

Horizontal Inequality and West Africa's Worsening Security: Case Studies of Mali and Nigeria

Abstract

Mutual distrust, suspicion, hate, fear of domination and marginalization compel in-group members to enhance their marked identities in order to differentiate themselves from others and mobilise against other groups that are viewed as threats. Groups in this sense include ethnic, religious and professional, and are further categorized in terms of demography into minority and majority groups. Groups accentuating the fear of each other are a recipe for violent conflict in any state. When governments contribute to this dichotomy through giving a group undue advantage at the expense of others, or deliberately deny a group of due benefits, group suspicion and conflict are taken to frightening levels that keep society dangling on the precipice of war. This research examines how Nigeria has fared under such state sponsored horizontal inequality, the impact on politics, cohesion and (in) security, and what could be done to reverse the trend. Ex post facto is adopted as the design for this study considering that the events under analysis have occurred and the researcher cannot manipulate the outcomes. Semi structured interviews were conducted with experts on conflict in West Africa to complement data retrieved from secondary texts. This was necessary in view of the fact that not much has been done on horizontal inequality and security in the region. It is adopted for the research analysis and semi-structured interviews alongside library research are utilised for data collection. This study concludes among others that the practice of horizontal equality in governance is a major tool that could reverse the negative effects of horizontal inequality.

Key Words: Horizontal Inequality, Horizontal Equality, Identity, Ethnicity, Group Cohesion, Group Suspicion

1. Introduction

In every part of the world, mutual distrust, suspicion, hate, fear of domination and marginalization characterize social relations in plural societies and nations. Such fears compel in-group members to enhance their marked identities which differentiate them from others and ensure group cohesion and mobilization against other groups that are viewed as threats. Such disparate groups include tribal-ethnic religious and professional and are further categorized in terms of demography; into minority and majority groups. The prevalence of this existential reality is a recipe for violent conflicts in any state.

Interestingly, heterogeneous nations in the global North have managed their diversities and differences with varying degrees of success. They have achieved a considerable amount of success because they have been able to identify and try to respect all groups in the management and allocation of scarce and competitive resources, including political positions.

The European partitioning of Africa and the subsequent colonial experience awakened group consciousness as the colonial powers, deliberately erected, nurtured and sustained structures that would place the cooperators (those who embraced the subjugation) on a better social, economic and political pedestal than the rest. This machination ignored the demography or population and so rocked the pre-existing balance. The aim of the colonialist was to perfect the exploitative enterprise of developing the infrastructures of the places they found to be financially viable at the expense of the less financially viable areas. So we have two regions of greatly contrasting cultural, social and political structures within the same state. This was the case of northern and southern Nigeria, as well as northern and southern Mali. Thus the seed was sown in these countries for horizontal inequality, group rivalry and mutual suspicion.

The worsening security situation in both Nigeria and Mali is mostly political; the economic challenges are only a consequence of the political crisis. Buttressing this point Efemini (2003), contends that the crisis in Africa appear to be economic but that it is actually a political crisis that is before our eyes and that the various expressions of underdevelopment across the continent is only the economic consequences. He went further to state that the very foundation of the crisis itself was political. Similarly, Ogundiya (2009), is of the view that the foregoing has thrown-up chaotic social relations and violent conflicts as well. Since legitimacy is claimed on the basis of the level of compliance with the rules and procedures of the emergence of political authority, the nurtured and sustained inequalities that has characterized the political process and triggered legitimacy crisis in the country, seems to have fragmented groups along these lines. This has manifested in the disputation of election results, vexations surrounding land distributions policies, grazing routes, and other such lopsided perceptions over the years. These issues are present and contentious in both Nigeria and Mali.

No society, irrespective of how advanced, can boast of not having security challenges. Across Africa, security has remained a huge challenge and has defied various solutions crafted to manage it. Some states have handled it better than others and this compels the question why it has remained such a huge burden on the economies of many states. Here lies the reason for the study to understand why these crises arise in the first place, and analyse horizontal inequality as a probable cause.

Scholars have focused on horizontal inequalities that have triggered group violence and crisis (Stewart, 2002, 2005, 2008, 2010a,b, 2015). Some have also investigated the economic losses of such crises, while others have investigated inequalities and its political implication as well as the challenges it has continued to have on democratic consolidation in these two countries (Mali and Nigeria). It is observed from the literature search that scientific study of such horizontal inequalities and its attendant security implications in Africa have been captured. This study adds to the growing literature in this area, and offers a unique contribution by examining this problem from a West African perspective. It utilizes the pre and post-colonial experiences of Mali and Nigeria in its analysis on security and so adopts a socio-historically holistic approach to the issue.

Socio-economic neglect and political exclusion of the Tuaregs, are at the bane of most of the crisis and the situation in Mali (Varin and Abubakar, 2017). Their colonial and immediate post-colonial experience as well prepared the grounds for group identity which was later mobilized politically with violent outcomes. The government dominated by the southern blacks was insensitive to the extent that it crafted land tenure policies to the disadvantage of nomadic Tuaregs and that the dissatisfaction with such policies ultimately contributed to the 1962-1964 rebellion. With regards to institutional weakness, the Tuaregs further argued that the inability of the state to properly deal with the drought crisis which greatly affected many groups especially the Tuaregs was at the bane of the 1990 rebellion as the Tuaregs held the state responsible for profiting from their ordeal by diverting into private pockets, international aid meant to address their plight at the time.

It is on record that the North, just like the Southern blacks in Mali, did not put up fierce resistance to the colonial rule of the British colonial government compared to the rest of the country. This reality came with certain benefits and at independence, it was in full political and economic effect. The colonial experience in Nigeria under the British colonial government made it abundantly clear that political power was the key to the allocation of scarce resources. This awakened ethnic consciousness which in turn brought about the struggle for political space in an atmosphere of scarce resources and mutual suspicion. The only logical conclusion is the politicization and mobilization of such group identities.

