

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*There is an existential threat to most societies through natural competition between groups over limited resources. The political process in Nigeria exemplifies the absence of requisite national spirit, give oddity to human values and these idiosyncrasies inflame insecurity, violence, underdevelopment, corruption, and poverty in the nation. Economic and social integration theory, resource mobilization theory and cultural theories were applied in this paper. The article thus, exploits economic and social integration theory, resource mobilization theory and cultural theories to articulate the reason that toxic politics is the bane of the Nigerian society.*

### INTRODUCTION

Going by the assumptions of the social contract theory, people submitted to the will of the state in exchange for security of their lives and properties. This implies that the most fundamental of the functions of the state is the provision of safety for the citizens and the promotion of their welfare. However, the situation in Nigeria deviates from the Hobbesian theoretical expectation to the extent that the capability of the Nigerian state to defend the territory from external aggressors and internal insurgency has become questionable. This could be attributed to the politicization of security in Nigeria which seems to provoke the periodic emergence of harmful ethnic militias. The huge population base with more than half being uneducated and living in abject poverty provide a fertile ground for the insurgents to recruit foot soldiers from the teeming youths who already feel alienated and abandoned by the political elites. Since the Nigeria's independence in 1960, the country has witnessed multiple security challenges which have been subjecting the residents to fear and trepidation. These include the 1967-1970 civil war, military coups, terrorism, insurgent activities, and lack of good governance, among others. Analogous to this state of affair is the widespread ethnic groupings estimated to be about two hundred and fifty and speaks about 500 different languages within them which propelled contestations leading to several ethnic rivalry and conflicts. Aside these is also the concern about religion, with a Muslim-dominated North and a broadly Christian South competing despite assured secularity provided in the 1999 Constitution as amended.

Nigeria does have appeals. It is the fourth largest gas supplier to Europe, and in recent times as Russia invaded Ukraine, and with its gas blackmail, the EU now looks towards Nigeria as sources of fuel. Despite the economic fortune, Nigeria's political landscape is skewed in favor of religion and ethnicity, precipitating friction and boisterous polity. As Nigeria is fueled with ethno-religious issues and cynical Federal Character principle, the political process often throws up the worst character within the civil society as merit is often not used as criteria in governance. Nigeria is

thus, bedeviled by deprived minds, and citizens are interrogating the situation about primitive politicking of safety and welfare of its citizen. Accordingly, Nigeria's diversity has not been properly integrated as seen in other less developed or developing countries. Nations with such distinctive appeal like India and Brazil seems to have overcome these differences.

According to Pew Research Center, Indians Muslim population is more than 213 million in 2020, cumulating into India's 15.5% population, the world's third largest and the world's largest Muslim-minority population (Kramer, 2021). Comparable to Nigeria, Brazil's Indigenous peoples live in every state of Brazil and represent 305 different ethnic groups and 274 indigenous languages. As of 2019, the population of Brazil speaks approximately 228 languages, of which 217 are indigenous, and 11 came with immigrants. Indeed, Brazil is home to the largest population of Italian origin in the world outside Italy, the second largest Spaniards in the world outside Spain and despite this diversity, Brazil has seen greater racial equality over time.

India's population is about 1.39 billion (World Bank, 2020), and is characterized by more ethnic and religious groups than most other countries of the world. The growth in GDP during 2021-22 is estimated at 8.9 per cent as against a contraction of 6.6 per cent in 2020-21. The world's two most rapidly major growing economies, China, and India, are both being driven by rapidly rising state investment. India has moved up two scores from 2020 its previous year's ranking to become the 135th most peaceful country in the world and the 5th in the region. ("Global Peace Index 2021 - Chronicleindia") In 2021, global peace index for Brazil was 2.43 index, increased from 2.02 index in 2012 to 2.43 index in 2021 growing at an average annual rate of 2.12% (Global Peace Index, 2021)

The level of societal safety and security, the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarization situates Nigeria 146 among 163 independent nations and territories, according to its level of peacefulness. Nigeria ranked eighth among the least peaceful countries in Africa after South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali. (Global Peace Index, 2021). Nigeria continues to face challenges on both safety and security and ongoing conflict domains. ("Nigeria Conflict: Country Faces Further Challenges in 2020") The conflict between government forces and Boko Haram in the Northeast led to an estimated 1,606 people killed in 125 fatal incidents in 2020, making an average of 13 deaths per violent event in the Boko Haram insurgency in 2020 (Olaiya, 2021).

