Tensions From Within: Perspective On State Fragility and Internal Security Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

The people's security and welfare are the Nigerian government's primary purposes. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state has often demonstrated an inability to perform these critical functions over the years. This study examined the link between the fragility of the Nigerian state and the expanding internal security challenges across the country. Data for the study were sourced from documentary evidence, like scholarly literature, newspapers, official documents of relevant organisations, and agencies. Utilising the analytical assumptions of the theory of state fragility, the study found that the fragility of the Nigerian state in terms of authority, capacity, and legitimacy contributes to the pervasive incidence of internal insecurities in the country.

Keywords: Authority, Challenges, Internal Security, Nigeria, Security, State Capacity, State Fragility, and Threat.

Introduction

The study examined the nexus between state fragility and internal security challenges in Nigeria. The problems associated with state fragility have become endemic in the socio-economic and political discourse of the Nigerian state. The internal security issues that Nigerians confront are multifarious, and no part of the country be it Northcentral, Northeast,

Northwest, Southeast, Southsouth, and Southwest is immune to it. The general effect of the situation is that hardly a day passes by in Nigeria without news of kidnapping, farmers-herders clash, banditry, attacks by Boko Haram insurgents, militant attacks, (inter/intra)communal clashes, secessionist/separatist agitations, armed robbery, cult violence, political violence, unknown gunmen attack, violent protests, and so on. All these demonstrate that the country is no longer at ease. Besides, the corruption that drives most of these security challenges remains pervasive in the country despite the government's anti-corruption posture. It is rooted in Nigeria's political culture such that the country has persistently ranked high in the Global Corruption Index (GCI). Whereas Nigeria in 2018 was ranked 144th in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published by Transparency International, its subsequent rankings of 146th in 2019;149th out of 183 nations in 2020, 154 out of 180 in 2021, 150 out of 180 in 2022, and I45th out of 180 in 2023. These unenviable ranks clearly indicate the metastatic nature of the security problem in the country, especially when viewed from the perspective of human security.

The state, at least from the Aristotelean conception, exists to ensure the good life as well as an avenue that enables citizens to realise their full potential. Contrarily, the Nigerian state has persistently scored low in most indicators of human development. The heightened poverty in the country compelled the World Bank to observe that the rate of poverty in the country increased from 40 percent in 2018 to 46 percent in 2023. This suggests that the statistics of poor Nigerians increased from 79 million to 104 million within the period. The situation becomes gloomier when we consider the classification of 133 million Nigerians as being multidimensionally poor by the National Bureau of Statistics. Nigeria also has "the highest number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa". Regrettably, Nigerian leaders do not only live in self-delusion, but they habitually deny that there is anything wrong with the country. This sentiment continues to frustrate genuine efforts to identify and solve basic problems with the nation. For instance, despite the obvious shortage of medical practitioners, the former Minister of Labour, Dr Chris Ngige, in a televised national broadcast, argued that there are more than enough medical personnel and medical practitioners in the country. He, therefore, averred that any medical practitioner who wishes to migrate abroad in search of greener pasture, or job satisfaction is free to do so. The hollowness of his claims was, however, exposed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated the weaknesses and limited capacity of the country's health infrastructures.

Based on these, the study examined how the fragility of the Nigerian state contributes to various internal security challenges that are witnessed in the country. It argues the weak institutional and legal frameworks in the country aggravate rather than ameliorate it. The study demonstrates that the fragility of the Nigerian state in the three areas of authority, capacity, and legitimacy creates conditions that result in tension, and threats within the country. These issues were selected because they present typical instances of how state fragility triggers internal security in the state.