In light of the above realities, it can be argued that horizontal inequality has sort of triggered the replacement of national conscience with group loyalty which has continued to affect good governance and peace across the West African sub-region hence the need to examine the problem.

The search for a civil society must not ignore the reality of diversity. States must accept the reality that every group matters as the Tuaregs that make up just a little over 1% of the population of Mali is able to cause such level of unrest due to their being very politically active. Same can be said for the Ijaws in the Southern part of Nigeria who are minorities, and in whose areas, crude oil is largely drilled, yet they remain excluded from mainstream national politics up until roughly ten years ago. Decades of political alienation prompted ethnic militarization against the government that caused massive disruption to the oil industry that economically affected Nigeria.

The objective of this study is to identify the role horizontal inequality on the security situation in Mali and Nigeria. The findings will inform of ethnic trends in Africa's Sahel region, as well as

on minorities ethnic government relationships, especially those that are conflict prone. These findings will have huge significance for understanding Africa's regional politics and so aid conflict resolution strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Methodology

The work adopts both ex-post facto and historical research designs via the utilization of process tracing and historical analysis for its research analyses. The study also examined events by linking often ignored but inter-related events that find expression in the form of ethnic domination which is then nurtured and sustained as horizontal inequalities at all levels. It is therefore not an effort to trace the origin of the issues under study rather, it seeks to explain the impact the issues have had on the two countries and may continue to have if urgent steps are not taken to address them. It is likely that this reality may affect and even shape future leadership given the fact that democracy is about numbers.

The case study research design was adopted with Mali and Nigeria as the case study. These cases were selected given that they both are classic examples of how group inequality breeds conflict, how this was established via their colonial experience and has carried on into north-south dichotomy in present day. These characteristics make these states ideal case studies.

In both Mali and Nigeria, the lack of strong institutions that could provide constitutional guarantees with respect to protecting the rights of all in the polity is ever evident. The reason for the group consciousness is the neglect by government but where the neglect becomes systemic horizontal, whereby patterns emerge and those affected are able to piece together the elements of these neglect and in the process realize that it is not random; they begin to change their attitude towards the source of such horizontal inequality.

The reactions of those affected begin to find expression in the way and manner they relate with the state which is viewed as the aggressor. This is not a situation of one group versus another rather, it is a case of a group that feels horizontally deprived and neglected in the political and economic scheme of things and are using their most potent weapon (their consciousness and group belongingness) to force the hand of the aggressor (the state) to strike a balance where they would feel like they are being taken seriously.

This work is not oblivious of the fact that it takes a group to perpetuate horizontal inequality but in this case, the state is the instrumentality through which it is achieved aided by constitutional loopholes and institutional weaknesses. If the state had strong institutional backbones that would provide the needed balance, the need to mobilize against the state through the instrumentality of marked identity would not be too attractive.

In light of the above, it is safe to say that the theoretical base of this work is institutionalism but from a behavioural perspective as it attempts to explain group reaction in a given situation. Data were sourced from archived materials that speak to conflicts, the ethnic dynamics, explored constitutional weaknesses that fail to provide the needed balance in the system on West African conflict history and security analysis. In view of the importance of secondary data to a work such as this, they were sourced from relevant journal and internet materials as well as texts. The data collected about horizontal inequality in Mali and Nigeria () were content analysed.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Horizontal Inequality as a Catalyst for Violence

This theme inequity a catalyst for violence shall be guided by the POLITICAL ECONOMY THEORY as a framework or tool of analysis derived from the writings of Karl Marx. It is a holistic, historical orientation which is applied by social scientists for the analysis of social formations and their contradicting relationships.

According to Caporaso and Levine (1992), Political Economy theory basically brings clarity to the pull and strains that have come to define the issues surrounding the nature and character of want and satisfaction as well as the dynamics of production and distribution to address want and satisfaction. It basically clarifies the relationship between economics and politics.

It is a fact that beyond production and management of the wealth of a society, equitable distribution of what is produced and managed with respect to the different groups is equally important in minimizing conflict.

On the part of Ake (1981), the proper understanding of what the material assets and the attendant constraints of a society are, in terms of how the society produces goods to address its material needs, how the goods are then distributed and the type of relations that arise from the organization of production, then we are striving to understand the culture of that society, its laws, religious system as well as its political system. For Lee and Jordan (2022) political economy directs how public policy affects society and the people.

Consequently, the discussion on inequity as a catalyst for violence surrounds the expressive forms of group consciousness in Mali and Nigeria. In the sense of this discourse, it refers to how groups identify themselves and that this reality has everything to do with their history which also influences their consciousness as a group, how they behave in response to policy decisions of the state are equally important.

Mali and Nigeria are countries with multiple ethnic groups brought together to achieve the colonial exploitative agenda by their respective former colonial masters and these respective exploitative agenda of both colonial power houses have far reaching foundational consequences and when aided by weak institutions, they find expression in deep seated horizontal inequalities which when not properly managed, is capable of awakening ethnic consciousness which in turn breeds the antagonistic struggle for political space in an atmosphere of scarce resources and mutual suspicion. This is simply a recipe for insecurity.

Both Mali and Nigeria suffered the unfortunate experience of colonialism in its path to nationhood and the character of the social and political realities no doubt impacted socio-political outcomes.

In Mali, the French colonial authorities did not consider the northern part of the country predominantly inhabited by the Tuaregs as having any serious economic importance based on the exploitative projected estimation of the colonial masters and thus the Tuaregs were not given or considered as an important component of the colonial agenda. This reality informed the granting

of autonomy to the Tuaregs and the autonomy was weaponized by the Tuaregs to reject French educational, administrative and political influence.

This was in contrast to the political events in the south that was enjoying better treatment as a result of their acceptance of French subjugation. This translated in better treatment of the south in terms of educational and economic policies which then tipped the scales against the Tuaregs to the extent that at independence, the black Africans of the south were comparatively more prepared and therefore had the socio-economic advantages conferred by independence in Mali. This is to say that in terms of education, and all round infrastructural development, the south was better equipped in terms of qualified personnel for a post-independent Mali as the south now had better and more qualified personnel to take up the available career positions and in the process, the socio-politico benefits attached to such position.

