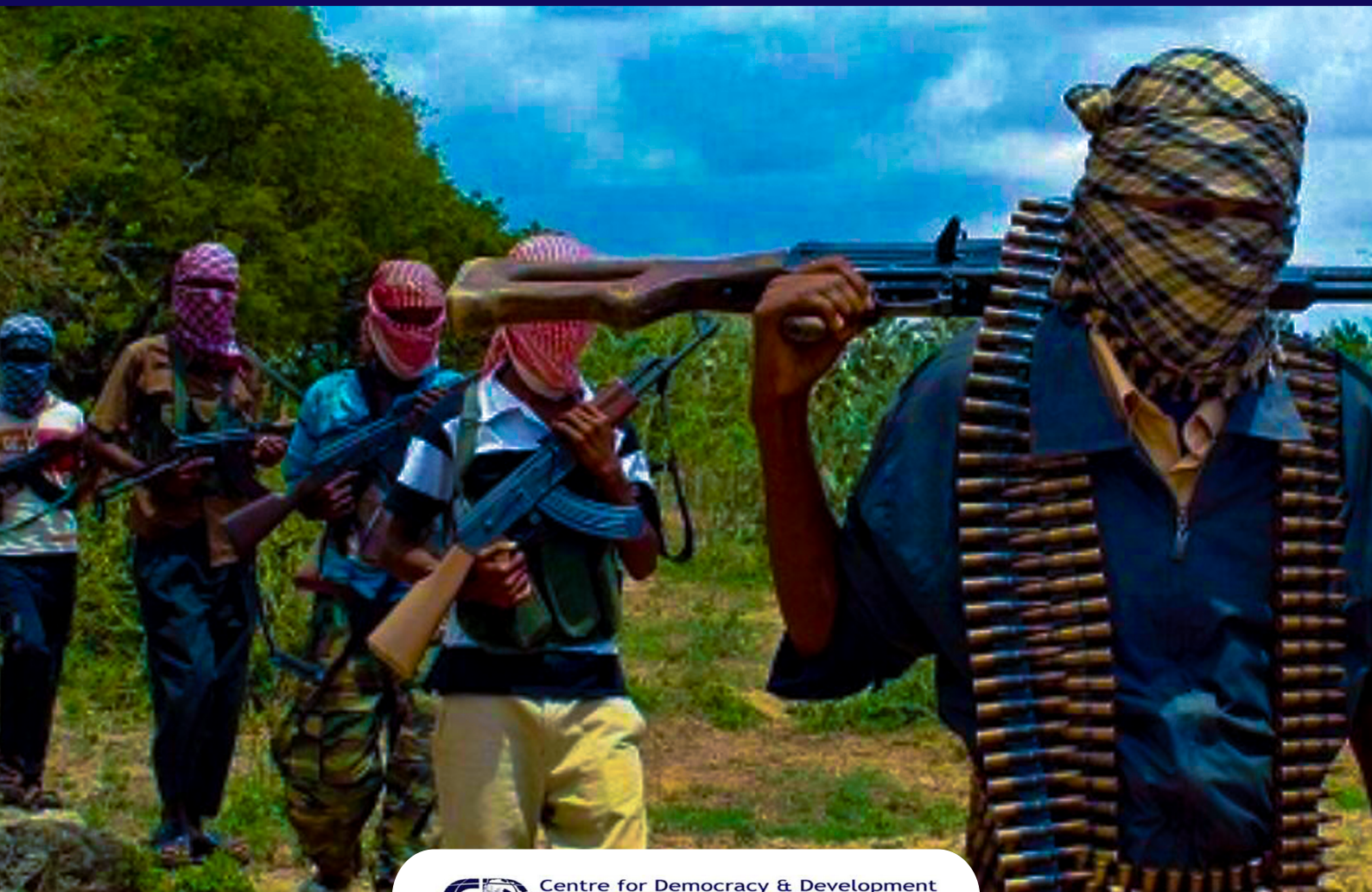


THREATS TO STATE INTEGRITY AND SOCIAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Nigeria is confronting a number of critical political and security challenges that are raising serious questions about its identity and survival as a democratic federal republic. First, there is a dramatic breakdown in security that has created a climate of disillusion in the state as a protector of citizens. Secondly, there is a breakdown of social cohesion in Nigeria with stress lines emerging at the levels of the family, community and state. Thirdly, there is a significant rise and expansion religious, fuelled in part by disinformation and hate speech that circulates across traditional and social media. Fourthly, there is frustration about the country's political and economic direction, with citizens believing the system is stymied by a reckless political class that is corrupt, self-serving and manipulative. Finally, Nigeria's elite consensus on federalism and the federal character principle as a guarantee against group discrimination and marginalisation is badly shaken.



There is no easy way to pull this country apart. The problems arising from such an exercise will be far bigger than the problem of trying to keep it going. The value of the size, the market, and the varieties of cultures are important and should not be neglected."

PROF ADE AJAYI, THE NIGERIAN SOCIAL SCIENTIST, VOL 5, NO 1, 2002, P.56

Insecurity in Nigeria

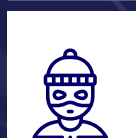
The state of insecurity in Nigeria has reached unprecedented levels. On a daily basis, well-coordinated commando-like operations by gunmen are organised against rural communities where people are kidnapped for ransom, houses burnt, and property looted. Similar attacks are also conducted against the army and police. These attacks are now occurring in virtually all geopolitical zones in the country. According to Governor Bello Matawalle of Zamfara state, there are no fewer than 30,000 gunmen spread across more than 100 camps in and around his state alone. These bandits collected N970 million as ransom from the families of their kidnap victims – over 1,100 – in the eight years between 2011 and 2019. During the same period, they killed 2,619 people.

Breakdown of state authority

On 6 April 2021, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, Chairman of the National Peace Committee, told Nigerians that there are six million weapons circulating in the hands of non-state actors. He estimated that as many as 80,000 have died to date and a further three million people are internally displaced as a result of insecurity. The country finds itself at a point where many Nigerians feel sufficiently marginalised by the state, and from society, to procure arms to protect themselves, rather than turning to the state for protection. Law enforcement officers have even become the target of attacks. According to the Inspector General of Police, 20 police officers were killed in March 2021 alone.

