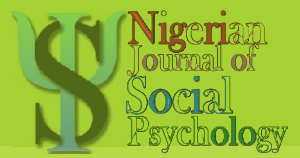


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Youth Restiveness and Surging Insecurity: A Reflection of Questionable Inclusive Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract

Youth restiveness as a collective action, underlines surging insecurity occasioned by the proliferation of ungoverned space across regions and countries. Recent similar experiences in Nigeria provides complex mix of evidences that complicate public confidence in law enforcement, security of lives and properties, and inclusive governance combined as challenges confronting national security architecture and good governance. While research focus largely dwelled more on access to power and its functions to ensure human betterment, scholars have only glossed over access denials and threats that youth isolation pose to inclusiveness in governance. Using Vilfredo Pareto elite theory of power and content analysis and inferential deductions, the paper is out to question the place of the youth in the power game between the governing and non-governing elites whom Pareto described as 'the Lions and the Foxes'. This theoretical paper raises the following question to shape the direction and focus of its engagements. To what extent is governance inclusive that affect the youths. Drawing from inclusive governance, the paper points to the provocative isolation associated to unbridled denial of access to power along youth line. The outcome of the paper targets advocating for inclusive governance that involves all stakeholders in the decision-making process and power relations.

Keywords: *Collective action, Good governance, Inclusiveness, Surging insecurity, Ungoverned space, Security architecture, Youth restiveness.*

Introduction

Nigeria has faced significant challenges in maintaining security and order, particularly in the face of youth restiveness and surging insecurity. Over the years, youth restiveness has been on the raise, with increase in the exclusion of youths and none-elite groups from governance, the desire of the masses for good governance and a change in the way society is structure and run. The End SARS protest, a youth-led movement against police brutality, highlighted governance and systemic issues within the country's security architecture, that have created security risks and heightened youth restiveness in the country. This paper seeks to critically engage with the existing security framework, examining its effectiveness in dealing with such social movements and identifying areas for reform. The purpose of this research is to critically analyze Nigeria's security architecture during the era of youth restiveness, with a particular focus on the End SARS protest. The study aims to understand the effect of inclusive governance in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of the current security strategies and propose actionable recommendations for enhancing national security. The paper objectives are: 1. To examine the exclusiveness of the present governance structure, its impact on youth restiveness, security in the country. 2. To evaluate the effectiveness of Nigeria's security architecture in

managing youth restiveness. 3. To analyze the response of security agencies to the End SARS protest. 4. To identify the systemic issues within Nigeria's security framework. 5. To propose recommendations for improving security strategies in Nigeria.

While there is substantial literature on Nigeria's security challenges, and their impact on the country's sustainable development (Akpokighe & Ejovi, 2021; CEPASD, 2023; Maciver & Igbojinwaekwu, 2019), there is a limited focus on the specific interactions between youth movements and security architecture. The paper addresses this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the End SARS protest as a case study. The Paper focuses on the period of the End SARS protest, primarily in 2020, and examines the responses and strategies of Nigerian security agencies. The territorial scope of the study is Nigeria, while the geographical scope includes major protest locations such as Lagos, Abuja, and other key cities where significant events occurred.

Literature Review

Academic literature on this topic explores the systemic issues within Nigeria's security forces, youth restiveness as a collective action, surging insecurity, ungoverned space, inclusiveness in good governance, and security architecture, as critical security related sub-themes. It focuses on the historical context of SARS, its transformation from an anti-robbery unit to an instrument of oppression, and the broader implications for national security planning. Amnesty International, (2016); Ovbiagele & Isah, (2023). Studies on the history of EndSARS protect show that the Nigeria Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS, was established in 1992, in Lagos state during the era of the notorious armed robber, Shina Rambo, to deal with violent crimes and contend their rise in the state. However, over time, it spread throughout the nation. Ovbiagele & Isah (2023) in their work on newspapers coverage of ENDSARS protest in Nigeria, based on content analysis of selected newspapers found that EndSARS protest is the first mass movement against police brutality in Nigeria. They noted that before it, it was Amnesty International and other civil society organizations that protested isolated cases of police brutality, such MASSOB and IPOB killing in the South East.