Indian and Brazil's prognosis proves that huge population and diversity does not necessarily provoke insecurity, it rather attests that with political will, a diverse country could enjoy peace and progress. Seemingly, the centrifugal forces of anomy and insecurity in Nigeria could be attributed to indecent politicking, and wrong application of democratic values. Thus, immorality in governance and politicization of security may lead to violent balkanization of the Nigerian state. Despite these challenges, people still repose some high degree of expectation in government to arrest the situation. Unfortunately, unfolding events suggest that the challenge of insecurity is far from over. It is on this note that this chapter attempts to interrogate how the politicization of security in the country has been fueling insecurity and come up with policy recommendations on how the situation could be brought under control.

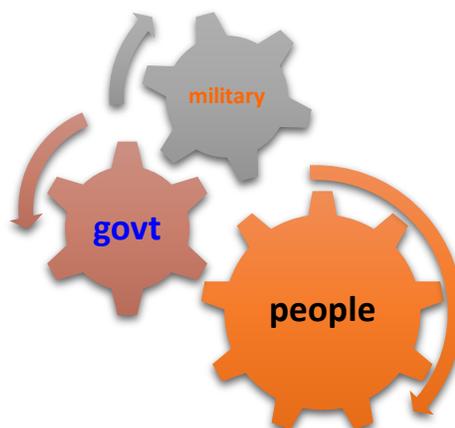
## **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The theoretical propositions adopted in this study were extracts and axioms derived from the Marxian analysis of conflict theory. In essence, conflict theory believes there is an existential

threat to a society through natural competition between groups within society over limited resources. First developed by Karl Marx, it's a theory that society is in a state of perpetual conflict because of competition for limited resources. Conflict theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. According to Marx, the production of surplus value is the framework for analyzing the dynamism of the capitalist society such as Nigeria (Harvey, 1983).

Given that the fundamental interest of Nigeria's population is security and survival, the theoretical proposition is thus in favor of the survival of state. Thus, for the Nigerian state to embrace safety, there is the need to examine the political process that produce pedestrian characters in government. This political process in Nigeria exemplifies the national spirit and give oddity to the peculiar human values and activities that provoke insecurity, violence, underdevelopment, corruption, and poverty. Unfortunately, groups that emerge from some of these doubtful political processes make binding decisions to their advantage and to the detriment of the rest of the society.

Meanwhile, the pervasiveness of violence of conventional war in human relations has steadily diminished over the course of human history; in its place the subject of terrorism has seized the world's attention (UNHCHR, 2001). On terrorism in Nigeria, 3 groups of theories are also prominent. These are economic and social integration theory, resource mobilization theory and cultural theories. These theories were further bolstered by poor democratic culture, poor leadership, and prevalent human rights abuses in Nigeria. In the Northeastern Nigeria, there are social, political, and economic conditions that feed fundamentalism and intolerance which make ordinary people available for recruitment as terrorist. These conditions include poverty and hunger, lack of access to quality education, unemployment, political manipulation of religion by the elite class and struggles over control of state resources.



**Figure 1: The Nigerian Society and Insecurity**

Source: Authors' conception

Figure 1 depicts the engineering of the Nigerian society. Fundamentally, the Nigerian society is made up of 3 manifestations, often presented as a tripod and comprises of the people, the government, and the military. In a normal clime such as Denmark, the nexus, and plausible linearity among the 3 strands is absolute, regrettably in Nigeria, this correlation has been coordinated by 2 of the 3 legs. Therefore, the government and the military in Nigeria has contrive the people, thereby, inflaming the political space.

In essence there is a nominate such as Germany, most other peaceful countries are subdivisions of sovereign composite kingdoms. This expounds somewhat why these countries with their plurality are stable. In Nigeria, the spirit of the people resonates with so much forcefulness as there is a struggle with religion and toxic ethnic divide manifesting a pervasive dogmatic anomie. Figure 1 is, consequently, central to this discourse as civil society is wrought with suspicion of each other. The collective national spirit by the people that form government is skewed with primordial sentiments. This explains the difficulty in resolving the linear equation comprising the people, government, and the military - the patterns of how the state conducts its vocation in the framework of the trinity. Accordingly, the paper shall further examine the military component of the trinity in Nigeria.

