

Elite Governance, Development, and Public Safety in Nigeria

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Abstract

Governance defines how political actors use ethical or corrupt practices to influence mass participation in political decision-making in public affairs. This article interrogates the implications of the elite monopoly of power for development and public safety in Nigeria. We anchored the study on Pareto's circulation of elite theory. It adopts a qualitative method to collect secondary data which are content and thematically analyzed. Results indicated that the gap between the elite and the citizenry threatens the development and public safety in Nigeria. This article concludes that elitism should not only socially engage with the citizenry, but it should also reproduce egalitarian political values and actors for inclusion in Nigeria's democratic destiny. Drawing on the values of the conceptual lions (oselu) of Pareto to scare his conceptual foxes (ojelu) vices out of political domination through electoral re-socialization could neutralize elite conspiracy against the majority and boost the capacity of vulnerable Nigerians to initiate and implement development and public safety defenses. It suggests that a true fiscal federalism predicated on ethical reorientation in politics could reinvent Nigeria, and relieve her of the burden of underdevelopment and insecurity into which elite avarice has plunged the country.

Keywords: elite career path, public safety; development, oselu/ojelu, Nigeria

Introduction

Though a vague concept, different people have used the concept of the elite in diverse cultural and intellectual areas to discuss the relevance of political actors to the public good. Since concepts imply "meanings and referents which are used to describe and explain phenomena" (Wilson, 1967, p. 18-25), they transcend ordinary words. Specifically, "in the social science literature," elite is the most extensively used concept "to describe the rule of a minority over the majority of the population" (Zannoni, 1978, p. 1-30), because the elite "collectively make policies that shape the life chances of every Nigerian" (Ogbeide & Aghahowa, 2005, p. 222). However, the word governance originates from the Greek verb *huberman*, implying "to steer a ship". This reality was the logic in Plato's Republic. The French *gouverner* developed from the Latin verb *gubernare* which evolved from the Greek verb "to serve" as the origin of the English words government and governance (Plattner, 2013). Howlett & Ramesh (2014) contend that while "governing" is the occupation of governments, "'governance' is about establishing, promoting and supporting a specific type of relationship between governmental and nongovernmental actors in the governing process" (p. 318). Today, the ethos of democracy forbids ascendancy by inheritance and favors a process-driven openness marked by competition and equity in the recruitment of public office

holders. Therefore, consistent with the values of civilization, there should be a paradigm shift from 'endogenous' approaches of social reproduction where inherited privilege drives ascendancy to elite meritocratic means of production in which competition defines status achievement (Baker, 2018).

Being ubiquitous members of social groups in the social structure, the elite influence the socioeconomic and symbolic capital of the society (Khan, 2012). The political pattern in profoundly traditional societies such as Nigeria might seem very communitarian, and critically scrutinized, it 'in fact always has and still does contain elite institutions and programs' (Börjesson et al., 2016, p. 15-34). Political actors can and do access the elite class through political manipulation. Exercising power, influence, and indirect rule, the elite deploys all their resources to gain ascendancy. Once there, the holder of political power is "...in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" (Osuji, 2018, p. 149). However, the way the elite manage political resistance, nothing shows that they have learned anything from Nigeria's political past that concretely commits them to "a new and positive culture of leading" (Agbaje, 2014, p. 103). The capacity of the elite to represent and act as political intercessors between the ruled and their leaders to cause political anger becomes critical (Osinbajo, 2021). These political actors often graduate into rulers and then into the elite class in the system. This transformation requires explicit analysis. The danger in this political metamorphosis is that the difference between dictatorship and democracy becomes blurry. Rather than have an inclusive democracy, we have "rule by some politicians" or "polito-cracy" (Schmitter, 2021, p. 3).

Regrettably, however, all surviving democracies hinge on the non-democratic elite who are entrenched in the self-styled "guardian institutions" of the state agencies, commissions, directorates, boards, central banks, courts, administrative staff... (Schmitter, 2021, p. 3). In a country where impunity drives corrupt practices, the least resistance may draw disproportionate aggression. For example, Sambo Dasuki misapplied US\$2.1 billion and N19.4 billion initially earmarked for the procurement of arms for the army to sponsor the re-election of President Jonathan through vote-buying (Nnoch, 2016). Similarly, Olisa Metuh diverted N400 million and US\$2 million initially earmarked for national security to vote-buying (Yahaya, 2020). In April 2014, violence crept into education when kidnappers abducted 276 schoolgirls from a government secondary school in Chibok, a town in Borno State (Amnesty International, 2023). Violence also sneaked into and devastated the agricultural subsector when in November 2020, in Zabarmari, in Borno State, Boko Haram killed over 70 agricultural workers on the presumption that the workers reported their presence in the community to the authority (Alfa & Maclean, 2020).

