

## ARROGANCE OF POWER: BANE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NIGERIAN STATE

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### Abstract

*The word, 'Power' (Greek Dunamis; Hebrew Koach), by nuanced step, englobes a pluriformity of ideas that have been diversely expressed in religion, political philosophy, law and the sciences. The breadth of its influence is wide, and the scope of its use is encompassing, diffusing into the fabrics of all existent beings: animate or inanimate, material or spiritual, substantial or accidental. The actuality of every organism is a manifestation of power, which can be put to good or bad use. The bad use or abuse (abuse) of power, and especially its variant—arrogance of power, draws down our discussion to the significance of power politics. In this essay, we establish that arrogance of power has historically constricted opportunities for positive influence, conviviality and growth. At different times and cultures, it has been buoyed either by an inheritable rectilinear acquisition of power that hierarchizes human relationships, or by the share use of brute force, leading to needless wars and human catastrophes. Our findings show that much of the blips in postcolonial Nigeria are hinged on the arrogant use of power. They also identify as reinforcing to this, the overtly acquiescent behaviour of citizens amidst serious infractions by their leaders. In the end, our work makes a case for a robust educational system that will liberate the citizenry, and so equip them to defuse the arrogant use of power wherever it manifests.*

**Keywords:** Arrogance of Power, Politics, Human Relationships, Infractions, Educational System.

### Introduction

The question of power is an interdisciplinary subject that cuts across virtually all strata of reality: sentient and insentient. While all living things—human or angelic, animal or plant, algae or viruses—possess power in some original fashion, nonliving ones possess it in a derivative sense. Inorganic substances like rock, oil, or water can be instruments with which power is displayed. In biblical parlance, power is used for the description of strength of mind, moral qualities of a person or God, or some inner strength that does not depend on outward things.

But in general human situation, it is displayed in a mechanical / electrical discharge or by bodily exertion. The latter is the lot of all sentient beings. Every living thing is condemned to the exercise or discharge of power.

Power permeates human life and is exhibited in human relationships of all kinds. Every individual human being possesses power, to the extent that one can rightly say that 'power makes human life'. Nonetheless, with social contracts that lead to the formation of states, individuals have to relinquish parts of their power to some sort of Hobbesian *Leviathan*—overwhelmingly powerful individual or structure, that is bestowed with authority to make decisions on their behalf. This is the genesis of governments which, over the years, have taken different forms and shapes. In the current era—when democracy has gained traction, the Leviathan is no longer a single individual or structure, but a group of individuals chosen by the masses to represent their interests. By virtue of being chosen by the peoples, political office holders do not only possess power but are also vested with authority for the execution of the said power. In a thriving democracy, power and authority are binary structures that propel the administrative machinery of the state.

In the main, power and authority do come with specific obligations since the decisions of those who wield them can make or mar the flourishing of the state. For this reason, there has been—from the political philosophy of Plato to the contemporary works of philosophers and scientists, an avalanche of scholarly works on the need for right exercise of power. Plato, for instance, argues that to avoid misuse of power, power should be domiciled in the hands of philosophers (*Republic*, 473d-e), as the rule of the wise leads to the reign of justice (Matassa, 2013: 2). For Aristotle, good leadership arises not from the whims of an individual (no matter how benevolent he/she might be), but from the exercise of the rule of law. For him, as laws govern the day-to-day activities of humans, "true forms of government will of necessity have just laws, and perverted forms of government will have unjust laws" (*Politics*, III, 11, 1282a 8-14). Good governance is thus, a consequence of obedience to the rule of just laws.