The view of Nigerian state law enforcement

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officials as predatory rather than protective has its roots in the colonial state. Under British rule the security apparatus was established to control and extort the people and not to protect them. This security culture emphasised repression and coercion and promoted a general lack of civility towards the civilian population. This approach continued in the independence era, which has been punctuated by military control of the state. For too long in Nigeria, national security has been equated to state security, and state security is viewed as the security of those who occupy public office. Rarely is national security viewed as the welfare and happiness of the citizens, neither is security viewed as 'community security', 'societal security' or securing the 'common good'. In other words, security is viewed in purely state-centric and military terms and not in social and developmental terms: it is perceived as the maintenance of state sovereignty. In these circumstances, national security can undermine the security of citizens. In fact, most Nigerians see security agents as potential violators of their security rather than providers of it. Whilst Nigerians are increasingly fighting back against security agencies, by taking security into their own hands, what is needed is a fundamental overhaul of the security sector in the country. Reforms that would enhance the human security¹ of all citizens rather than limiting itself to the interests of the political class.

But the failings of the Nigerian state are

not simply limited to its ability to guarantee security. Its ability to tax citizens, and use those taxes to deliver basic services, is also in question. Even the revenues that are allocated from the state are diminished further by rampant corruption across all levels of government. The ability to use ill-gotten wealth to avoid complying with laws and regulations, further compounds this problem. The constitution defines the purpose of the state as the protection of the security of Nigerians and the pursuit of their welfare. But many Nigerians are forced to pay for their own security guards; to provide their own electricity through a generator; or to buy water from private sector vendors rather than rely on state providers.

