



# CONCEPTUALIZING “FEDERAL MIGHT” IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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## KeyWords

Democracy, Ekiti 2018 Elections, Federalism, Federal Might, Incumbency Factor, Political Security, Rule of Law.

## ABSTRACT

It is a common phenomenon in matured and burgeoning democracies across the world that candidates vying for political positions emerge victorious not with pettiness but intelligence; not in desperado but good manifesto; not with profligacy but economic sagacity; not with mediocrity but meritocracy; not just by incumbency but competency and most importantly, not by “federal might”, but candidates’ capabilities. The aforementioned negotiations have dominated the political space and lexicon of Nigerian political discourses. This work attempts a conceptualization of the term “federal might” as it applies to Nigeria. To do this, we have conceptually eviscerated the term “federal might”, and have thematically, with qualitative cases, highlighted its etymology, its beneficiaries, the strength of the might, the nature of threat the might is utilized against, the means it is exercised and the time or period in which the might is exercised. We have also juxtaposed the term with its twin term of “incumbency factor” and its anathema, “political security”. To drive home our point, we have examined the federal power play in the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections and have implicitly and explicitly demonstrated the effect of “federal might” on the political security of Nigerians. The work argues that federal might is not just deleterious to citizen’s political security but insidious to our infant democracy. It is therefore our recommendation that apposite measures be taken to fortify the nation’s institutions against individual or group manipulations.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1472, the earliest set of Portuguese traders arrived at the Bight of Benin. Thirteen years later, Joao Alfonso d'Alveiro visited Benin Kingdom and invited the King Ozolua to Portugal. From the 1797, Mongo Park had begun the exploration of the Niger and by the 1840s, the Europeans were making inward movements into the territories of distinct groups that would later become Nigeria. By 1846, the Anglican and the Presbyterian missions had started operations and John Beecroft had successfully annexed Lagos by 1851. While Lagos was overrun and declared a colony by 1861, the Oil River Protectorate was established in 1884. Between 1879 and 1886, George Taubman Goldie's United African Company had evolved to become the Royal African Company and had played a key role in halting French advances into the territories of northern Nigeria. By 1897, "Nigeria" was officially named and the Protectorate of Southern Nigerian was declared in 1900. The 1903 British conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate and the challenges that ensued had culminated in the 1914 amalgamation (See Falola, 2009; Falola, 2008).

The above demarches and many more cumulatively culminated in the forceful marriage of peoples with over 250 disparate cultures, belief system, interests and eschatology into a British economic consortium that would subsequently attain the position of a sovereign state. Hence, efforts at evolving a system of government most befitting in managing intercultural rivalry and diffidence had led to colonial Nigeria experimenting series of constitutional reforms between 1914 and 1939 when the seed of federalism was nursed by Sir Bernard Bourdillon who in 1939, severed the country into three political Provinces (see Olusanya, 1980). While Arthur Richard consolidated on Bourdillon's delineation to create Regions, it took until 1951 before the Macpherson Constitution advanced a quasi federal structure. With the 1954 Littleton Constitution, federalism had taken shape but the federal superstructure was enlivened by the volatile parliamentary system of government which failed to dose tension but rather, escalated the political lunacy which was repercussive of the gory putsches and insurrections shortly after independence (Ekpo, 2017).

Since federalism could serve as institutional response to rivalry and conflict by diving sovereignty and making it possible for majority and minority communities to have exclusive control over specific political jurisdictions such as education system and military that are useful for nation-building (Norman, 2006:xvii), it was coveted for the 1979 transition to civilian rule. Paradoxically, by the late 1970s, there were deliberate measures by the Olusegun Obasanjo junta to centralize and concentrate power into the hands of one single "all mighty" executive president (see Ekeh, 1999:74-76) through a kind of mutated federal structure which beyond nomenclature, was a "mighty tool" in the hands of the executive president. It was a bogus therapy for the rowdy and mishandled parliamentary system, albeit, this was the origins of the 'federal might' system which was reinforced in a more brazen manner by the Abdulsami Abubakar's junta through the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Conventionally, federalism is supposed to be an "organizational mechanism through which governments manage power" (Gerston, 2007:5; Morgan & Davies, 2008:1). It is supposed to be a system whereby "all exercisable government powers are divided between a national government and several state (canton, province, land, etc) governments with the exception of concurrent powers exercisable by either plane of government" (Zimmerman, 2008:4). According to Riker (1964:1) as quoted in Filippov, Ordeshook, & Shvetsova (2004:3), federalism entails that "(1) two levels of government rule the same land and people, (2) each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous, and (3) there is some [constitutional] guarantee...of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere". It is designed to ensure symmetrical "freedom" and "security" of disparate communities (Schmidt, 2000) and in the words of Professor A. V. Dicey, "is a natural constitution for a body of states which desire union and do not desire unity" (Norman, 2006).