Conceptual Explication of State Fragility and Internal Security

State fragility as a concept is fraught with contestation. It suffers from definitional dissensions, especially because most scholars disagree with associated classifications, noting that it attempts to stampede all countries into copying, and being modelled after the Western state system. Notwithstanding, the Department for International Development (2005) sees "fragile states as those where the government cannot deliver its core functions to most of its citizens". Following this, the Centre for Research on Inequality and Social Exclusion defines it as "states that are failing, or at risk of failing, concerning authority, comprehensive service entitlements, or legitimacy" (CRISE, 2009). Extending this further, the OECD (2014) argues that "a fragile state has weak capacities to carry out basic governance functions and cannot develop communally when it comes to constructive relations with society". This renders them more vulnerable to internal or external shocks like economic crises or natural disasters. Similarly, fragile states have been seen as countries facing significant poverty and lacking strong institutions. They have a deficient capacity to fulfil the basic functions of a state, are poorly governed, and often experience political instability, including armed conflict (Gates, Graham, Lupu, Strand & Strøm, 2016).

State fragility denotes a state's lack of ability to perform some of its primary (core) functions, namely state authority, state capacity, and state legitimacy. Authority signifies the capacity of the state to manage violence. Capacity refers to its capacity to deliver fundamental public services. While, Legitimacy, connotes its ability to enjoy the consent and recognition of the people it claims to rule. The fragility of a state is measured by several indicators that include battle-related deaths, homicide, monopoly of violence, access to clean water, child mortality rate, education, basic administration, human rights protection, press freedom, and asylum granted (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Themner & Wallensteen, 2011; Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016; Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation

(IGME), 2014; UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS & UNESCO), 2015; Farris, 2014; Freedom House, 2014).

Given this, "fragility describes a country that is failing or at high risk of failing in three dimensions: (i) authority failures: the state lacks the authority to protect its citizens from violence of various kinds; (ii) service failures: the state fails to ensure that all citizens have access to basic services; (iii) legitimacy failures: the state lacks legitimacy, enjoys only limited support among the people, and is typically not democratic" (Stewart & Brown, 2010).

As Ziaja, Sebastian, JörnGrävingholt, and Merle Kreibaum (2019) submit, "the authority dimension evaluates the capability of the state to regulate the use of physical force within its borders." Authority is evaluated based on deaths resulting from conflict, homicide statistics, and a combined index reflecting a state's control over violence. The capacity dimension evaluates the capability of the government to deliver essential public services to its citizens. This capacity is assessed through child mortality rates, availability of clean water, rates of primary school enrolment, and a composite measure of fundamental administrative capacity. The legitimacy dimension refers to governments' capacity to gain their citizens' approval for the state's authority. Legitimacy is evaluated through indicators such as press freedom, human rights ratings, and the count of asylum applications approved for a state's citizens.

According to the Fund for Peace (2018), typical characteristics of state fragility encompass:

• The inability to maintain physical control over its territory or to monopolise the legitimate application of force;

• The decline of legitimate authority to make decisions collectively;

• A failure to deliver adequate public services;

• The incapacity to engage with other states as a complete participant in the international community.

Meanwhile, the Fund for Peace also gave the following as indicators of state fragility: "widespread corruption and criminal activities, failure to gather taxes or engage citizen backing, forced displacement of a large segment of the population, significant economic downturn, inequality based on group identity, systematic oppression or discrimination, acute

demographic challenges, loss of skilled individuals, and environmental deterioration. Nations can experience failure at different paces through sudden collapse, gradual decay, gradual weakening, or external invasion over various durations" (Fund for Peace, 2018).

Fragility, as used in the study, demonstrates the inability of the Nigerian state to secure its citizens and territorial integrity against attacks from belligerent groups; the inability to provide and ensure a consistent supply of basic social amenities like electricity, good roads, rail lines, dislocated transport services, potable water, nutritious food, etc; and the high-level non-acceptability of the government of power, disassociation, disinterest and detachment of the people from the state.

Internal Security

As per Imobihge (1990), internal security refers to the ability of a nation to safeguard itself against risks and threats, ensuring its capacity to protect and advance itself, uphold its important values and legitimate interests, and improve the welfare of its citizens. Arase (2018) sees "internal security as that which is primarily concerned with internal threats and includes: all state actions directed at emplacing, uploading, and deploying national laws, strategies, policies, and state law enforcement agencies towards the maintenance of peace, law, and order; as well as safeguarding citizens from fear or threats to the values, livelihood, liberty, lives, and property within a country's territory."