Military security is not identical to military protection of the hegemony. Essentially, military security describes the ability of a State to protect itself from any form of aggression. Ultimately, the later discerns the protection of the protector, a study of the unified theory of civilian control of the military. Military protection elucidates how the military is managed and maintained particularly when responsibility is shared between political leaders and the armed forces of Nigeria (AFN). Trapped within a rigid bureaucracy, today's relationship between the military and the civil society is immersed in the micromanaging of the military by the government. Be it as it may, as government leadership rotates among different ethnic nationalities, it became an opportunity to build up potency, particularly in the defense sector. Thus, the AFN, is constantly a subject of manipulation to gain advantage over other ethnic nationalities. In this case, populism becomes a useful secondary concept that if used sensitively and systematically, will enable us to understand the potential consequences of political ineptness within the Nigerian state.

**Populism – The Nigerian Perspective:** Populism is not a universal model that, once unlocked, will enable us to decrypt all other political discusses about a state, but at its root, populism is a belief in the power of the people, and in their right to have control over those that governs rather than a wealthy elite.

The principle of populism appeals to general conceptions based on hopes and fears of the people, particularly when new divergent collective consciousness pushes against the prevailing norm. If we reminiscence over the decades of military dictatorship in Nigeria, 'the people' validated these virtues; a leaning that was frequent during the May 2015 presidential election. In a rare show of character, which is often evoked during soccer match involving national soccer team - the incumbent is overthrown almost collectively despite the usual entreaties. An anomaly that is unique. Though it is distinctive, there is a need to weigh the perceived unpredictability in peoples' behavior first against the military, and more recently against a section of the Nigerian elite.

Hitherto, it was the menace of military dictatorship in June 1993 that kindles Nigerians to act collectively to embrace the virtues and features of a system of government by the civil society. The total eclipse and outright rejection of the AFN by the people and those that govern was

precipitous. The military impulsively became an aberration, a pariah, and coerced into a wholesale subservience to the political authority from May 1999. The people perceived the military as the problem among the triad; they paid little attention to the political jobbers that evolved from their midst. By early part of 2015, particularly during the election, the convulsion and quandary of the trinity became profound, leading once more to the overthrow of the prodigal elite by the people and the election of General Mohamad Buhari. This is significant in that within two decades, the people in a remarkable fashion acted as a catalyst for change in Nigeria, not only that, but the military also behaved maturely by allowing the people themselves to correct their earlier choice of those that govern them. Fortunately, this is probable in such a linear relationship. Recall, that as of 2014, the philosophical necessity of democracy has become diametrically opposed to the *raison d'être*. Contrary to the expectation of the people, there were widespread and significant discrepancy between the ideological political theories and values commonly professed by Western democracy and what was realizable by the end of 2014. The nascent democracy expectedly, demonstrated infantile and problematized the national security question. About the period, the state was no longer sovereign – most part of the Northeast was under the radical Islamic (Boko-Haram) control and authority.

Ostensibly, the underbelly of the AFN particularly the Nigerian Army and the Nigerian Air Force were exposed - the military security was already jeopardized. Essentially, because huge percentage of funds meant for operations were diverted for political ends ironically, by those that should normally expose the ills, are cronies and appointees of the politicians. Hence, promotion and strategic appointments depends on if the military officer is a conformist. This became widespread.

### **Issues of Terrorism in Nigeria**

There are several issues bothering terrorism in Nigeria. These include political grievances, social inequality, and poverty. In Nigeria, election malpractices, poor governance and corruption have risen. The society was in a state where majority are disenfranchised and marginalized. Ethnic and religious differences became a veritable tool in the hand of politicians to settle scores, leading to further insecurity. Terrorism became a preferred tool to redress perceived inequities and normative restraints by government often lead to further insecurity. Political freedom and economic opportunities are not widespread thereby heating up the polity and preventing sense of belonging and pride. Nigeria remains poor based on the poverty rates and related indices as shown below in table 1.

**Table 1: Poverty head count by year**

Year	Poverty Incidence (%)	Est. Pop (Million)	Pop. In Poverty (Million)
1980	28.1	65	18.3
1985	46.3	75	34.7
1992	42.7	91.5	39.1
1996	65.6	102.3	68.7
2004	54.4	126.3	68.7

Source: NBS Poverty Profile in Nigeria, 2004.