The growth of rural banditry

The crisis of a lack of state authority is symbolised by the fact that rural Nigeria is characterised by the absence of the state and its security agencies. It is therefore not surprising that armed banditry has spread and impacted negatively on lives and livelihoods. There are contending narratives as to the reasons for, and character of, the crisis of armed banditry in Nigeria. The debilitating effects of climate change cannot be overlooked. Specifically, waning amounts of rainfall has taken its toll on the growth of shrubs and vegetation useful for not only farm purposes but also for grazing needs of herds. In other places excessive flooding is the problem. But arguably the most important explainer for the rise of rural

1. Human security involves not just national security but also the promotion of economic development and the human rights of citizens.

banditry is poor governance and the virtual collapse of institutions of governance. Deep seated corruption has eroded the capacity of institutions to perform their functions effectively. This, combined with the fact that Nigeria's borders are porous and there has been decades of freelance smuggling of small arms and light weapons, has provided the means for the escalation of violence. In these ungoverned spaces, violent non-state actors can obtain arms and undertake violent attacks and crimes almost undisturbed.

Two major zones of ungoverned spaces have emerged in Nigeria in relation to the phenomenon of armed banditry. The first is the Sahel region of the northern Nigeria which specifically covers dry lands in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states. The second consists of the swamps and forest regions of the Niger-Delta characterised by rivers, creeks and lakes in the states of Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, Abia and Ondo. Consecutive governments watched and allowed these ungoverned spaces to consolidate. One central element in the northwest zone that favours armed banditry is the existence of large forests bordering rural areas. The Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu forests have become major hideouts for criminals. Worse still, with a fragile state system and waning public confidence in police and state security institutions, the allegiance of defenceless rural communities is gradually shifting toward informal armed groups and local vigilantes.

Herder-farmer crises

The other dimension of state crisis is the rise of pastoralist-farmer conflicts in Nigeria that have spread and intensified over the past decade and today poses one of the greatest threats to the country's national integrity. The six zones of Nigeria are all affected. Prior to the twentieth century, the Fulani were mainly concentrated in the semi-arid zone of northern Nigeria, mostly due to the presence of trypanosomes and other diseases that made cattle rearing in more humid environments in the south impossible without significant losses to the herds. But improvements in veterinary care has reduced those risks and allow herders to migrate further south in recent decades.

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This phenomenal increase has put enormous pressure on land and water resources used by farmers and pastoralists. One of the outcomes of this process has been the blockage of transhumance routes and loss of grazing land to agricultural expansion. Furthermore, the pressure on land has worsened the phenomenon of contests over access to land between pastoralists and farmers leading to the growth of violent confrontations between the two groups, particularly as the pastoralists have moved further southward.

The conflicts arise when grazing cattle are not properly controlled and consequently graze on cultivated plants in the farms of host communities. Wider insecurity is further perpetuating this problem. As pastoralists are being blocked out of traditional grazing reserves due to growing insecurity, they are being forced into adopting pastoralist methods that increase, rather than decrease, the potential for conflicts and discord. Traditionally, pastoralists disperse themselves so as not to overgraze areas and encroach on farms. With rising insecurity however, they are being forced to move in large groups in smaller spaces. This large-scale concentration of pastoralists in limited ranges allows them to protect themselves against attacks. The paradox is that the more concentrated they are, the more damage they do to crops, which in turn fuels more violent conflict.

Traditional modes of conflict resolution between herdsman and farmers have

broken down under this strain as conflicts have grown in scale and intensity. Host communities tend to register their grievances by placing restrictions on movement and grazing of cattle in designated areas and enforcing compliance through coercive measures decreed by the host community vigilante groups which may take the shape of killing stray cattle or arresting and prosecution defaulters. As these conflicts aggravate, the Fulani herdsman who are losing more and more of their cattle and sometimes their lives also resort to violence by attacking such communities. As violence between herdsman and farmers has grown and developed into criminality and rural banditry, popular narratives in the form of hate speech have exacerbated the communal and ethno-religious nature of the clashes.