Similarly, terrorism launched an attack on public transportation while some gunmen hijacked a train on March 28, 2022, in the Kateri-Rijana area of Kaduna state, killing many and abducting others (Chime, 2023). A secessionist group, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the south-east, has become renowned for ordering people to boycott work and stay at home (Campbell, 2021). The elite have hands in all these calculated assaults on public conscience in Nigeria. Therefore, if Tijani (2013) holds insecurity to imply the inability of a nation to "...maintain law and order when the government cannot protect the lives and property of citizens (p. 181), successive governments in Nigeria have failed to secure Nigeria against underdevelopment and insecurity by tolerating corruption. The literature underscores the critical distinctions between public and elite choices (Jacobs & Page, 2005) and the gaps in public-elite political practices (Kertzer, 2020). It is doubtful if the elite function in the interest of Nigerians. The elite's seizure of public sector policies and resources weakens the productive capacities of investors in agriculture and the oil sectors of the Nigerian economy and thwarts the equitable distribution of the benefits of growth (Oxfam, 2017). Today, "...in Nigeria...the top 10 percent of the population is capturing most of

the existing growth, and the people at the bottom are without attention...” (Okonjo-Iweala, 2013) to present the richest 0.003 percent Nigerians (6,355 individuals worth \$5 million and above) who have 1.4 times more wealth than 107 million other Nigerians (Oxfam, 2023).

Despite the impact of the elite on security, the scientific community knows little about the extent to which the elite are instrumental in the development and security of Nigeria. Therefore, this article aims to probe the role that the elite play in development and public safety in Nigeria. It realizes this objective by answering the following questions: (i). How do some citizens become elite in Nigeria? (ii). How do the interactions of the elite with the mass public threaten development and public safety in Nigeria? (iii). How can the elite become tools to accelerate development and stabilize public safety in Nigeria? Without addressing the elite intervention in Nigerian politics, understanding the contextual dynamics of their inherent manipulative activities in the distribution of political power and the implications of these for development and public safety may elude the scientific community. Attempting to understand how the elite use their influence to create instability in government and economic recessions (Kia & Vurasi, 2013) that wittingly or unwittingly turn “Nigeria into a fragile state” (Oluwo & Chanie, 2016, p. 1, 4-5), is the knowledge gap which this article hopes to bridge.

Circulation of the Elite Theory: A Framework

This study adopts the Circulation of the Elite Theory, propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1848 – 1923) to clarify the conception, construction, and use of power interactions in contemporary Nigerian society as its theoretical framework. The theory holds that power is firm because the elite is organized while the non-elite are different and defenseless, the interests of the elites are integrated because of their shared social class, statuses and the clarifying criteria of power is the position of influence within the formal institution (Deric, 2011). Pareto argues that his conviction that man is unequally endowed accounts for the varieties that manifest in the superior class (the elites), and the inferior class (non-elites), into which human capacities are categorized. The elite theory emphasizes that a group of individuals that permeates the spectrum of society holds and wields an incomparable capacity to capture power, maintain it, and govern (Friedrich, 2014; Okonofua, 2013), usually at the expense of the majority. Elite theory rests on two major sets of thoughts. While power resides in the hands of a few critical individuals who direct political, economic, and military interests, the emotional distinction between the elite and the mass public is the possession of intelligence, skills, and networks with the operators of government affairs (Ekundayo, 2017). Pareto identifies two classes of the elite – the lions (*oselu*) who demonstrate some striking utilitarian political values reminiscent of applied loyalty and reformist character by superimposing societal interests on personal interests and the foxes (*ojelu*) who represent the exact reversal of the former by conspiring, being incredibly distrustful, covetous, and self-seeking such that they appropriate every imaginable advantage due to the people for their parochial interests.

Results

Formation of the Nigerian Elite

The elite is a nebulous social category having no specific parameters to isolate its members who manipulate the destiny of a country (McCartney & Zaidi, 2019). The conceptual complexity of the elite poses an issue (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017) and predisposes it to numerous descriptive ways of analysis (Howard & Kenway, 2015). It is specifically so in the context of “...space (global versus local), time (old versus new), or field (political versus cultural)” (Hoyer, 2022, p.2). Hafner-Burton et al. (2013) define the elite as “the small number of decision-makers who occupy the top

positions in social and political structures” (p. 369). USIP (2023) conceives the elite as persons or assemblies with disproportionate political control, prosperity, or influence on policy choices or their execution. The mechanisms of elite reproduction acknowledge the hereditary norm, cooptation, and other processes that successfully transform financial, social, or cultural capital into political capital (Raciborski, 2007). If the Weberian position still holds, then the intellectuals will drive the formation of democratic institutions, such as an “aristocracy” (Michels, 2015, p. 536), which is the advanced phase of the elite group.