The national poverty rates showed some fluctuations between 1980 and 2004, and the trend has continued till 2022. The poverty incidence increases between 1980 and 1985 and between 1992 and 1996 and dropped appreciably in 2004. Despite a drop-in poverty rate, the people in enduring poverty rise from 18.3 million in 1980 to 68.7 million in 2004. Social deprivation does influence the rate of subversion of uneducated and unemployed youth into becoming terrorists. Failure, therefore, to meet the population's basic need reinforces poverty and exposes the civil society to greater intolerance of each other and hatred for the system up till 2022.

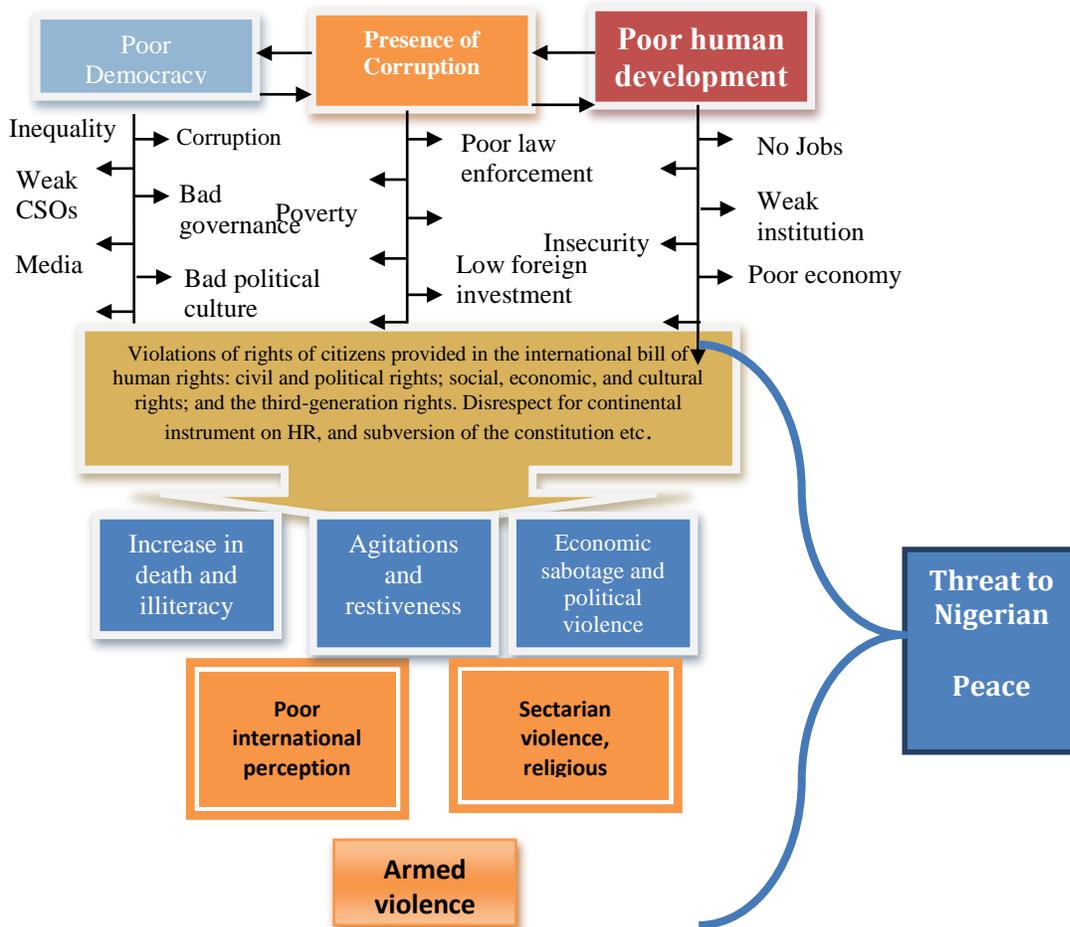
### **Challenges Emanating from Politics of Insecurity in Nigeria**

One of the reasons adduced by the Boko Haram debacle, was the callousness of the Nigerian government to its plight. (See figure 1. Threat to peace in Nigeria) In reality, the economic implication of terrorism is its impact on inflation and its effect on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as investors are unsure about the future. The opportunity cost of fighting terrorism is also high. The fund that is channeled towards fighting terrorism could have been used for social infrastructural development. These have a long-term implication on growth and development.

Also, incidents of harassment and hate crimes have been on the rise since General Mohamad Buhari ascend power in 2015. Since the Mogadishu bombing in Abuja, the social life has dropped, because people are afraid to go to large gatherings.