State responses

The Nigerian state has become increasingly reliant on the armed forces for internal security. Constitutionally Nigeria's internal security infrastructure is composed of the National Police Force (NPF) - the lead agency for law enforcement - and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, which is mandated with protecting critical national infrastructure and handling related disaster management. However, the capacity of NPF and other official, but non-military, security forces has eroded over time due to severe resource constraints and an orientation away from civilian protection to VIP protection. According to Mike Okiro, the former Chairman of the Police Service

Nigeria has about 400,000 police officers.² However, a good proportion of these officers are not available for routine police work because more than 150,000 of them are assigned to guard VIPs and others who ordinarily would not qualify for police protection.

The military has been assigned to fill the gaps. As a result, Nigerian society has, in effect, been militarised and is losing the habits of civilian-led security provision. The military now is engaged in internal operations in almost all of Nigeria's 36 states, seeking to quell not only the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, but also rural banditry and mass kidnapping in the northwest, the Biafra resurgence in the southeast, ethno-nationalism in the southwest, farmer-herder conflicts in north-central and ongoing militancy in the Niger Delta. Underpinning the limited success of the Nigerian military in their efforts to reduce insecurity across the country has been the lack of trust and close collaboration between civilians and security agencies. Reports of physical assault, sexual abuse and even killings by military personnel have been recorded; these are particularly problematic when it comes to building trust with communities.³

The Nigerian army is trained for warfare, not a multitude of asymmetrical conflicts with relatively small and mobile armed combatants. In the northeast for example when a Boko Haram stronghold is attacked,



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many insurgents are killed and captured. But some of them escape and resort to attacking soft targets. The watch word of the insurgents has been flexibility. Following the recapture of most of the territory held by the insurgents and the degrading of their fighting capability in late 2015, Boko Haram resorted to the increased use of suicide bombers, often using young girls. The insurgents tactics are therefore constantly evolving, and the military has struggled to keep up. The military has most recently resorted to establishing super camps - huge, barricaded camps in major towns and local government headquarters - where the

2. Warami. 2018. "Ruled by Jokers". Vanguard Nigeria. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/ruled-by-jokers/>

3. Amnesty International. 2020. "They betrayed us: Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria." <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/nigeria-boko-haram-survivors-raped-and-starved-military-rescuers-new-report>

civilian population can congregate for their safety. However, this approach leaves rural areas largely in the control of insurgents, with residents who choose to remain outside these urban areas in order to secure livelihoods, increasingly seeing the state as failing to protect them.

In the battle against rural banditry, cattle rustling and mass kidnapping for ransom in the northwest, the approach of the military has been equally problematic. Although a major military offensive, launched in September 2021 in Zamfara state, has had some notable successes in killing bandit leaders, the use of aircraft to bomb bandit targets also saw the lives, liberty and property of ordinary residents affected. Furthermore, these groups remain highly mobile and although pushed to the periphery of the state for now, are likely to return when the military presence lessens. They appear to be one-step ahead of the military at almost every turn. When large offensives are announced, they duck. When petrol sales are restricted, they bribe massively to procure necessary supplies. When the mobile network is switched off, they buy Thuraya satellite phones.

The lack of effectiveness of the military response to insecurity has led to the emergence of a new approach emanating from state governments and community leaders in many parts of the country - to buy guns to fight back. It is an approach many communities are also adopting. Localised vigilante groups have sprung

up in response to the dire security climate in northern Nigeria, with the concept expanding into the southeast and southwest in recent years. Two key trends are particularly important to capture when discussing these groups. First, vigilante groups are gradually assuming the role of security forces and in some instances have received official recognition from more formal political actors. For example, the Borno state executive council approved N352 million in January 2021 to bolster the work of the vigilante groups in the state. Secondly, and more ubiquitously, is the fact that vigilante groups have also contributed to the security challenges facing northern Nigeria. Groups like Yan Sakai and Fulani militia have fuelled insecurity in Northern Nigeria through their tit for tat reprisal attacks on each other. The increasing problem is with so many arms in circulation there is a real risk that rogue elements within these groups will turn these arms against the people they have been established to protect. There is also a wider risk that if communities have problems with one another in future, they will use the weapons against each other.