"Politics", for Francis P. Yockey, "is an activity in relation to power" (Quote Master, n.d.). Every political system entails the use of power, for good or bad. While a good system is geared towards the proper use of power, bad ones are always enmeshed in its bad use (abuse - *ab use*), which we term the arrogance of power. Arrogance of power is the self-conceited presumption of an individual or group of individuals that their power gives them the right to intervene in the affairs of less powerful others. Since, as Lord Acton asseverates, "power

corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely” (1887, 12), democratic systems opt for the separation of powers to avoid its concentration in one individual or group of individuals. This is why, in democratic systems, power is shared amongst the three arms of government: Legislative, Executive and Judiciary. While the Legislative has the authority to make laws; the Executive implements laws and perform sundry actions of day-to-day administration of society; and the Judiciary has the power to impose sanctions regarding any breach of the laws. Their quasi-independence is aimed at ensuring mutual control and influence, so as to preclude the arrogance of power (Ibraheem, 2015; Ogbujah, 2021).

As deeply entwined with human nature, the phenomenon of arrogance of power has plagued diverse administrative structures across times and places. The difference between a quasi-stable and a failing state is the degree and intensity of its manifestation. In Nigeria, as in many African nations, its range of manifestation is an albatross to democratic growth and human development. From top to the bottom, every institution of the society has its tales of woes. In spite of constitutional provisions, the current executive arm of government seems to have fully emasculated other arms, leading to some form of despotism, with damning consequences. In this paper, our objective is to investigate the effects of ‘arrogance of power’ on Nigeria’s development. We shall attempt to drive home our points by highlighting real-life cases of gross arrogance of power within the Nigerian hierarchy.

### **Arrogance of Power: An Organismic Phenomenon?**

To properly navigate through the phenomenon of the “arrogance of power”, it is apposite to first, contextualize power itself. Most people have a visceral conviction of what power is but find it somewhat difficult to properly couch it in words. Power is an elusive concept that achieves notoriety for its ambiguity. It is a concept that attracts many labels with subtly and grossly different meanings in many cultures, times, and fields. For instance, the notion of power, for the physicist, is different from what others like political philosophers or religious enthusiasts conceive of it. Notwithstanding the imports of mechanical or electrical force in a hyper technological world, we shall delimit our hermeneutics of power within the context of politics.

In this vein, it is perhaps, pertinent to begin with Panteleon Iroegbu’s depiction of power as the ability, force and energy to be, have or realize a thing (2000, 160-61). This portrayal patently indicates the diffusion of power in everything and

every situation. It means, as Ogbujah (2006: 183) asseverates that “every situation is a situation of power”: power to live and to accomplish tasks. The extent one can live, and the scope of one’s accomplishments do depend on the amount of power one enjoys. Within the gambit of political economy, Ogbujah further sees power as the ability to influence or control the behaviour of others; the political control of a country exercised by its government or leader (2016: 3). As emphasizing the ability to influence or control others, power necessarily determines the texture of the relationship between two or more people. Robert Dahl (1957) elaborately deals with the relational aspect of power, stressing that power must be understood in terms of a relation between people and is expressed in simple symbolic notation. Dahl’s descriptions elicited the theory of power comparability, or the model that explicates the relative degree of power exercised by different individuals within a social group.

Unequal relationships amongst organisms, including humans, are a palpable fact of nature. Crickets do not relate to frogs or rats in an equal footing; frogs do not relate equally with swans or ravens; and swans do not relate evenly with wolfs and foxes. Given the disparity of sizes and agility in the animal kingdom, the exercise of power is hierarchized in line with the organism’s internal force or energy. With no internal (conscience) or external (law) measure of control, brutes exercise their powers freely to their fullest capacity—displaying, as it were, that ‘might is right.’ By hindsight, the human organism doesn’t seem to have fared much better than brutes. Of necessity, and using different metrics, some people possess more power than others. Governments exist to manage power display so that man does not become wolf to man. But in spite of having transited from the Hobbesian state of nature which was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short” (*Leviathan*, 1651), recurrent experiences show that the phenomenon of ‘might is right’ still perdures. In several circumstances, the animalistic drive blights the enforceable criteria of right and wrong (which supposedly distinguishes human from animal life), and attenuates our capacity to transcend mere brutish display of power. The only difference perhaps, is in the sublimation of physical bravado to other forms of hegemony such as economic, political, social, technological, etc. So, irrespective of its form, organisms naturally tend to utilize power for their self-directed interests. The arrogant or abusive display of power (in the sense of selfish use) is thus, a phenomenon native to all forms of organisms.

