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Nigeria on the margins of revolution, 1993-2023

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Abstract

Dire poverty, extreme economic hardship, injustice, nepotism, religious intolerance, and lack of equal opportunities among others have always been the harbingers for revolutions across the world. These indices have prompted the Glorious Revolution in England, the French Revolution, the American Revolution, and other recent ones such as the Iranian Revolution, the Arab Spring and the Facebook Revolution in Egypt. An examination of Nigerian history, particularly in the last five decades, would reveal situations of economic hardship, deprivation, and scarce and grossly unequal opportunities. While there have been series of protests and civil uprisings, the severe situations have not resulted into full-blown violence revolution in the country. This paper seeks to examine the history of protests and socio-political uprising in Nigeria's recent history. It interrogates the factors that have prevented the development of the extreme situations into violence revolution in the country. Through the lens of historical scholarship, the study adopts a qualitative methodology of research where information collated from extant literature, contents analysis of media reports, the internet, and personal experiences of the authors are distilled to foreground the basic arguments. The study recommends the need for the Nigerian government to ensure economic development and equal opportunities to prevent the outbreak of a violence revolution.

Keywords: *Civil Uprising, Deprivation, Economic Hardship, Nigeria, Revolution*

Introduction

The agitation for self-determination arising from poverty, political marginalization, resources control, value deprivation, insecurity, and human rights abuses have persisted in Nigeria. Aside from the aborted Biafran war of secession (1967-1970), several other uprisings in Nigeria were limited in time and space. Many of the uprisings failed to fulfil the cause and characteristics of a full-fledged revolution. Some of the major recent uprisings and protests witnessed in Nigeria included the 1993 general election debacle, the sharia

law tension in the north, the subsidy removal brouhaha in 2012, and the End-SARS protests in 2020. These and many others were violent attempts to stem an existing order and demand for structural change in the country. Like many other societies across the globe, revolts in Nigeria have historical antecedents. The country's history is replete with series of mass movements against government policies and programmes. During the early part of the twentieth century, revolts in Nigeria included the protest against the introduction of water rate within the colony of Lagos in 1908, and the protests against women taxation and marginalisation in politics which resulted into the famous Aba Women Riot of 1929 and the Abeokuta Women's Revolt of 1947 respectively (Olusanya, 1980). In the post-colonial period, situations of discontentment over leadership style and corrupt practices have further warranted revolts and insurrections eventually leading to the military intervention and eventually the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war. The adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and the disappointment and untold economic hardships it imposed on the average Nigerian also generated discontents and protests within the various spectrum of the country in 1989.

1993 was a watershed in the annals of the evolution of the Nigerian state. The abrupt suspension of a popular democratic process was not only a peak of disappointment, but sparked a massive revolt against the government (Okorie, 2020). For months, socio-economic and political activities were paralysed making Nigeria a place of global cynosure (Nwosu, 2017; Babarinsa, 2015). Subsequently, government ineptitude and anti-masses policies have continued to engineer discontent, protests, and revolts. In 2023, for instance, the introduction of some reforms in the banking sector imposed severe hardships on the people. Series of annoyance protests and arson were witnessed in the country. However, these extreme situations have often failed to degenerate into full-fledged nationwide violence revolution. This paper seeks to unravel the peculiar situations that have made the country remained coalesced. To foreground the basic discussions, the next section of the paper engages in conceptual and theoretical discourses.

Conceptual and Theoretical Discourses

The word "revolution" literarily connotes "a return to a previous state of affair". But since the French Revolution, the concept has assumed a modern meaning which connotes the overthrow of an established order involving the transfer of state power from one leadership to another. Modern revolution may involve a radical restructuring of the social and economic relations among the different components of a state. Though revolutions may occur in a spontaneous manner, their causes are usually long in gestation and

may have both domestic and international roots. One of the major features of revolutions is that their processes always include elite competitions and mass mobilization. The outcomes of revolution always differ from the original objectives of the revolutionaries. It is difficult to identify when revolutions begin and end. There are different types of revolutions and one can identify political and social revolutions. A political revolution produces changes in the character of both state power and personnel. It continues until the monopoly of control and force of the old is broken and a new hegemonic group reconstitutes the sovereign power of the state. Social revolutions are far reaching and usually involve socio-political transformation, class struggle, and the pressure for radical change from the masses. However, this mobilization may be manipulated by other to achieve selective objectives which may be opposed to those of the popular classes. For revolutions to be successful, series of things must come into alignment. These may include the strategy, the organization, the leadership, and the resilience of the masses. In 1859, Karl Marx described revolutions as “the locomotives of history” (See Malia, 2006). This explains the recurrence of change in the historical evolution of man and societies. Looking at revolution from the realm of the political economy, Karl Marx sees it as the new modes of production which were generated within the confines of the existing ones such as the transition from feudalism to capitalism and to socialism. According to this assertion, revolutions were caused by the development within a mode of production and a contradiction between the social forces and social relations of production. This is expressed in class conflict which brought about what Marx termed ‘the epoch of social revolution.’ To this end, each pre-revolutionary class developed consciousness through economic and political struggles against the existing dominant class. The result would produce a new relation of production and the accompanying ideological forms, and the eventual establishment of hegemony by the triumphant revolutionary class. Another approach describes revolution as the socio-political crises which are produced by the dislocation of modernization. According to Tocqueville, revolution occurred when the expectations for positive change are dashed in the society. A modern version of this description is the J-Curve Hypothesis which place emphasis on the anticlockwise direction of expectations (Davies; 1978; Rahman and ibn Mohd Yasid, 2022). However, according to the functionalists, revolutions are profoundly antisocial. Chalmers Johnson in his *Revolutionary Change* (1982), for instance, termed revolution as dysfunctional event which must be avoided. It is believed that political authority was legitimized by social consensus and so long as this consensus persisted, governments could make necessary adjustments or radical reforms to prevent revolutionary situations.