Nigeria needs a new security paradigm to address the growing insecurity in the country. What is clear is that large military operations, announced in advance and focused on one state at a time, simply cannot work even if sufficient funding is made available. Both bandits and terrorists are engaged in a war of movement based on small mobile groups. The armed forces

must follow the same tactic. Hundreds of small mobile army units should be established based on the intelligence of where the bands of terrorists and bandits are. There is an urgent need for continuous and more effective intelligence gathering at the community level to allow for more targeted security sector responses. To do this the armed forces and police need to recommit to building trust with local communities.

The way forward for the police has been extensively mapped by three police reform panels - the Obasanjo regime's Dan

Madami commission (2006), the Yar'Adua government's Yusuf assessment (2009) and the Jonathan administration's Parry Osayande study (2012). All these initiatives reported the same core problems: insufficient personnel and funding for operations; poor training; dilapidated training institutions and barracks; limited firearms skills, leading to frequent shooting mishaps; and the demeaning obligation for officers to pay for their own uniforms. Perhaps the most important factor they emphasised is the deep culture of corruption that resulted in salaries being unpaid because they are diverted elsewhere.

Structural challenges

Pervasive poverty and inequality

Nigeria has a high level of poverty and inequality. It ranked 161 of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index,⁴ a fall of four places since 2018. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) '2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria' report, 40% of the total population, or almost 83 million Nigerians, live below the country's poverty line, meaning that their annual income is less than N137,430, under USD330 per year.⁵ But poverty in Nigeria is not evenly spread. Inequality has also increased in recent years. The country's Gini coefficient increased from 0.36 to 0.42 between 2011 and 2016.⁶

Furthermore, the number of people living in poverty in the northern region has been increasing since 2011. In 2016, it represented 87% of all poor in Nigeria. Northern states have the lowest level of economic development, the least access to education, the poorest network of health facilities and staff and the highest birth rates. In Nigeria, total fertility rates increased to 5.8 in 2016. This is accentuated in northern states. Jigawa state has the highest fertility rate of 8.5 and Kano 7.7 according to the 2016 survey conducted by NBS. The pressure to feed these large families is huge and can be a contributory factor to consistent poverty levels and even insecurity, given that Nigeria's herder-farmer conflicts are linked