Another quite defining event was the severe drought that affected crops and livestock of the Tuaregs which they believe was deliberately not properly managed as funds meant for the proper management of the situation found its way into private pockets thereby causing monumental losses for the Tuaregs. This situation set the grounds for another round of hostilities as the southern led government was held responsible for deliberately mismanaging the situation.

These and other such policies like the systemic and deliberate refusal of the southern led government to extend social services and infrastructural development to the north meant that the north had limited access to good roads, markets, schools, hospitals etc. The fact that these social services were stifled deliberately to put the north (Tuareg region) at a disadvantage meant that the benefits that these services confer would as well be comparatively lesser in the north thereby giving the south certain advantages that were systematically nurtured and sustained thereby breeding consciousness marked by ethnic identity which found expression in the 2012 rebellion that erupted thereby worsening the security situation in the country.

This position is corroborated by Varin and Abubakar (2017), when they said that the crisis in Mali is mainly centered around the way and manner the Tuaregs are being treated. This is worsened by the age long exclusionary policies of the state against the Tuaregs.

The tendency to protect the group is only logical. Perhaps the argument of Turton (1997), would suffice when he contended that the strength of ethnicity is located in the firm believe members have in their origin and that it is the very essence of their drive as a group. The action of the Tuareg in the North is reminiscent of this feeling and passion to protect their heritage.

This position is in line with the position of Stewart (2010a,b), when she argued that in the presence of unbearable naked horizontal inequalities expressed and bounded by ethnicity or religion, its mobilizing prowess is most potent. This is made worse as opportunistic leaders in the group make sure that every form of horizontal inequalities are given the most vivid description to spur members to act.

According to the Geneva Declaration (2010), there is also the report which affirms that countries with severe social and economic inequalities are more prone to conflict. It went further to state that, it is even worse in countries that are experiencing low levels of economic development as well as religious differences or divide.

3.2 Horizontal Inequality and the Threat to National Security

This theme would be analysed through the lens of constructivism theory which basically argues that knowledge is constructed and that it is not just the passive acceptance of information but that the mind of the learner plays a huge role in the learning process (Bodner, 1986; Bruner, 1961; Sjoberg, 2010). That is, the way people encounter, engage and experience their environment does not only enable them to reflect upon such experiences but also enables them to construct their own reality which then becomes part and parcel of what they already knew based on the newly constructed knowledge as they continue to learn.

Jean Piaget's (in Cherry, 2022), through his Constructivism theory tried to unravel the dynamics of knowledge through an in-depth study of how children are actively involved in the process of learning. Explaining constructivism, Fosnot (2005), argued that knowledge is a function of the environment. What was earlier considered truth was only a reflection of the adaptive nature of the human mind as a function of his environment. Chandra (2012) explains from a constructivist perspective how the environment influences even the ethnic composition of a society and also argued that the political and economic reality of a society could influence even the ethnic composition of a society. He further argued that even the existing ethnic divisions can be influenced by political realities such as elections, parties and politics generally.

Basically these arguments contend that it is the society that shapes its citizens as they transit along life experiences. A hostile environment will create a hostile population same way a peaceful environment will produce a peaceful population. It is the ability of the state to create a peaceful society through inclusive policies that determines the kind of society it would have.

No doubt, without laws society breaks down and when the laws seem not to apply equally to all groups, society becomes equally unstable if and when the disadvantaged group(s) is/are able to utilise their identity and mobilise members effectively to confront the source of their vexations. Horizontal inequality is basically an application of different rules for different groups by states, governments or leaders that are saddled with the responsibility of providing fairness and equity. Sometimes state institutions are implicated in nurturing and sustaining horizontal inequality. This is mainly due to the fact that man is a product of his environment and with this reality comes certain biases that affect his objectivism which reflects and influence state institutions. Recently, a former serving senator from Kaduna state (Shehu Sani), at a Channels television 'politics today' interview programme where he was quoted as saying that "it is impossible for terrorists to hide; Buhari simply not interested in stopping them.

This is perhaps why Jones et al. (2011), argued that where the institutions are not able to handle the political demands of a population or to bring about balance and fairness, pressures would mount and if not well managed could result in conflict.

In essence, it is the institutions that were supposed to ensure that no group is excluded because when people feel excluded from policy benefits and where such exclusion coincides with marked ethnic, religious or other group identity; it awakens consciousness and becomes a cocktail for disaster.

In the same vein the type of the treatment given to the Tuaregs vis-a-vis the black southern Africans in southern Mali by the colonizing powers during Mali's march towards nationhood, strengthened the consciousness of the Tuaregs that resulted in the hostilities that has characterized insecurity in the state of Mali. It is the consciousness of being left out in the scheme of things that explains the several failed attempts by the Tuaregs and a few other groups in Mali to secede and form an independent state of Azawad.

In similar exclusionary political fashion of the Nigerian state, it has given rise to agitations from different groups that have taken arms against the Nigerian or being anti-nationalist such as the clamour for the state of Biafra from the south-east, Odudua state from the south-west, Niger Delta Republic from groups in the south-south.

The voting patterns in the 2015 polls with specific reference to the presidential elections reflects the reality that group consciousness now play a huge role in determining the state of affairs as regards who gets the number one job in the country.

Tables 1 and 2 in pages 34 and 38 clearly illustrate these biases in terms of the appointments into military and paramilitary establishments and the ethnic and religious voting patterns in the 2015 polls respectively.