Within political economy, Niccolo Machiavelli accentuates the importance of arrogance of power by creating a barrier between private and public morality. By regarding human nature as wretched and deceitful, he outlines reasons for which

a leader could renege on his promises. In the eighteenth chapter of *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli avers that to dominate and control the state, a prince must be cunning like the fox, to recognize traps set by the wolves and beastly like the lion, to ward off direct attacks. The implication in a political economy is that power can be expressed subtly or through coercive means. This can be articulated using two taxonomies, namely: the classification into hard and soft power; and the ordering into manifest and structural power. The latter taxonomy merely displays the forms into which the former is revealed. Whilst hard power entails the use of aggressive and coercive means (military or economic) to compel others into adopting a stand or behaviour, soft power involves the shaping of others' preferences and choices through appeal and attraction. Those who deploy soft power build bridges through effective communication, cooperation, respect and the rule of law. In contrast to promoting the isolated use of the duo, Joseph Nye (2004) introduces the third term—"smart power" in the text, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. For him, the problems of governance can be resolved by the use of smart power, as "smart power is neither hard nor soft. It is both" (32). Smart power means knowing when to apply either of the pair to achieve maximal benefits.

Power is manifest when it is expressed through the direct use of force which, could be hostile (in the sense of hard power), or friendly (in the sense of soft power); and structural when it is expressed indirectly in the structures of society. Structural power is ubiquitous and can permeate the entire spectrum of the polity—insidiously directing the course of actions without patent bravado. Over the past few years, attention has been evenly split between structural and manifest forms of power. This is more so given the realization that even though structural power is somewhat faceless, it is nonetheless far-reaching. Michel Foucault emerges as a prime researcher in this area, noting that power is dispersed and pervasive: "power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" (1998: 63). Structural power is subliminal, abstruse, and expressed in ideologies and perceptions that legitimize the existing status quo. The dual expressions of power can better be illuminated using an analogy from colonization/globalization. During colonization, the global north applied brute force to control and influence the global south. However, in this era of globalization, the global south is being controlled and influenced by subtler means pursuant to its dependence on goods and services from the north. Or, put differently, the colonial lords, through the use of manifest power, carted away able bodied men and women to the West for slavery; but in this era, and through the use of structural power, the youths are escaping in droves to the West for

new forms of slave duty. The methods might be different, but the aim is still the same: exertion of power and control over others.

On the other hand, authority, as a term associated with power, is in reality, often wrongly interchanged with it in daily discourses. Though with glaring divergences when subjected to proper hermeneutics, both concepts are essential in social engineering. In general, scholars associate authority with the legitimate use of power. For Max Weber (1978: 37), power (*macht*) is a generalized phenomenon, while authority (*herrschaft*) relates more specifically to institutionalized command. Whilst everyone can have expendable power, not all have the authority to exercise it. As repositories of power, every individual has the capacity or power to direct affairs or accomplish activities, but not everyone is entitled to have their directives obeyed, or their activities respected. Authority is the instrument that confers legitimacy to power. It is the influence a person has over others which is usually backed by the law. In political economy, administrators possess both power and authority. The power they express is legitimized by the authority vested on them by their offices. But it might happen, as Ogbujah (2016) rightly notes that one may have the authority to perform a duty without the requisite power to do so. For instance, a security agent might have the authority to maintain law and order, but might be overwhelmed by a situation that he lacks the physical or 'political' power to do his job. Thus, not only does power need authority for legitimization, authority needs power for effectuation. Power and authority are intricately entwined in practical terms within a social structure.

Authority, for the most part, does not just legitimize power, it also curtails it. Authorities are to be exercised within the ambit of the law. When political agents overstep the bounds provided for by law, or begin to twist laws for their self-centered interests (abuse of power), they begin to lose legitimacy. In modern political economy, loss of legitimacy is rife. Now and again, people display their irritation through civil disobedience, insurrection (for internal affairs), and isolation (by international partners). But because these reactions are not far-reaching, and political agents oftentimes are able to maneuver their ways through, the range of their illicit actions has continued to expand. We are living, as David Miliband (2019) observes, through a dangerous general trend of impunity, which blights the lives of millions of people across the globe. This impunity is widespread because constraints to abuse of power have been weakened both locally and internationally, and agents believe they can do anything and get away with it.

