on this allegation, a nationwide protest with demand for the dissolution of SARS engulfed Nigeria in 2020. The protest and the bloody crackdown that followed led to Lekki Tollgate massacre of October 20, 2020. The EndSARS protest as well as the Lekki Tollgate massacre validates the view that Nigerian military brutality is a threat to the citizens. In fact, the general insecurity in the country is frightening, thus making the general public to be in a state of uncertainty or better still, in a nasty and brutish state. The general security condition of the country contributes a lot to the psychological trauma being experienced by the people, as well as loss of lives and property, and internal displacement. However, Nigeria’s security shortcomings discourage foreign investors and have been known to force some existing ones to close down.

The worst part is that the Nigeria state having been captured by selfish political elites has become a precursor of internal insecurity pathogens. The neutrality of the state is thereby brutally compromised as the behavioural pattern of the state tilts towards the use of military force as the first option against dissent even when other alternatives are available. Regrettably, herdsmen who continue to pose significant threat to farmers and rural communities through wanton killing and maiming remain untouchable. The law has turned its eyes to the other side not seeing the devastations caused by the armed militia of rich cattle owners of mainly northern extraction. As bad as it is, groups such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) that do not engage in violent activities have been classified as terrorist groups by the federal government of Nigeria. The invasion of Nnamdi Kalu’s (the

leader of IPOB) Afaraukwu community and subsequent killing of people by the military personnel during the ‘Python Dance’ operation saga in September, 2017; Odi massacre carried out on November 20, 1999 in the predominantly Ijaw town, Bayelsa State; army invasion of Zaki-Biam, Benue state in 2001, etc., explain the true nature of justice deficits in our polity, and flags the Nigerian state as a typical harbinger of insecurity pathogens.

The government of Nigeria is recorded to have negotiated with Boko Haram insurgents in the north and Niger Delta militants in the oil rich south-south region. Therefore, one is tempted to ask why military attack was the first option in addressing the issue of IPOB and the group secessionist agitations. By implication, the government’s approach to disparate groups/agitators seems to suggest that if you are not violent, the state uses force on you; but if you are violent, the state dialogues with you. Located in the nature of government’s approach to dissent is the implied fact that the Nigerian state has by its devotion of attention to violent groups, promoted insecurity. Thus, the state fails to be an agent of distributive justice. Hence, justice has been taken to the ‘black market’ where it is auctioned, and the highest and most favoured bidder goes home with it. The extra-judicial killing of Saro-Wiwa with eight (8) other Ogoni men by the General Sani Abacha led military government on November 10, 1995 is also an antecedent of injustice. Expressively, Nwolise, (2017) laments that the government’s double standard approach (laced with nepotism) destroys patriotism and efforts at nation-building and peace-building, while it encourages violence and insecurity on the other hand.

Conclusion

The post-colonial Nigerian state has proven to be ineffective in solving the lingering socio-economic, political and security challenges that confront the citizenry in different locations and regions of the country. As a result of lack of autonomy of the post-colonial Nigerian state, it has always served the parochial interest of the few at the expense of the majority. This lack of autonomy suggests that the Nigerian state has limited independence from the hegemonic grip of the political elites. Further, the state is also constituted in such a way that it reflects and mainly caters for a narrow range of interests, that is, the interest of the rapacious political elite, who are engaged in pillaging and primitive wealth accumulation. The determinants of decision-making and wealth accumulation are members of a small powerful group, who directly or indirectly corner and capture the state in a most dangerous manner for their personal aggrandisement. Consequently, there is an unending conflict between the Nigerian-state and the citizens because of general governance failure. Thus, different groups have emerged to challenge the legitimacy, unity and continuity of Nigeria as a sovereign and indivisible entity.

The negative socio-economic conditions of the people have also propelled them into challenging the governing authorities. Regrettably, no concrete and

sustainable efforts have been made by the Nigerian government to reclaim the confidence of the people. There have been cases of agitations and threats of secession, yet the problems of socio-economic and political injustices that are propelling these internal challenges remain unresolved. Arguably, the Nigerian-state has created a system of clear division between the poor and the rich; between one ethnic group and the other; between one religion and the other. Apparently, what exists is a system where the will of the people is subverted and injustice is a norm. In view of the issues raised in this paper, we strongly argue that peace and injustice cannot be accommodated in the same space. Therefore, as long as general and perceived injustice persists in Nigeria, effective security governance will remain elusive. At this point, there is the need to engage in a strong institutional revolution of the existing political system to give rise to the negation of the current political permutations and configurations that have orchestrated a kind of politics of inclusion versus exclusion.

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