A good number of theories have been formulated for the outbreak of revolutions across the globe.

Frustration-Aggression Theory is one of the paradigms that have been used to explain the causes of revolution (Van Der Dennen, 2005; Freeman, 1972). This theory draws inspiration from psychology and sees the roots of revolutions in the state of mind of the masses. It considered revolutions to occur only when the masses enter a mental state of frustration or deprivation relative to some set of goals. Scholars in this school suggested sources of such frustration or relative deprivation to include long-term effects of modernization and urbanization, short-term economic reversals, and the systematic closure of political or economic opportunities to selected ethnic or economic groups. A careful examination of the Nigerian economy and polity, particularly since independence, would reveal a similitude of the factors suggested by this theory as prompting revolution. The school agrees that the essential defining factor in a revolutionary situation is widespread frustration with the current political-economic environment.

Structural-Functionalist Theory is another popular theoretical explanation for revolution in the societies. The theory draws inspiration from sociology. Scholars in this school approached societies as systems whose smooth functioning depends on maintaining an equilibrium both in the total flow of demands and between the system and its environment, and between the various sub-systems (such as polity, economy, status, and culture) that make up the social system (Ardalan and Ardalan, 2020). Thus, any disturbance that severely impairs the equilibrium of demand and resource flows in a society leaves that society in a state of disequilibrium or dysfunction in which it is unstable, or prone to revolution. Few different sources of dysfunction were suggested, such as the impact of technology and modernization on the demands and resources of the various sub-systems; or exogenous changes in values (such as the growth of new religion or ideology); change in the distribution of power among the elites in the various sub-systems; or merely incompatible changes in the various sub-systems. All authors in this school agreed that the essential, defining factor of a revolutionary situation is a state of severe disequilibrium in the society. The aim of their analyses was to identify and explain those events that cause or influence systemic stress. Judging by diverse socio-economic indices, the situation of disequilibrium and unequal opportunities in Nigeria is not only severe but has continued to swell consistently in the last six decades.

The Interest-Group Theory derives inspiration from the traditions of pluralist school of political science, which sees events as the outcome of conflict between competing interest groups (Goldstone, 1980; Stone, 2017).

Revolution was therefore treated as the “ultimate” political conflict, in which the normal struggle between interest groups is escalated (by both the intensity of the conflict and the magnitude of resources that interest groups bring to bear) to the point where normal political processes for conflict mediation and resolution fail, and the political system in the notion of “multiple sovereignty”; that is, a situation in which (1) competing interest groups are so violently opposed on highly salient issues that their differences cannot be reconciled within the current political system, and (2) two or more competing groups have sufficient resources (political, financial, organizational, military) to establish “sovereignty” over a substantial political or military base, and thus seek to achieve their goals by force. Again, many patterns of events may give rise to such conditions. Tilly, for instance, noted that wars, economic modernization, urbanization, or changes in value systems or ideologies may all give rise to new interest groups, as well as change the balance of resources among competing groups (Tilly, 2017). For these authors, the essential, defining factor of a revolutionary situation was a combination of interest group conflict and resource control that exceed the capabilities for conflict mediation of the current political institutions. Political parties’ conflicts of interest and the prolonged agitation for resource control have been part and parcel of Nigeria’s political and socio-economic history.

According to the Intrusion of International Political and Economic Pressures School, revolution is often triggered by international political conflicts or by the impingement of the international capitalist markets on previously local agriculture (Armstrong, 1993). In short, the intrusion of international political and economic pressures may introduce incentives that bring states and landlords into opposition with basic aspects of the agrarian, economic, and political organization of their society, thus creating an impetus to revolutionary change. Since the mid-1980s, Nigerian has been seriously subsumed under the international capitalist economic system that have constrained national economic developed and promoted consistent discontent against government policies and programmes. The Coherence of the Armed Forces was propounded by scholars such as Goldstone (1980; 2001) as among the causes of revolution. This school emphasis the role of the armed forces in revolutionary crises. It demonstrated that revolution is impossible where the armed forces of a state are intact and effectively used. Thus, the conditions of military coherence and of structural constraints on the state’s use of armed remain a key issue. Since the birth of the fourth republic in Nigeria, the successive administrations have often adopted series of strategies to keep the military in sync with the government such as retiring the very senior officers and increase the salaries and allowances of the officers

at the different cadres. In the same vein, the military have often been used to suppress civil uprisings.