It is not surprising that the core thesis captured in Miliband's Age of Impunity is the "arrogance of power." At the micro level of individual societies and nations, the allurements of power and the overall waning of 'checks-system' across the globe have had drastic impacts on the most vulnerable in societies. Agents frequently take advantage of weak institutional structures to abuse, intimidate, and sometimes destroy the lives and properties of perceived opponents—recipes of autocratic governance. At the macro level, arrogance of power has had its most patent effect in unilateralism—the penchant for nation states to ignore dialogue and take and implement decisions regardless of feelings/positions of allies or adversaries. This has played out in the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan; in the German push for the recognition of Croatian Government against the will of European Union member nations; in the French fight to prevent Germany from controlling leadership in the European Central Bank, etc. But besides these, the largely western policy of democratization through intervention provides impeccable testament to the diffusion of arrogance of power in democracies. Arrogance of power creates hegemony who, by force or might bully their way around situations. "The biggest temptation for a hegemon" as Gert Krell suggests, "is to go it alone, dictation instead of consultation, a preacher and imposer of its values" (2003: v). The resultant effects, as can be seen in the misadventure in Iraq, Afghanistan, and indeed all over the middle east, are nothing but catastrophic. It is sad that most people saddled with leadership positions succumb to the allurements of "arrogance of power."

### **Development: A Human Good**

Development is a complex, contested, ambiguous and elusive term to which a plethora of meanings has been attached. Indeed, one of its simplest definitions comes probably from Chambers' notion of 'good change' which, nonetheless, raises all sorts of questions about what is 'good' and what sort of 'change' matters (as Chambers acknowledges), about the role of values, and whether 'bad change' is also viewed as a form of development (2004: 1743). Although the theme of 'change' may be overriding, what constitutes 'good change' is bound to be contested as De Janvry and Kanbur (2006: 74) state, because there is no uniform or unique answer. Views that may be prevalent in one part of the development community are not necessarily shared by other parts. For instance, while the provision of basic amenities like pipe born water, electricity, etc., is seen as a developmental stride in most part of Africa, it is not viewed that way in

the western hemisphere, as they had long moved past that level. However, these sorts of ambiguity are doused by the incisive asseveration of Ogbujah and Opara (2014: 53) who express development in inclusive and functional terms to label novel, verifiable, and reliable progress in individual and social lives. Development is thus, ineluctably tied to the concept of progress in personal and societal/communal lives.

In socio-political terms, development can be seen as bringing about social change that allows people to achieve their human potential. This depiction signifies that for a social change to be termed development, it must enable people to achieve their potentials in life. This brings to fore the idea of person-centred development upon which Udoidem crafted his thesis: development is “a process leading to the realization of full human and environmental potentials” (1992: 25). In other words, development is human-centric, as it aims to improve human lives, either directly in terms of human capital development, or indirectly—in the provision of infrastructures that enable same.

However, by nuanced step, the term has a range of meanings that depend on the context in which it is used, and it has often been used to reflect and justify a variety of different agendas held by different people or organizations. The idea of development articulated by the World Bank, for instance, is quite different from that promoted by Greenpeace activists. Whilst the World Bank emphasizes the provision of infrastructures which, may require deforestation; Greenpeace activists are much more concerned with the conservation of the environment and protection of biodiversity. This has important implications, as Adam (2009) observes, for the task of understanding sustainable development, because much of the confusion about the meaning of “sustainable development” arises because people hold very different ideas about the meaning of development.