The unique Nigerian cultural context overlooks the exotic admission criteria for rustic grassroots political key role players in the likes of rustic late Lamidi Adedibu, the strongman of Ibadan politics. Sometimes, politicians temporarily without formal positions command prestige and authority in their area of political influence. For this reason, the resource of political power is not always institutionalized (Wesolowski, 2000). This admission loophole probably offered Adedibu the effortless celebratory entry into Nigerian elitism which was neither accessed on achieved nor ascriptive, but coercive negotiatory parameters. However, sociology acknowledges that some individuals who do not have the requisite intellectual merit sometimes become members of the elite through ascription. In this direction, some Nigerian elite have constructed an ascriptive pathway for their children into elitism. This improvised route complements its compositional criteria and destroys a specific social analysis (Kertzer, 2020). It also imports a measure of oddity into the context. Talent and effort should blend, instead of being sacrificed, to access leadership (Littler, 2013). This logic invalidates the eminence of ascription in leadership recruitment to glorify the transition from the “old elite” – whom they were by inheritance – to a “new elite” accessed by personal fitness and competence– who they become (Jahan & Hamid, 2019). Therefore, the profile of the new entrants into the elite group is anchored on acquired knowledge and intellectual capacity (Mason-Bish, 2019), most often.

Using Nigerians’ assessment of politicians in the context of palliative management following subsidy withdrawal, Nigerians distrust politicians. The politicians and not the individuals living in poverty would take advantage of the palliative intervention if completely left in the hands of politicians (Nigeria Labor Congress & Trade Union Congress, 2023). Kwara state has a palliative committee including the police, traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society organizations, security agencies, and community leaders (Ajakaye, 2023). This Kwara model can be replicated across Nigeria to make the vulnerable population access the fuel subsidy palliative provided the committee members are not members of the ruling political party. Ten bags of rice are allocated to each of the 177 wards in Ekiti (Boluwade, 2023). The inadequacy of the palliative provision itself symbolizes a kind of inbuilt corruption. Oguntoyinbo (2023) contended that some unscrupulous government officials will hijack the disbursement process to make the palliatives elude the poorest of the poor. Most disappointingly, the Rural Community Development Outreach has exposed some experienced politicians planning to hijack the palliative funds and use online media of foreign personnel to manipulate those who dare to deride the elite and their godfathers to scuttle inclusive development focus of subsidy palliative (Ezenekwe & Mohammed, 2023).

The Arewa Consultative Forum describes the federal government’s palliative of N5 billion to Lagos, Oyo, Kano, and Bayelsa states as unrealistic and unscientific for treating states with differential demographic characteristics as being equal (Muhammad-Baba, 2023). Rather than disbursing the palliatives to the states in a suicidal Father Christmas manner, the government should address wage increases, focus on agriculture, and support farmers in food production (Sani, 2023). N-Power, Trader Moni, Market Moni, and the use of N500 million to feed school children during the COVID-19 lockdown are some government interventions that have failed transparency tests (Edeh, 2023). Being a large institution within which the presence of bad eggs

who might commit blunders cannot be overlooked, the government is vicariously liable (Ngelale, 2023). Given all these evident moral inadequacies of the elite, Nigerians cannot trust the elite to disburse the palliative without equity problems. This is not to say that the Nigerian elite are generically bad or good. However, the extent of fairness or unfairness that they can display in sustaining the people's interests could facilitate their informed classification. The way the elite migrate from party A to B appears to give the impression that, in reality, the distinction between the elite exists more in name than deeds and principles.

There is a need to evolve a definition that unpacks all these confounding antics of political actors without failing to resonate with the local cultural realities of Nigeria. Therefore, this article holds the elite as a predatory, exclusive group with self-assured pedigree and heuristic exposure to manipulate the asphyxiated majority, compromise their collective resources, and predispose them to perpetual multidimensional poverty. It is at this point of differentiating between the variants of the elite in the context of their altruism or lack of it that the classification of the elite makes some sense in Nigeria. Therefore, based on the role that the elite play in identifying, protecting, describing, and determining vital public concerns and settling what and who should obtain precedence vis-à-vis others (Nzube, 2018) elite classification becomes germane. This article relies on insights from Pareto's typologies of the elite to railroad the local genre of the elite into mainstream academic literature. Nigeria has many discrete ethnic nationalities. Yoruba is one of the three most concentrated ethnic nationalities from where the article has borrowed two political concepts *Oselu* and *Ojelu* for adoption.

The Paretoan foxes come closer in terms of conceptual similarity to *oselu* in the Yoruba language. Just as the Paretoan foxes seemed to overtake their competitors using superior collaborative skills and persuasion rather than the use of oppression or aggression, the *oselu* elite is committed to fairer means of attaining their goals and sharing their rewards. Conversely, the Paretoan lions were populist, just like their *ojelu* equivalent in Nigeria, which favored one-dimensional inflexible action instead of concession. They are rigidly committed to self-interest. If there is a genre of the elite that is considered morally good in the Nigerian context, it is the *oselu*; it logically follows that at its polar extreme, an implicitly morally hostile counterpart in the *ojelu* elite exists as it does in Nigeria. Even when the fact of the contending presence of the two variants in Nigeria's political ecology cannot be denied, democracy encourages the electorates to choose from the two options.

