

STATE CAPTURE, CORRUPTION, AND THE UNDERMINING OF SECURITY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

State capture has emerged as a significant threat to governance and national security in Nigeria because it weakens the effectiveness and autonomy of security institutions. State capture entails the erosion of security agencies' capabilities through policy, regulation, and resource allocation as the political and economic elites try to increase their influence. The current research uses the qualitative documentary research design supported by institutionalist theory to examine the implications of state capture in the Nigerian security sector. The data analysis involved government documents, international organisations, anti-corruption institutions, and scholarly materials. The results show that the process of state capture takes place through the patronage appointment process, procurement fraud, resource misallocation, lack of accountability, and low morale of employees. The recommendations include institutional changes involving recruitment based on merit, security sector reform, anti-corruption reform, and accountability reform. The research highlights the structure and norms underlying the weakening of the security sector through state capture.

Keywords: *State capture, corruption, security institutions, Nigeria, institutional theory, security sector reform, public trust.*

Introduction

The ability of the state to ensure security is one of the key measures of effective governance. The security institutions, such as the military, the police, intelligence units and anti-corruption bodies, receive their legitimacy and effectiveness through the constitution and by being governed through integrity, professionalism and accountability. When any of these governance elements is weak, the security sector can become easily subject to political manipulation, corruption and lack of public confidence, thus reducing their ability to deal with security issues (World Bank, 2017; OECD, 2007; UNDP, 2022). In recent years, Nigeria has faced many complicated security problems such as Boko Haram terrorism, armed banditry, kidnapping, farmer-herder clashes, separatist violence, maritime piracy, oil theft and organised crime. Even though there have been increases in defence spending as well as security sector reforms, these security problems continue to grow geographically and functionally.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI, 2024), Nigeria has continued to allocate much finance to its defence efforts, while the country's successive governments have initiated different types of reforms to strengthen the country's security efforts. Yet, improvements in effectiveness have not been impressive enough, thus leaving questions on the role of institutions in the matter. Traditional explanations of Nigeria's security problem have tended to be mainly centred around operational factors such as lack of sufficient funding, out-of-date technology, poor coordination of intelligence gathering, porous borders, insufficient workforce, and inadequate technology (Akinola, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2024).

Although these factors are still significant, they only partially explain security problems in the country since they tend to focus on governance problems as secondary causes of underperformance. Research shows that the effectiveness of institutions of security is determined not so much by the amount of funding as by the quality of governance mechanisms controlling it (Transparency International Defence & Security, 2020; World Bank, 2017). In terms of these governance issues, state capture can be regarded as one of the factors that is significant enough to attract more attention to understand why institutions of security tend to underperform. Contrary to conventional corruption, which usually implies the abuse of power to serve personal interests, state capture is defined as the process of manipulation of laws and policies by political or economic elites in order to serve their own interests (Hellman et al., 2003; Innes, 2014).

In the security sector, state capture goes beyond isolated incidents of corruption such as bribery and procurement fraud to changing the rules of the institution with respect to recruitment, promotions, procurement processes, operational financing, oversight bodies, and accountability mechanisms. In this way, corruption becomes institutionalised in the governance structures rather than being an anomaly in the administration. The implications of state capture for the security institutions of Nigeria are very significant. The political involvement in appointments weakens merit-driven professionalism; the manipulation of procurement processes siphons operational funds away from security functions; discretionary spending on security weakens budgetary control; and the capture of oversight agencies limits the chances of corruption being detected and punished.

As a consequence of all this, the capabilities of the institutions are undermined, and insurgency, organised crimes, kidnappings, and extremism become possible. It is thus important to comprehend the governance process to understand why high security budgets have failed to translate into national security benefits. While there have been many studies conducted on corruption, governance, and insecurity in Nigeria, there are still several issues that need to be addressed in relation to the matter. Firstly, most of the literature focuses on corruption either as a problem in the administration of the country and its ethics, and secondly, the majority of existing literature on insecurity has paid much attention to the operations and military strategies to fight insecurity. There is still a lack of knowledge on how state capture undermines governance and the performance of security institutions in a state.

Furthermore, there has been a scarcity of studies on the integration of Institutional Theory with

state capture that would address such aspects of informal political institutions as patronage systems, bargaining, politicisation of appointments and discretionary budgeting as the means through which the autonomy of security organisations gets undermined in Nigeria. This study aims to examine the institutional effects of state capture, corruption, and weakening of security institutions in Nigeria through the prism of Institutional Theory. The study will conduct a qualitative analysis of the documents issued by the government, international organisations, anti-corruption agencies, policy documents and peer-reviewed literature.

Instead of considering corruption as standalone bad behaviour, the study views it as one instance of institutional capture, which alters the governing structure in the security sector. There are three main contributions of this study to existing research on the topic. First, it adds to the body of knowledge about corruption since it shows that the deterioration of security organisations in Nigeria can be better understood using the wider notion of state capture rather than corruption as traditionally defined. Second, the study contributes to Institutional Theory since it shows how the interplay between the formal and informal governance practices affects the performance of the security sector in a young democracy. Third, the study provides an integrative framework for elite capture, institutional corruption, weak organisational capabilities, loss of public trust, and insecurity in the country.

Conceptual Framework

State Capture Defined

State capture refers to the manipulation and control of state institutions, policies, and regulations by influential private actors for personal gains, without regard for the general interest of society (Hellman et al., 2000; Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011). Unlike the common form of corruption that normally takes place as an act of bribery, embezzlement or rent-seeking activities of individual public officials, state capture refers to a structured, deliberate and prolonged activity through which influential actors alter the rules, institutions and governance structure to get sustained political and economic advantages (Hellman et al., 2000; Innes, 2014).