Sadly, the Nigerian federalism is mutated, and for reasons noted by Dikshit (1975:213-216), had failed between 1979 and 1983 and with ills such as "federal might" is at the brink of strangling citizen's political security presently. The greatest of its threats are the hyper-centralization of power to the center and concentration of executive powers in the hands of one super executive president with benign checks and weak institutions (see Ekpo, Agorye & Tobi, 2018). In the phrase of Sir John Acton (1834-1902), "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". The corruption in exercising the absolute power bequeathed the executive president of Nigeria (by the 1999 Constitutions) is explicit and implicit in the "federal might" terminology in the Nigerian political lexicon. Our focus thus is to conceptually eviscerate the term "federal might", with the view to highlighting its etymology, who benefits, how powerful the might is, for what threat the might is utilized, by what means it is exercised and in what time or period that the might is exercised. We shall also juxtapose the term with its sister term, "power of incumbency" and its anathema, "political security". To crown it all, we shall examine the federal power play in the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections with the aim to qualitatively point out the effect of "federal might" on the political security of Nigerians.

## CONCEPTUALIZING "FEDERAL MIGHT"

The manifestation of actions that could be qualified as "federal might" has remained a dominant occurrence and reoccurrence in the political milieu of Nigeria's body politics. As would be demonstrated, the phenomenon is increasingly gaining wide recognition and is normalized with indiscriminate usage and application by political actors basically to draw citizens' attention to a practice they vaguely define, occasionally weaponize and unwittingly misapply. Scholars have not totally ignored this phenomenon. For instance, Adeniyi's *Power, Politics and Death* (2011) has captured the manifestation of "federal might" in the context of "power

politics” and has presented plausible cases, demonstrating how the “rule of man” (federal might) had convincingly caged the “rule of law” in the [Olusegun] Obasanjo and [Umaru] Yar’Adua political dispensations. Similarly, Albert’s “Cabal in Nigerian Political Economy” (2012) and “Explaining Godfatherism in Nigerian Politics” (2005) implicitly echoes “federal might” as a culmination of intrigues by the “man in the center” and his “cabal” and “clientele” to, through series of networks, legally and/or extra-judicially control the nation’s resources and decision-making apparatuses for his selfish interest. In the same vein, Said Adejumobi in the chapter “Democracy and Governance in Nigeria: Between Consolidation and Reversal”, in his edited work *Governance and Politics in Post-Military Nigeria* (2010), captures this theme in the contexts of “executive arrogation of power”, “culture of impunity” and “institutional erosion” perpetuated by the Obasanjo’s civilian administration; a malfeasance which is accentuated by Falana’s embossed treatise titled “Constitutionalism, Rule of Law, and Human Rights” (2010).

Albeit, there has been no single attempt at drawing up a definitional framework to box up, and situate the increasingly utilized concept of “federal might” in the conceptual glossary of the Nigerian political opuses. We attempt a conceptual framework here to draw the attention of scholars to this ignored theme that craves attention.

## Etymology

The phrase “federal might” is a creation from the two English words “federal” and “might”. The word federal ( $\sqrt{e-d(-)rl}$ ) has its origin from the Latin word *feodus*, “which refers to a lasting voluntary association among equals” (Gertson, 2007:5). The word was, according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, first used in 1624 to mean “treaty” or “pact...between political units that surrender their individual sovereignty to a central authority but retain limited residuary powers of government”. Might ( $\sqrt{mat}$ ) on the other hand, evolved from the pre-twelfth century English word “miht” which means “the power, authority, or resources wielded by an individual or a group”. Might is synonymous with words such as “energy”, “force”, “muscle”, “power”, “strength”, etc. The word was blown and made disproportionately popular through the writing of the pseudonymous author Ragnar Redbeard in his 1890 controversial book, *Might is Right: or the Survival of the Fittest*. Albeit, there has conspicuously been no case in any Western literature where the two antagonizing words are conjoined to form an oxymoronic phrase with a meaning as utilized in the Nigerian political lexicon. Federal might, etymologically, could be adduced to be the privileges enjoyed by the center in a traditional federal arrangement. Or perhaps, the exclusive power and control of the central government over certain state institutions, jurisdictions and prerogatives as against its “equals”. It could also be construed to be the constitutional strength and advantage accorded the center by other federating units. And by this etymological conjecture is jealousy within the confines and ambits of the supreme laws upon which such a federation hangs.