Therefore, the "prolonged struggle for dominion between two factions" within the political system (Michels, 1962, p. 102) manifest as the *oselu* (the system supporting) and *ojelu* (the system compromising) elite in Nigeria. However, both classes pursue exclusionary politics, and their differing associations with brutality result in pitiable development consequences (Ezeajughu, 2021) for the country. This theoretical interrogation can provide useful insights into the conflicting roles that the elite play to predispose Nigerians to stable development and public safety or a lack of both. The elite became so fixated with the mentality that the creator made Nigeria for them to rule eternally. "Nigeria cannot break up because the elites are united...the ordinary Nigerians...are burdened by poverty...that they cannot even organize for the break-up of the country" (Lamido 2021). Most probably out of mischief, Lamido referred to section 2(1) of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) which says that "Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state..." to back his indivisibility theory without linking it up with Chapter 11, section 13 of the same constitution which enjoins the elite, in the fundamental objectives and Directive principles of state policy, to steer national development through good governance (Uzodinma, 2017).

The description and classification of the individuals and groups that come together to constitute the elite in Nigeria is vague just as Salman (2023) finds it in Pakistan probably because of its

universal conceptual nebulosity. The elite is, more frequently, a product of predominantly affluent families having members who may have hobnobbed with the holders of elite positions or personally occupied them in earlier generations. Due to their operational idiosyncrasy, the elite have customarily been classified as occupying the zenith in social pyramids relative to simultaneous placement with other groups (Jahan & Hamid, 2019), that were probably relegated to the nadir. The stigma of incompetence that characterizes elitism in Nigeria has earned the elite members the notorious cabal identifier. In truth, individuals might spend eternity and strength denying their opportunity and exclusive status (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2017), the idea of denial that causes a redefinition of elite belongingness without elitist emotions (Krauz-Lahav & Kemp, 2020), does not change its contents and realities.

The elite group is typically made up of less than one percent of the overall Nigerian population (Odubajo & Alabi, 2014). While the elite who can be classified as *oselu* embrace shared thoughts about normative behavior (Zvobgo, 2020) undergirding development and security, the elite who typify *ojelu* capture power for their narrow interests (Kieh, 2018). Both *oselu* and *ojelu* groups negotiate and renegotiate political boundaries ostensibly to increase inclusion for electoral victory to improve society, but in reality, they attempt to access a political route out of poverty. This manifests in their reckless interparty migration at the slightest provocation. Therefore, their laying siege to public interest comes with differing levels of hostility, depending on the kind of elite. Perhaps this concern might have predisposed the Nigerian elite to incapacity for a consensus not only to improve Nigeria but also to stop itself from devastation (Osinbajo, 2020). Therefore, in the elite bargains, both camps are committed to negotiation and re-negotiation of the power-sharing formula and resource distribution between elites (Denney & Barron, 2015; Laws, 2012). While the few transparency-loving Nigerians applaud the *oselu* and condemn *ojelu*, the corruption-embracing majority across Nigeria belittle the virtues of the former and extol the vices of the latter for their parochial interests.

Mudde & Kaltwasser (2017) have helped to drive the message of the conceptual dichotomy between *oselu* and *ojelu* further home when they conjectured a stark boundary between the “two homogeneous and antagonistic camps as ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’” (p. 6). However, the way politicking is structured in Nigeria makes political settlement drive who gets what, between *oselu* and *ojelu*, and in what proportion as a result of political “godfatherism” (Isaac, 2005, p. 79–105) and its intervention in the electoral process. When societies undergo rapid transformation, they release impacts that disintegrate traditional arrangements before new associations with socially constructive functions replace them and are prepared to stand in their place. Consequently, a group of displaced persons emerges. These are persons removed from their old positions of former authority. When the normal routes to political influence are blocked to such individuals who are not conventionally qualified, anomie recruitment occurs (Apter, 1959, p. 117). In 2022, Musiliu Akinsanya, aka MC Oluomo, who up to then was the Chairman of the Lagos State Parks and Garages Management dramatically became a member of the APC Presidential Campaign Council (Omisore, 2022). In a video, MC Oluomo told Igbo people who did not want to vote for the party in the Lagos governorship election should stay at home. Due to public outcry online, he recanted the threat. “We have begged them. If they don’t want to vote for us, it is not a fight” (Akinsanya, 2023). Imagine if public reactions were not heavily tilted against the threat, his group might have resorted to violence or provocative acts to enable MC Oluomo and his cohorts to access political elitism in Lagos.