Based on the views of the Council of the European Union, internal security encompasses various security sectors to tackle significant threats that directly affect the lives, safety, and welfare of citizens, including criminal activities and both natural and human-induced disasters such as wildfires, earthquakes, floods, and storms (cited in Saddique Abubakar, 2019).

Idris (2019) conceptualised internal security as the security of the entire citizenry in all ramifications of life. It is an all-encompassing idea addressing healthcare, finance, learning, effective governance, environment, etc. Considering this, the meaning of security has shifted from its state-centric conceptualisation to a more nuanced approach called human security which has a man at its epicenter. Human security has seven dimensions namely health, security, economic security, food security, personal security, community security, political security, and environmental security. It is this perspective that is adopted in this study.

The principle of internal security according to Ollorwi (cited in Idris 2019, p.323) are:

a. A conservative and coercive method of managing internal security is not a solution for achieving stability, law, and order within society; rather, it involves the creation and maintenance of conditions that ensure the fundamental rights of citizens while addressing the root causes of dissatisfaction and internal conflict and mitigating socio-economic difficulties and disparities.

b. The core principle of society is to maximize the overall well-being of all its members.

c. Internal security becomes significant and effective only when it fosters an environment that allows citizens to pursue their legitimate interests and fulfill their essential needs.

d. Effective governance is the foundation upon which internal security is built and flourishes.

e. Collaboration and partnership among the police, the public, elected officials, government agencies, and other entities working together to combat crime and ensure safety are essential for maintaining internal security.

Fragility of the Nigerian state

The Fragile States Index (FSI), which is published by the Fund for Peace (FFP) is an annual assessment of countries across the globe based on measurements of the social, economic, and political pressures that states face (IFAD, 2018). Nigeria has maintained a persistent decline in the index as evidenced by its unenviable rankings over the years. The unhealthy oscillation of Nigeria within the Fragile States index from 2007 to 2021 demonstrates that the country is grappling with socio-political risks that have not been properly addressed. For instance, it ranked 17th in 2007, 18th in 2008, and 15th in 2009, It maintained 14th position in 2010, 2012, 2020, and 12th in the 2021 FSI reports. It also ranked 16th, in 2022, and 15th in both 2023 and 2024. The FSI serves as an early warning signal to states about potential internal threats and risk factors capable of distablising collapsing them. Judging from observable realities, the country has been moving in and out of the "Alert Category". This was predicated on its high scores in most of the social, economic, and political indicators used as measures for the computation and categorization of countries in the index.

The Nigerian state is deficient in good governance as the people hardly enjoy meaningful governance dividends. State institutions in the country cannot effectively discharge their responsibilities. Because of this, the 2021 inaugural Chandler Good Governance Index (CGGI) ranked Nigeria 102 out of 104 countries studied. Like the FFP, the indicators used by the Chandler Good Governance Index to arrive at its decisions were "leadership and foresight; strong institutions; robust laws and policies; financial stewardship; attractive marketplace; global influence and reputation; and helping people rise."

Meanwhile, the plethora of internal security threats in the country were testaments to the country's performance in most political indicators in the FSI index. The Nigerian state cannot confidently boast of possessing a monopoly of violence over its territory. Ezirim (2009) observed that the economic profile of each country is used to determine its strengths and weaknesses as well as its rating in the FSI. On this note, the economic profile of Nigeria has been unimpressive over the years, and it threatens all the empirical referents of human security in the country.

Decrying this ugly situation, Fasan (2021) in his analysis of the performance of Nigeria's economy in 2020 stated:

> The 2020 HDI puts Nigeria at 161st position out of 189 countries. The World Bank ranked Nigeria the 7th worst country in its 2020 Human Capital Index. Nigeria was 136th out of 163 countries in the 2020 Social Progress Index, and 144th out of 167 countries in the 2020 Legatum Prosperity Index. Of course, Nigeria is the "poverty capital of the world", according to the Brookings Institution's Global Poverty report, and the third country most impacted by terrorism, according to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index.