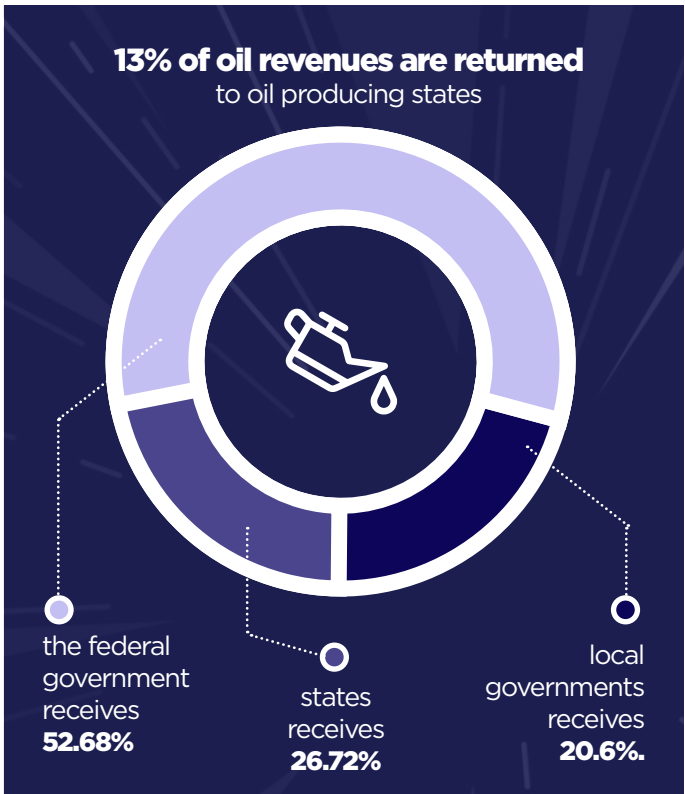
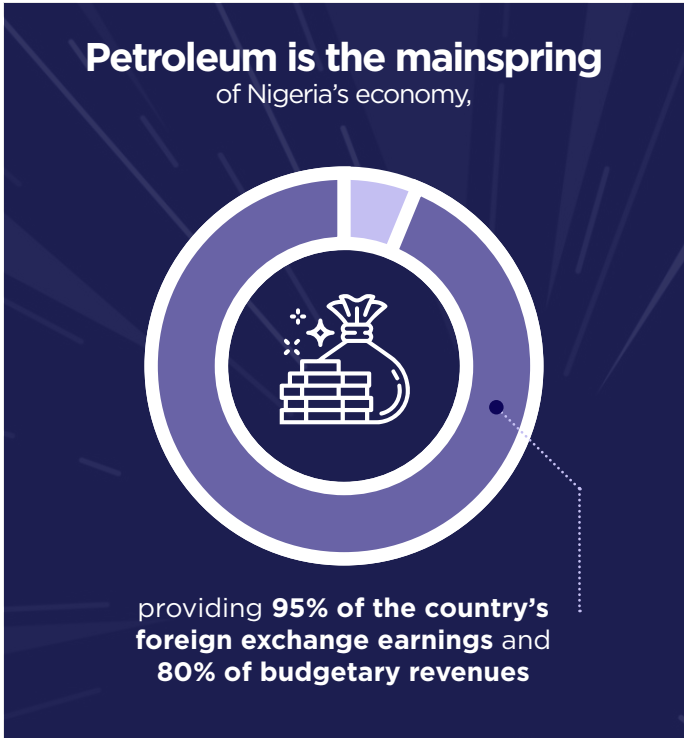
4. Human Development Index, 2020

5. Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. 2020. '2019 Poverty and inequality in Nigeria'.

6. Ibid

to pressures on agricultural land. The north is also behind in educational attainment across the country. As of 2018, the gross enrolment rate in elementary schools in Nigeria stood at 68.3%; in the northeast it was 59.7% for boys and significantly lower for girls.⁷

This developmental crisis has led to a breakdown of social cohesion, especially in the northern part of the country. There is a very large proportion of northern youth who are not in school, not in the family house and not in regular paid employment. Drug consumption has become widespread. These youth live precarious lives in urban centres doing menial jobs in the informal sector. Living in the cities, these marginalised youth who learn about the massive wealth being enjoyed by a few through social media, feel marginalised, angry and abandoned by society.



Delivering services

Petroleum is the mainspring of Nigeria's economy, providing 95% of the country's foreign exchange earnings and 80% of budgetary revenues. This also makes revenues very sensitive to global oil prices. Petroleum revenues are collected by the federal government and distributed to state and local governments using a revenue allocation formula that prioritises equality of states, with some adjustment for population and derivation – 13% of oil revenues are returned to oil producing states. As it stands, the federal government receives 52.68%, states 26.72% and local governments 20.6%. Section 32 (b) of the Third Schedule of the Constitution empowers the revenue allocation formula to be reviewed every five years through an act of the National Assembly. But the last successful review was in 1992.

