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Privatization and national security in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between privatisation and national security in Nigeria. The broad objective was to assess how privatisation policies have influenced national security outcomes in the country, with specific focus on evaluating the impact of privatisation on citizens' quality of life and analysing the implications of these changes for national security. Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilised secondary data sourced from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, official government documents, internet-based resources, and relevant unpublished materials. The findings indicate that the privatisation of public enterprises has adversely affected the quality of life of Nigerian citizens, and that the resulting decline in living standards has contributed to heightened threats to national security. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Nigerian government reconsider state-led economic interventions, as strategic state capitalism may foster real economic growth and generate opportunities essential for improving citizens' well-being and, by extension, strengthening national security.

Keywords: Privatization; Quality of life; National security; Security; Public enterprises

1. Introduction

Abraham A. Maslow (1954) coined the term hierarchy of needs to account for the foundation of human motivation. He posited that motivation depends on the realization of needs as in the hierarchy. He argued that if the needs of individuals are met, they will be motivated and their focus will be directed towards achieving the next need in the hierarchy. He stated that human needs are of hierarchy and priority and are categorized into five levels. On the second rung of Maslow's need hierarchy is the safety or security need. Safety or security is manifested when one is free from physical or emotional harm or attack. Security manifests when one is safe at anywhere, at any time and in any condition.

Security is generally about the condition of being safe from harm, the defense, protection and preservation of values that are of immense benefit for the people, and the absence of threat to acquire goods (Francis: 2009). It is about survival and the condition of human existence especially the peaceful assistance of human being. Security is concerned with the existence of peace, development, and justice because the presence of all these factors will create the conditions that make the people feel free and have hope in the course of pursuing their legitimate agenda. Security is associated with a situation devoid of risk, particularly those which if left uncontrolled would threaten the continued existence of peace in the immediate future (Bello: 2023). This means that security is the condition of not living in an uncertainty today and tomorrow. Security embraces the absence of all the intervening phenomena that hinder people or a nation from achieving a goal or goals. It involves the ability to pursue esteemed political and social desire without facing any type of threat that jeopardizes ones pursuant of his or her ambition. It is the concern of the state to create conditions that will enable the citizens to be relaxed, accommodated, and comfortable in their respective places.

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Security is an enhanced quality of life resonates with the protection of lives and property of groups, community, the vulnerable and the minority. Security is a tool that can catalyze the attraction of investment, improve manufacturing and agricultural development. It can also enhance political democratization as it promotes citizen mobilization process. Security is the fundamental reason for the existence of a state (Namo, 2018) and in effect state has to solidify its legitimacy by reconstructing its security status. It is the maintenance of constant and continuity of livelihood, stable income, foreseeability of sustaining daily life, protection from crime and freedom from psychological harm, shielded from emotional stress which results in the pledge of understanding that one is recognized, loved, wanted, and protected in one's locality and by residents around (Bello, 2023). Security centres on the emotional and psychological sense of being part of a social group that can offer one protection when the need arises (Audi et al 202). In Bello, (2023) when viewed from the economic lens, security is predicated on the production of residents from disease, hunger, poverty, unemployment and financial embarrassment (Audi et al 2022 in Bello, 2023). When viewed from the economic lens, security is predicated on the protection of residents from disease, hunger, unemployment and financial embarrassment. A well-cherished and security laden society provides good education, basic healthcare services, unguided democratic principle, human rights and of course adequate sanitation guides and facilities. Security is therefore a situation when there are no decay and social disorders in a society, no embarrassment of any sort, normalcy exists in a place and Corresponding author Chima Eze Fidelis people are moving about their legitimate businesses, in day and night without any atom of disturbance or attack from any angle or persons. Maslow (1954) understood the importance of security when he put it on the second rung of his hierarchy of needs. Without security, the farmland we cultivate cannot be cultivated as there will be disruptions and attacks in farms. In addition, without security, we cannot breathe fresh air as the air we breathe will be polluted. Security is the stone on which the national development is designed and constructed.