Table 1: Showing Heads of Military and Paramilitary Organizations Appointments by Obasanjo, Jonathan, and Buhari administrations respectively

Obasanjo /Atiku	Military/Para-Military Appointees	State/Geo-Zone	Jonathan/Sambo	Military/Para-Military Appointees	State/Geo-Zone	Buhari/Osinbanjo	Military/Para-Military Appointees	State/Geo-Zone
Chief of Defence Staff	Lt. Gen Alexander Ogomudia	Delta/South South	Chief of Defence Staff	Ola Ibrahim	Kwara/North Central	Chief of Defence Staff	Abayomi Olonishakin	Ekiti/South West
Chief of Army Staff	Victor Malu	Benue/North Central	Chief of Army Staff	Azuibike O. Ihejirika	Abia/South East	Chief of Army Staff	Tukur Buratai	Borno/North East
Chief of Naval Staff	Vice-Admiral Samuel Afolayan	Kwara/North Central	Chief of Naval Staff	Dele Joseph Ezeoba	Plateau/North Central	Chief of Naval Staff	Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas	Cross River/South South
Chief of Air Staff	Marshal Jonah Wuyep	Plateau/North Central	Chief of Air Staff	Alex Badeh	Adamawa/North East	Chief of Air Staff	Sadique Abubakar	Bauchi/North East
Insp. General	Tafa Balogun	Osun/	Insp. General of	Solomon Ehigiator	Edo/South	Insp. General of	Ibrahim	Niger/

of Police		South West	Police	Arase	South	Police	Idris	North Central
National Security Adviser	Aliyu Mohammed Gusau	Zamfara/ North West	National Security Adviser	Sambo Dasuki	Kaduna/ North West	National Security Adviser	Babagana Monguno	Borno/ North East
DG, DSS	Lateef Kayode Are	Lagos/ South West	DG, DSS	Ita Ekpeyong	Cross River/ South South	DG, DSS	Lawal Daura	Katsina/ North West
Comp. Gen. Customs	Jacob Gyang Buba	Plateau/ North Central	Comp. Gen. Customs	Alhaji Dikko Inde Abdullahi	Katsina/ North West	Comp. Gen. Customs	Hameed Ibrahim Ali	Kaduna/ North West
Comp. Gen., Immigration	Lady Uzoamaka Nwizu	Imo/ South East	Comp. Gen., Immigration	Mrs. Rose Uzoma	Imo/ South East	Comp. Gen., Immigration	Mohammed Babandede	Jigawa/ North West
Comp. Gen., Prisons	Abraham Akpe	Benue/ North Central	Comp. Gen., Prisons	Aminu Suleh	Bauchi/ North East	Comp. Gen., Prisons	Ja'afaru Ahmed	Kebbi/ North West
Corps Marshal, FRSC	Danyaro Ali Yakasai	Kano/ North West	Corps Marshal, FRSC	Osita Chidoka	Anambra/ South East	Corps Marshal, FRSC	Boboye Oyeyemi	Kwara/ North Central
Commd. Gen, NSCDC	Non-Existent in 1999	Nil	Commd. Gen, NSCDC	Abdullahi Gana Mohammed	Niger/ North Central	Commd. Gen, NSCDC	Abdullahi M. Gana	Niger/ North Central
Minister of Defense	Theophilus Danjuma (June 1999–2003)	Taraba/ North East	Minister of Defense	Bello H. Mohammed	Kebbi/ North West	Minister of Defense	Mansur Dan Ali	Zamfara/ North West
Minister of Interior	Mohammed Shata	Katsina/ North West	Minister of Interior	Abba Moro	Benue/ North Central	Minister of Interior	Abdulrahman Dambazau	Kano/ North West

Source: By Author

Table 2. Heads of Military and Paramilitary Organizations Appointments By Obasanjo, Jonathan and Buhari with Respect to Geo-Political Zones

Geo-Political Zones	Obasanjo		Jonathan		Buhari	
	Appointments	% Spread	Appointments	% Spread	Appointments	% Spread
South-West	2	16.7	Nil	0	1	7.14
South-East	1	8.3	3	21.4	Nil	0
South-South	1	8.3	2	14.3	1	7.14
North-West	2	16.7	3	21.4	6	42.86
North-East	1	8.3	2	14.3	3	21.43
North-Central	5	41.7	4	28.6	3	21.43

Source: By Author

This concurs with Gurr (1994), who contended that when major political or economic grievances in society coincide with socially constructed identities, the end result is most likely violence. Stewart (2002), went as far as analysing selected country cases which supported her argument that ethnic identities and economic/social ones are not a good mix as it most often leads to one form of instability or the other.

Scholars like Cederman et al. (2010), in a bid to properly understand and properly explain how political inequalities relate with conflict, have analysed 124 ethnic conflicts over a period of 59 years from 1946 to 2005 focusing on variables such as ethnic groups' access to power and conflict. Their results were indicative of the fact that there exist a positive relationship between increased conflict and the degree of political exclusion. According to Cederman et al. (2010), this implies that the excluded groups were likely to express their anger by rebelling against the source of their deprivation and exclusion. This is in agreement with the contention of Wimmer et al. (2009), when they also demonstrated that political exclusion increases the risk of conflict.

Basically, the effort here is an attempt to understand the nature of group expression in reaction to the politics of exclusion and the role of the state as an agent of horizontal inequality through the instrumentality of exclusionary policies that has pitched groups against one another in terms of defining access to power and by implication who gets what, when and how. This in effect also unveils the reasons for inclusion and exclusion thereby defining the contestations and its implication on the overall development of both nations.

The importance of carrying all groups along cannot be overemphasized given the myriads of research that have indicated that there is a connection between horizontal inequality and crisis or even armed conflict.

Consequently, it will not be out of place to state that equity is what almost certainly ensures sustainable peace in any society and by extension, development and meaningful progress. The different groups must be made to feel that their fears, concerns are important and taken seriously through the implementation of policies to address those concerns or fears as the case may be. On the other hand, politicizing such legitimate concerns only prepares the ground for conscious mobilization by group to address their fears using any means necessary including violence.