7. Ibid

States and local government authorities (LGAs) in Nigeria are responsible for the provision of basic services such as education, health care, water and sanitation, rural infrastructure, and community services. The high degree of autonomy provides states an opportunity to set their own course. However, this autonomy also poses a challenge to building national consensus in the areas of macroeconomic stability, prioritising public resource allocation and meeting minimum standards in service delivery. LGAs have minimal autonomy relative to the power of state governors. Even the constitutionally entrenched provision of democratically elected local governments is observed more in the breach than in practice, with governors usually appointing local councils and their heads. LGAs are further weakened by the fact they are their allocated resources from the State Joint Local Government Accounts – a situation that puts them at the mercy of state governments for revenue.

Beyond the structural challenges for delivering services, Nigeria's public sector is not organised to provide public services to the people. The design of policies is more influenced by bargaining among elites than by public accountability mechanisms. The level of public expenditure on services such as health and education are much lower than in other African countries. Even committed budget figures are a poor indicator of public expenditure because the amounts

allocated are regularly never released in full or even in significant percentages.

Insufficient funds, combined with a lack of accountability erodes institutions' capacity to deliver services. Furthermore, the lack of public information at national and subnational levels - on budget allocations, expenditures and development outcomes - impedes civil society organisations and media's ability to supervise the government's policies, financial management and effectiveness in delivering public services. Moreover, the reliance on oil revenues further disincentivises the provision of accountability mechanisms from the state as it does not depend extensively on citizens to raise funds.

The youth challenge

The concept of the 'precariat' has been developed by Guy Standing in relation to contemporary European society increasingly being defined by a distinctive relation of production of so-called "flexible" labour contracts; temporary jobs; labour as casuals, part-timers, or intermittent workers. They live a life of instability – without secure occupational identity; accommodation, insurance, and for some of them, without even a civic identity. This group is a dangerous says Standing because their lives lack stability and predictability. They however have a clear consciousness of their deprivation, and their lives are characterised by three defining dimensions that produce a