The developmental role of the state was concretized by the provisions in the 1979 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria section 16 and in section 24 of the 1999 constitution. The sections provide that the state shall direct the policy towards ensuring inter alia: that suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wages, old age persons, and employment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens. In order to achieve the above policy, government at all levels-central, state and local governments embarked on the creation of public enterprises. But today, more than 88 public enterprises have been privatized or sold to private individuals and more are to be privatized, thereby limiting the role of the government in service provisioning.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to examine:

- Quality of life
- National security in the face of privatized public enterprises in Nigeria.

2. Methodology and materials.

We adopted a documentary approach. This means that we used secondary sources only. We gathered our data from books, journal articles, newspaper, internet materials and official documents.

2.1. National Security

National security connotes two interpretations. National security connotes an apparatus used by the government to neutralize threatened decay or decay and threatened social disorder or disorder in the society. Even though it is the duty of the military and paramilitary to ensure that national security is maximized, all of us or the public are paramount for the promotion of national security. This is a new thinking in national security. It incorporates non-military people in the control of decay and social disorders in the society (Bello, 2023). When the apparatus are properly put in place, then we conclude that national security exists. This makes it mandatory for the public to support war on threats to national security.

Another dimension of national security is that national security connotes a situation whereby there exists normalcy in the society as well as a condition devoid of decay and social disorders hence, the concept of security is expanded to embrace presence of economic security, food security, social security, environmental security, the quality of life security and technological advancement security (Bello, 2023). This implies that the enhancement of national security goes beyond mere assemblage of military and police equipment to cover the satisfaction of human wants (Audi et al (2022). Satisfying human wants involves ensuring the existence of adequate food, high level of productivity, enhanced per capita income, employment opportunity, opportunity for creativity and provision of financial facilities to promote self-progression.

National security of any nation is threatened by two main pointers namely: decay and social disorders. Decay is orchestrated by corruption, poverty, deprivation and suppression of the will of the people. Social disorder is manifested by armed robbery, kidnapping, raping, arson, forceful land grabbing; and assassination. The absence of decay and social disorder creates conditions for national security to thrive. In view of this therefore, various social and economic structures should be reconfigured so that what generates decay and social disorder will unknowingly disappear.

2.2. Privatization

Today, the relieved orthodox policy advice especially from Monetary Fund and the World Bank is that the state should withdraw from its ownership and management of public enterprise in Nigeria. Furthermore, the globazers' gospel had also posited that private ownership of the factors of production is the only variable solution to efficient production of goods and services so as to enhance economic growth and development. And because of this indoctrination, there is a move by most countries to privatize their erstwhile public enterprise. Most developing countries including Nigeria have joined the developed economies or industrialized economies to privatize their public enterprises.

Privatization is the transfer of the ownership and all the incidence of ownership including management of a public enterprise to individual investor (Igbuzor: 2009). Iheme (1997) conceptualized privatization as any of a variety of measures adopted by government to expose a public enterprise to competition or to bring in private ownership or control or management into a public enterprise and accordingly reduce the usual weight of a public ownership or control or management. This definition is a reductionist model in that government relinquishes its responsibility to the private hands. Privatization according to Star (1998) is a shift from the public to the private sector, not shifts within sectors. As Star posited that the conversant of state agency into an autonomous public authority or state owned enterprise is not privatization. This aspect is an expanded increment of responsibility. The privatization and commercialization Decree 25 of 1988 and the Bureau of Public Enterprises Decree 25 of 1988 and Act of 1999 respectively defined privatization as the relinquishing of part or all of the equity and interest held by the Federal Government (Obasanjo 1999). Thus, privatization is the total or partial withdrawal of the government's participation in the ownership, control and management of public enterprises (Nwoye, 2003). However privatization is viewed, it transfers ownership of production and control of public enterprises from the public to private sector (Nwoye 2003). Privatization no matter how framed is an ideological concept meant to drive home the interests of the capitalists economies.