Protests and Civil Uprisings in Nigeria since 1993

The socio-political and economic history of Nigeria (since creation in 1914) has been inundated with series of protests, riots, and uprisings against government policies, regulations, proclamations, and programmes (Olusanya, 1980; Akintola, 2010; Ugwuja and Onyishi, 2023; Mbah, 2014). The press, church, political parties, community people and other elements constituted the forces of nationalist agitations and remonstrations against government unfavourable policies and programmes throughout the colonial period. While some pacific approaches were noticeable and adopted, there were occasions of violent protestations and radical approach, particularly during the period of decolonisation. The Zikist Movement, for instance, was a group of young nationalist enthusiasts with powerful youthful exuberance that adopted radical approach towards remonstrating their displeasure about colonial policies and regulations (Olusanya, 1966; Ekechi, 2001; Obi-Ani and Obi-Ani, 2015). The first and second republics in the post-colonial period as well as the staggered military regimes that lasted till 1999 also registered the outbreak of uprisings in selected parts of the country leading to breakdown of law and order and destruction of lives and properties in the affected areas. As socio-economic and political advantages became streamlined, the people became more resistance, unresponsive, and reactionary to government policies as their opinions were moulded by certain forces and elements (such as the civil society organisation and ethno-regional groupings) in various parts of the country.

Between 1967 and 1970, Nigeria passed through a turbulent period that shook the foundation and the fabrics of the pre-existing historical interconnection, interaction, and collaborations among the major sections that constituted the country. The country passed through a period of her litmus test, a similitude of what the United States underwent during the mid-nineteenth century, where it was divided into two warring parties and on the brink of dissolution. The 1970s that followed the civil war witnessed some form of tranquillity and progress in the country due to the oil boom that increased the gross national income tremendously, allowed for infrastructural development, created employment opportunities, and paved the way for salary improvement leading to increase in the per capital income (Obi and Iduh, 2011; Onouha and Elegbede, 2018). However, the economic misfortunes that were witnessed in the country starting from the beginning of the 1980s became strong factors precipitating palpable tension and anti-

government protests (pacific and violent). The adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in the mid-1980s further aggravated the situations. Apart from the economic problems, political miscalculations, self-centeredness, and the sit-tight-syndrome plummeted the country into serious political crisis that affected every aspect of the people lives. Nigerians were therefore ready for a political change that would transform personal and national socio-economic fortunes and proffer fundamental human rights.

The year 1993 was a watershed in annals of Nigeria's socio-political and economic evolution. It witnessed the most popular election in the annals of Nigeria's general elections attracting global attentions and interests. Coupled with the global trend towards military disengagement that encamped the 1990s, the prolonged stay of General Ibrahim Babangida (the self-acclaimed military President of the country) and his dramatist procrastination of the transition to democracy programme did not only heightened the expectations of the Nigerian masses for a political change but dramatically reduced political apathy to a level yet to be recorded in the history of the country's electioneering process (Uwaifo and Oni, 2019). The June 12 1993 election was, therefore, the climax of an eight years of protracted, expensive, controversial, and unstable transition programme of the Babangida's administration. The electioneering process got the most heightened national appeal and coverage in the history of the country, collapsing all the ethnic and religious bifurcations and other sectional and sentimental differences. The voting pattern that was adopted (Option A4) was not only unique in term of coordination and administration of materials, it offered a quick processing where casting and collation of votes were easily done and transmitted (even in an era where digital media and technology had very limited coverage). However, one of the most unfortunate scenarios transpired as the entire process was truncated and the results of the election was eventually annulled by a military fiat and media pronouncement on 23 June 1993, about two weeks after the voting processes had been concluded. Bogus, unfounded, and flimsy excuses were presented by the junta regime for the annulment (Ekanade and Odoemene, 2012; Nwosu, 2017; Fagbohun, 2013). The National Electoral Commission under the leadership of Professor Humphrey Nwosu refused to exercise the last stage towards completing the election and the internationally acclaimed winner of the election was not declared.