Relatedly, most 20th Century philosophers such as Clausewitz were absorbed with how to better govern the trinity which, comprises the Government, the people, and the military in Nigeria today. In what way could the society harmonize the complex and inextricable nexus among government, national characters, and the defense of a state? An enquiry into why the Europeans and North America seems to have achieved relative peace and pioneering innovations situates this study. For instance, Nordic countries particularly, have evolved optimal customs and processes of developing their primary resource, which are the people. Hence, interrogating Human Development Index, Democracy Index (DI) and Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Denmark for illustration, bares modest linearity. Understanding the Nigeria society would become sharper if a comparative study of a typical peaceful society is made with that of Nigeria. The case of the

Nordic region is instructive if we examine their National Peace Index over time. Beyond this, in the early 60's, contemporaries of Nigeria such as Brazil, India and Singapore have made further progress when compare in 2022.



**Figure 2: Threats to Peace in Nigeria**

Source: Authors' conception

In a recent work “Rich State, Poor State and the Gulf of Guinea” Nigeria was appraised to be about seventy years behind India and Brazil. While this is arguable, the thesis went further to blame the elite and natural resource curse for the gloom.

Likewise, this broadside is an enquiry into how the constituent regime of the society interacts with each other to produce untoward phenomenon. In the 90s for instance, Nigerian contingents to Economic Community of West African Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) – a Peace Enforcement Mission, and perhaps the first of its kind globally was celebrated worldwide for courage and proficient conduct; today, more than 25 years after, a lesser adversary at home has humiliated

same army. This is what provokes this argument. Indeed, one of the factors that first induced Carl Von Clausewitz to write was precisely the sudden and almost total collapse of his own state, Prussia. As noted, the trinity of government, army and people even permeate a chapter in his entire work that is devoted to guerrilla warfare. He was more focused though, on the essence of war. His military theory hardly speculates on what might happen, if there is a fundamental change in one of the variables such as the spirit of the people, chiefly within the context of Civil Military Relations (CMIR).

Though passive, the nepotistic ideas and policies is a feature that has made the AFN susceptible. National character describes a people; it does not circumscribe nationalities or composite kingdoms within that state. Rather, it depicts collectivism regarding how the spirit of the people pulsates. Thus, security challenges have burdened the state and all purported efforts to disavow hard security issues such as terrorism and banditry has not yielded the desired results. Somewhat, because the expectations and promises of democratically elected civilian administration since 1999 and subsequent electoral experiments up to 2022 has failed to deepen trust and foster safety and welfare of the citizens.

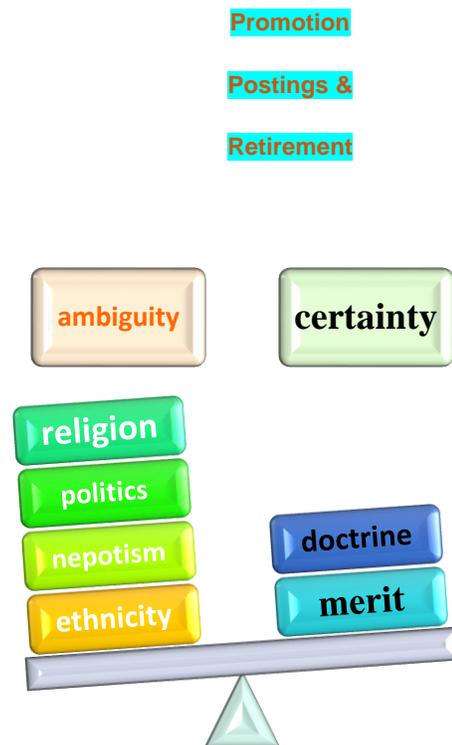
Greed and corruption exemplify the political space in Nigeria. Recently, one of the political parties increased the Presidential form to One hundred million naira, a political slot that the winner takes home about 50% as total remunerations over a 4-year period. This provoked questions as to why a Presidential candidate would seek for an office when the expected income in 4 years would attract about 50% in terms of salaries. The politics of money has not only validated corrupt practices in the political space, but also the argument that democracy in Nigeria prop-up corrupt elite and impoverish the voters. Also, Germaine is the issue of religion and politics. Muslim Christian ticket has become enshrined despite the country's secularity as promoted in the Constitution of the Federal Republic. The other issue is that of Muslim North and Christian south joint tickets that has put in jeopardy the freedom of choice of the people.