Elite's Interactions with Citizens that Threaten Development and Public Safety in Nigeria

This section chronicles how the elite's interactions with the public threaten development and public safety in Nigeria. Despite the "moral mediocrity" of the public and the "moral excellence" of the elite (Ortega & Gasset, 1945, p. 125), the latter is encumbered by their "political inefficacy" (Pennati, 1959, p. np) to depict Nigeria as the most classic example of the African paradox of a land of abundance with the majority living in poverty (Ezekwesili, 2013). By performance, nearly all the political office holders, since independence to date, have clandestinely conspired against the Nigerian project to covert collective patrimony to the advantage of a few (Sote, 2022). Therefore, the elite will most likely sabotage any policies or institutional transformations that might threaten their power or control over resources (USIP, 2023). As of 2022, Nigeria was the world's 15th largest oil producer and 16th largest producer of natural gas liquids (Energy Institute, 2023). Through the elite's poor governance, they allowed Nigeria to slide to the unenviable status of being the world capital of poverty, with 71 million people living in extreme poverty (Cole, 2023). Faced with this ugly reality, the elite in successive governments have intervened in the stimulation of non-oil businesses. The failure of their efforts, in this regard, has made diversification inevitable (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2021). Regrettably, however, the way the elite have mismanaged the non-oil space makes household farming which the citizens fell back on incapable of suitably lifting them out of poverty (World Bank, 2022).

The elite indulges in all forms of illegal mining activities to endanger ecological richness. Some Kokota International Airport officials in Ghana, in June 2021 intercepted 978 bars of gold, valued at about 8.2 billion naira (£14.5m). The gold allegedly belonged to Abdulaziz Abubakar Yari, the former Governor of Zamfara State (Igwe, 2021). The January 16, 2024 explosion that ravaged some parts of Ibadan was traced to some unnamed dishonest Nigerian and foreign miners (Makinde, 2024). How long it will take the government to use kinetic and non-kinetic measures to unmask the powerful Nigerians behind illegal mining and terrorist activities in Nigeria (Alake, 2023) for prosecution remains conjectural. Across the world, harvesting the organs of human beings is a crime. Ike Ekweremadu, a senior lawmaker in Nigeria and former Deputy Senate President was apprehended alongside his wife and his doctor in the UK for attempting to harvest the kidney of a young adult Nigerian male at £7,000 and a job in exchange for traveling to the UK (Mohamed, 2023). These three Nigerians have been jailed in the United Kingdom for conspiracy to ensure the travel of a man to harvest his organs in 2023 (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2023).

The sum of \$2 billion was said to have been stolen from the National Security Budget under the watch of National Security Advisor, Colonel Sambo Dasuki (BBC News, 2015). Across the board, between 1960 and 2005, about \$20 trillion was stolen from the treasury by public office holders, according to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (Vanguard Newspaper of March 20, 2015). In 2007, the EFCC announced that it had built watertight cases against 30 state governors. However, none has been successfully convicted and sent to jail. Most telling was the N32.8 billion Police Pension Fund theft trial of John Yakubu Yusufu. Despite his admission of fraud, he walked out of court free after paying a paltry N750,000 in fines (Bellanaija, 2013). On appeal, probably due to public outcry and interest, the Court of Appeal jailed the pension thief for six years, and a fine of N22.9bn was imposed on him (The Punch of January 29, 2013). The United States FBI (2022) accused Senator Chimaroke Nnamani, the Governor of Enugu state between May 1999 and May 2007, of having looted and laundered \$41.8 million. After establishing that Nnamani did not lawfully earn enough to justify the millions of dollars he possessed, he ordered the forfeiture of his assets to the US government (Acker, 2022).

The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) accused Jolly Nyame, the former Governor of Taraba State, of diverting N1.64 billion in May 2007. A High Court of the Federal

Capital Territory sentenced him to 14 years in correctional service, and the court ordered him to refund the sum so diverted (Banjoko, 2023). Switzerland refunded \$500m of Mr Abacha's loot, but the refund was re-looted (Ojo, 2019). Imagine Owelle Rochas Okorochoa, the former Imo State Governor, was accused of money laundering. Senator Theodore Orji, who was Governor of Abia between 2007 and 2015, and Chinedum Orji Enyinnaya, his son, were accused of diverting state funds while he was governor (The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, 2021). These are a few of the instances in which the elite conspiracy served as a crafty manipulation of the system to convert the collective patrimony to the advantage of the elite (Sule, 2022).