The activity entails the continued manipulation of legislative bodies, judiciary and regulatory framework. Thus, state capture enhances elite power and undermines institutional independence and democracy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Fazekas & Tóth, 2016). Instead of breaking the existing rules, state capture manipulates and changes the institutional set-up and decision-making process to reallocate public powers in favour of private gains (Hellman et al., 2000; Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011; Transparency International, 2020). The importance of the concept of state capture is defined by the significance of its implications for institutional legitimacy, democracy, and policy efficacy.

The captured states provide such an output of their policies that serves the interests of more influential private actors rather than the interests of the general public (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). State capture represents many intertwined issues of governance. Beginning from the legislative realm, state capture implies the biased nature of the law-making process, which is

carried out in favour of the economic and political elites (Wedel, 2001; Dal Bó, 2006; Gilens & Page, 2014). Not only are laws and regulations selectively enforced but are also crafted to serve private interests, thereby fostering exclusionary and extractive forms of governance. Legislative capture is directly related to administrative capture, implying the intentional penetration of bureaucratic institutions.

The phenomenon of administrative capture helps private interests place their people in the respective ministries, regulatory organisations, and government institutions such that they will influence the implementation and enforcement of policies. They help in selectively implementing laws, discriminating in the distribution of public funds, regulatory preference, and restricting competition (Hellman et al., 2000; Carpenter & Moss, 2014). The activities get entrenched in the very structure of the state, thus becoming harder to address in terms of governance reforms. Besides capturing the executive, the state is captured through capturing other government oversight institutions.

The independent judiciary, the supreme audit institutions, the anticorruption bodies, and the regulators are essential tools in making people accountable and providing a legal character to their activities. At the same time, under the circumstances of state capture, the mentioned entities are deprived of their integrity due to political appointees, biased courts, selective investigation, and weakened enforcement. As a consequence, people connected with the state receive immunity from investigation and trial, while the credibility of the mentioned entities is lost (O'Donnell, 1998; Wedel, 2001; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). The relationship among the listed aspects demonstrates the fact that the issue of state capture does not consist of isolated cases of governance, but is a phenomenon that implies the transformation of the structure of the institutions of the state.

Consequently, through the transformation of the structure of the institutions and the process of politics in the country, the elites transform the state from an impartial institution of public service into the means of appropriation and domination. The effects of state capture include unfair public policy, distrust in government institutions, poor state capacity, low competitiveness of the economy, and lack of confidence in the government. The impact of state capture on developing and transitional countries is especially severe because their systems of checks and balances are underdeveloped and therefore easily manipulable (Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that best explains the nexus between state capture, corruption, and poor institutionalisation of security institutions in Nigeria is Institutional Theory. The theory posits that the actions of political and organisational players are not only motivated by individual rationality but also by the institutional environment that surrounds them. The origins of Institutional Theory have been traced back to Classical Institutionalism. The scholars in this field seemed to be more concerned about the effect of political and administrative institutions on the

political and economic effects of the state. The institutionalists at the beginning believed that institutions comprised of not only legal institutions but also the embedded norms and values that define the behaviors of organizations. For example, Veblen (1899) believed that the behavior of economic and political actors was highly influenced by institutions. Similarly, Selznick (1949) highlighted that organizations developed their identity through the social process of accepting societal values rather than following legal institutions. Classical scholars indicated that public institutions followed political and social norms despite them violating the constitutional rules.

This observation is of particular relevance in Nigeria, where security institutions often behave in accordance with established political expectations despite being clearly defined by constitutional mandates. In continuation of this classical approach, New Institutionalism redirected the focus from organisational structure to the institutional context within which organisations are functioning.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest that organisational formalisation is more concerned with organisational legitimacy than with organisational efficiency. Also, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) show that organisations operating within the same institutional context exhibit growing similarity as a response to common pressures. This shift from Classical to New Institutionalism is particularly relevant to the Nigerian security institutions, which operate in the political context of political patronage, elite rule, corruption, and lack of effective accountability mechanisms. As a result of institutional reform, there might be some changes in organisational structure while organisational effectiveness remains virtually unaffected due to unchanged institutional context.

One of the key notions of New Institutionalism is institutional isomorphism, which is defined as a convergence of organisations under institutional pressures in terms of organisational structure, organisational processes, and organisational behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). DiMaggio and Powell distinguish between three main types of isomorphism: coercive, normative, and mimetic pressure. Coercive isomorphism is the result of the pressure exerted politically, legally, and regulatorily by influential entities. Concerning Nigeria, the security organisations, which are made up of the police, the military, the intelligence service, and other law enforcement agencies, are faced with political influences with regard to decision-making, law enforcement, appointment, and promotion. These influences have negative impacts on the autonomy of the institutions, hence resulting in selective law enforcement.

Normative isomorphism is the result of professional norms, organisational culture, and occupational values. The weakening of professional norms as a result of increasing political loyalty concerning recruitment, promotion, and career development leads to poor professionalism and inefficient institutions. Mimetic isomorphism is the result of imitation of organisational practices in a situation where an organisation is faced with uncertainty. Concerning the Nigerian public sector, the security organisations tend to imitate common practices of other government organisations like bureaucracy, unaccountability, politicisation, and patronage. When these practices become prevalent among all public organisations, they tend to be regarded as common organisational practices.