Furthermore, development is a process rather than an outcome: it is dynamic in that it involves a change from one state or condition to another. Ideally, such a change is a positive one—an improvement of some sort, in the sense of progress as highlighted above (for instance, an improvement in social welfare, physical amenities or overall wellbeing). Hence, like peace, there is nothing like complete or full development: it is not a finished condition, but always a work in progress because human beings always aspire to higher levels of development. It can be more or less, meaning that it can be measured with some precise indices. It increases or decreases depending on prevalent socio-political conditions, indicating that development is reversible: it can move from a higher level to a lower level within ‘a twinkle of an eye.’

Besides, a developmental activity is sometimes regarded as something performed by an agent (such as a development agency) for another (such as rural farmers in a developing country). This agential component demonstrates that development can be a political process, as it raises questions about who has the power to do what to whom. In this sense, development activities are precipitated by state actors that have been vested with such powers, either directly by establishing frames of progress, or indirectly by creating enabling environment for individuals to function and flourish. The emphasis on enabling individual progress accentuates the human-centric nature of development. That is, every developmental stride should be geared towards making life easier for the citizens of the state, who know where it hurts most. As facilitators then, agencies must guide against banal arrogation of power of exclusivity in determining what gets done and who gets what.

Finally, development is a linkage issue. Every sector of the state has to be functional and in sync with others for that state to claim to be developed. In a reductive sense, all sectorial elements can be subsumed under security. Security is thus, the lynchpin for development. By security, we not only mean issues that demand guns and bullets, but also that of bread and butter. As much efforts are put into physical security of the state, similar or even much more efforts have to be directed towards human security. Human security entails the provision of basic amenities that guarantee a good life for the citizens / residents of the state. These basic amenities range from material things as food, clothing, housing, etc., to non-material things as justice, inclusivity, and equality/equity. This is what makes development a human good, without which life would be horrid and poor. In a polity, the essence is to use instruments of the state to protect human rights and eliminate or reduce all forms of discriminations. This ideology is reflected in the classification of the globe into developed and developing countries. In developed societies, issues of human rights and basic amenities are of utmost concern to state agencies. The reverse is however the case in developing countries, particularly in Africa where human rights are grossly and ironically violated by the same instrument (government) created to guard it.

### **Impacts of Arrogance of Power to Nigeria's Development**

At the core of any political discourse is the exercise of power. Every political system is rated in regard to where power is domiciled and how it is exercised. The democratic system of governance is highly regarded because power is decentralized and sovereignty lies with the people who choose their leaders

through elections. The choice and acceptance of leaders by the people bestow legitimacy on the government. According to Fredrick (2001: 3):

The concept of legitimacy as a political concept is inherently complex in that it involves at least three distinguishable components: the electoral (constitutional) right to rule; the procedural (normative) rightfulness in the exercise of rule; and the substantive (teleological) rightness in the ends of rule.

Each of these components has a bearing on the exercise of power. The electoral (constitutional) right to rule legitimizes the wielding of power; the rightfulness in the exercise of rule not only legitimizes but also gives acceptability to that law or act. More so, the ends of the rule are important—as the goal of every government is to make decisions that will lead to the *summum bonum* (greatest or ultimate good). An impassioned scrutiny reveals the manifestation of arrogance of power in all the three components advanced by Fredrick. As regards the electoral (constitutional) right to rule, the process of wielding power in Nigeria has been compromised as politicians have bastardized the electoral system. Here, elections generally mirror the Machiavellian model where “the end justifies the means.” Vote buying and political intimidation have sadly become epiphenomenal to the electoral process. According to Bratton’s (2008) survey-based estimates, about one out of five Nigerians has been personally exposed to vote buying, and about one in ten has experienced threats of electoral violence. Besides these, incidences of ballot box snatching, stuffing of boxes with pre-thumb-printed ballots, and inflation of votes by the electoral umpires and the judiciary, are very rife. Perhaps, no classic case in recent times is more glaring than the Supreme Court’s injudicious intervention in Imo state’s gubernatorial election in 2020. The level of arrogance displayed in the removal of a serving governor is still baffling to legal luminaries. These acts of impunity compromise the electoral process—a phenomenon which late President Umaru Yaradua admitted when he acknowledged that the elections that brought him into power “had shortcomings” (Abdul-Rahman, et al., 2007); they constantly deny Nigerians the opportunity to choose their rightful leaders. Except we bring to end these sorts of political brigandry, there would be no hope for genuine and meaningful development.