Although the date for the exact usage of the word “federal might” in Nigeria cannot be ascertained, the origins of such term cannot be unconnected with the constitutional demarches and distrust which greeted politics at the center during the colonial dispensation. The desperate measures by northern politicians to secure equal or more representation at the federal parliament in 1950 and counteracting moves by the politicians in the south to truncate its fruition (see Ekpo, 2017) attest to the fact that even before the enunciation of federalism in 1954, the “might” of the center was appreciated by all and sundry. Although there were traits and evidences of abuse of power at the center before the collapse of the first republic (1960-1966), it is safe to trace the origin of the phrase “federal might” to the Shehu Shagari’s administration when Nigeria, between 1979 and 1983, adopted and mutated Federalism as a political superstructure. By 1999 when power was again transferred to the civilians after over a decade of military dictatorships, “federal might” (as etymologically construed earlier) had attained a new dimension - that which is defined side by side with impunity, abuse of power, victimization of opposition, suppression of dissidents and enshrinement of political insecurity.

## Federal Might for Whom?

Ordinarily, the head of the executive in a federation wields and exercises the highest degree of national power and is responsible for the implementation and expression of the exclusive and a preferred quotient of concurrent duties. The use of executive power, albeit, is regulated by the constitution alongside apposite structures and institutions to checkmate spontaneous, fortuitous or premeditated abuses. In the Nigerian situation, the 1999 Constitution (as amended) has described the head of the federation as a “president” who by the virtue of his office, is “the Head of State, the Chief Executive of the Federation and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation” (Section 130(1&2)). Thus, the constitutional strength of the federal government is exercised by the President (chief executive) and the unconstitutional and even ‘legitimate’ abuse of same privilege (might) is perpetuated by same person. With complete control over state institutions and agencies, Presidents usually manipulate the system to favour his biddings and that of his friends and loyalists who in this case are the beneficiaries of federal executive power corruption. For instance, the history of elections in Nigeria has been the history of manipulation and concoction of figures by executive controlled agencies. In 1983, President Shehu Shagari exercised federal might to his advantage such that the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) registered 65.3 million people (a figure which was greater than the population of the entire country only 20 years earlier and an increase of 18 million from the 1979 register) with presiding officers manufacturing figures for his “landslide” and “overwhelming” victory (Adejumobi, 2010:94). While there is a consensus that the elections that returned President Olusegun Obasanjo to office in 2003 was a sham, that of 2007 and 2011 were in no way better but with the Judiciary “always-always” on the side of the winner (Eribake, 2011).

Recruitment into some 'juicy' federal institutions such as the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), etc. does not follow due process and is used by the President to strengthen the network of his 'might' arbitrarily. For instance, *Sahara Reporters* (2016) had discovered that the CBN "gave well-remunerated jobs to another 121 relatives or wards of people who are politically connected with President Muhammadu Buhari" without following due process. Similarly, control over the NNPC had culminated in most Presidents (Olusegun Obasanjo – 1999-2007 and Muhammadu Buhari 2015-ongoing) doubling as oil ministers. Obasanjo is recorded to have colonized the NNPC and "never discussed activities of the corporation with government officials until his last days in office" (Asadu, 2018). Presidents allocate oil wells to cronies and would do everything to truncate reforms for according to Muhammadu Buhari presidency, "the bill would reduce the power of the president and oil minister to oversee and award oil licences and contracts" (Carsten, 2018).

Aside pecuniary benefits, the friends, cronies, party stalwarts and loyalists of Presidents also incur palpable advantage from the federal might practice. There are cases where by, for being 'close' to the president, one share in the 'might' and 'immunity' that blows across Aso Rock. For instance, James Ibori's (the former governor of Delta State) connection to the Yar'Adua administration made him insusceptible to financial crime prosecution amidst an avalanche of evidences. It also explains why the attorney general (under Ya'Adua administration), Michael Aondoakaa, went extra miles to frustrate Ibori's prosecution in Nigeria and in Britain. Aondoakaa even "forcefully took over the prosecution of the EFCC's case against Orji Kalu, former governor of Abia State, based on a purported restraining order" (Aiyetan, 2007). Same could be said of the reinstatement and promotion of Abdulrasheed Maina, a fugitive of alleged pension fraud, by the Buhari Administration. As observed by Adeniyi (2011), the presidential might given Patricia Etteh (the first female speaker of the House of Representatives) by the Yar'Adua administration and the 'Katsina Mafians' stalled her corruption trial and kept her afloat until such support was withdrawn. The federal might courtesy is conventionally and more often than not, extended to the candidates of the ruling party for senatorial, gubernatorial and other elections. In seldom cases, the 'might' is legitimately, but discriminately used to send 'cryptic' messages. For instance, when the parent of the coordinating Minister of Finance, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was kidnapped, there was a seldom deployment of troops and federal resources to the awe of Nigerians; though legitimate, it was bizarre that only federal connection can explain.