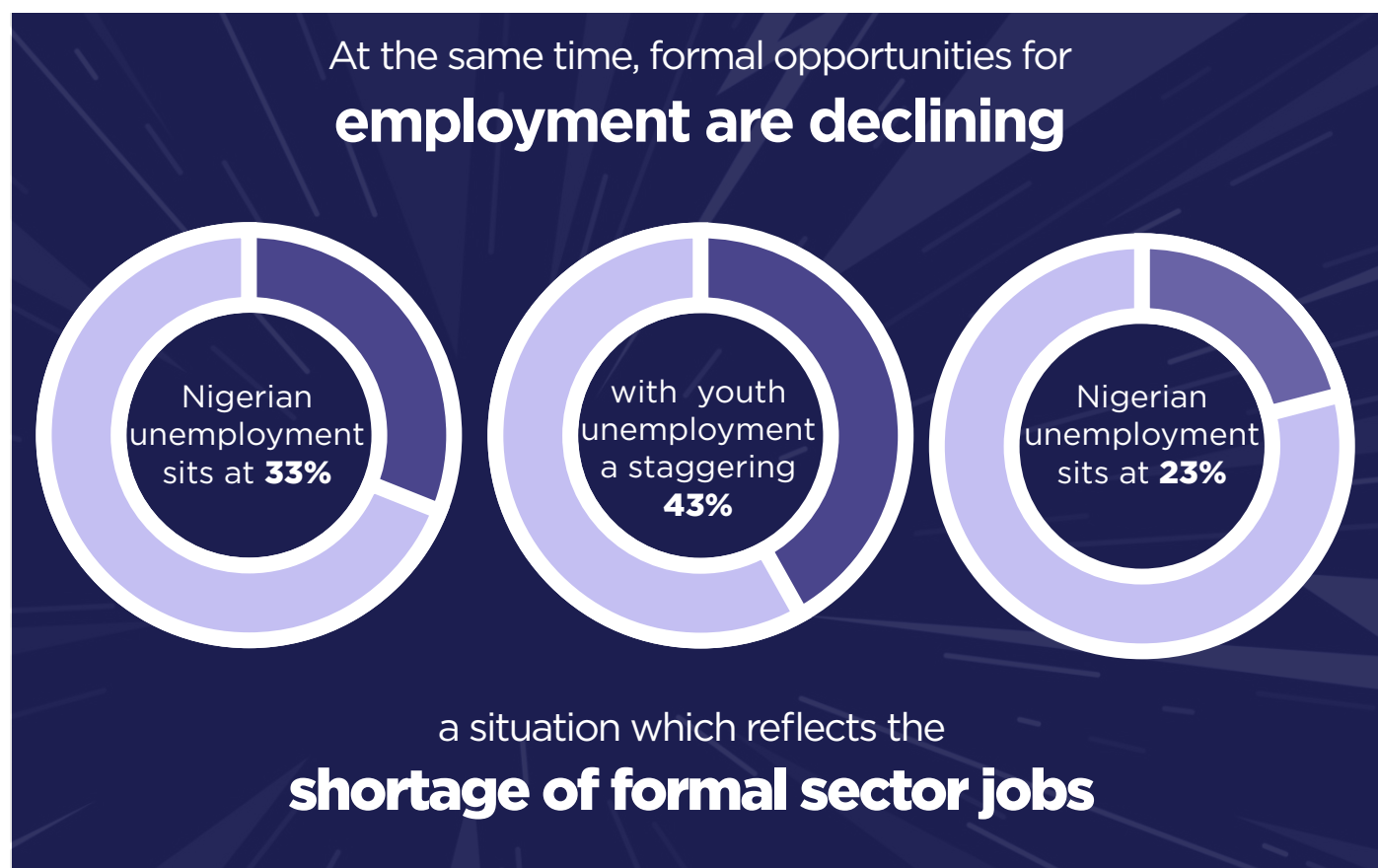
4. Human Development Index, 2020

5. Nigeria Bureau of Statistics. 2020. '2019 Poverty and inequality in Nigeria'.

6. Ibid

consciousness of relative deprivation and a combination of anxiety: anomie (despair of escape from their precarious status), alienation (having to do what they do not wish to do while being unable to do what they would like to do and can do), and anger at their terrible conditions of existence. It was precisely these conditions that provoked the predominantly youth-led #EndSARS demonstrations in October 2020 in Nigeria.

The most important contemporary problem for Nigeria is the lack of opportunity for youth. Nigeria has a sizeable youth bulge that has been growing rapidly. At the same time, formal opportunities for employment are declining. Nigerian unemployment sits at 33% with youth unemployment a staggering 43%. Similarly, 23% of employed Nigerians are currently underemployed, a situation which reflects the shortage of formal sector jobs.



Conclusion

T Given the huge security challenges facing the country, it is important that Nigeria devises effective strategies that will stem the multiple violent conflicts affecting the nation and create conditions for the protection of human rights and the deepening of democracy. The armed forces are already playing a significant role in these efforts. At the same time, the military have not been traditionally trained to engage in this arena and their rules of engagement might not be suitable for the new role thrust upon them. It is therefore important to publish, debate and revise the rules of engagement to ensure that their approaches and soldiers understand and act in conformity with human rights principles. At the same time, Nigeria has to expand the police, train them and build their capacity for effective law enforcement.

Better policymaking, supported by increased revenue raising at all levels, is also essential. For example, a new policy framework on the farmers-pastoralists

crisis should be developed that is both comprehensive, consultative and mutually beneficial to both groups. The establishment of grazing reserves for example, provides the opportunity for practicing a more limited form of pastoralism and can offer a pathway towards a more settled form of animal husbandry. But only 113 of Nigeria's 417 grazing reserves have been gazetted.

The Nigerian state has not previously experienced the scope and depth of crisis it is experiencing today. But to a significant extent the state itself has been the major driver of the crisis it is encountering. The task before it therefore is that of reconstruction, in the medium to long term, alongside short-term solutions that can support more immediate improvements to tackle the insecurity threats and development challenges posed across the country. This is not just a task for the state and its institutions. As the state recovers, traditional and religious institutions, as well as civil society, have a huge role to play.



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