For the State Executives to serve the ends of justice, sections 175 and 212 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) empower the president to judiciously and judicially exercise the dispensation of justice. The elite abused these statutory provisions. Governor Adekunle Ajasin of Ondo State granted pardon to his party members, who were said to have committed arson. Governor Bola Ige of Oyo State pardoned convicted Eniola Atanda. The Chief Judge of Anambra State sentenced Obi Okongwu, the then Solicitor-General of Anambra State to 21 days imprisonment. The then Governor of Anambra State, Chief Jim Nwobodo issued two instruments, one for remission and the other for pardon under the provision of the 1979 Constitution. Okongwu immediately regained his freedom (Ekwenze, 2014). A court convicted Alhaji Salisu Buhari, Speaker of the House of Representatives, for forgery, altering, and perjury and sentenced to a term. Chief Obasanjo granted him a hasty state pardon in 2000 (Kupoluyi, 2013). President Goodluck Jonathan pardoned Alamieyeseigha (Emelike, 2022). President Buhari controversially pardoned Joshua Dariye of Plateau State and Jolly Nyame of Taraba State, who were convicted and jailed for theft of public funds in 2018 even before serving half the length of their jail terms, in April 2022 (Isaac, 2023).

The elite are instrumental in budgetary injustice that provides about three percent of the Nigerian population in the National Assembly to earn more than 70 percent of the budget is sad. The reverse of this ugly practice is true in Scandinavian countries (Tor, 2022). Farouk Lawan, the former member of the House of Representatives and Chairman of the House Ad-hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy Probe was found guilty of receiving the sum of \$3 million from the Chairman of Zenon Petroleum and Gas Ltd, Femi Otedola, to clear his company in the fuel subsidy probe which the House of Reps initiated on 2012 (Otaluka, 2021). Peter Nwaoboshi was a Delta State Senator who was sentenced to seven years in prison by the Lagos Division of the Court of Appeal for money laundering, he had used Golden Touch Construction Project Limited and Suiming Electrical Limited, his companies, to launder money in 2022. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) accused the lawmaker of using 11 companies as fronts to secure for himself a N3.6 billion contract in the commission in 2021 (Uwajaren, 2021). Albert Bassey Akpan was the Senator who represented Akwa Ibom North-East Senatorial District at the National Assembly. A Federal High Court in Uyo, the state capital, convicted and sentenced him to 42 years imprisonment for money laundering (Okeke, 2021).

When infrastructure is in a state of decay, it increases the cost of production, affects competitiveness, and adds hassles to business operations (Ajibola, 2020). In recent times, stock market instability has prevented Nigeria from being a destination for foreign investors in the last quarter of the year before (Egbo, 2020). Following the investigation by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety) of the killings in Nigeria, it reported over 100,000 unarmed and defenseless Nigerians who were directly or indirectly extrajudicially killed in the past eight years. On average, yearly deaths outside the law of 12,500, 1,050 per month, and 35 unlawful deaths per day. The report added that the security forces of Nigeria would not achieve the security of

lives and property if the Federal Government maintained its present posture (Umeagbalasi & Udegbunam, 2024).

The negligent way the elite have handled power generation for industrial and agricultural uses made most Nigerian manufacturing industries comatose because of inadequate and epileptic electric power supply to galvanize economic production (Sote, 2022). The unemployment rate among youth aged between fifteen and twenty-four years in Q2 2023 was 7.2%; in Q1 2023, it was 6.9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Strangely, kidnappers went to Emure in Ekiti and took five pupils and four staff members of Apostolic Faith Group of Schools on whom N100m ransom on Monday, January 30, 2024, was demanded. The kidnap between December 11, 2020, and March 11, 2021, three months, of about 800 school children in Katsina, Kankara, Kagara, Jengebe, and Kaduna (Lakemfa, 2021) is a national embarrassment. Furthermore, gunmen had killed two traditional rulers in Ekiti –the Onimojo of Imojo, Oba Olatunde Olusola, and the Elesun of Esun Ekiti, Oba Babatunde Ogunsakin. The attack on school pupils was the handiwork of Boko Haram which is naturally opposed to Western education (Hassan, 2024).

The literature acknowledges some adverse micro and macroeconomic implications of fuel subsidy removal for the inflation rate to increase (Mohammed, Ahmed & Adedeji, 2020). While some studies suggest that the savings from fuel subsidy removal could benefit other segments of the economy (Ogunode, Ahmed & Olugbenga, 2023), other empirical evidence indicates that fuel subsidy escalates fiscal deficit and supports the removal of fuel subsidy (Harun et al., 2018; Adagunodo, 2022). One microeconomic implication of the fuel subsidy removal is that the forces of demand and supply will determine the price of petrol, or Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) (Su et al., 2020), rather than subsidy or government intervention. It is tragic that since the fuel subsidy regime started, the domestic refineries of Nigeria have been in a bad state (Okongwu & Imoisi, 2022). Fuel subsidy in Nigeria had to go because it was economic cannibalism (Lawal & Agwu, 2022). If fuel subsidy removal is an investment in the people, the government could use its proceeds to support those living in poverty in developing countries (Couharde & Mouhoud, 2020). To the elite, the Nigerian treasury is akin to the proverbial *eja abuubutan* (the inexhaustible fish) from which they have been stealing in the hope that it will never finish. Now, the elite have resorted to foreign loans that they have also started to loot. The ignoble conduct of the elite must have prompted Obasanjo (2024) to confess that the past and present Nigerian leaders have disappointed themselves, disappointed Africa, disappointed the black race, and disappointed the world. In consequence, therefore, the frustrated boy in a viral video has suggested a mass burial for all the complicit Nigerian leaders (richdaddy75, 2017).