Besides the bastardization of the process of wielding power which, impugns the legitimacy of the declared winners, arrogance of power seems diffused in every institution and structure of society; it is patently displayed in the overall exercise of power. At the micro level of family relationships, patriarchy streamlines

leadership structures, accentuating the position of men while diminishing those of women and children. In some cultures, it forbids women from indulging in some businesses and activities that are regarded as “manly”; and objectifies their ‘bodies’ as gratifying instruments for male sexual needs. In the end, men are turned into hegemony, with their families as their immediate court of display. Although attenuated since the emergence of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), patriarchal structures still pervade societies, constricting the path to equality and progress, and perpetrating same through arts and literature. This display of arrogance has elicited what Lorber (1997: 16) calls “the gender politics of resistance to patriarchy” which has mushroomed into a motley of revisionist movements. Chioma Opara (2004: 5) acknowledges these, whilst decrying how patriarchy has over the years turned female writers and critics into the “butt of bigoted critical perspectives.”

At the macro level of societal leadership, history shows that from colonial times, Nigerian cultures have always evinced subtle reinforcement of arrogance of power. The colonial lords, by share use of brute force, subdued the colonies. The resistance of the natives often led to needless wars and human catastrophes. When they consolidated power, one of their pastimes was to aggregate a retinue of servants to carry them on shoulders to functions—a behaviour that was soon copied by local warrant chiefs and emirs. To tighten grips on power, the local chiefs, as stooges, were allowed some “pecks of office”, and at the same time, enormous unilateral powers over their subjects. This inducement further spread into bestowing leadership position to their family lineage in perpetuity. Acquisition of power became some sort of an inheritable rectilinear system that hierarchized human relationships. People were simply discriminated, or their opinions overlooked because of family lineage. In the structure of traditional Igbo society, for instance, Ogbujah (2006: 183) admits that this hierarchization gave undue leverage to ‘power brokers’ over others, and often sacrificed objectivity at the altar of authority, while celebrating mediocrity under the guise of maintain tradition.

In a sequence of events, the colonial era mentality has been absorbed by current indigenous leaders. They could make people gather and wait endlessly beyond scheduled times for public functions, and when they arrive, everyone had to stand up until they are motioned to sit down by the “lords,” often without apologies. Although this might be interpreted (by some) as simple courtesy to executive privilege, the obvious result is that these “pecks of power” have so twisted the psyche of our leaders to assume some air of superiority over the

led—as is constantly manifest in their speeches and actions. And this is bolstered by the acquiescing attitude of the masses to the point that individual objections are often met with stiff resistance from the people. It has apparently become “our way of life.” Today, it is common place, in public gatherings for a young leader to desecrate ‘traditional stools,’ and demean or depose holders, for cheap political gains; it is clever for a governor or president to unilaterally sack the entire executive cabinet and work alone for as long as he/she wishes. Little wonder why Nigeria has retrogressed over the past couple of decades.

Even though the phenomenon of *abuse*, or bad use of power is rife in both private and public sectors of the Nigerian society, its preponderance in public institutions is huge. It permeates the fabrics of every strata of society, and manifests in all manners of corrupt practices. As the lynchpin for underdevelopment, corruption foregrounds every act of impunity: in the taking and acceptance of bribes; in acts of nepotism; in the denial of justice (promotions, allocation of resources/amenities, etc.); in the usurpation of other’s property; etc. Corruption is always at the base. Little wonder the *Premium Times* (Press Release, 2019) report shows that the 2018 survey by the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) identified the police as the most corrupt public institution in the country. According to the survey, “a bribe is paid in 54 per cent of interactions with the police. In fact, there is a 63 per cent probability that an average Nigerian would be asked to pay a bribe each time he or she interacted with the police” (para. 4). “Corruption” the report continues, “remains a significant impediment to law enforcement, access to justice and basic public services such as affordable healthcare, education, and electricity supply” (para. 6). The snag is, if the institution charged to maintain law and order is deeply mired in corrupt practices, then the entire society is on a highroad to destruction. It is like what Achebe (1958: v) referenced from the opening stanza of William Butler Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming”: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.” Things have indeed, fallen apart because of police corruption, and there is anarchy on every street. Nigeria has become a complete shadow of itself. Oyebode (2019, para 5) observes:

Nigeria is looked upon as a giant of Africa. Yet Nigeria could not conduct free, fair and credible elections. It is a smear on the image of Nigeria. If we do away with selective enforcement and condonation of corruption, we will build and live in a better society. Corruption is a refined form of stealing. The politicians are stealing our common patrimony.

Development of the people is almost inversely proportional to the level of corruption.

Nigeria's underdevelopment is thus, identified as a function of corruption; of arrogant use of power. Allied to corruption in terms of the arrogant use of power, is the issue of police brutality. Acts of police brutality, ranging from illegal arrests of citizens, to torture, extortion, sexual abuse, extra-judicial killing, etc., have become so rampant that they have lost their shock value. The youths are being profiled because of tattoos and dreadlocks; adults are harassed for riding in posh cars; and even prostitutes are sometimes rounded up for rape (Achirga, 2019). There is gross violation of the human rights of the citizens. Through its notorious unit—the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the police unleashed the reign of terror on the citizens which, ended in a macabre of sorts. Triggered proximately by the unprovoked shooting of a boy in the streets of Delta State by SARS operatives, the youths took their faith in their hands, and went demonstrating. The yearning for an end to police brutality, birthed the #ENDSARS movement that eventually led to its disbandment. Although the notorious unit is disbanded for a year now, the police abuse of power is yet to abate, as it is only by the flagrant use of power that they could perpetuate corrupt practices.

Perhaps, the most recent case of “arrogance of power” in public domain, is the Twitter ban. Barely two days after pulling down President Buhari's tweets, and suspending his verified @MBuhari account for violating Twitter's rule guarding against hate speech and speeches that incite violence, the Nigerian Ministry of Information and Culture released an official message suspending indefinitely, the activities of the microblogging and social networking service Twitter in Nigeria. And to tighten inordinate grip on power, the Buhari's administration further proposed to establish a “code of conduct” for the media to counter, among other things, what she termed “fake news.” This rightly set off alarm bells within the human rights community (Campbell, 2021), with many highlighting its undemocratic nature. For puncturing the ego of an “emperor”, the entire Twitter using community in the nation had to suffer. This whimsical ban on twitter, as Campbell notes, mirrors the authoritarian leadership style of hegemon, and lays the grounds for dictatorship. It reminisces the reign of terror and impunity characteristic of Buhari's first stint with power during the 1983-1985 period as military Head of State.

Undeniably, freedom of speech and freedom of the press are some of the hallmarks of democracy, as the free press is the vanguard of any nation. In this

era of supersonic transmission of information, social media has become a major tool of communication given to its ease of use and far-reaching impact. Barely a year ago during the #ENDSARS movement, Twitter was the key medium used in protesting police brutality, as well as exposing extrajudicial killing of peaceful protesters to the international community. The platform has also been used to call out a lot of corrupt practices of the current administration. A palpable suspicion is that the Twitter ban was primarily enforced to disarm Nigerian youths from using the platform as a tool for protest. Tying it to the pulling down of @MBuhari Twitter account was only a ruse. Not long ago, President Donald Trump's account was also suspended for violating Twitter guidelines, but his reaction was not to limit the freedom of the American people. Any policy that stifles information flow in a polity is retrograde, and does not portend well for societal development.