Similarly, the Editorial of Thisday Newspaper of August 20, 2021, observes:

> The first duty of any government is that of protecting the society from violence and invasion of their privacy by others, while the second duty is the protection, as far as possible, of every member of the society from injustice or oppression. When a government loses the capacity for both, anarchy beckons (https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/08/20/fragility-of-the-nigerian-state/).

The content analysis of the above citations indicate that the Nigerian economy is in crisis and in doldrum. This sort of negative economic indicator is fertile ground for breeding crimes and insecurities as most people will seek survival by indulging in criminal activities. Poverty appears to provide the necessary conditions for crime. It induces uncultured individuals to act impulsively, which leads to corruption, kidnapping for ransom, (armed) robbery,

embezzlement, misappropriation of public funds, and so on. When corrupt individuals embezzle money budgeted for educational development, there is a high risk of an increased number of out-of-school children as we currently witness in Nigeria, who terrorist groups easily recruit for this mission.

Moreover, according to a joint 2018 report by the LSE and Oxford University Commission on State Fragility titled "Escaping the fragility trap, the six basic signs of state fragility are:

> A cursory look at the signs of state fragility listed above appears as if the entities that generated the report had Nigeria in mind. Because the country currently witnesses all the signs indicated in the report. These negative score sheets of the Nigerian state were what prompted Campbell & Rotberg (2021) to declare that "the African giant is failing."

State Fragility as the Centre of Gravity of Internal (In)Securities in Nigeria

It is true that none of the various reports by the Fund for Peace (FFP) on the global Fragile State Index ever named Nigeria as a fragile state. However, existential realities suggest that it is one. The Nigerian state performs poorly in all three areas of Authority, Capacity, and Legitimacy that constitute the primary measures for classification in the FSI. In terms of security, the Nigerian state appears to have lost its monopoly of violence. Several non-state armed groups and individuals often challenge its claim to the monopoly of violence with little or no consequences. Recently, the Nigerian state appeared to have lost its authority over parts of its territory in the Northeast to the Boko Haram insurgent group, while many others are currently contested. No part of the country is currently without one security threat or the other. In the Northcentral, there is the simmering herders-farmers crisis, in the northeast is the BH insurgency, Northwest suffers the menace of armed bandits, cattle rustlers, and kidnapping for ransom KFR). The Southeast is facing threats from unknown gunmen (UGM), the issues surrounding the Indigenous People of Biafra, among other things. The Southsouth presents the problem of militancy, sea piracy, cult wars, sea robbery, crude oil theft, etc. In the Southwest, an admixture of herders-farmers crisis, kidnapping, and separatist agitations by the Yoruba Nation Movement (YNM), led by Prof. Banji Akinloye Adeyemo in addition to Sunday Igbogho's separatist grandstanding threaten the corporate existence of the country. Worse still, various triggers of collective grievances that manifest in calls for self-determination and restructuring of the country's federalism continue to escalate the country's fragility status.

The fragile security ecosystem of the country was exposed by the bandit attack of August 24, 2021, at the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna which resulted in the death of one military officer, injured another, and abduction of two others. In their usual reactive response to these attacks, Governors of Katsina, Niger, and Zamfara states suspended markets, shut schools, and closed most roads that lead in and out of their states. The federal government also directed all telecommunication companies operating in the country to impose an internet blackout in Zamfara State which happened to be the worst-hit state. Corroborating the view on the incapacity of the Nigerian state, Mailafia (2021) observes:

> "our government no longer possesses monopoly over the use of violence. Boko Haram, ISWAP, and the genocidal Fulani militias not only outnumber the Nigerian military, they are more than a march for them in terms of the quality of their military arsenals. Government cannot fully police our country's borders, leading to uncontrolled immigration of well-armed terrorist groups. Nigeria is currently the kidnap capital of the world, in addition to possessing the unenviable title of being the world capital of poverty. More than 24 million children are out of school. Some 3.5 million Nigerians are living in makeshift IDP camps. UNICEF recently announced that 345,000 children have died in the North East over the last 12 years. Borno Governor Babagana Zulum recently announced that more than 450,000 of his people have gone "missing". On a national scale, we are looking at an estimated one million people that have been lost in the unfolding inferno".