The socio-economic neglect and political exclusion of the Tuaregs was the central nerve that exploded and activated most of the crisis in Mali. No doubt, the Tuaregs dissatisfaction was ever present but this was made even worse by the prolonged neglect by government with respect to the provision of basic public services and infrastructure among other underlying factors. To make matters worse, the domination of state craft by the southern black which deliberately heightened their insensitivity to the plight of the Tuaregs to the extent that even land tenure policies were exploited to the disadvantage of nomadic Tuaregs which ultimately prepared the grounds for the 1962-1964 rebellion.

Consequently, the general feeling of the Tuaregs was that of suspicion as the southern blacks led government was also unable to properly handle the drought crisis which devastated groups particularly the Tuaregs and was seen as deliberate thereby again, setting the stage for the 1990 rebellion as the state was held responsible for profiting from their ordeal via embezzlement of international aid meant to address their plight in addition to other unfavourable land policies. This simply implies that for relative peace to reign, the government must take deliberate steps to device more inclusive policies.

Mali was able to experience or enjoy relative peace when the Azawad People's Movement (MPA) were given a sense of belonging through the efforts of Ahmadou Toumani Toure who explored a non-military solution to the impasse. Under his leadership, he took deliberate steps to display that the state was unbiased through inclusive policies. Basically, there was a broader sense of belonging which was extended to include even the administrative structure for the regions in the north.

In Nigeria, state response to agitations and concerns by different groups in the country is not very different as in most cases; the first reaction of the state is to suppress such agitations rather than negotiate with the groups so as to understand their concerns or fears with the genuine intentions of addressing them. These agitations are rife in the south west as well as the south east and the south-south and the response of the state can only be characterized as high handed despite abundant historical experiences showing that negotiation and non-military options have had better outcomes than military suppression that is not sustainable.

For example, just like the case of the Tuaregs in Mali, the Nigerian state to a large extent was slow to addressing the concerns of the people of the Niger Delta responsible for the crude that sustains the Nigerian economy. This gave rise to the emergence of different militant groups notably the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and a host of others within the region. After being ignored for years, the peaceful agitations metamorphosed into armed struggle and as usual, the initial response of government was to suppress these agitations. These groups went ahead to carry out coordinated attacks on oil installations to the extent that the economy of Nigeria was brought to its knees as government

could no longer provide social services and the only most attractive option was to negotiate a non-military solution to the problem. The agitations of the different groups in the different regions was basically to have a sense of belonging and as well benefit significantly from the mineral deposits (crude oil) in their land.

During the Olusegun Obasanjo's administration, the government caved in and responded by creating the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) on the 5th of June, 2000 to address the development challenges of the region. Whether this developmental agenda was achieved is a discussion beyond the scope of this work. During the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua's administration in 2011, the government responded to similar attacks by declaring Amnesty to the militant groups before relative peace returned to the region.

In both Mali and Nigeria, there are clear evidences which suggest that part of the problem was and is still the lack of strong institutions that could give all groups reason(s) to believe that the state exist to protect and serve all groups in the country. The reason for taking up arms against the state or even civil disobedience is a clear indication of the people's loss of faith in the state system. The state is no longer seen as an impartial umpire and as such the different groups feel the need to challenge its legitimacy.

For example, the Igbos in Eastern Nigeria as well as other groups in other parts of the country have complained of certain systemic political exclusion in the scheme of things in the nation and the delay in the feedback process has given birth to the likes of Nnamdi Kanu in the East, the Ogonis through late Ken Saro Wiwa and Henry Awka in the South, Sunday Igboho in the West who all voiced the unfair treatment of its people and have become a source of political mobilization. These different individuals were able to mobilize group sentiments to further their agitations because the state has continued to present itself as a bias umpire. This perceived bias is measured on the scale of the privileges enjoyed by the north as they are seen to be getting a better deal from the "National cake".

In contemporary Nigeria, same is playing out under the current administration of Muhammadu Buhari as the appointments into sensitive offices in the country have not displayed the diversity in the country (see Tables 1 and 2 on distribution of heads of military and paramilitary organizations appointed by Buhari as at 2015). It was a situation where the appointees namely Chief of Air Staff, Insp. General of Police, National Security Adviser, Director General, Department of State Services, Comptroller General, Customs, Comptroller General, Immigration, Comptroller General, Prisons, Corps Marshal, FRSC, Commandant General, NSCDC, Comptroller General, Fire Service, Minister of Defense, Minister of Interior, were mainly from the North East, North Central and North - West extraction respectively. This is the height of insensitivity.

Currently, there are reports of gold mining activities in Zamfara state without firm regulatory presence of the state, this could be a source of discontentment to other regions with mineral deposits but with strong regulatory presence of the state authorities. There have been accusations of state policies favoring particular sections over others and it is policies that this that implicates the state as an agent of horizontal inequality.

The cluster of Federal Government projects in a particular location paints a more vivid picture the (ab) use of power and its implication for who gets what, when and how. President Burhari hails from Daura in Katsina state and in the seven years of his regime so far, Daura has been the location of the following; the Federal Polytechnic, Daura, Airforce Reference Hospital, Daura, Women and Children Hospital, Daura, University of Transportation, Daura, Kano-Maradi rail line passing through Daura, School for People with Special Needs, Daura, Nigerian Airforce Response Air Wing, Daura, Nigerian Army 171 Battalion Base, Daura, Forwarding Operating Base, Daura, National Directorate of Employment Centre, Ganga, Daura, Upgrade and Expansion of Daura Mini Stadium, Sustainable Development Goals Skills Acquisition Centre, Zango Road, Daura, Completion of the Sabke Dam, Daura which supplies 1m litres of water to Daura and neighbouring communities, 73km 132KVA line from Katsina to Daura and two 30 and 40 MVA transformers to boost power supply, Dualization of the 72km Katsina-Daura road. 50-bed Maternity Centre at the Daura General Hospital built under the name of the First Lady, Sir Emeka Offor E-Library, Daura, 400,000 litres capacity solar powered water system by NNPC and Belema oil in a joint venture with Jack-Rich Tein Foundation, Several SDG School Projects in Daura, Several works of rehabilitation, expansion, reactivation and completion of abandoned and existing projects including roads, schools, drainages, water projects etc., National Directorate of Employment (NDE) Cosmetology training and distribution of Cosmetology packs to 1000 women in Daura, 330KV /132KV power substation, Daura. (Legit, May 29, 2022. List of Projects, Establishments in Daura)