The Institutional Theory is further supported by the institutional economics approach of North

(1990), who suggests that the effectiveness of political and economic performance depends largely on the quality of institutions and their enforcement capacity. A lack of enforcement institutions results in a situation where informal institutions like patronage, clientelism, rent-seeking, and elite bargaining supersede the formal system of governance. Therefore, political elites are capable of using public institutions for private benefit, which results in state capture and institutional autonomy (North, 1990; Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Poor enforcement systems, lack of accountability, and weak anti-corruption institutions in Nigeria constrain the capabilities of the security institutions in conducting themselves in line with their constitutional mandate.

Three institutional pillars suggested by Scott (2014) illustrate the weaknesses inherent to Nigeria's security institutions. The regulative pillar encompasses the formal rules and the enforcement thereof. While Nigeria has a large legal structure aimed at combating corruption in the country, enforcement has remained inconsistent due to political influence causing impunity (Transparency International, 2024; UNODC, 2019; World Bank, 2024). The normative pillar is based on values, ethics, and code of conduct. In most cases in the Nigerian security organisations, recruitment, promotion, and disciplinary action are done under political influence as opposed to what is required for good performance. The cultural-cognitive pillar entails the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide organisational behaviour. This situation, whereby there has been corruption, political interference, and lack of accountability, has brought about informal ways of doing things which go against the constitution and the organisation's code of conduct. With time, such activities become accepted practices in the organisation.

Historical institutionalism offers some insight into this through the theory of path dependence, in which past institutional decisions determine the results of current governance (Pierson, 2000; Thelen, 1999). The historical legacy of Nigeria's administrative system in its colonial history and the ongoing patrimonial tradition and patron-client relations have determined an institutional path that is difficult to reform.

The concept of institutional isomorphism offers some of the best arguments for explaining the problem of governance failure in Nigerian security institutions. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), organisations that experience coercion, norms, and mimicry pressure begin to behave similarly from an institutional perspective. In Nigeria, it can be observed that the military institutions, Nigeria Police Force, intelligence organs, and anti-corruption bodies exhibit common traits such as the influence of politics on their appointment procedures, promotion through patronage, selective law enforcement, irregularities in procurement processes, and lack of accountability frameworks. The security institutions do not operate as autonomous professional institutions but continue to embrace governance practices typical of the entire public sector.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative case study research design to investigate the link between state capture, corruption, and the erosion of security institutions in Nigeria. Qualitative case studies are especially suited to examining socio-political phenomena due to their provision for in-depth

investigation of elite power dynamics, governance processes, and informal institutions that cannot be explored using quantitative designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). All the data used in the study were sourced from secondary sources such as documentary and archival materials, including scholarly journal articles, books, policies, government publications, annual reports, audit reports, legislative materials, procurement data, and international organisation and anti-corruption agency reports.

The data collection was carried out from January to April 2025 using the databases of Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, and the official digital databases of the World Bank, OECD, UNDP, UNODC, Transparency International, EFCC, ICPC, NEITI, SIPRI, and the Budget Office of the Federation. For the data collection, the use of keywords and Boolean phrases such as state capture, corruption, security institutions, security sector governance, elite capture, institutional decay, public procurement, governance, and Nigeria was made. Selection of documents was based on their relevance to corruption, governance, public administration, public procurement, institutional effectiveness, and security governance in Nigeria and similar countries.

A special focus was given on recent reports from Transparency International (2024), World Bank (2024), UNODC (2024), NEITI (2024), EFCC (2024) and ICPC (2024), along with fundamental theoretical literature by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Suchman (1995) and Hellman et al. (2000).

The documentary database created as a result included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policies, legislative reports, audit reports, procurement documentation, budgets, as well as reports from international organisations and anti-corruption agencies. All this documentation served as evidence of the procurement practices, resource allocation, institutional management, accountability mechanisms, corruption patterns, and effectiveness of Nigeria's security institutions' operation. Analysis of themes within the collected data was done through a six-stage thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). Both inductive and deductive coding methods were applied. In the former, the themes could be discerned from the documentary information, including patronage recruitment, procurement corruption, misallocation of resources, logistics problems, human resource problems, inefficiency, and degradation of security sector operation and infrastructure.

The deductive coding process was guided by institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Suchman, 1995) and state capture (Hellman et al., 2000), thus providing an understanding of the results within the theoretical frameworks. To make the findings more credible, reliable and valid, triangulation was used as a research method where data collected from different categories of documentary sources such as peer-reviewed articles, government documents, international organisations' reports, anti-corruption agencies' reports and reputable media reports were compared. A data analysis table was created that allowed systematic coding on various analytical aspects such as source, institutional context, state capture practices, corruption practices, impacts on security governance and institutional reforms. Ethical issues were resolved through the use of readily available documentary materials. As the study did not use any participants, no ethical clearance was required for conducting interviews and surveys. However, the study still

followed the guidelines of doing qualitative data analysis, such as transparency, reliability, objectivity, proper referencing and proper interpretation of the document (Orb et al., 2001).

The qualitative approach offered a thorough structure for investigating the role played by state capture in institutional weakening of security organisations in Nigeria. Through an effective document review, thematic analysis, and theory-building, the study offered credible information on the impact of corruption on security management and formulated credible recommendations for institution building.

Security Institutions in Nigeria

The Nigerian security arrangements operate under a governance framework which exhibits characteristics of institutional fragmentation, overlapping functions and continuous political interference. Although it is accurate to assert that the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Services (DSS), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and many others have different functions assigned to them according to the constitution and laws, their efficiency depends mainly on how well the institution is governed and not how the organization is structured.