The protest started as a social media campaign under the hatch tag #ENDSARS due the unproved shooting and killing of a youth in Delta State by men of SARS in October, 2020. Within hours, it metamorphosed into a street protest with the support of some celebrities and activists, and cumulated into the sad event of October, 20, 2020 when the State security agencies, applying excessive force to disperse the protesters, used life ammunitions on unarmed defenseless peaceful protesters, killing some, maiming some and arresting some. Ovbiagele & Isah (2023); Amnesty International, (2016). The literature points to a significant knowledge gap in understanding how to effectively integrate human rights protections into national security strategies while maintaining public order and trust.

This gap highlights the need for comprehensive reforms that go beyond surface-level changes and address the structural and cultural issues within the Nigerian security architecture. The 2020 EndSARS protest in Nigeria is an epic event that marked a significant period of youth activism against police brutality, specifically targeting the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The movement highlighted the pervasive issues of extrajudicial killings, extortion, and human rights abuses by SARS officers. The protest reached a critical point on October 20, 2020, at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos, where the Nigerian military allegedly used lethal force against peaceful protesters, resulting in numerous injuries and deaths.

In the context of Nigeria's national security architecture, the response of security forces during the EndSARS protest revealed deep-rooted challenges within the system. The use of live ammunition and subsequent denials and cover-ups by the authorities underscored a pattern of impunity and lack of accountability. Amnesty International documented these events, emphasizing the need for justice and accountability for the victims.

The EndSARS movement also highlighted the disconnect between the government's security strategies and the populace's demand for justice and reform. Despite reforms suggested by presidential committees over the years, including the disbanding of SARS, the underlying issues of police misconduct and human rights violations have persisted.

Youth Restiveness: This is a concept that has no exhaustive and conclusive definition. Rather, it has been subjected to different interpretations and descriptive definitions by scholars. To some, it is “the extreme form of deviant behavior among youth which is socially unacceptable in any society”. Yusuf, (2014:151), that involves a combination of organized body of youths, sustained protestation, involving conflict, violation of the law and violence, Elegbeleye (2005) and action behaviors that are unwholesome and socially unacceptable carried out by youths, aimed at enforcing desired outcome from constituted authority, Igbo & Ikpa (2013). To some others, youth restiveness is a situation in which youths who are experiencing dissatisfaction become incapable of being still or quit and often display lack of control. Ejumudo (2014). As a mass action, this manifest as demonstration, protest, agitation, and sometimes violent actions by young people, often in response to perceived neglect, deprivation, marginalization, social injustice and lack of opportunities. Generally, Youth Restiveness refers to a state where young people who desire something become uncontrollable. Youth restiveness in Nigeria is often driven by socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, poverty, and lack of political engagement. According to Okafor (2020), these factors contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement among the youth, leading to movements such as EndSARS.

Surging Insecurity: Extant literature shows that there is surge in insecurity in Nigeria arising from insurgency, militancy, banditry and kidnapping, farmer-herder conflicts, illegal mining and oil bunkering, and urban crimes, that is intricately and substantial linked to youth restiveness in the country, driven by factors such as unemployment, political marginalization, lack of education, and police brutality. Amnesty International. (2020). The factors contributing to this situation and the connections between insecurity and youth restiveness can be understood through several key points:

Surging Insecurity in Nigeria: Nigeria has been experiencing various forms of insecurity, including: Insurgency, such as the ongoing attacks in the northeastern region by Boko Haram and its splinter group, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Banditry and Kidnapping: Frequent incidents of banditry and mass kidnappings is rift cross the country, particularly in the northwest, International Crisis Group. (2020). Farmer-Herder Conflicts: In Nigeria, there are violence clashes between farmers and herders, especially in the Middle Belt region. Militancy in the Niger Delta and different parts of the north, such as Nasarawa State, with armed groups involved in oil theft and illegal mining attacking oil infrastructure and communities near mining sites, respectively, persists. Urban Crime: Cities such as Abuja are witnessing rising levels of urban crime, including armed robbery and gang violence, “one chance” and cybercrimes.