Ideology refers to ideas that are logically related and identify those principles of values that lend legitimacy to political institutions or behaviours (Rodee: 1983). He argued that ideology maybe used to justify the status quo or to justify attempts (violent or non-violent) top change it. Major part of the twentieth century marked two opposing ideologies on how society should be governed and developed. These ideologies were anchored on capitalism and socialism. These ideologies were also referred to as the ideologies of the right and the ideologies of the left. Capitalist ideology typified by neo liberalism insisted that a self-regulated system of market will bring about spontaneous process of development. On the other hand, the socialists and many other variants such as the interventionists argued that unregulated capitalisms will always bring about poverty, unemployment and human misery (Egwu 2009). Egwu (2009) maintained that proponents of socialism argued that there was the need to intervene by the government with the regulation of the market. The end of the twentieth century made a remarkable landmark in the world's economic history. With the end of that twentieth century and with the end of cold war between the bipolar ideologies, there was an ascendancy of capitalism and neo-liberalism, hence the intensification of globalization and the drive for privatization (Egwu, 2009).

Many countries embarked on privatization programmes at different periods. For instance, much of infrastructural privatization has its origin in the deregulation policies of the United States of America during the 1970s (World Bank, 2008). Chile introduced privatization programme in 1970. The United Kingdom implemented a rigorous privatization programme in the 1980s. The decision of the United Kingdom to embark on privatization programme was largely informed by the need to cut back on public spending rather than the need to promote efficiency and competition (Iheme, 1997). Thus, in other words, United Kingdom embarked on privatization in order to drive home the deliverance of the principles of capitalism, some of which are competition and the individual struggle for survival. The beginning of 1990s witnessed the implementation of privatization programme in many countries of the former Eastern block like Romania, Czechoslovakia among others so as to minimize the weight of their spending on public organisation (Iheme, 1997). Privatization of public enterprises generated by globalization is spreading like a mild fire to the extent that by the year 2007, more than 8,500 state owned enterprises in over 80 countries have been privatized (World Bank: 2007). Many countries embarked on privatization without comparing their socio-economic bearing with the socio-economic background of the capitalist states.

2.3. Privatization in Nigeria

Privatization, a concept sandwiched into the Nigerians lexicon of political economy by the developed countries represented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was formally introduced in Nigeria by the privatization and commercialization Decree 25 of 1988 as part of the structural adjustment programme of the then Federal Military Government (1985-1993). This decision was in conformity with the various conditions made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that developing countries should embark on structural adjustment programme in order to sustain their economies for an enhanced development.

The structural adjustment programme outlined same kinds of reforms which it claimed would affect the goals, administration and management of most of the public sector enterprises for purpose of efficiency (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1986). These reforms were initiated and promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Structure adjustment programme as it was claimed was aimed to restructure the economy and make it more competitive and productive. The sale of public enterprises constituted part of the restructuring, Nigerian state embraced the programme on the expectations that it would promote her macro-economic growth. The elements of these structural adjustment reforms included deregulation and liberalization of the economy, privatization of public enterprises, withdrawal of subsidy from some public services where used to be the case and devaluation of the national currency, for example the naira and other related market reforms (Alli, 2009).