This skewed distribution opens up the reality that the employment opportunities in Katsina state are grossly in favour of those from the area. According to Agbiboa (2017), the outcry as a result of the blatant and arrogant display of insensitivity by the current administration of president Muhammadu Buhari in terms of the special treatment given to the Fulani ethnic group has reached unprecedented levels and has sparked serious ethnic distrust thereby encouraging the eruption of violent conflicts in different parts of the country which is capable of causing a total breakdown of law and order if not well managed.

What this has caused in Nigeria is that other groups at the receiving end of the bargain have decided to mobilize. The election results and the voting pattern of the 2015 polls clearly reflect the conscious ethnic and religious mobilization. See page 38 for the voting patterns of the North East, Central and Western regions as well as the south-south as it shows candidate voted for by the major ethnic groups and religions per state at the 2015 polls.

According to Prasetyawan (2014), commenting on the 2007 and 2012 elections in Jakarta Indonesia said that ethnicity is quite significant in determining the outcome of elections. He was not oblivious of the place of other variables such as education and flood but also acknowledges the fact that their relationship (ethnicity and voting patterns) is not static.

For Brinkman et al. (2013), they argued that indeed inequalities in all its forms increase the dissatisfaction of group(s) which could result to conflict. They further argued that the unbalanced distribution of social services has been blamed for inter-group conflict in Kosovo, in other areas such as Melanesia, the culprit was violence against women while in Yemen, the cause of the chaos was political exclusion. What this entail is that if there must be relative peace, then, the Nigerian state must be seen to be taking deliberate steps to be fair and just to all groups by crafting more inclusive policies.

Speaking of inclusive government, Keen notes that the risk of conflict is less in a politically and economically inclusive government. Illustrating this reality, he cited research works which suggests that mobilization and participation along ethnic lines in countries like Ecuador and Bolivia indicates that it discourages rebellion and that the reverse is the case in Guatemala and Peru where political and economic exclusion hold sway.

What provides perhaps the best motivation for group mobilization is the realization that their collective deprivation is not random but rather designed and that the state is implicated in perpetuating it. Scholars agree that the best way to change the situation and usher in relative peace is for all groups to have a sense of belonging through deliberate state policies.

For Stewart (2000, 2002), from available research, there is ample evidence that horizontal inequality in terms of access to political and economic power are very potent forces capable of causing violent eruption of conflict. This is because when a group or groups feel aggrieved, it is capable of mobilizing (along ethnic, regional or religious) the group to redress the source of their collective deprivation.

Jones et al. (2011), agreeing with the work by Richard Auty, Indra de Soysa, Terry Lynn Karl, James Fearon, Michael Ross, and Jakob Svensson, the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) at New York University, concluded that the reason why groups get involved in violence sometimes is economic. That if minority groups are fenced off, they would most likely find it difficult to resist the temptation to challenge the status quo especially when there is natural resources at play.

In both Mali and Nigeria, banditry is on the rise as different communities have fallen under the control of different armed groups. Nomadic herders in most cases have claimed to be the victims of systemic corruption and as such taken up arms to challenge the credibility and legitimacy of the state. This challenge has no respect for religion as mosques and churches have all been stung by banditry. This is even made worse by the overwhelming burden of corruption even within the armed forces thereby making the claim of decimating bandits and other terrorist groups a far cry from the reality on the ground.

This situation was buttressed by the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2006), when they also argued that there has been a steady rise in banditry enabled by the free flow of modern weapons since 2000. They further argued that nomadic herders claiming to be victims have decided to not only defend themselves but as well challenge the existing status quo and that corruption which has crippled state institutions have made it even more difficult for the state to play the role of an unbiased agent.

All the indices and ingredients for violent clash are coming together perhaps too rapidly as the number of children unable to attend school is fast increasing. According to Oxfam briefing paper of July 2019, the number of children attending school in Mali is as low as 2% and 3% especially of nomadic pastoralists. This is not different from the Almajiri system in northern Nigeria. Both cases portend serious threat to security in both Mali and Nigeria.

The year 2012 marked a watershed in the history of the state of Mali. This was because of the occupation of some communities by armed groups a similar fate being experienced by Nigeria today. The bandits have overrun the military and such law enforcement agents of government to

the point that the borders have remained unmanned signalling the outright collapse of state institutions. Even the public service has disappeared thereby leaving most territories under the control of bandits who are said to brazenly collect taxes from farmers and herders while state officials saddled with such responsibilities remain in hiding. The Malian authorities were said to have become poster boys for corruption so has there been several cases where soldiers have been caught being involved in leaking information and other classified intelligence to the bandits to the extent that rural dwellers in affected communities in some cases feel safer under the protection of armed groups.

This explains why the African states with good human rights record; tend to experience greater peace, lesser conflicts and greater political and economic stability. Table 3 is a representation of this reality using the Human Freedom Index scores (HFI). The HFI scores basically show that the countries with the highest Human Freedom Index scores are widely considered to be among the freest countries in the world.

The Categories of the Human Freedom Index are, Rule of Law, Security and Safety, Movement, Religion, Association, Assembly, and Civil Society, Expression and Information, Identity and Relationships, Size of Government, Legal System and Property Rights, Access to Sound Money, Freedom to Trade Internationally, Regulation.