Besides infringing on the fundamental rights of the Nigerian people, the Twitter ban constitutes a great impediment to the growth of indigenous businesses. In a digital age, coupled with physical restrictions imposed by COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, many small and medium scale businesses have survived through online transactions. There are lots of Nigerian youths who use the Twitter platform to promote their businesses and various sundry transactions. The Twitter ban means that millions of such people would have been thrown into the labour market. An estimate has it that the ban costs the Nigerian economy \$6 million per day (Campbell, 2021). Hence, for an impudent and indiscreet arrogant act of one leader, a whole set of youths have been rendered unemployed and unproductive in a battered economy.

Research and experience show that any society replete with cases of arrogance of power is likely to suffer gross instability. When public office holders use the powers of their offices for personal aggrandizement, there is bound to be civic discontent, and depending on its gravity, developmental prospects would be negatively impacted. For instance, the #ENDSARS protesters blocked major roads in Lagos, Abuja and some other cities to get the attention of the Government. During the period, business transactions literally ground to a halt, leading to massive drop in the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of the respective cities. Besides the disruption of businesses, properties were either looted or vandalized. As the environment became unsafe for life and property, multinational corporations began to drawdown their investments, stopping further inflow of foreign direct investments (FDI). The ripple effects of these is economic downturn, unemployment and poverty.

This is especially the case in the Niger Delta where Multinational Oil corporations have fled because of security risks. After turning a blind eye to the plight of the Ogonis that suffered gross environmental degradation; after killing Saro Wiwa and eight others through a sham trial that was condemned across the globe, the Ogonis were pressed to seek for self-help, forming the movement of the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP)—an instrument with which they closed oil production in Ogoniland for over twenty years now. The Ogoni experience is not any different from other Nigerian communities that have suffered arrogant neglect in the hands of successive Nigerian governments. In consequence, whilst over fifteen militant groups have been formed in the Niger Delta to attack oil facilities, challenge the occupier Nigerian military, and demand justice; the Igbos are pushing for independence through the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB); the southwest is seeking for Oduduwa republic; while the entire northeast and northwest are devastated by the activities of Boko haram and bandits. Oftentimes, the formation of militant/liberation groups is a consequence of marginalization and criminal neglect of the plights of the people. Ogbujah (2018: 5) already noted that these groups emerged due to failure of dialogue, as political actors arrogantly refuse to implement several blueprints for developing the country. The ripple effect of all of these is gross underdevelopment—no meaningful development can take place in a conflict-ridden society.

## **Conclusion**

Power is at the center of every political system, and its abuse reflects the level of ethical depravity in this ‘age of impunity.’ The goal of every political system is to bring about development. Hence, the process by which power is wielded and how it is exercised impacts developmental strides. Arrogance of power does retard the development of a nation. As we have established in the preceding paragraphs, arrogance of power is commonplace in all political structures across the world, but in varying degrees. Its manifestation in Nigeria is banal, and its reach is encompassing; it is destructively impactful to her developmental struggles.

For effective counterbalancing of activities, and in order to win the goodwill of the people, the institutionalist Joseph Nye (2002) insists on the prioritization of the use of “soft power”, that is, on the economic capacity and “cultural capital” of a society. Leaders must realize that wars and conflicts are not won with rockets and bombs alone; political solutions based on the social values and

economic needs of the people seem to be much more effective in resolving conflicts in the modern world. However, in every situation where arrogance of power is rife, what is needed is the right counterweight to the “assertive unilateralism” of the radicals. This can be provided by other arms of government (within a state), or other national governments (in terms of global activities). To merely exhibit hopelessness in the face of impunity/tyranny amounts to acquiescence, which ultimately reinforces arrogance of power.

Power is not given to anyone; it is usually taken. The best way to take power from hegemony in a democratic system is through the ballot boxes which, cannot be achieved in a climate with high rate of citizens’ apathy to political processes. Nigerians need to be properly enlightened on the power of their votes. It is insufficient to complain about the ineptitude or tyranny of political office holders—it is high time power is taken away from them and given to those with needed competences, as its bad use is a blight to nationhood and development. For the most part, what is needed under the current socio-political throes, is a robust educational system that will liberate the citizenry from the divisive gimmicks of political elites, and so equip them to defuse the arrogant use of power wherever and whenever it manifests.

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