The hopes and aspirations of the Nigerian masses for a better life and socio-economic transformation were believed to have been dashed leading to massive protests that engulfed various parts of the country. Students of higher institutions, journalists, activists, and other concerned Nigerians from different walks of life took to the streets with protests and revolutionary

chants where series of bonfires, arsons, and roadblocks were implemented. Educational institutions, manufacturing outlets, small-scale and international markets, banking and financial institutions, health facilities and other socio-economic and political facilities were forcefully closed and the situation was degenerating into mass revolts of some sort. Hundreds of lives were lost. Nigeria at this juncture was over-ripe for a radical political change, revolution. In a re-enactment of the civil war experience, Nigerians (particularly those from the eastern parts) began to sojourn back to their ethnic base as they envisaged the situation would become a full-fledge revolution (Olowojulo et al, 2019; Johnson, 2017; Okorie, 2020). Uncertainty rented the atmosphere from the date of annulment till the announcement of “step-aside” by General Babangida in August 1993. Before the pronouncement, the military regime hastily imposed a restriction of movements in the major areas of protests activities in the south western part of the country which immediately contributed to the suppression of the agitations and prevented further degeneration of the situation into a full-fledge revolution. Fully armed soldiers were released from the different barracks across the country to quench the growing spate of civil disorderliness that have paralysed socio-economic activities and to monitor the restrictions. By certain parameters and juxtapositions, the June 12 debacle was viable enough to ignite revolution in Nigeria looking at some of the aforementioned theories of revolution, particularly the Frustration Aggression Theory. The situation leading to the outbreak of the Arab Spring, (Kamal, 2013) was similitude to the injustice, deprivation, marginalisation, unlawful detention and incarceration among others that prevailed in Nigeria during the aftermath of the annulment and the Epetedo Declaration by the acclaimed winner of the election (Chief M. K. O. Abiola). Even without the prevalent of digital technology and social media that easily spread and escalate issues to national and international levels, the June 12 scenario shook the military to its root and divided its ranks. The military junta became so flummoxed that it had to introduce decree 63 which produced an interim and diarchical administration under Chief Ernest Shonekan.

In May 1999, Nigeria returned to democracy where a Yoruba man from the South-West and from Abeokuta in Ogun State where the adjudged winner of the annulled June 12 Presidential Election (Chief MKO Abiola) originated was elected as the President of Nigeria. Throughout the eight years and two tenured civilian administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), series of socio-political and economic issues cropped up that warranted reactions from the populace, like other countries around the globe. Issues such as the introduction of sharia law in the north, the Odi and Saki Biam massacres, and electoral malpractices generated crises of different magnitude

which got no real national appeal and coverage. While the sharia law scenario and the massacres did not actually possess a national coverage in terms of direct concerns and impact, the issue of election malpractices was seasonal and the fact that those directly affected are involved in one form of electoral misconduct or the other including gun-point ballot snatching, assassination of political opponents, destruction of electoral materials, the use of thugs for different shades of anti-democratic practices among others subdued the viability of these scenes turning into national violent demonstrations. President Yar'adua who succeeded Obasanjo publicly admitted that the general election that produced him was marred with irregularities and frauds (Ukpon and Mfon, 2023; Ismaila, 2016), but no serious outrage followed the pronouncement because all the parties to election engaged in malpractices. Therefore what suppressed the situation from degenerating was the Yoruba aphorism which could be interpreted as saying “everyone is a (mala) potential thief, but the one is that caught in the act is the convict (barawo)”. The nature of the political economy of Nigeria since the twilight of colonial rule and the commercial production of petroleum products has placed crude oil at the centre stage. From the 1970s, the country entered into the gear of mono-economy and over-reliance on petroleum which permeated lack of foresight for economic progress. The situation became worsened to the extent that despite her abundant crude resources, her capacity for refinement of crude oil dwindled to the level at which she cannot supply local consumption.

The existing refineries were not only unable to refine for local consumption (talk less of producing for export), they became worn out and were not repaired for many years. The only alternative was for the importation of refined petroleum products such as the premium motor spirit, diesel, kerosene and the like. This importation in the mix of massive corrupt practices that have bedevilled the sector and decision of selected privileged persons in the country to build refineries in other parts of the world where the Nigerian crude oils were exported for refinement. The implication of the exportation is that the prices of the refined products were then determined by the international forces of demand and supply in a capitalist global economic order. The landing cost of the products per litre (real, inflated, or manipulated) increased tremendously making it difficult for an average Nigerian (with low per capital income) to purchase the products. This situation necessitated the introduction of oil subsidy which though have started since the late 1970s to make Nigerians benefit from the country's natural endowment, but became more imperative owing to continuous increase in the landing costs. Owing to this, humongous amount of the country's annual revenue were devoted to the payment of fuel subsidy to importers preventing the concentration on

infrastructural and other socio-economic development activities. The country has resulted into borrowing from the international lenders as the annual gross national income became incommensurate to cater for recurrent expenditure, talk less of capital expenditure. The loaning option even aggravated the issue of economic crises as the huge percentage of the national income was used for serving the accumulated debts.