According to recent scholarly studies, security institutions perform at their best where the governance regime exhibits qualities like accountability, coordination, transparency, and civilian control. In contrast, a fragmented governance regime and political interference inhibit performance and negatively affect the efficacy of security institutions in the country (OECD, 2007; World Bank, 2017; United Nations, 2020). The use of the Armed Forces for domestic security purposes is a case in point. The Nigerian Armed Forces are established through Section 217 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999, as amended) to defend the country from any external aggression. Yet, the Armed Forces have increasingly performed the roles of domestic policing through activities such as Operation Hadin Kai, Operation Safe Haven, Operation Delta Safe, and Operation Whirl Stroke.

The growing trend toward the militarisation of internal security highlights the continued weaknesses within the civilian law enforcement institutions rather than the improvement in governance of national security. Military involvement is associated with difficulties, such as lack of coordination of intelligence, investigation, police, logistics, and accountability (International Crisis Group, 2024; Centre for Democracy and Development [CDD], 2023; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2022). Poor effectiveness of the police organisations is yet another example of how poor governance impacts the outcome of security operations.

Although there have been improvements in budgets by successive governments dedicated to security, it is quite clear that procurement fraud, political influence, and corruption, poor staff welfare, poor training, and accountability remain the issues that undermine the effectiveness of these organisations. In other words, the issue lies not in the absence of money but in the way money is handled in this situation. In this regard, Corruption Risks in Defence Procurement,

Weak Parliamentary Oversight, and Lack of Transparency in security expenditures were highlighted by Transparency International Government Defence Integrity Index (2020). Equally, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI, 2024) and the World Bank (2024) note that poor public financial management and poor governance hinder the efficiency of public expenditure in strategic areas including security.

The rise and growth of community vigilante groups is another sign of public mistrust of the formal security agencies. There has been the formation of many local security groups, including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), Amotekun Corps, Ebube Agu, Yan Sakai and many other community vigilante groups in several Nigerian states, owing to the perception by citizens of the inability of the security agencies to effectively protect them against security threats, political interference, accessibility, and inefficiency. Although these groups play significant roles in the provision of local security, the establishment of these groups represents more of declining institutional legitimacy than increased citizen participation in security governance.

The emergence of community-based security systems, according to UNDP (2022), is explained by the inability of state institutions to guarantee the security of their citizens. Afrobarometer (2024) states about lack of public trust in the police and the presence of fears regarding corruption, abuse of power, and inefficiency of the law enforcement agencies. Besides governance challenges faced by Nigerian security services, there is the challenge of the country being captured by elites in terms of influence and control over public institutions. The appointment of people based on political interests, bias in law enforcement, patronage, and discretionary usage of security services are major reasons for the lack of autonomy and professionalisation of the institutions.

The challenges of governance are detrimental to civilian control, create conditions for impunity, and decrease institutional resilience to new security threats. The countries that have efficient institutional systems of accountability, procurement, hiring by meritocracy, and legislative oversight have much higher security performance indicators in comparison with countries that allocate more resources to their defence expenditures (World Bank, 2017; OECD, 2007; United Nations, 2020). Hence, sustainable security sector reform is not just an increase in the defence budget or institutional restructuring.

It is essential to carry out reforms in such spheres as the improvement of the accountability system, removal of political pressure on the security forces, inter-institutional information flow, transparent procurement process, increased parliamentary and civilian control, merit hiring and promotion of employees for the successful reform implementation. Nevertheless, without solving the issues of governance, there will be no improvements in security performance in spite of the high defence budget expenditures (International Crisis Group, 2024; World Bank, 2024; Transparency International Defence & Security, 2020; OECD, 2007).

Historical and Structural Roots of Corruption and State Capture in Nigeria

The existence of corruption and state capture in Nigeria can be explained by the historical development of institutions that created an environment conducive to the continuation of such practices. The colonial system of government was a very centralised form of governance meant for political control, taxation, and exploitation rather than effective public administration. By implementing the institution of indirect rule, the colonial masters created a class of traditional rulers whose legitimacy stemmed from colonial sponsorship rather than popular consent, thus establishing hierarchical systems of political control and weak public accountability (Mamdani, 1996; Young, 1994). Therefore, the institutions emerged as tools for the sustenance of political authority and distribution of economic privileges, which became institutionalised long after the departure of the colonisers (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; North et al., 2009).

After gaining independence, this pattern of institutional development remained unchanged and was supported by various civilian and military governments alike. The military government also had an even more centralising way of wielding power that made the functions of the legislative and judicial branches even less efficient because of the absence of institutional checks and balances (Ake, 1996; Joseph, 1987; Suberu, 2007). The fast-growing income from oil, triggered by the oil boom of the 1970s, was followed by an increasing rivalry for government positions because of the connection between the political elite and the control of the country's wealth. Instead of being the tool of economic development, the oil income turned into the basis for rentier politics, clientelism, and prebendalism, when government positions were used not just for political profit but also for economic gain of the elites (Karl, 1997; Ross, 2012; Sala-i-Martin & Subramanian, 2013).

Therefore, political competition was no longer based on ideological conflicts and political performance but on bargaining about the distribution of state resources among the elites, thus fostering corruption, rent-seeking, and institutional capture (Joseph, 1987; Ake, 1996). The above-described process still impacts today's governance via the path-dependent institutional mechanism that preserves the distribution of political power. Notwithstanding the existence of formal institutions in Nigeria that promote transparency, accountability, and good public administration, the country is still dominated by informal institutions defined by patron-client relationships, ethnic patronage, political godfatherism, and elite bargaining.