Many African countries like Ghana, Zambia and Nigeria embraced the structural Adjustment programme and other economic stabilization reform programme in the mid-1980s. Therefore in order to attain the macro-economic goals as canvassed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the guidelines on privatization and commercialization programmes provide that the reform programmes were set to:-

- Restructure and rationalize the public sector in order to reduce the dominance of unproductive investments in that sector,
- Restructure the enterprise for privatization and commercialization towards a new horizon of performance improvement, viability and overall efficiency,
- Ensure positive returns in public sector investment in commercialized enterprises.
- Check the present absolute reliance of commercially oriented parastatals on the treasury for funding and to encourage their approach to the Nigerian capital market;
- Initiate the process of gradual cession to the private sector of such public enterprises those by the nature of their operations and other socio-economic factors are best performed by the private sector,
- Create a favourable investment climate for both local and foreign investors;
- Reduce in the level of internal and external debts; and
- Provide institutional arrangement and operational guidelines that would ensure that the gains of privatization and commercialization are sustained in the future (FON: Privatization and Commercialization Guidelines, 1988).

With this development, public enterprise in Nigeria have been subjected to unrestrained neo-liberal experimentation and the commercialization of social service provisioning (Folabi, 2007). This Means that public enterprise in Nigeria have been subjected to market ethos and the marketization of goods from public enterprises in consonance with orthodox policy advice to the developing countries. Privatization has paved the way for the dismantling of indigenization policy of 1972 and for the integration of Nigeria back into the global economy which is more industrialized and vibrant. The privatization handbook (FGN: 2001) Stipulates that the emphasis is to change from commercialization to encouraging core investors and promoting foreign investments in the privatization programmes.

Consequently by adjusting to the conditionalities of the structural adjustment programme, the Nigerian state has had to withdraw from its ownership and management of public enterprises. It is quite evident that the greatest area of the impact of structural adjustment programme an African societies and on the people is in the performance of public enterprises where the state used to play significant roles in the life of the people through the delivery of social welfare policies. As Nellis (2009:2) gave reasons that explain why African states created and sustained public enterprise, thus:

institutions and pre-dispositions inherited from centralized interventionists colonial regimes; a tendency to associate liberal capitalism with colonialisms and imperialism; the post war ascendancy of leftist statist political ideologies; the apparent absence or embryonic nature of the indigenous private sector enterprises; the conversation of failing private enterprises into public enterprises to forestall increase in employment; the attractiveness of public enterprises to politicians who use them as patronage mechanisms to distribute jobs to both the mighty and the minor and to provide goods and

services. These are but some of the more important historical, economic, social, and political factors which have led almost every African state to create large public enterprise”.

The fundamental reasons for the creation of public enterprises in all economies is the provision of goods and services which are too costly for individuals to provide. The dramatic policy reversal in the economic sphere -the state's withdrawal from the ownership and management of public enterprises which EL Badawi and Hegre (2003) have described as economic “shock” have fuelled tension and greater concern for access to resource.

2.4. Privatization and quality of life in Nigeria

Since the wind of privatization started blowing and the subsequent experimentation of commercialization of public enterprises in Nigeria, the Nigerian economy has suffered a serious setback (Folabi: 2007). The financial sector has been jaundiced and this has a great effect on the real economy through recession and unemployment, lowering wages and affecting the social sector. The Nigerian youths constitute approximately 60 percent of the nation's population (Bello, 2023). The national Bureau of statistics (2012) in a study found that the population of youths in Nigeria is estimated to be 64.1 million. The worst hit of the unemployment are the youths. The World Bank Report (2010) had indicated that, 28.57 percent of Nigerians are unemployed and they are in the range of 18 to 35 years of age.

Clark (2007) had observed that Nigerian infrastructure has collapsed due to unrestrained privatization in Nigeria. The infrastructural collapse has negatively affected the quality of life of the people. For instance, the World Bank had pegged the benchmark of \$1 per day for determining the poverty level (Odi 1998). In most south-south countries of which Nigeria belongs, many people live on less than one dollar a day and many can hardly afford three square meals per day (Ubaka: 2008). The degree of poverty in Nigeria is on the increase. Data sourced from the World Bank depicted that the number of poverty ridden individuals in Nigeria as at 2020 stand at 89 million and by 2022, it went up to 95.1 million showing that 6.1 million more have fallen below poverty line within an interval of three years. This figure represents 6.4 percent increase (Bello: 2023). The same report indicates that with the present 2022 figures, the number of poor people in Nigeria had an increase of 13.7 percent from the 2018/2019 figure of 82.1 million to the 95.1 million in 2022 (World Bank in Bello, 2023). Worst still macro-economic pressure points (inflation, high interest rates and depreciation) may push an additional 13 million Nigerian below the national poverty line by 2025 (Musa, 2025).