Malaifa's assertions are symptomatic of a nation that is under internal siege and haemorrhaging. It demonstrates that human security as essential as it is, is a very scarce commodity in Nigeria whether in terms of food, health, community, personal, and economic securities, among others. The country's elites are deeply fractured and factionalised along the fault lines of ethnicity, party politics, region, religion, culture, and so on. The fracture manifests more during elections, census, political appointments, award of contracts, and promotions in the nation's civil/public services. As they seek to corner the state, and its resources for their personal and sectional interests. This explains the skewed practice of appointing individuals, that share regional, ethnic, religious, and blood relations with the Presidents into sensitive and key positions. This pattern was instituted during the Buhari civilian administration and is currently being entrenched, under the Tinubu Presidency with appointments in the financial, economic, and security sectors.

Economically, Nigerians are currently undergoing one of the worst economic hardships in the country's history. Most Nigerians live under the poverty line of $1.90 each day, while the unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2024 stood at 5.3 percent. The rate of inflation in the

country is remarkably high. It rose from 18.8% in 2022 to 24.5% in 2023. This slows down the country's economic growth. Besides, the rapid increase in fuel prices increased N256 in May 2023 to N1200 in September 2024 has put so much pressure on the disposal income of workers. As the prices of economic goods and services in the country in positively related to the price of petrol. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria is the country with the highest number of out-of-school children in the world at 18.3 million in 2024. With the worsening socio-economic indicators, many Nigerians are eager to migrate abroad, and this results in an expanding incidence of brain drain and human capital flight. The phenomenon is mostly common among health practitioners who seek greener pastures and job satisfaction. For food security, the 2022 Global Hunger Index, ranks Nigeria 103 out of 121 countries facing hunger crisis. The 2024 Global Report on Food Crises indicated that 24.9 million individuals are suffering from acute hunger in Nigeria (Oyedeji, 2024). Also, the 2024 World Poverty Clock reported that approximately 70,834,207 individuals out of Nigeria's population of 225,731,260 were experiencing extreme poverty. This makes Nigeria the world's second-largest poor population after India (World Bank Group, 2024).   The consequence of this is that the levels of crime and insecurity are likely to increase as more individuals face food insecurity amid an escalating poverty rate. All of this indicates an economy in distress that requires repair.

Politically, there is an erosion of the state's ability to make binding decisions for the common interest of all citizens. Over time, the Nigerian state has gradually but steadily lost the trust and confidence of its citizens over its inability to protect them and their interests. Individuals and groups see most policies of the Nigerian state as suspect. This is demonstrated in the collective opposition by Southern states and most states in the northcentral geopolitical zone to the federal government's-initiated policies aimed at settling the herder-farmer crisis namely cattle colony, rural grazing areas (RUGA), grazing routes, and so on. For them, cattle rearing is the private business of individuals and should be allowed to operate like other privately owned businesses in the country. These policies are perceived to represent land-grabbing strategies by the federal government (FG) targeted at appropriating lands of Nigeria's indigenous communities for the Fulani ethnic nationality. Hence, the allegation that FG is trying to use these policies as ploys to further the fulanisation and islamisation agenda. Additionally, elections in Nigeria frequently boil down to competitions between different ethnic groups instead of being a contest among political parties, ideologies, and manifestos. In the conflict between ethnic groups, tools such as hate speech, ethnic profiling, misinformation, intimidation, voter suppression, verbal assaults, cyberbullying, and violence related to elections are employed as weapons. These

actions contribute to the further fragmentation and intensification of the already existing social divide among the diverse ethnic nationalities that make up the federation.