According to Institutional Theory, organisations tend to develop formal governance institutions to acquire legitimacy and retain informal practices that support existing power arrangements (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Scott, 2014). As with historical institutionalism, institutional arrangements once entrenched produce self-reinforcing dynamics which make reform very hard politically and thus costly and difficult (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010). In such an institutional context, the phenomenon of state capture is produced since individuals and economically dominant players who wield political influence have enough weight to affect the legislative, regulatory, public procurement, judicial, fiscal, and budgetary process in such a way that benefits them rather than the common good.

Governance reforms tend to replicate existing problems rather than fix them because the

beneficiaries of these arrangements exert enough influence on how these reforms are implemented and monitored. As such, corruption in Nigeria needs to be seen not only in the light of administrative failure, but also in terms of a structural problem created by institutional arrangements which favor the interests of elites over the state, hinder the rule of law, undermine state capacity, and citizens' trust in public institutions (Hellman et al., 2000; Hellman & Kaufmann, 2001; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015; Transparency International, 2024; World Bank, 2017; OECD, 2018).

Elite Influence and Institutional Control

Influence of the political and economic elite in public institutions in Nigeria is now increasingly taking on attributes more commonly associated with state capture than with democratic political competition. Rather than seeking to shape public policies through constitutional and electoral processes, the country's powerful political and economic elite is increasingly attempting to influence institutional outcomes through the exercise of excessive control over strategic appointments, procurement procedures, regulatory authorities, public budgeting processes, and parliamentary oversight (Hellman et al., 2000; Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011; Transparency International, 2024).

A good example of state capture as a practice in a situation of weak governance is Nigeria, which continues to suffer from governance shortcomings that allow political elites to capture state institutions for their benefit. According to the report of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI, 2024), the issues associated with governance in Nigeria, such as ineffective public financial management, procurement processes, and the absence of control mechanisms, remain serious obstacles to transparency and accountability in extractive industries that represent an important source of government revenue in the country. Similarly, according to BudgIT (2024), the problems related to the public expenditure system in Nigeria include budget implementation opacity, extra-budgetary spending, and duplication of projects, inefficient project implementation, and weak parliamentary supervision.

Studies in the field of budget implementation always reveal the gap between the amount of money planned for projects and their actual expenditure, thus implying that higher public expenditure does not necessarily guarantee the improvement of the results of public service provision. Hence, it may be stated that the issue is not in the lack of finances but in the absence of effective mechanisms of their control. Moreover, the case of the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC, 2023; 2024) proves that corruption in Nigeria becomes an institutionally driven process rather than just mismanagement. CISLAC states that political patronage networks still hamper anti-corruption efforts through interference in investigation and procurement processes, public appointments, and other accountability measures. Therefore, many oversight agencies face the problem of political resistance in investigating corruption cases that involve political figures.

Likewise, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2024) finds that political

interference in institutions of governance has had negative effects on democratic accountability and trust in several sectors. The governance reports of the CDD point out concerns about political interference in electoral institutions, legislative bodies, security governance and public administration. The CDD argues that concentration of political power in patronage networks affects institutional independence and diminishes the effect of the mechanisms designed to limit the power of executives. This issue is especially prevalent in the security sector of Nigeria since control of coercive institutions ensures political safety, electoral gains and exclusive access to significant government resources. Appointment of individuals to key military, police and other security institutions has often been based on political patronage and elite loyalty rather than competence and organisational merit.

The methods of patronage recruitment, promotion, and deployment undermine the autonomy of institutions, decrease professionalism, politicise command structures, and shift loyalty from constitutional requirements to politicians. Such an approach also hurts the efficiency of operations and people's trust in security institutions (International Crisis Group, 2022; Transparency International Defence & Security, 2020; UNODC, 2023). This concept explains the mentioned changes due to the presence of informal political norms and incentives along with formal laws regulating institutions' activity (Scott, 2014).

As a consequence, while Nigerian security institutions observe constitutional regulations formally, they may show some deviations in their informal behaviour to satisfy political interests. Dualism in institutions, poor accountability procedures, weak professionalisation in organisations, and inefficiency of the institution itself are possible in case of such contradictions in formal institutions' norms and informal political behaviour (North, 1990; Scott, 2014). Public procurement emerges as one of the main ways of state capture of the governance of security. In the case of defence procurement, there is a problem since contracts are characterised by high value, confidentiality clauses and national security exemptions. Thus, political interference results in selection bias, excessive values of contracts, lack of competition in the process of awarding contracts, delays in the implementation of projects and favourable treatment of politically connected firms.

Meanwhile, over the last ten years, there were significant financial inputs for defence and security in Nigeria, the efficiency of governance was rather low. There is insufficient infrastructure for intelligence, antiquated equipment, weak logistics, personnel welfare, and reduced combat readiness, despite increased budget allocations (OECD, 2016; Transparency International Defence & Security, 2020; SIPRI, 2024; BudgIT, 2024). The collective impact of state capture is a reinforcing process of institutional decay. The inadequacy of oversight encourages corruption and rent-seeking; corruption drains funds from operational needs; poor institutional performance undermines public confidence; and diminished public confidence makes cooperation with security apparatuses difficult.