The standard of living in terms of the citizens' purchasing power, access to basic health care services, potable water and electricity, building materials, decent foods, road, education and nourishment is low. Today, the rising cost of maintaining of healthy diet has put a strain on many Nigerian, as the average daily cost of a nutrition's diet in the country reached N1255.00 per adult in August 2024, as reported by National Bureau of statistics (Guardian editorial Friday, January 24, 2025). Nigeria ranks 109 out of 125 on the Global Hunger index, with a staggering 32 percent of children under the five years stunted and 2 million suffering from severe acute malnutrition, according to the United Nations International Children Education Fund Report (Guardian Editorial, Friday January 24, 2025). This acute food shortage contributes significantly to school absenteeism in Nigeria. This condition has been so since the importation of orthodox policy for economic reforms. For the instance human development index is a comparative measure of life expectancy, education and standard of living for countries worldwide. It is also a measure of the impact of economic policy on quality of life (Central Bank of Nigeria 2007). The 2006 human development index for Nigeria based on 2004 figure was 0.448, Nigeria ranked 159th position out of 177 countries and 76 out of 102 developing countries for which the index was computed (World Bank; 2007). This situation is worsening to the extent that as at 2010, Nigeria ranked 142 out of 182 nations for which the index was computed (Bello, 2023). Privatization option has put some few people in advantageous position and majority of people are in the disadvantageous position. Impliedly. Some few people gain and majority of people lose out. For instance, privatization option in Nigeria is further widening the gap between the rich and the poor privatization returns have not been able to integrate the various social strata as canvassed by privatization drivers. Nigeria is among the 26 countries in the world with the widest gap between the rich and the poor as measured by the Gini Index (Igbuzor, 2009). The Gini Index measure the extent to which the distribution of income (or in some cases consumption expenditures) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfect equal distribution (World Development Indicators 2002). A gini index of zero indicate perfect equality, while an index of 100 means perfect in equalities. The Gini Index of Nigeria is 50.6 (Igbuzor, 2009). This is an indication that the gap between the rich and the poor in Nigeria is very much alarming.

3. Quality of Life and National Security

The concept quality of life pertains to the conditions the citizens have found themselves. It could be negative or positive. Impliedly quality of life pertains to the comprehensive state of well-being and satisfaction experienced by the people. It includes assurance of income, knowledge and skill development, adequate security and absence of war of any sort

availability of public utilities and affordability of prices of foods for use or consumption (Odo et al 2025), some authors have attempted to relate quality of life to the generation or prevention of security challenges. Such authors include John Dollard (.1939), Autrey Yates (1962), Leonard Berkowitz (1962), among others who theorized that people have basic needs such as food, shelter security and others necessary for the sustenance of life which if not fulfilled can generate frustration thereby leading to aggression and conflict (Bello, 2023). They also argue that aggression or conflict is the product of frustration which arises when individual needs are denied to get such goods which enhance the improvement of his or her quality of life as a result of the way the society is structured and this will have a negative effect on the construction of structures for national security. So the national security challenges no doubt is traceable to the adoption of orthodox policy advice to the developing countries on structural reforms. The structural reforms as it was pointed out earlier have led to the removal of subsidy where it used to be the case, devaluation of the naira, privatization of public enterprise and downsizing of public institutions.