Party politics as practiced in Nigeria seems to have heighten political divide across religious and ethnic divide of the state. In Nigeria, incessant military rule has provoked 3 factors that take preeminence over appointments and promotions across the MDAs. These includes loyalty, state of origin and religion. As a result, suspicion and lack of trust pervades the Nigerian politics and seemingly polarized the state and rendered it inefficient (Ahonsi-Yakubu, 2001). Nigeria has not been playing its first eleven since independence making the country susceptible to bias and lack of faith among its population. Ethnicity and nepotism pervade the politics of insecurity and promotes division and agitation by separatist movements in the Southeast, Middle Belt, and the Southwest. The 2023 elections have also brought to fore the question about the domination Hausa/Fulani North and whether the rest of the country should succumb to Fulani's annexation of Nigeria.

### **Models of Managing Insecurity in Nigeria**

The model that the Nigerian state applies to handling the issue of insecurity in Nigeria is questionable – some perceive this as partial. It is palpable or in some instance, clear cut the way the Buhari's government has bluntly chose to call some agitators in the southeast and the southwest terrorist and indisposed to proscribing the Fulani agitators in the north until forced to do so in 2022. Buhari's government favors negotiation and paying Ransome to kidnapers and killer herdsmen thereby, raising the misgiving in several quarters about his government weak

postures to his tribes' men. In Nigeria, the authority to vote yet remains the acme of liberty; As John Stuart Mill cautions of threat to liberty, which democracies are prone to, namely, the tyranny of the majority; the 2015 election in Nigeria revealed something different. The spirit of the Nigerian society was dictated by the worst behavior the leader was willing to tolerate. The ship of state was rudderless, and the military was the worse for it.



**Figure 3: Model for Managing Insecurity in Nigeria**

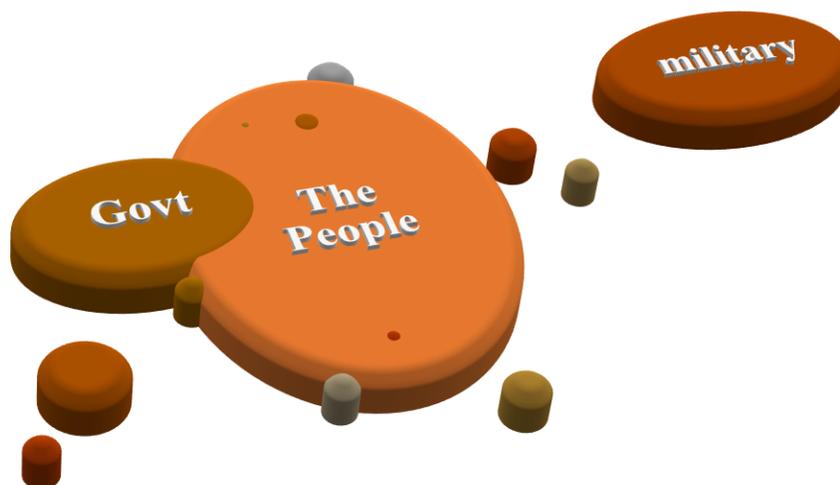
Source: Authors' conception

As illustrated in figure 3, the episodic, but boisterous relationship between national character and the military has deepens nepotism and trepidation in the AFN. The new collective consciousness is, therefore, bigotry, contrary to a military that derive its moral through reward for merit and dogma as Clausewitz had anticipated (Carl Von Clausewitz, 1984). Aside from being fiscally corrupt, the military institution has become morally drained. The AFN now recruits unqualified candidates, promote mediocre and retire their finest officers.

From the foregoing, the military as a subset of the society is not impervious to widespread ills that have come upon the nation. For an Armed Force that emerged from the vestiges of militocracy,

the penchants to revert to the culture of violent military quest are very real. Unfortunately, relatively large percentage of civilians that emerged as political leaders in 1999 could not project constitutional powers to protect the military. This critical shortfall has been recognized for several years, because of the fate that befell the acclaimed winner of popular June 12 election in 1993. Therefore, in the words of Zinni and Koltz (2009), those that emerged, lacked vision, and consequently lost the ability to look and plan. The outcome in 16 years of political pilgrimage was the spiteful Dasukigate.