The resulting governance failure provides fertile grounds for insurgency, banditry, kidnappings, oil theft, organised crime, and violence while at the same time opening up additional channels for elite manipulation of institutions. The experience of Nigeria proves that insecurity is

increasingly caused not only by a lack of funding but also by governance failures emanating from institutional capture, lack of accountability, and elite control of institutions (World Bank, 2017; International Crisis Group, 2024; NEITI, 2024; CISLAC, 2024; CDD, 2024).

Undermining of Security Institutions in Nigeria

Some of the themes related to each other and identified through analysis of the relevant documentary sources to explain the erosion of the security institutions in Nigeria include: misallocation of funds, political patronage, corruption within the institutions, political appointment, poor morale among the staff, nonexistence of accountability mechanisms, and reduced public trust. All these themes have been identified in both government and civil society literature and reflect the idea that the erosion of institutions has a lot to do with governance rather than budgeting. For instance, although there has been a provision of almost \$19.9 billion in the budget for the defence sector in Nigeria from 2016 to 2022, corruption in budgetary and procurement processes has led to inefficiency of the institutions.

Table 1: Thematic Matrix of Documentary Evidence on State Capture and the Undermining of Security Institutions in Nigeria

Theme (Code)	Evidence from Documentary Sources	Analytical Interpretation	Institutional Implication
Resource Misallocation	Between 2016 and 2022, Nigeria allocated \$19.9 billion to defence, but the operational capability was low. Corruption and security votes that were not accounted for have resulted in diversion of funds away from operations.	Security financing is hampered by corruption instead of insufficient budget allocations.	Failure of operations, obsolete equipment, poor logistics, and inefficiency in combat.
State Capture and Elite Patronage	Political elites exercise control over procurement, recruitment, promotions, and allocations of operational funds. Security votes are also beyond the scrutiny of the public.	Organisational policies and procedures are shaped by the interests of elites.	Security agencies that serve the politicians instead of being concerned about national security.
Patronage-Based Appointments	Appointment and promotion of recruits within the security force are driven by politics rather than based on merit.	Institutional legitimacy is harmed through the establishment of patronage instead of professionalism.	Low professional standards, weak leadership, and poor organisational performance.
Institutional Corruption	Cases of corruption during procurement, overpriced contracts, siphoning of operational funds, extortion through checkpoints and embezzlement of logistic resources are rampant.	Corruption is now a part of organisational processes rather than an individual act.	Weak internal controls, poor public confidence, and inefficient operations.
Low Staff Morale	Poor provision of welfare benefits, delays in payment of salaries, poor supply of equipment and injustices deter members from undertaking hazardous operations.	Corruption undermines motivation indirectly due to unfair working conditions.	The lack of commitment, absenteeism, underperformance, and inefficiency of security personnel.
Weak Accountability Mechanisms	Security force supervisors are influenced politically, investigation cases are selective, and supervisory independence is weak.	Anti-corruption bodies do not have enough autonomy to ensure compliance.	Impunity and decline of the security sector.

Declining Public Trust	Reports of extortion, abuse of authority and criminal affiliation discourage civilians from cooperating with the security forces.	Normalising corruption reduces the legitimacy of institutions.	Absence of information sharing, poor community policing, and prevention of crimes.
Security Outcome	In light of the increased allocation of budget to the defence sector, the levels of insecurity, insurgency, kidnapping and organised crimes have been rising.	Only financial investment will not help security without institutional reform.	Insecurity despite an increase in government expenditure.

Source: Synthesised by the author from documentary evidence (Transparency International Defence & Security, 2020, 2025; CISLAC, 2025; Policy Brief, 2025; Amnesty International, 2020; Afrobarometer, 2023; Hills, 2021; Agbiboa, 2020; Omede, 2021).

From the thematic analysis of documentary data, it is clear that military spending in Nigeria does not lead to national security improvement. Despite considerable growth in defence spending, insecurity in the form of insurgency, banditry, kidnappings and violent extremism continues to prevail, implying that money alone is not enough for security gains (SIPRI, 2024; UNODC, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2024). While previous research (Collier & Hoeffler, 2007; SIPRI, 2024) holds that spending on defence is important to boost state capacity through efficient institutions, the case of Nigeria proves that this was hindered by poor governance.

The study finds corruption in institutions as the major impediment to effective functioning of the security sector. Contractual cheating, inflated budgets, misuse of defence funds, political nepotism and lack of control have negatively affected the efficiency of security operations (Presidential Committee on Audit of Defence Equipment Procurement, 2018; Transparency International Defence and Security, 2020; World Bank, 2024). The results of the research confirm the theories of prebendalism developed by Joseph (1987) and state capture by Hellman et al. (2000), while

The contrary view is expressed by Huntington (1957). Inadequate governance in institutions is due to several issues such as inadequate governance, lack of precision in the voting process of security, and financial transparency (BudgIT Foundation, 2023; OECD, 2020; World Bank, 2024). As much as realism theory stresses the significance of military power as the major aspect of security (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001), in relation to Nigeria, inadequate governance in institutions is among the significant determinant of poor performance of military institutions.

Inadequate governance has created various negative consequences in terms of professionalism and moral of soldiers owing to patronage, non-payment of salaries, poor welfare package, lack of equipment and personnel management issues (Alemika, 2013; Transparency International Defence and Security, 2020; OECD, 2020). This is a demonstration of Institutional Theory (Scott, 2014) and views of North (1990) who argued that organisational performance depends on the institution but not leadership and training (Huntington, 1957). Finally, the research proves that the corruptive behaviour and abuse of power and lack of accountability of officials negatively affect how citizens see and cooperate with security organisations (Transparency International, 2024; OECD, 2020; World Bank, 2024). The results coincide with the predictions of procedural justice theory (Tyler, 2006) and contradict the coercive state view (Tilly, 1985),

which argues that order can be achieved through coercion only.