Socially, the Nigerian government has fallen short in fulfilling its obligations to enhance the welfare and well-being of its citizens. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended); under the Fundamental Objective and Directive Principles of State policy, precisely in Section 14(2c) states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". To this, Okoye & Peter (2021) argued that even though most states of the federation were named after rivers, the people lack access to clean and safe drinking water. Generally, the country's basic social amenities and service delivery have nothing to write home about. Nigerians routinely grope to bed in darkness, due to paucity of electricity supply. Healthcare provision in the country be it at the primary, secondary, or tertiary levels are different states of disrepair. Most of these health facilities are nothing but mere dispensary centres. In the area of transportation, despite the billions of petro-naira budgeted annually for transport; the country's transport infrastructure continues to be poorly maintained. Most roads in Nigeria, especially in the Southeast are death traps. This has led to countless accidents, injuries, carnage, and unnecessary delays while in transit. Similarly, most cities and highways in the country are littered with refuse due to poor environmental sanitation.

In terms of cross-cutting issues, there is an entrenched and coordinated web of corrupt criminal syndicates that operate virtually in every sector of the Nigerian economy. Making the discourse on corruption in the country shift from 'regulatory capture' gradually but progressively to 'state capture'. Indicating that organised criminal syndicates in the country are no longer satisfied with controlling a particular state institution that regulates the sector of the economy they operate in. Instead, they now seize control of the entire state apparatus, which they use to make and implement decisions that serve their interest. Moreover, there is an endemic group-based inequality in the country. This is evident in areas of political appointments, citing of industries, construction of roads, rails, airports (especially their upgrading to international airports), fixing cut-off marks for admission into Unity schools as well as tertiary institutions, and so on. Also, criminals who commit similar crimes are subjected to selective justice based on ethnicity, religion, party affiliation, and political connection of the suspect. What is even worse, Raimi (2017) alludes to an existing criminal reward system that enables insecurity in the country through what he referred to as the cycle of violence. This is a situation where non-conflict or peaceful state actors gradually make inroads into violent conflicts as those who own and control

the means of violence referred to as conflict bourgeois get rewarded with state contracts, political appointments, and cash for violence buy-back. Moreover, state institutions in Nigeria are privatized to the extent that whatever, segment of the petty-bourgeois class that captures the state at any given time, not only uses it to perpetuate itself in power but to persecute its political opponents both real and imagined. It is worth noting that the persecution is not limited to members of the opposition party. Rather, it is extended to those who belong to different factions of the same political party and dissenting voices. This accounts for countless court cases, expulsion, and counter-expulsion of members by different factions within the same political parties in the country. The selective justice often witnessed in the manner the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and its sister agencies invite, investigate, and persecute suspects equally demonstrates this.

Conclusion

The study investigated the implications of the fragility of the Nigerian state in terms of authority, capacity, and legitimacy. It demonstrated that the inability of the Nigerian government to secure its territory from belligerent elements by maintaining the monopoly of force, ensuring the welfare of citizens, and enjoying the consistent support of generality of the people through good governance fuel the prevalent instability and security threats across the country. This manifests in the form of expanding poverty, unemployment, hyperinflation, hunger, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPoB) separatist movement, banditry, farmer-herder conflict, mass protest, strike by organised labour, and so on.

Despite these numerous weaknesses identified in this study, the fragility of the Nigerian state is not hopeless. It can still be rescued. Fragility according to OECD (2016) denotes the combination of exposure to risks and insufficient coping capacity of the state to manage, absorb, or mitigate such risks. This suggests that the Nigerian state needs to address the issues that undermine its authority, capacity, and legitimacy. This will enable it to proactively respond to risk factors at their early stage before they escalate. Legitimacy has both supply and demand sides; the state can remedy most of its fragility by delivering basic social services to citizens.

Accordingly, addressing these internal security challenges will require reconsideration of most of the economic reforms that deform the nation's economy. The drive to adopt and implement neo-liberal economic reforms/policies indicates a lack of understanding of the dynamic and

internal operations of Nigeria's post-colonial peripheral capitalist formation. The expanding insecurity situation in the country will never abate despite increased internal security operations measures until the economy is fixed.

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