Converting the Elite into Positive Tools of Development and Public Safety in Nigeria

This section examines the steps the public policy can take to reverse the development and public safety disasters with which Nigeria grapples. Uzodinma (2017) identifies the constitutional mandate that the elite have to achieve in Nigeria: "...add value to the lives of the people of Nigeria... by creating employment opportunities for the people, improving on infrastructural facilities ... initiating policies that can grow the economy and enhancing the security of lives and property ... (p.15). Imagine, due to the elite's boundless wastefulness, Transparency International (TI) ranks Nigeria among the most corrupt domains in the world in its 2022 Corruption Perception Index (Punch Editorial Board, 2023). For Nigeria to make progress, we need to emphasize merit, competence, and performance to bring the best citizens in this country to do the job and hold them to account (Sanusi, 2020). In Islamabad, Imran Khan, a former Prime Minister serving a three-year jail term for fraud, has again been sentenced to another ten years in prison for revealing official secrets by a Pakistani court (The Associated Press, 2024). Similarly, in South Africa, ex-

president Jacob Zuma was sentenced to 15 months for disregarding a court order to testify at an inquiry into corruption during his tenure (Al Jazeera, 2022). There must be punishment for criminality. Nothing is normative about the theft of public funds. Therefore, Nigerians can no longer tolerate it.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022) reported that 33.3 percent of Nigerians are unemployed, therefore, predisposing Nigeria to a low standard of living, an increase in crime rate, low national income, and a high rate of dependency that discourages education, and leads to under-employment (Udeuhele et al., 2022). To avoid the unpleasant effects of unemployment, public policy should sustainably strengthen vocational training programs; encourage public-private partnerships beyond the customary sloganeering; invest responsibly in technology and innovation; promote entrepreneurship commitment; enhance accessible education; and establish networking platforms (Ariyo, 2023). The Federal Government lost nearly N797.8 billion to waivers and questionable concessions between 2011 and 2013. The reckless concessions that have had their toll on the economy did not have any impacts on the revenue-generating capacity of government agencies (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). To address the inherent inequity in the Nigerian tax system so that unscrupulous foreign investors and local accomplices do not compromise the Nigerian tax system, individuals who independently struggle to survive in harsh economic circumstances should not be subject to indiscriminate taxes and levies. The collection and extortion of taxes/levies/charges by agencies of government from members of the public, without offering services that are commensurate to these numerous charges in their justification, is completely reckless and fraudulent (Gbemre, 2014).

In all parts of Nigeria, fuel price has risen intolerably while power outage has become the norm (Oxfam, 2017). Monetary and non-monetary palliatives should be instituted and equitably managed to provide short and long-term relief for vulnerable populations in the country. Products' adulteration has made an incredible proportion of Nigerians vulnerable to kidney failure. To this end, Obasanjo (2024) suggests an urgent legislative intervention to support people with kidney diseases in Nigeria as a temporary solution. To save more lives, he recommends that Nigeria should introduce pre-employment and insurance screening to bring in more individuals for early detection. The bulk of the non-oil exports of Nigeria are connected to agriculture, which contributed 19.63% to nominal GDP in the first quarter of 2023 (NBS, 2023). Many Nigerians who engage in agriculture have abandoned it because of insecurity. For agriculture to prevent food insecurity, the elite should guarantee public security. Nigeria needs to be rescued from the claws of its foreign-backed avaricious captors. (Jega, 2022). There should be no immunity for any public officeholder. Moreover, the judiciary should be holistically independent. The annual declaration of public officers' assets should be a mandatory official ritual (Faloore, 2023).