All these reforms have led to decreased government intervention in the public sectors and consequently generated inadequate employment prospects. Employment prospect could enhance modest and offer honourable living condition to employable people. Failure of privatization to generate employment opportunity has led to setting up of illegal ventures across the country (Bello: 2023). Illegal ventures are those ventures which the generality of the populace see as the case of social disorders. In most cases these illegal ventures metamorphose to a very high organized criminal activities. The poverty ridden living condition in Nigeria in addition to the continued impoverishment and unemployment pushes people to engage in lawless enterprise with huge monetary reward (Bello, 2023), impliedly, most crimes in Nigeria are monetary induced crime. A society bedeviled with low per capita income, poor industrial base, poor wages, salaries, and pension stipend, lack of job opportunities in public and private sectors, high cost of living will be a challenge with a large proportion of its citizens resorting to criminal activities as the only hope for getting money needed for their survival (Bello-2023). Clinton (2001) argued that the instantaneous cause of disconnect between the Nigeria's wealth and its people promote the rise of frustration heading to the formation of aggressive groups who are antagonistic to the authority of the state. These new group of persons may attribute their criminal behaviour to the need to get their fundamental resources for their sustenance. Security challenge varies directly as the unemployment. This means that as unemployment increases, security challenges equally rises which invariably threatens national security. The disregard of the vast majority of the nation's population from earning sustainable livelihood through employment has thrown them on to the roads where they constitutes threat to the national security (Bellow, 2023). They find employments as soldiers of crime and violent related groups, for instance land grabbers, kidnappers, election manipulators armed robbery fraudsters where they are paid or get huge sums of money and other promises.

To reduce these trends of security challenges or to improve the national security in Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigerian must reverse her structural adjustment programme which led to the structural reforms which depleted her intervention in major aspects of the nation's economy. To this end, the Federal Government of Nigeria should borrow a leaf from Asian approach to structural reforms. States in Asia coordinated investment plans, articulated development vision in the serve of an entrepreneurial agent engaged in institutions building to promote growth and development (Chang 2005). The Malay state is an example of developmental state in Asia. The state prepared on roll back plans as another approach to structural adjustment reforms. The state redesigned an industrial master plan for the country which focus was on the local capitalist class. Focusing in local capitalist class was its industrialization strategy. Malay state encouraged an entrepreneurial community and created a new class of 'Buripetra' capitalist class that would engage in both foreign and domestic investment. The Malay government generated deliberate incentives to help the growth of the local capitalist class (Ningin 2000).

Thus adapting the Malaysian prototype means that the Nigerian state provides assistance to public enterprise. These enterprises should be encouraged through patents and technical advisors be encouraged through patents and technical advisors from the developed countries. The state instead of giving rooms for the sale of public heritage like public enterprises should establish "Buoripeta" capitalist like class. In Nigeria, the "Bunripetra" structure could be labelled as "Wazobia" capitalist class. This class representing the government should be encouraged to establish public enterprises that can embark on the production and reproduction of capital and create employment opportunities. Provision of industrial master plan is required in order to achieve this feat. This industrial master plan should be articulated in such a way that industrial zones that out across the country are included. The plan should have provisions for access to technical advisors providing access to capital from the state and providing access to technical equipment at reduced tariffs.

4. Conclusion

This study posits that privatization of public enterprises constitutes one of the major factors that have contributed to the degeneration of national security in Nigeria privatization has negatively affected Nigeria's real economy through

unemployment and recession. Unemployment rates have been high and cost of essential commodities have been on the increase. This situation has depleted the quality of life of the citizens as indicated by the poverty indices. Few people are living in affluence while the majority are living in abject poverty.

In consequence, the youths of the population in the poverty bracket find it easier to acquire wealth through enlisting in the violent related groups-land grabbers, kidnappers, fraudsters, election manipulators, armed robbers where they are paid a huge sums of money. These actions threaten national security.

Recommendation

The Nigerian government should adopt the Malaysian model of structural adjustment programme by creating and development state capitalism. This is because state capitalism will improve the nation's real economy through the creation of employment opportunities and decrease of recession.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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