From this study, it is clear that the source of problems in the sphere of security in Nigeria is linked to governance and institutional issues rather than under-funding of security. This study is in line with the ideas of North (1990), Scott (2014), and Acemoglu & Robinson (2012), according to whom institutions play a crucial role in achieving sustainable security, not finance. Defence expenditures are crucial factors, but sustainable security is achieved by accountability, transparency, and good governance.

Critical Infrastructure and Security Vulnerabilities

The efficiency of a nation is measured in terms of its robust critical infrastructure that helps in producing economic outputs, public health, governance, and national security. The security agencies like the military, police force, intelligence agency, and emergency services rely on robust infrastructure in the form of power supply, transportation, communication, health facilities, banking system, and ICT infrastructure to work efficiently and perform their constitutional duties (OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2022). This is because the critical infrastructure provides the logistics, communication, surveillance, command and control, and crisis management capability to these organisations. However, the increased digitisation and interdependence of the infrastructure have rendered them vulnerable to both physical and cyber threats, which, in turn, affect the efficiency of the security organisations (NIST, 2024).

Misappropriation of funds allocated for the upkeep and securing of infrastructure is the greatest risk to the resilience of critical infrastructure. Governance and accountability lead to inadequate funding of resilient infrastructure, and as a result, there is the use of outdated infrastructure that is very much prone to disruptions because of its age in times of emergencies (OECD, 2019; World Bank, 2022). This poses difficulties in the operation of the security agencies and lowers their capacity to respond to any threats either internally or externally. The modern critical infrastructures depend on each other, which makes the whole system even more vulnerable.

Any disruption in any sector of critical infrastructure such as electricity, transport or telecommunications may result in disruptions in many other sectors because they are all interconnected. For example, any disruptions in electricity supply will have a ripple effect on such spheres as the military and police command system, logistics, monitoring and control systems, and emergency response procedures. According to Buldyrev et al. (2010), failures of the interdependent infrastructure networks spread very rapidly and cause severe disruptions in the system, which are difficult to predict or handle. The fast development of technology has caused an increase in vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure systems.

Despite the improved efficiency of the system because of digitalisation, it has introduced new vulnerabilities to attacks from cyber criminals and even from some countries. Cyber-attacks like ransomware, malware, phishing and OT cyber attacks may affect data transmission, communication during emergencies and command and control functions, thus making it difficult to have an effective response to national security. Industrial control systems, which control

energy, transport, water supplies and other infrastructures, are vulnerable to cyber-attacks which are very advanced. Consequently, it is important to improve cybersecurity by using cyber-resilient architectures, adaptive defences, network monitoring and threat intelligence.

Failures in governance add to the problems, because effective management of critical infrastructures requires policies, coordination, information sharing and investment. Inconsistent mandates of institutions, lack of interagency cooperation, inadequate information exchange, and accountability issues are some of the main reasons why crisis and emergency management is not efficient (OECD, 2019). Modern studies on governance emphasise the importance of multi-sectoral governance involving government institutions, business enterprises, civil society actors and security establishments to make infrastructure much more resilient through risk assessment and emergency planning (CISA, 2023; OECD, 2019).

There are physical threats to infrastructure from attacks in regions experiencing terrorism, insurgency, organised crime and violent extremism. Economic value and symbolic value of infrastructures like energy pipelines, communication systems, transportation and power generation are usually reasons behind their being targeted. Attacks on infrastructure have implications for the delivery of essential services, costs involved, overworking of security forces and loss of public trust in government institutions. Several studies from all around the globe demonstrate that security policies related to protection of the infrastructure that are based only on military actions will not guarantee good results if there is no proper governance and collaboration between the population and the business sector (OECD, 2019; UNODC, 2023).

Environmental threats such as climate change contribute to the existing vulnerabilities of the infrastructure. The frequent occurrence of floods, heat waves, storms, droughts and other hazards has resulted in increased risks of disruptions in infrastructure. The construction of the infrastructure without taking into account the current state of the climate makes it vulnerable to disruptions that will need relief measures, humanitarian aid and reconstruction of the infrastructure. These issues will create additional problems for the work of security forces. It is necessary to take climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into consideration during the process of planning the infrastructure systems (UNDRR, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

To address the issues that are connected to the risk intersections, a comprehensive approach to the development of resilience is necessary, and this will encompass technology, governance, and society. Technology will entail cybersecurity, artificial intelligence-driven threat detection, network redundancy, a secure cloud computing environment, and surveillance of operational technologies (CISA, 2023; NIST, 2024). Governance approaches will require regulation, clarity of roles, accountability, collaboration between agencies, and private sector collaboration in the protection of the infrastructure (OECD, 2019). Resilience in society can be achieved through campaigns among the people, emergency preparedness programs, cybersecurity education, and training of emergency management and critical infrastructure staff.

The vulnerability of critical infrastructure is multidimensional and has significant implications for the effectiveness and resilience of security organisations. The following threats pose a threat to the capabilities of security organisations, including corruption, interdependency of

infrastructure, cybersecurity threats, failure of governance, destruction, and climate threats. To solve the problem, there is a need to adopt a holistic approach, which involves the use of technology, institutions, environment and society in making the infrastructure resilient and secure for the nation. Otherwise, the infrastructure will still be susceptible to disruptions.