Table 3: Human Freedom Index scores from selected countries in Africa

S/N	Country	HFS	HFR	PF	EF
1	Botswana	7.9	53	8.1	7.62
2	Seychelles	7.84	57	7.99	7.63
3	Liberia	6.81	103	7.14	6.35
4	Niger	6.41	118	6.78	5.97
5	Nigeria	6.28	123	5.79	6.97
6	Mali	6.25	124	6.55	5.83
7	Mauritania	5.73	143	5.18	6.49

Source: Cato Institute, the Fraser Institute, and the Liberales Institute at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. Keys: Human Freedom Score (HSF), Human Freedom Rank (HFR), Personal Freedom (PF), Economic Freedom (EF).

This is what is lacking in Mali and Nigeria. The national morale is low as citizens first see themselves as Tuaregs, Dogon, Bambara, or Mande people before they see themselves as Malians just as in Nigeria, citizens first see themselves as either Fulani, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo or Ijaw before they see themselves as Nigerians.

This is also because those at the disadvantaged end have largely lost faith to the extent that even a nationalist in Nigeria was quoted as saying that Nigeria was nothing but a “mere geographical expression”, while Chinua Achebe entitled one of his famous works “there was a country”.

This is perhaps why Efemini (2003), argued that, to many rural dwellers, the very existence of the state is viewed as a nuisance which is to be avoided as the citizenry strive to make ends meet

every day. This is anchored on the premise that the state social services record is so insignificant that it makes no real impact in their lives as such regarded as irrelevant at best. The average man on the street only stumbles on the state unexpectedly.

It is only when the different groups feel that they have a stake in the state that they would feel the need to protect it. This simply connotes that it is the different groups that gives the state credibility, legitimacy and even security. Without the cooperation of the different groups, the machinery of state would always have clogs in the wheel. The state is safest when its people believe in it.

Groups identify themselves as group mostly in the face of perceived deprivation and discrimination. Where the state is alive to its responsibilities, groups will exist but with a more positive attitude. The history of America and the native Americans or Indians as well as the African Americans use to be a constant clash heightened by the need for each group to protect group members but today, due to the political developments where anyone from any group can aspire to hold the highest office in the land, these groups are becoming more fluid as government and governance is getting more and more inclusive and responsible to the people.

In Rwanda, the Hutus and Tutsi's undermined each other, a miscalculation that led to the 1994 massacre that left thousands dead but today, Rwanda is characterized as a beacon of hope for Africa as the Government have worked very hard to ensure that the state exist for all groups.

This is what is missing in Mali and Nigeria. While a lot could be attributed to the colonial history of both countries for inheriting colonial institutions that were largely designed to be dependent, other reasons for the lack of cohesion is the lack of political will on the part of the political elites in both countries.

3.3 Horizontal equality as a Means for Stability in Mali and Nigeria

There is consensus on the need for inclusive policies by government as a way of ensuring that all groups are given a sense of belonging and by extension bringing about stability. For example, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo (in Vanguard, 2021), spoke on the need for all groups to be given a sense of belonging in the Nigerian project when he enthused that "equity, justice, fairness is imperative for Nigeria's unity". He further stated that "despite the scale of the challenges facing 'the country', unravelling this web of commonality as proposed by enthusiasts of disintegration is a cure that is worse than the disease". The president as part of his Independence Day speech, reacting to the issues of equity, justice and fairness said that, "I fully understand the anxiety of many Nigerians on the inability of this country to go beyond a never-ending potential for becoming a great nation to an actually great one." A major missing link this study argues is the lack of horizontal equity.

The same way that horizontal inequality propagates conflict is the same way that horizontal equity would propagate relative peace and a sense of belonging for all groups in the polity. The fear and suspicion for one another is as a result of the lack of institutional guarantees and well-crafted policies to ensure that all sections of the country is carried along. For example, a politically sensitive government could never dare appoint a particular group of people into sensitive offices not minding the federal structure of the country.

A group of people should never feel that they cannot be trusted with the highest office in the land simply because of where they come from (as in the Igbos in Nigeria). In both Mali and Nigeria, it appears that a group of people are first class citizens while the other groups are second class citizens of the country. This does not inspire any sense of ownership or belongingness in those groups who have been made to feel as though they are not part of the country. It certainly makes such groups to want to assert their identity and make certain claims.

The agitations of the people of the Niger Delta Region under the Obasanjo administration got to dangerous levels that threatened the very survival of Nigeria's mono-economy. Their demand was basically to control the resources of their region for the development of the Niger Delta. According to Human Rights Watch (1999), youths from the Ijaw extraction met in Kaiama, Bayelsa State, south south Nigeria under the umbrella of Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), and expressed their displeasure with the treatment of the region by the Nigerian state. The declaration in a nutshell exposed the fact that the character of politics in Nigeria was basically the "struggle for the control of oil mineral resources" without a commiserate strategic plan by the government to address the attendant environmental chaos caused the land of the people by the oil prospecting giants.

On another front, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) on their part came up with the Ogoni Bill of Rights in which they, in August, 1990 articulated their demands. October, 1992 witnessed the establishment of the Movement for the Survival of the Izon Ethnic Nationality (MOSIEND) with the aim of adopting an Izon People's Charter.

These developments and other suppressive retaliatory steps taken by the Nigerian state made the region even more volatile and it further affected Nigeria's revenue and foreign exchange earnings as the people of the region were bent on ensuring that they frustrated Federal Government efforts to expropriate resources from the region. The Killing of Ken Saro-Wiwa who was until his death, the mouth piece of MOSOP and eight other compatriots on November 10, 1995 as well as other suppressive actions of the Nigerian state, caught the attention of the international community. The death of the then Military Head of State Gen. Sani Abacha, paved the way for a more responsive military government headed by Gen. Abdulsalami who midwifed a transition that ushered in a democratically elected government under the leadership of General Olusegun Obasanjo.

In a bid to launder the battered image of Nigeria, the government was open to listening to the agitations and vexations of the people of the Niger Delta Region most expressive of the different groups were the Ijaws who are the occupants of the land area that produce Nigeria's crude.