The prohibitive cost of governance in Nigeria is shameful (Soludo, 2013). As a result, public consensus on the subject favors a significant reduction in the cost of governance. Public policy should urgently upgrade the protection of schoolchildren against terrorism and create an obvious sense of security for Nigerian schoolchildren...to learn the values of counter-terrorism skills (Ayodele, 2019). By the present projection, in 25 years, Nigeria's population will be over 400 million. The fossil fuel that Nigeria relies on today as revenue may no longer be there. The public focus should be on the post-oil economy. Except the economy is realistically diversified, the source of food for 400 million people may become a spectacular issue. Nigeria needs to embark on value reorientation, otherwise, the country might become a failed state sooner than later (Falola, 2024)

Having recognized that the legacy of not having an integrated infrastructural master plan is poor public policy on infrastructure (Ayogu, 2019), policymakers should efficiently bridge that

gap. To prevent insecurity and infrastructural decay from scaring investors from Nigeria, Lemo (2021) suggested that public policy should make Nigeria recapture its rightful place that has already been taken over by Ghana, Egypt, and Kenya as more attractive destinations for foreign investors. Concerning infrastructural equipment, Ajibola (2020) reminded Nigeria that just as insecurity deters investment from hampering the future of business operations, infrastructural decay escalates the cost of production, affects competition, and erodes companies' feasibility. To redress these integrated disasters, Banjo (2021) advised that the elite in Nigeria need a paradigm shift in their attitude to nation-building to qualify as ideal role models for the younger citizens. Re-bordering the traditional placement of the elite in the social space can alter the perception of people about its objective and significance (Krauz-Lahav & Kemp, 2020). The elite project can be nonviolently reframed for wider social approval if the cooptation of meritocracy or egalitarianism is intellectualized for inclusion. This development is more so because "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich." (Kennedy, 1961). It is hoped that this will help Lamido's (2021) indivisibility theory to be cognizant of the norms of inclusivity and egalitarianism for sustainable national development.

Restructure, on its own, does not have the potency to address the systemic anomalies in Nigeria's system. The 'politics of turn-by-turn Nigeria' should not be discontinued because it cannot enable the escape of individuals from poverty (Olurode, 2022). The elite has weaponized religion for their selfish interests. While some people prefer to grow rice, and others to grow Sharia, then, both sides should be given the means to develop. Restructuring Nigeria will enable individuals to pursue their choices without let or hindrance (Soyinka, 2022). For Nigeria to be stable, progressive, and development-friendly, refinement of its current federal structure, and improvement or its restructuring is desirable (Adebanjo, 2022). A return of Nigeria to fiscal federalism can effectively strengthen the confederating units to address insecurity through the development of altruistic political initiatives to fix the dilapidated security and infrastructure architectures and even create new ones (Benjamin, 2013). Today, the rat race to develop efficiency to access global capital in a global economy where competitive investment advantage goes to safe environments for rewarding outcomes compels the government to pay more attention to security (Lemo, 2021). In light of this, Ajibola (2020) suggested that the government should intensify efforts, especially in the areas of insecurity and provision of electricity because they affect the cost of operation which is ultimately passed on to the consumers. The elite should speak up to the protracted security challenges that confront the country (Osinbajo, 2021). For inclusion, "Nigeria belongs to us all and no part of the country should be left in doubt about their place in this union on any basis whatsoever, ethnic, religious, language, region, culture or social standing" (Obasanjo, 2023).

Conclusion

In this article, we contend that the elite can be a positive instrument of development and public safety if their abundant resources are rightly channeled. To make this theoretical assumption resonate with the contextual realities, the article examines the formation of Nigeria's elite, the way the elite interaction threatens development and public safety in Nigeria, and suggests how the infrastructural thoughts of the elite of Nigeria could be redirected towards development and public safety. It adopts Vilfredo Pareto's theory of the circulation of elites to explain how the Nigerian project became a victim of the Nigerian elite who control the means of production, state apparatus, revenue allocation, sharing of the resources, dictate the rhythm of security, and infrastructural progress. Though the paper argues that the elite is to blame for the insecurity and infrastructural deficit in Nigeria, it suggests a paradigm shift that will enable the elite to use what Nigeria has to develop and secure the country. Furthermore, the article acknowledges

the responses of some elite members to the sanitization of the Nigerian polity against financial corruption and their abysmal failure in these contexts.

In light of available data, this article suggests that mass education should replace political egoism (*ojelu*) with altruism (*oselu*) in Nigeria for sustainable development and public safety. For security to herald infrastructural development in Nigeria, judicial independence-driven social justice is a sine qua non. Given empirical evidence in the literature, this article suggests that the cost of governance should be reduced to allow attention for other sectors; the country and its politics should be reformed to allow the inclusion of public-spirited individuals for participation; government business should be demystified such that no one runs any risk when the business of government is critically appraised; primordial interests should be precluded from the political space; recruitment into public offices should be by merit to banish nepotism from Nigeria; the national independent electoral commission should be holistically independent; terrorism negatively impacts agricultural production and complicates the rising inflation in Nigeria. Therefore, it should be crushed. The youth and women should be exposed to entrepreneurial empowerment to set the two vulnerable sub-populations free from multidimensional poverty. In response to the social demand approach, public education, health, social protection, and development should be suitably addressed. Leakages should be plugged to reduce the impact of corruption on development and public safety in Nigeria.

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