Broader Security Implications

The problems of state capture and systemic corruption are connected with serious consequences, such as the undermining of the efficiency of institutions that also pose threats to the security of people, democracy and sustainable development of the country. The inability of the state to secure its citizens and apply the rule of law is one of the major consequences of the above-mentioned issues. The process of distributing the funds devoted to ensuring national security becomes distorted due to corruption, and therefore undermines the performance of security institutions. In turn, the weakened institution provides non-state armed groups, such as criminals, insurgents, kidnappers, bandits, etc., with an opportunity to perform their illegal actions without facing any difficulties from the side of the government.

Therefore, in Nigeria, the cases of organised crimes, armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom and insurgency have become frequent due to the prevalence of corruption, lack of proper monitoring of the activities of institutions and security governance (International Crisis Group, 2023; UNODC, 2023). The concept of corruption in general causes a decrease in confidence in political, judiciary and law enforcement institutions. When citizens do not have trust in the government because they think that government officers abuse their authority and resources to achieve personal benefits, they become less willing to cooperate with the police forces, obey governmental policies, or take part in politics in any way. Consequently, in many cases, communities resort to unofficial means of providing security and settling conflicts, thus weakening even more the position of the state (Afrobarometer, 2024; World Bank, 2017).

The feeling of favouritism, lack of accountability and injustice is a cause of division of society and instability. Corruption diverts money intended for providing public goods, such as education, health care, social programs, and infrastructure. This results in creating conditions when socially vulnerable population groups, including the under-or unemployable youth, become more prone to joining criminal groups, violent extremist organisations, and insurgent movements. Corruption not only hinders development but also promotes insecurity (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2023; Transparency International, 2024). Apart from the above-mentioned internal impacts of corruption, several external factors influence the competitiveness of the economy of the country in question due to the absence of investments, low levels of investors' confidence, increased costs for businesses and poor opportunities for

sustainable development. Those countries that suffer from bad governance and widespread corruption are exposed to the cycle of poverty-unemployment-fragile governance-conflict and cannot achieve sustainable development (World Bank, 2017; Transparency International, 2024). It is important to note that corruption and state capture are major threats to good governance,

socio-economic stability, national security and sustainable development. In addressing these challenges, there needs to be legal and institutional means that could help improve accountability and transparency in resource allocation through government expenditures, ensure the independence of monitoring institutions, and restore confidence among citizens about their government. It is also important to promote social development, opportunities for economic development, and build institutions to reduce the root causes of corruption, criminality, and insurgency.

Though Nigeria serves as the empirical example within this paper, the relationship between governance and security uncovered herein applies to many of the democratic nations in Sub-Saharan Africa that are plagued by patronage politics, poor institutional independence, politicised security sectors, and elite control of public institutions. Therefore, the suggested theoretical framework becomes a valuable means of comparison when studying institutional corruption and security governance in other nations like Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Policy Recommendations

To deal with the problems of state capture and security institutions, there is a need for specific governance reforms.

Firstly, there should be the establishment of independent and well-funded anti-corruption agencies with appointments through merit, operational independence, and legislative protection of investigative and judicial officials from any form of political interference. Such reforms are necessary for breaking up the existing patronage network system and building institutional integrity.

Secondly, there should be an increase in accountability in the security sector by having transparent budgeting and procurement processes, as well as mandatory public disclosure of security spending. These reforms should be complemented by punitive action for any cases of financial mismanagement and abuse of office to curb corruption.

Thirdly, there should be reforms of the security sector that will entail transparent recruitment processes, professionalism training, promotions through merit and improved welfare packages for the security officers to eliminate any corrupt behaviour among them. Just as important is the need for democratic oversight involving participation of civil society organisations, media and professional associations in monitoring security performance and expenditure.

Apart from Nigeria, the results of this study also enrich the general knowledge about the relation between governance and security. The relationship between governance and security demonstrates that institutional corruption and capture are major factors which lead to the failure of national security in developing and transitional states. This governance-security relation can be considered a useful tool in analysing many Sub-Saharan African states, which experience problems related to poor governance institutions, political patronage, elites' capture, and loss of citizens' confidence in state security institutions.

Conclusion

The problem of state capture demands persistent institutional reform, which is anchored in meritocratic recruitment practices, an open procurement system, anti-corruption institutions, judicial independence, and accountability structures. In the same manner, civil society organisations, investigative journalism, professional groups, and local-level oversight activities are critical for monitoring public spending and the effectiveness of institutions. Given that the work of the oversight agents may be conducted under politically constrained conditions, the protection of whistle-blowers, freedom of information, judicial independence, and legislation become crucial in ensuring that the work of civil society organisations is not intimidated and politicised. These actors, despite the presence of elites in the institution, can enhance accountability by working with the legislature, courts, development partners, and oversight bodies. In addition, ensuring judicial independence, safeguarding whistle-blowers, increasing access to information by the public, and punishing corrupt officials in the government are critical for achieving institutional accountability. All these reforms can be used together to ensure that there is transparency, efficiency in operations, and professionalism in Nigeria's security institutions. This way, only then will Nigeria build resilient, professional, and accountable security institutions that can respond effectively to the current security challenges faced in the country. In conclusion, security sustainability in Nigeria is about more than just raising defence budgets; it is about ensuring integrity in institutions, preventing capture by the elites, and building transparency and democracy in the security sector.

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