Relationship with Youth Restiveness: Although Youth restiveness in Nigeria is closely linked to the broader issues of insecurity, several factors illustrate its relationship with the surge

in insecurity in the country. These factors include: Unemployment and poverty, lack of education and opportunities, political marginalization, radicalization and extremism, police brutality and human rights abuses. Amnesty International (2015). Unemployment and Poverty: High rates of youth unemployment and poverty contribute to restiveness. Many young people feel marginalized, disenfranchised, and dissatisfied, leading them to join militant groups, criminal gangs, or engage in mass protests and sometimes end up in violence. Lack of Education and Opportunities: Limited access to quality education and economic opportunities leaves many young people with few options but to engage in criminal activities or join insurgent groups.

Political Marginalization: Youths often feel excluded from political processes and decision-making. This lack of representation can lead to frustration and agitation, manifesting in violent actions and protests. Police Brutality and Human Rights Abuses: The EndSARS protests in 2020 highlighted the widespread issue of police brutality against young people. The heavy-handed response to these protests further exacerbated tensions and contributed to the cycle of violence and insecurity. Radicalization and Extremism: Youth restiveness is often exploited by extremist groups like Boko Haram, which recruit disillusioned young people by promising them a sense of purpose and belonging.

Evidence of the Link: The EndSARS Protests was empirical evidence of the link between youth restiveness and surging insecurity in Nigeria. The 2020 EndSARS protests against police brutality, Amnesty International, (2020) were led predominantly by young people, was episodic unlike similar mass actions such as Mend protest against environmental injustice in the Niger Delta and economic marginalization which metamorphosed into a militia group that engaged in some criminal activities in the course of fighting their cause. The protests, and the government's violent response in addition to revealing systemic issues that need to be addressed, underscored the deep-seated frustrations among Nigeria's youth and the potential for these frustrations to escalate into broader security challenges. For instance, many bandits and kidnappers in Nigeria are young men who have turned to crime due to a lack of viable economic alternatives. In ungoverned spaces, insurgents, like Boko Haram, have successfully recruited many young Nigerians, exploiting their economic disenfranchisement and lack of opportunities.

Ungoverned Space: Ungoverned space, which contextually include land boarder lines, cyberspace, airspace, maritime and outer-spaces with weak or no state supervisory presence, regulatory authority and control, (Menkhaus, 2010; Clunan & Trinkunas, (2010), are often cited as key threats to national and international security, contributing to global insecurity, as they are increasingly targeted by the international community for external interventions both armed and otherwise. The term incorporates the many spaces where state authority is contested, from tribal, sectarian, or clan-based governance as in the south eastern states of Nigeria, to areas ruled by persistent insurgencies, such as parts of Zamfara, Yobe, Kaduna, Adamawa and Borno, and other Northern states in Nigeria, and to nonphysical spaces, such as the internet and global finance. Within this multiplicity of contexts, there is a mirage of security concerns, including youth restiveness, mass internal displacement, mass immigration and migration, dirty money, cybercrime, terrorism, existence of drug trafficking lords, warlords, insurgents, radical Islamist groups, invasion of human rights and security. Ultimately, Ungoverned Spaces demonstrate that state-centric approaches to these concerns are unlikely to supplant the many sites of authority that provide governance in a world of softened sovereignty. Ungoverned spaces have been recognized as having national, regional, international security significance, Clunan & Trinkunas, (2010), highlighting the need for inclusive governance and development.

Inclusiveness and good governance: Inclusiveness in good governance refers to the practice of ensuring that all segments of society, especially marginalized and disadvantaged groups, are actively involved and represented in the decision-making processes of governance. It emphasizes the need for diverse participation and equal opportunities for all individuals in the political, economic, and social spheres (UNDP 2010b). Key Components of Inclusiveness in Good Governance are representation, participation, equity, transparency and accountability, observance of the rule of law, and empowerment. Representation is achieved by ensuring that all groups, including youths, minorities, women, and other marginalized communities, have a voice in governance structures and decision-making bodies. Promoting diversity and inclusion through policies and practices that facilitate the election, appointment and employment of diverse representatives enhances representation. Participation, entails encouraging active participation from all societal segments in the political process, including voting, public consultations, and civic engagement. Creating platforms and mechanisms that allow for public input and feedback on governance issues, to enhance participation in governance.