The disenchantment of Dasukigate ultimately established my notion regarding the tyranny of the elite. Despite the gross misuse the military endured from 1999-2015, the military kept faith with the trinitarian order, while those that govern exhibited fatuity, were extremely venal; yet impenitent. In a recent article by Dr. Daniel H. McCauley an Assistant Professor at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, a 2014 leadership study conducted by the Palladium Group surveyed more than 1,200 companies in 74 countries. In this study, over 50 percent of the respondents stated that the quality of their organization's strategic leadership was unsatisfactory (Creelman, 2014). Fully two-thirds of the respondents serving in an organizational capacity as board member, chief executive officer, or managing director did not believe that their current leadership development approach was providing the necessary skills to successfully execute their strategy (Creelman, 2014). An observation, which corresponds to view that the world has changed, but education in our higher military institutions has not changed with it. In the face of asymmetry, strategic leaders in the AFN still spend years in an archaic educational system, studying subjects they will never use, preparing for a world that no longer exists.



**Figure 4: Analysis of CIMIR in Contemporary Nigeria**

Source: Authors' conception

The politicians leveraged its military poorly; misused their constitutional powers, squandering the military. As implied in figure 4, the military is no more in the alliance; it is not very clear therefore, how timely the intervention of the people is, in salvaging the military from the elite. The people deserve commendation in that; they once rescued the same elite in 1993, when power was

muzzled from the military to give hope to the political class. The role of the people in the alliance is nadir and superior to its constituent part in the trinity. They demonstrated strength and resilience in the face of adversity and parochialism; they became the arbiter, the protector of the military and the political elite. The spirit of the people has relieved the military from pressure and misadventure of the political class in May 2015.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, we have established the theoretical linkage between populism, Folkisest and military protection. Unfortunately, to the extent that, the raucous and political heuristic of the past decade could hardly free the people from the artifice of its political elite. The AFN reflects the society; undoubtedly, the more matured military institution subjected itself to an immature and extremely venal political class as required by law. While the socio-economic impact of the past decade is of serious concern, this paper underscores the psychological impact of this larceny on the military. As illustrated in figure 4, the current national spirit is alien to the spirit of First Eleven and War Fighting - a subject of Constitutional Debate or Presidential Veto.

In the end, tyranny of the majority conception has led to the tyranny of the bourgeoisie, and the proletariats have proven the philosophers right once again. As represented in figure 4, the trinity is dysfunctional, and the current political leadership has options; they could either deliberate on 'right sizing' the military or neglect military protection at the nations' peril. The military requires a pathological intervention as the coming anarchy may well be beyond the 'People' to unbundle next time around. Aside these, there are other strategies that could be of help to overcome the dangers of politics of insecurity in Nigeria. One, there is urgent need to purge the military of sabotage officers who usually give details of military war strategies to the insurgents. In this regard, Akinterinwa (2022) asked two fundamental questions: 'Why is the country's military strategies always known to the insurgents? Why are the military personnel on war duty always ambushed and killed? These two questions pointed to the need to for the military authority to screen and dismiss all bad eggs and put mechanisms in place to do thorough background checks on new recruits to avoid employing enemy's spies into the military. Two, there is need for a concerted efforts by the Presidency to prevent Nigerian politicians from jeopardizing the security architecture in Nigeria, especially in the current era of politicking. No person or group should be allowed to use the military to protect their political interest. Using the military to intimidate the opposition always have catastrophic end as it on the one hand, stimulate the interest of the military in politics; while on the other hand, pushes the used military personnel to seek political favors in return. Both have great negative consequences on the security administration.

Three, there is the urgent need to address what Adebayo (2022) described as government-induced insecurity. To him, the source of insecurity is attributed to the fact that insecurity has become a business where government has opened the sector for security actors to make money at the expense of the country's safety. The implication is that those actors who are not making money from it subsequently see themselves as been deprived and marginalized, thus, make frantic efforts to find their way leading to the politicization of security. It is pertinent to note that much of these recommendations fall on the shoulder of the President. The bulk stops on his table. Perhaps, therefore he is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. To this end, this paper conclude that the President should summon courage and political will to deal with all actors involved in the politicization of security in Nigeria especially within the security agencies and the political class.



Finally, it is important to replace Federal Character with national spirit that allows for equity and justice. Nigeria should do away with ideas which, dictate appointments into government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, (MDAs) based on religion and sociocultural norms which, has found its way into promotions and appointments of civil servants, military, and paramilitary organs of government. This no doubts have deprived the country of excellent security officers that could enhance safety in Nigeria. Thus, there is the need to jettison the Federal Character code as presently implemented.

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