It was owing to the realisation that the country's economy was hitting the rock in the hands of the subsidy regime that made the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) to resolve into the removal of the fuel subsidy. It was claimed that a certain cabal was milking and sulking the country's economy through the instrument of the subsidy and sadly enough the country was subsidising her neighbouring countries as millions of litres of the imported subsidised products were smuggled to these countries, whereas the government must have already settled the subsidy on the products. Thus, in January 2012, the GEJ administration pronounced the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria so that local prices can reflect international flow and fluctuations. The pronouncement was attended by a nationwide condemnation and rejection leading to massive protests across various parts of the country, one of the most well-coordinated in the history of the country. Typically in Nigeria, increase in pump price of petroleum usually warrant hike in the cost of transportation and by extension every commodity, product, and services. One of the unique characteristics of this nationwide protest was that, it was not only backed by a cross-section of the elites, it witnessed active participation of a good number religious leaders, party stalwarts, celebrities, and human right activists. Majority of the middle class elites were to be affected financially if the removal was eventually implemented because it would lead to increase in the pump price of the petroleum which they need for their daily socio-economic movements. Hence, their concerns and active participation. The presence and speeches of these set of the elite at the centres of the protests (especially at Freedom Park in Ojota, Lagos) coupled with the industrial action embarked upon by the labour union was instrumental into holding the country to a standstill for about two weeks. Socio-economic activities were paralysed as there was no vehicular movement in several parts of the country. Many Nigerians expressed anger and frustration on the media and clamoured for a reversal of the government policies on the removal of subsidy.

This is another situation that aligned and harmonised the opinion, thought, feelings, and reactions of a substantial number of the Nigerian populace regarding a government policy. It was a rare opportunity for revolution or radical change of government judging by conditions that precipitated landmark revolutions in the world history. However, the long

distance of the centres of protests to the actual seat of power in Abuja was a factor in preventing the protests from snowballing into revolution, something like the Parisian Mob leading to the French Revolution. More so and the final straw, was the deployment of military officers on the streets on the early hours on Monday, 14 January 2012. Before the protesters could reconvene at their various centres to linger the demonstrations, fierce looking and armed soldiers were readily on ground to respond to any “misbehaviour”. In this sense, another scenario that could have resulted into revolution or radical political change in the country was suppressed. Some have argued that the failure was due to the fact that the mobilisers of the protests did not have the intention for staging a revolution. But the fact remains that revolution usually occur suddenly without adequate planning, judging by the history of revolutions.

Apart from the richly endowment in mineral and natural resources, human capital resources is another tangible asset that Nigeria is blessed with. The country is reputed as the most populous black nation in the world and its population has always been larger than the combinations of the total populations in the other sixteen West African countries altogether. In addition to the huge population is the fact that the country possess substantial amount of youthful population which ordinarily is a viable factor for technological advancement, industrial development, scientific innovation, socio-economic transformation and massive participation in the global economic order and inter-relations. Despite the unpalatable statistics on the amount of out-of-school children in the country, hundreds of thousands students are graduated from both secondary and tertiary institutions in the country annually. The fact that demographical growth has not been matched with economic growth and development in the country has often created a situation of extremely limited employment opportunities for the youths in the country. Many universities graduates have suffered the fate of remaining unemployed for years while others have to settle for menial jobs, better tagged “underemployment”. This is even aggravated by the situation of very poor power supply that has frustrated many young Nigerians out of the alternative blue collar jobs as many of private/multinational corporations operating within the country have closed their businesses (Uddin, 2013; Salami 2013). It has also become difficult for those who are crafty to establish themselves independently due to poor economic conditions and lack of enabling environment. The situation of limited opportunity has thus degenerated to the extent that an average Nigerian youth prefer to scramble for the very limited white collar jobs within the government ministries and parastatals. It has been so serious that the phenomenon of employment racketeering has become an open-secret in

various government and private settings.

Successive administrations in the country have often embarked on series of programmes and institutional frameworks to alleviate the problems of unemployment and get the populace (particularly the youths) economically engaged. Some of these frameworks include the National Directorate of Employment, Labour Employment and Empowerment Programme, Youth Employment and Social Support Operation, Sure-P, N-Power, and the NYSC programme among others. These efforts were replicated at federal, state, and local government levels with non-governmental organisations, private sector and international organisation leaning some supportive initiatives. The administration of President GEJ was not an exception as a number of initiatives such as the Sure-P (initiated in 2012 to reinvest the excess profits from fuel subsidy towards the development of critical infrastructure and youth empowerment) were implemented towards suppressing the burgeoning issue of unemployment rate in the country. In March 2014, a recruitment exercise into the various cadres at the Nigerian Immigration Service came to its peak. The application for the different positions started in 2013 and applicants were requested to pay a sum of N1, 000 online. In a country where huge amount of unemployment and underemployment reigns supreme, about 680,000 peoples bought the online application forms for an opening that would eventual appoint just only about 5,000 persons (Vanguard, 15 March 2024; Punch, 29 March 2014). The number of applicants is an infinitesimal percentage of the total number of unemployed youths which was rising to about 25 percent in the country as at the period (Anugara, 2014). Four major centres including the Abuja Stadium, Port Harcourt Stadium, Benin Stadium, and a college in Mina (the capital of Niger State) where locations where the applicants were requested to be physically present for the selection exercise. The one to be held in Lagos was cancelled beforehand. Unfortunately, the handlers of the exercise were unable to engender crowd control and management coupled with the fact that some unauthorised persons gained entrance into the venue thereby increasing the already over-bloated population and leading to stampede in all the four centres. Nineteen persons including an expectant lady were killed during the stampede while hundreds of people suffered varying degree of injuries at the different locations.