Equity, by ensuring fair distribution of resources and opportunities across all groups, with a focus on reducing disparities. It also involves addressing inequalities by implementing policies that promote social justice and equal access to services and benefits. Promoting openness in government actions and decisions to build trust and ensure that all citizens have access to information, and holding public officials accountable for their actions and decisions, ensuring they act in the best interests of all citizens, secure transparency and accountability in governance, a hallmark of good governance. Inclusive good governance also involves supporting initiatives that enhance the capacity of all individuals to contribute to decision-making, and providing education, training, and resources to empower disadvantaged groups to participate fully in governance processes.

Inclusiveness in Good Governance has many benefits which include: Enhanced legitimacy, social cohesion, improved policy outcomes, and economic development. Inclusive governance practices increase the legitimacy of governmental institutions by ensuring that they represent the interests of all citizens. Promoting inclusiveness helps to build social cohesion by fostering a sense of belonging and community among diverse groups. Policies and decisions that consider diverse perspectives are more likely to address the needs and priorities of the entire population, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Thus, by ensuring that all groups have access to opportunities and resources, inclusiveness in governance can lead to more equitable economic growth, reduction in youth restiveness, and arrest the surge in insecurity in the country. By fostering inclusiveness, governments can create more resilient, equitable, and just societies where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to the common good.

Security Architecture: This is a unified security design that addresses the necessities and potential risks involved in a certain scenario or environment. It specifies when and where to apply security control (Technopedia, 2023). It is a term commonly used in IT and Cyber security where it is defined as: “The practice of designing computer systems to achieve security goals.” Pooja Rawat (2023); Richard Crowther (2018); Schatz, Daniel; Bashroush, Rabih, Well, Julie (2017). Nigeria's security architecture comprises of the various agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, the military, and intelligence services. Scholars such as Akinwale (2021) have critiqued the centralized nature of this framework, arguing for a more decentralized approach to address local security issues effectively. In this paper, security architecture refers to the state security plan for reducing security breaches, providing fast incidence response, improved efficiency, better compliance with professional guidelines, laws, regulations and

industry best practice. It consists of the processes, procedures, agencies, institutions and laws involved in the provision of security, and risk reduction, and signifies the relationships between the various components within the plan. It is designed based on risk management goals, setting procedures best practice, resource allocation and availability, legal and regulatory framework. It involves assets identification and valuation, threats/risks assessment, probability assessment, risk impact assessment and selection of countermeasures, processes and procedures for their implementation and control. It also covers incident management measures, monitoring and review processes.

Key studies and reports by organizations such as Amnesty International provide crucial insights into the events and aftermath of the End SARS protests, urging for systemic changes and accountability measures to restore public confidence in the security forces and the rule of law in Nigeria. Public confidence in the security forces and the rule of law underpin national security which has been defined as: Confidence in the maintenance of state boundaries and the preservation of its territorial, ideological, cultural integrity (Asamu 2006), national value and likelihood of survival (Yusuf, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Vilfredo Pareto elite theory of power has been adopted for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and the role of elites in society, vis – a- vis the national security architecture. Vilfredo Pareto's elite theory of power, also known as the "Pareto Principle" or the "80/20 Rule," is a sociological and political theory that focuses on the role of elites in society. Pareto's theory posits that society is divided into two main groups: a small ruling elite and a larger non-elite mass. The elites are those who possess the most significant amount of power, wealth, and influence, while the masses have less.

According to Pareto there are two types of Elites, Governing Elites consisting of those who hold political power and control the state; and the Non-Governing Elites made up of those who exert influence in other areas such as business, culture, and intellectual life. The movement of individuals and groups move in and out of power secures circulation of Elites, constantly changing the composition of the elite. It ensures the dynamism of the ruling class and prevents it from becoming stagnant. Pareto suggested that societal stability depends on the ability of the elite to adapt and incorporate new members.