It was these agitations and demands that culminated in the establishment of the Ministry of Niger Delta and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) by the Olusegun Obasanjo's government. They were established to serve as vehicles through which the region could be developed as a means of calming the nerves of the militant groups in the region.

Similarly, the Amnesty office was established as an outcome of the agitations of the different militant groups in the region under the Yara-Adua/Jonathan's administration. The office has provided a platform through which the militant groups could channel their grievances directly to government. The Amnesty programme also provided a level of empowerment through the

payment of monthly stipends to the ex-militants. This, to a large extent, has contributed to relative peace in the region.

Capturing the vexations of the people of the area Alumona and Okoli (2021), stated that, sometime in June 2016 when president Buhari was to flag-off the Ogoni land clean-up in Rivers State Nigeria as an aftermath of massive oil pollution from the activities of SHELL specifically, the people of the area refused the president entry into the land as some aggrieved militant groups led by the Niger Delta Avengers threatened to assassinate the president as he was not welcomed in the region. A similar incident occurred in December of 2016 where the president was to attend a security summit in Enugu, eastern Nigeria, a protest orchestrated by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) threatened the safety of the president and in both cases, the president did not attend himself but only sent representatives.

The clean-up has not been well executed according to the Stakeholder Democracy Network which was established as a non-governmental organization in 2004. It focuses on providing technical and specialized support for areas impacted by the extractive industry and poor governance. However, today, there is relative peace in Ogoni land in view of the Federal Governments' effort to clean-up the environmental catastrophe that was occasioned by oil exploration activities by Shell and the Nigerian state. The relative peace is not as a result of a promise kept, but it is as a result of a step in the right direction on the part of the Federal Government considering the fact that this was a region that was very hostile to the Federal Government in the late 1990's leading up to the death of Ken-Saro Wiwa and eight others who died fighting for the environmental rights of their people.

This is perhaps why Osaghae (2008) argued that in a nutshell, the state is a space where different groups make ethnic claims and counter-claims which has its roots in the colonial experience by the different groups and the role of the state since colonial times

On the Malian side, the main issues have been rebuilding a unified national army as well as the decentralization of political power and decision-making.

As to the question of whether there are means for stability in Mali and Nigeria, results from the interviews conducted suggest that reducing inequality in all its forms is therefore an economic, social and political imperative for the countries of the Sahel, and governments have many policy options to achieve this. Progressive tax policies, in particular, can be powerful tools since they enable the direct redistribution of income within society. Funds raised and support from the international development community can help finance quality social policies and public services in education, health and social protection, which are among the main levers governments, have at their disposal to reduce inequality and poverty. Progressive and equitable tax policy choices can play a major role in reducing inequality and poverty but also in strengthening the social contract, the latter being a direct corollary of the former.

- 1) Limit gender inequality
- 2) Reduce inequalities between urban and rural areas.
- 3) Reduce income inequality while increasing levels of education with added access healthcare

- 4) Develop social protection systems for the poorest and most vulnerable populations
- 5) To improve the living conditions of pastoral communities, the development of livestock herding and the local processing and marketing of animal products (dairy, meat, hides, etc.) constitute a major opportunity
- 6) Policies for adapting to and fighting climate change are critical for Sahel countries.

Even the evidence on the ground shows that relative peace in Mali was experienced when the Azawad People's Movement (MPA) were given a sense of belonging through the efforts of Ahmadou Toumani Toure who seek to explore a non-military solution to the impasse. Basically, there was a broader sense of belonging which was extended to include even the administrative structure for the regions in the north. What this entail is that stability is not an aspiration, it is an outcome of inclusive policies as there is hardly peace without justice, equity and fairness.

Conclusion

Horizontal inequality causes conflict especially when the actions of the state through its various policies create suspicion which acts as a catalyst for mobilization along identity lines and activated to challenge the legitimacy of the state based on how they have experienced the state as a group. The literatures affirm that neglecting any group could pose a threat to peace and that the two most influential elements in mobilizing sentiments is religion and ethnicity.

The governments of Mali and Nigeria no doubt, have both been implicated in accentuating horizontal inequity which has influenced group responses which are most times expressed violently. In both countries, there are several cases which point to the fact that the military is used as a suppressive agent against agitations and that such actions only delay the explosion of vexations as such proper engagement of the groups in a sincere, purposeful dialogue, stand a better chance of being more productive. The Tuareg rebellions in Mali and the attacks and explosion of oil infrastructure carried out by MEND and other militant groups in the Niger Delta region are reactions to an insensitive state character.

It is public record that the reason for the declaration of amnesty for the Niger Delta militants by the Yara'Adua administration was mainly because the use of the military to suppress the agitations of the people of the region was not working as it only aggravated the vexations of the people. This simply implies that where there is a combination of both political and socioeconomic horizontal inequity, the eruption of conflict is only logical. This is why the character of the state must be designed in such a manner that would ensure that the biases of the government in power does not reverse peace building efforts already set in motion.

It is perhaps pertinent to add that the Amnesty programme has, to a large extent failed to address the discontentment of groups in the Niger Delta that did not take up arms against the state. This implies that while government granted amnesty to quell the unrest and give the people of the region a sense of belonging, the state failed to address the discontentment of other non-violent but equally disenfranchised groups in the regions. This is because not all marginalized groups have the capacity to take up arms against the state as such, the concerns of this small group or collection of groups is hardly addressed as they do not pose any serious challenge to the state.

The Tuaregs in Mali and the Ijaws in the Niger Delta region are minorities in both countries however; it is their violent expression that pricked the state to act to address their concerns. This does not mean that there are no other non-violent groups that have not been marginalized in both countries.

The paper is not oblivious of the fact that Horizontal Inequalities are not particularly useful when the goal is to evaluate the generalizability of the horizontal inequality–political conflict nexus across many cases.

Institutions are quite influential in determining the outcome of political reality in any country as such; both the formal and informal institutions should be taken seriously as they exert various degree of pressure on the workings of the state system and overall performance of government.

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