Saturday, 15 March 2014 was a dark day in the annals of Nigeria's historical evolution and socio-economic trajectory as injury was added to insult of an average Nigerian youth. The situation of massive socio-economic deprivations was enormous and was being aggravated by the absence of employment opportunities after graduation from the tertiary institutions affecting many Nigerian youths. The hope of about 680, 000 promising

young men and women was dashed altogether in the hands of a government parastatal which was supposed to be a beckon of glad tidings. Outcry and clamour rented the air for several days as the gory news of the poorly managed recruitment exercise fluttered to the public. Even though the elites were not directly affected by this saga as many of their children were better positioned to be gainfully employed, the masses were strongly infuriated about the turn of events. Like the situations leading to the French Revolution and the more recent Arab Spring, the majority of the people who were at the bottom of the societal strata and at the receiving end of the poor management of the economy in Nigeria were embittered. The situation got the necessary potentials of dovetailing into massive revolts against the government for reasons such as the fact that the major venue for the mismanaged recruitment exercise was close to the seat of power (the Aso Rock), and that the abortive exercise and grievances that were associated with it were occasioned in other major parts of the country. However, the force and determination that was needed to galvanise the situation into a full-fledged revolution and mobilise the people into action were absent. Though protests were orchestrated in various parts of the country by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and civil society organisations in Kaduna, Abuja, and Port-Harcourt, they failed to galvanise the people into the real action and subsequently the protests petered out. In this scenario, the country tread on the margins of revolution and escaped. More so, Lagos State (which is usually the rallying point for political activism in the country) was not directly affected by the saga and therefore no fillip was added.

Nigeria like other countries across the globe has witnessed different forms of crimes and social problems that have perpetuated its historical transition. Prominent among the crimes that have reigned supreme in the country is issue of armed robbery that pervaded the entire fabrics and locations of the Nigerian societies for decades (Osifodurin, 2007; Boge and Isaac, 2017). Notorious armed robbers such as Lawrence Anini, Ishola Oyenusi (nicknamed Dr. Ishola), and Shina Adeleke (nicknamed Shina Rambo) carried series of nefarious activities leading to loss of properties and lives at different occasions. Big stores, mega markets, commercial banks, and private residents were ransacked on consistent basis making Nigerians to live under palpable tension. It was so bad that major cities in Nigeria cannot sleep with two eyes closed because of the activities of these men of the underworld. From the period after the civil war through the first decades of the twenty-first century armed robbery was a notorious form of criminality throughout the country (Osifodurin, 2007). It was such serious that the community people and the governments had to make efforts at curbing the

menace. Apart from the construction of entrance gates in different estates, many people (particularly the elites) began to employ the services of private security outlets (formal and informal) to protect their lives and properties. For the fact that security of lives and properties is the main function of the government, governments at the three layers have also taken initiatives to establish security apparatus that would specifically assist in mitigating the scourge of armed robbery and insecurity. In most cases, this arrangement involved establishing a special squad within the overstretched Nigerian Police and Army. In Lagos State, for instance, the Rapid Response Squad was created in 1999 dedicated to combating the rampant and disturbing rate of armed robbery and other crimes within the enclave. It metamorphosed from the initial Operation Sweep that was initiated by the Buba Marwa led military administration.

In the like manner, the Federal Government of Nigeria established the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SAR) to confront the challenges of armed robbery in the country in 1992. Specifically, the Babangida Administration established the squad to deal with crimes associated with robbery, kidnapping, vehicle theft, and cattle rustling among others (Ogbette and Idam, 2018). It was created as special corps within the Nigeria Police Force and members of the squad are always on the highways to pre-empt and forestall robbery activities. Subsequent regimes maintained the special corps as important aspect of the country's security architecture, particularly since the birth of the fourth republic that have forced the soldiers back into the barracks. More so, the ranging insecurity and terrorism within the northern part of the country has warranted that the soldiers are concentrated in the battle zones with the insurgents and bandits. In line with the global records of police brutality (including Nigeria), the cases of inhumaneness towards innocent members of the public from the officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad came to the climax since the twenty-first century (Akinyetun, 2021). Cases of exploitation and unlawful arrest and detention of innocent victims were recorded in different parts of the country (Ulo, 2021; Abiodun, Oloyede, and Ademola, 2020; Idowu and Chukwudi, 2021). The Squad began to shift its attention to the internet fraudsters (popularly known as "yahoo boys") who have not only become notorious "armless robbers" but have constituted a menace to the socio-economic fabrics of the country (Sanni and Boge, 2020). However, series of reports from the squad officers' dealings with the public revealed a quantum of sharp practices (Akinyetun, 2021).