Thus, when the ruling elite becomes rigid and refuses to allow new members, it risks being overthrown by a new elite group from the masses. According to Pareto human actions are based on what he termed "residues" and "derivations". Residues are the underlying instincts and drives that motivate behavior, while derivations are the justifications and rationalizations people use to explain their action, Britannica; Encyclopedia. Pareto contends that Elites are particularly adept at using derivations to maintain their power.

He believed Elites are manipulative, and skilled in crafting narratives and ideologies that justify their dominance. They use various means, including manipulation, ideology, and force, to maintain their position and control over the masses. In his view, Elite rule is inevitable in any society as they are naturally more capable and thus rise to top.

Conversely, Social Movement theory, is an interdisciplinary study within the social sciences that generally explains why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as its potential social, cultural, political, and economic consequences, such as the creation

and functioning of social movements. Wikipedia, has been adopted to understand youth restiveness as a collective action. The Britannica (2024) defines Social Movement as a more or less spontaneous coming together of people who share common outlook on society, whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures, loosely organized, for sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Though it may vary in size, it is essentially collective, intrinsically related to social change, involving collective behavior in crowds that are of brief induration, or episodic and are guided largely by impulse.

Methodology

Using Vilfredo Pareto elite theory of power, content analysis and inferential deductions, the paper is out to question the place of the youth in the power game between the governing and non-governing elites whom Pareto described as 'the Lions and the Foxes'. This theoretical paper raises the following question to shape the direction and focus of its engagements. To what extent is governance inclusive that affect the youths. Drawing from inclusive governance, the paper points to the provocative isolation associated to unbridled denial of access to power along youth line. The outcome of the paper targets advocating for inclusive governance that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making process and power relations.

Findings and Discussion

The End SARS protest, which began in October 2020, was a significant youth-led movement against police brutality, specifically targeting the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The protest highlighted the systemic issues within Nigeria's security apparatus and sparked a nationwide call for reform. Evaluation of Security Architecture. The study finds that Nigeria's security architecture was ill-prepared for the scale and intensity of the End SARS protest. The response of security agencies was often high-handed and full of impunities, leading to further escalation of tensions. Key systemic issues identified include: Continuous existence of ungoverned spaces; exclusiveness in governance; lack of accountability within security agencies; ineffective communication and coordination among different security bodies; inadequate training and resources for managing peaceful protests.

The exclusion of youths, tribal, sectarian or clan-based groups existing in society from governance, community and economic development, and ignoring their complaints have elicited feelings of dissatisfaction from them, that makes them restless. This is driving youths to resort to such mass actions like demonstrations and peaceful protests, as the alternative means of gaining the attention of the political and economic elites, access to power and decision-making and inclusion in governance. This exclusion and bad governance, creates a potential gap between these groups and the political and economic elites which has been exploited by criminal groups to further exacerbate surging insecurity in the country.

The impact of youth movements like End SARS has the potential to drive significant social and political change. However, the current security framework is not equipped to handle such movements constructively, and positively, often resulting in violent clashes and undermining public trust. The study further observed that Nigeria's security architecture needs a holistic

overhaul that would among others things include institutionalizing the rule of law both in governance, the planning, development and management of security polices and responsibilities. Training and retraining in investigative policing, human rights protection, the rule of law, transparency, proper planning and management of intelligence to forecast threat and deal with it before its full blown.

Inclusiveness in governance significantly impacts youth by shaping their opportunities for political participation, access to resources, and overall engagement in societal development. The extent to which governance is inclusive affects various aspects of youth life, wellbeing and development. It ensures that young people have the opportunities and resources they need to thrive and actively contribute to society. However, achieving true inclusiveness requires addressing systemic barriers and implementing policies that promote equity and participation for all youths and marginalized groups. Addressing these underlying issues through inclusive good governance is crucial for reducing youth restiveness and the surge, improving security, fostering inclusive development, and a more stable and inclusive society.

Conclusion

Stereotypical restiveness associated to youth underscores their criminal profiling and criminalization. Collective action is no respecter of age or class. Protest is one thing; it underpins is another. Abandoning the later to deal with the former has never provided any actionable result.

Recommendation

National security architecture today is confronted with myriads of challenges because of its reactionary instead of proactive response to security threats, which exemplifies government attitude to security. This must be addressed using inclusive securitization and security planning.

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