There were daily reports of extortions, brutality, rape, torture, killing, and other form of impunities perpetuated by the officers of SARS across country (Oyosoro, Etti, and Aigbe, 2022). Efforts from the government to reform and

comport the Squad's overboard (following outcry from the people) yielded no desired result. In 2018, therefore, the helpless Nigerian populace took the case of police (SARS's) brutality to the court of the digital media which appeared to be the last hope at that point by creating a twitter hashtag (#EndSars). This did not only brought every Nigerian on a page regarding the issue, but also assisted in internationalising the situation. The twitter handle became the reservoir for the ill-treatments perpetuated by SARS and other forces in the country against common Nigerians. The digital campaign came to its climax on 4 October 2020 when a video of SARS officers dragging out two men from a hotel in Delta State and shooting one of them went viral on twitter and many other social media platforms. This triggered reactions from various parts of Nigeria where people trooped to the street to demand the disbandment of the Squad and an end to armed forces brutality in the country. For about two weeks massive Nigerians (particularly the young generations who have been locked out of school due to the industrial action embarked upon by the university lecturers in the country) blocked virtually all the major highways in the southern parts of the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The socio-economic activities within the country were paralysed and situation degenerating into a non-violence revolution gradually with major stakeholders across the globe (such as President Biden and the UN Secretary General) meddling in support of the protesters' agitation for a reformed police and armed forces' treatment of the people. It was actually another scenario that made the country to walk on the margins of revolution as the larger percentage of Nigerians were affected by the Squad's activities, directly or indirectly.

Though the issue and the reactions that followed enjoyed a national appeal certain factors such ethnic interpretations, lack of national coordination, absence of recognised protest leadership, and the application of forceful disbandment of the protesters at a major station of the protests in the Toll Gate at Lekki (Lagos State) quenched the thirst for a revolution in the country. In the northern parts of the country, for instance, Nigerians turned against themselves as protest breakers penetrated, threatened, and even attacked the armless and non-violence protesters. There was the ethnic jingoism and claim that the protests was initiated to discredit the government of the then President Mohammadu Buhari who was a northerner. Lack of leadership and national coordination could also be seen as a stumbling block as the protesters lacked direction and step-by-step approach to actualising its objectives and purposes. Some of the protesters went overboard by attacking innocent police officers including committing arson on some of their stations and even barracks. In the process of locking people out of their means of

sustenance as a result of the road blockades, hoodlums took to the street attack shops, stores, and innocent civilians carrying away their valuables. The last straw was the application of brute forces by the armed forces to disband the protesters, particularly at the Lekki Toll Gate. Tens of people were reportedly killed on the scene on 20 October 2020. This further worsened the situation as people (particularly hoodlums) began arson against public and private facilities. The protesters were eventually dismembered and the fillips in their agitations were scattered including suppressing the source of their financial sponsorship.

In line with the inventions in the fourth industrial revolution, the banking and finance industry has witnessed the introduction of digital technology that has prompted internet banking across the globe. Nigeria has not been an exception to this and series of banking reforms have been implemented to prompt mobile, internet, and a cashless economy. The procedural reforms which started during the period of Charles Soludo as the Governor of the Central Bank was improved upon by his predecessors in office. In October 2022, the Central Bank under the governorship of Godwin Emefiele reemphasised the embarkation on certain monetary policies which covered aspects of re-designation of the naira denominations, reduction of the cash withdrawal limits, and the promotion of cashless economy. According to the apex bank, the policies were aimed at curbing currency counterfeit, reducing insecurity, discouraging cash hoarding, promoting price stability, promoting financial inclusion, and encouraging a cashless economy. In the process of implementing the multi-faceted monetary policies, frustration and hardships were imposed on Nigerians. A situation of extreme scarcity of naira notes was imposed putting the informal dominated economy into an unpalatable state. The situation affected every strata of the economy and social ladder as people's monies were stacked in the banks. The old naira notes were mopped up from circulation while the new naira notes were extremely low in circulation. The Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) hardly dispense enough cash while the banking halls were always filled to the brim as angry customers wanted access to their savings.

From the end of January to the middle of March 2023, the country's economy was messed up as business transactions (physical and online) became extremely difficult. Apart from the daily experiences of fights at ATM stations, Nigerians had to buy the naira notes at huge mark-ups from informal sources such as filling station attendants, motorists, POS operators, and bankers. Physical transactions were constrained by the paucity of funds and people were returning to the ancient barter system of exchange of articles for articles. Fluctuating internet and lack of internet coverage in the rural

communities became the major stumbling block to digital transactions. This is even worsened by the fact that virtually every transactions (even those involving as low as less than N1, 000 and below) were done online as there was no naira notes in circulations. These little transactions attracted bank charges and commissions. In addition, people were sceptical about e-payment options because of the recurrence of negative issues such as fraudulent transactions, failed transactions, prolonged waiting times for redress of financial disputes, and lack of basic literacy requirements from a section of the society. The situation degenerated into the one similitude of a typical in war zone where movements were paralysed and commercial activities were constrained. Many of the farmers in the rural communities were unable to pay their labourers, majority of who were unbanked. The cash crunch also affected the trade volumes as the larger percentage of transactions in the country were informal and cash based. All households in Nigeria were affected and the hardships prompted some people to carry arson on banking facilities in certain parts of the country. On this issue, Nigeria walked on the margin of revolution but luckily escaped it again. The role of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in preventing further degeneration of the situation cannot be overemphasised. In March 2023, the court ordered the reversal of the policy to allow the old naira notes to be in circulation till the end of 2023. Though it took two weeks before compliance from the Central Bank, the pronouncement assisted to douse the heightened tension in the country.

Factors Mitigating Revolutions in Nigeria: The Conclusions

Several indices have revealed the possibility of revolution in Nigeria. Poverty, unequal access to the state's wealth, religious extremism, economic hardship, and power highhandedness have been inherent but have failed to precipitate a revolution in Nigeria. Economic hardship arising from harsh economic policies have crippled the living standard of many Nigerians. The National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) published in 2020 placed Nigeria's poverty rate at 40.1 percent, with 30.9 percent living below the international extreme poverty line (World Bank Group, 2020). With the Covid-19 interlude and the cashless policy re-introduced in 2022, more Nigerians were said to wallow in poverty. In a nutshell, factors such as ethnic diversity, religious differences, elite suppression, historical precedence, economic inequality, and armed forces interventions have prevented a revolution in Nigeria. Heterogeneity and diverse ethnic groups have played a deterring roles in the history of violence and protests in Nigeria. Nigeria harbours more than 250 ethnic groups, with the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba being the major groups. Tribal differences played out during elections and public discontentment

against unfavourable governmental policies and poor economic conditions. Tribal difference has been used as a “diversionary tool” to forestall mass mobilisation in Nigeria (Ndife, 2021). For instance, during the EndSARS Protests, there was low mobilisation in the northern parts of the country as the protests were believed to have been engineered by the southerners against the Buhari-led administration.

Furthermore, religion has played a significant role in opinion and decision-making in Nigeria. In this sense, religious differences have hindered mass mobilisation and united movements against structural deficit. Religious differences are factored in during protests as people show favouritism towards leader that share attachment to their religion persuasion. More often than none, the religious pulpits and sermons have often been used to discourage revolts against government policies. This seems to be in line with Karl Marx’s proposition that “religion is the opium of the people”. Nigerians have also felt reluctant to protest bad governance or instigate systemic change due to suppression by the elite. According to Oyeboade (2022), suppression is the only language understood by leaders of developing democracies like Nigeria. Revolts have often been met with stiff resistance from the police and the armed forces who often maimed and killed protesters (Mbah, 2014). The 1993 Election conundrum and the 2020 #EndSARS protests constitute historical precedents in this instance. In the case of the June 12 saga, the government intimidated, harassed, and even killed members of the civil society organisations (such as NADECO) that were at the forefront of the protests. They were chased around the country and some of the houses were destroyed by the forces commissioned by the government. Deployment of the military forces has often impeded the outbreak of revolution in Nigeria. The authoritarian regimes in the country have used the instrument of military forces to suppress protests by civil societies, labour unions, lawyers, and human rights activists which were the leading voices of revolution across the world. They could have served as the Voltaire, A. V. Dicey, John Locke and co that spurred the French Revolution through intellectual activism.

The fact that the government foils revolutionary movements hinders the manifestation of revolution in Nigeria. Protests and agitations have failed to yield their desired ends and the people have learned from historical precedents. Lack of participation in protests affect revolutionary attempts as the people fear for their lives and deem it unworthy to gather under the sun against unconcerned leaders. The complicity between the elite and the non-state actors has not only helped the former maintain power, but also it has presented revolution as a mirage to those who envisage it. The politicians sponsored protesters to fault the regime of the opposition. Thus, when scores

of people march out to denounce a bad system, many protesters withdraw upon accomplishing their “aim” thereby challenging the objectivity of the revolutionaries. Moreover, many protesters conceive of protest as an avenue for looting public resources. Several shops and warehouses are plundered during protests while the government’s infrastructures are vandalised. This often create avenue for government to apply brute force and for the revolutionary cause to become unpopular. However, the Nigerian government need to be more proactive and initiate efficient policies and programmes that would permeate massive youth employment, social inclusion, economic development, equal opportunities, enabling environment for the growth of industries and small scale enterprises, skill acquisition and consistent power supply, and provision of modern infrastructure and social amenities. These would assist in dousing tensions and preventing the possibility of revolution and the country remaining coalesced.

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