### ***Federal Might by What Means?***

As earlier mentioned, the corruption of federal executive power is often demonstrated and manifested through the manipulation of government agencies controlled by the chief executive of the country. Some of the agencies most ridiculed and weakened for such purpose include the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF), the Code of Conduct Tribunal (CCT), the State Security Service (SSS), the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and conduits such as loyal state governors, state house of assemblies, courts and judges, rogue civil agencies, and party bigwigs. In fact, every government agency is susceptible to these manipulations at different point and befitting occasions.

The highhandedness of the Obasanjo administration in the illegal Odi operation through the military was a resounding warning that the chief executive is mighty and isn't ready to tolerate "due process". The politics surrounding the Operation Python Dance II and the proscription of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) by the military, even before an arranged court action, demonstrates the power of the military (federal might) over the court (see Ekpo & Agorye, 2018). The trial of the Senate President, Bukola Saraki by the CCT after his emergence as the senate president (against the wish of the president and his friends) and the Gestapo styled attempt to force his resignation through an SSS raid is a rare exhibition of "power-pass-power". From the days of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo to this moment, the EFCC has been an attack dog for opposition and dissidents – just that the Buhari administration has taken the game of "selective" anti-graft to the "next level". Adams Oshomole, the ruling All Progressives Congress' (APC) national chairman recently confirmed that "once you join APC, all your sins are forgiven" (Sunday, 2019). State assemblies are often used to ridicule and impeach 'recalcitrant' state governors; for instance, just 18, out of 32 Lawmakers impeached the Oyo state governor, Adewolu Ladoja in January 2006 and the illegal act was implemented swiftly by federal controlled police (The Nation, 2006). In most cases, several of these media are utilized simultaneously depending on what interest is at stake. For instance, during elections, it takes the collaboration of the INEC, the CCT, the NPF and the NAF with the judiciary as accomplice in perfecting a rigging might. This is the most insidious aspect of federal indiscriminate use of 'might' because its implications are far-reaching and cyclical. We will discuss this more in our examination of the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections.

### ***Federal Might Against What Threat?***

Abuse of federal power is often utilized against discriminate legitimate and indiscriminate illegitimate threats. Discriminate legitimate case here includes rare flexing of federal muscle on threats against "senior citizens" such as that which manifested during the kidnapping of Iweala parents. In most cases however, federal might is often utilized against perceived or actual threats to the powers and suzerainty of the President and his cronies. It is most palpably used against opposition, dissidents and naysayers. For instance, Obasanjo's desperation to contain the then opposition figure and Lagos state governor (Bola Tinubu) culminated in his brazen refusal to release the allocation accrued to the state for years even when a court of law had passed a judgment in favour of the

later. President Obasanjo also utilized the INEC and other institutions to cage the threats of his powerful vice president, Atiku Abubakar, in the eve of the 2007 elections. The hand of President Goodluck Jonathan was conspicuous in the 2013 governors' forum elections against his perceived enemy, Governor Rotimi Ameachi of Rivers state. To ensure that the anointed candidate of the mouthed opposition leader, Ayodele Fayose would not emerge victorious in the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections, 30,000 armed personnel were deployed in the election by the Buhari administration. There were overt attempts by the Buhari government to neutralize the threats posed by the senate president, Bukola Saraki by forcing his resignation, barricading his home, invading the senate chambers with dramas ranging from court trials to stealing of the senate maze during session.

There are rare cases where real threats are managed and contained through the manipulation of government institutions and agencies in a Machiavellian manner. For instance, both the Shiites and the IPOB constituted grave threats not just to the Nigerian state but the Buhari administration. Extraneous might was used in crushing these groups with the Shiite leader still behind bars amidst bails granted by courts. Same is the case of Colonel Sambo Dasuki who has been in detention since 2015 over a supposed \$2.1 billion allegedly embezzled arms funds.

### ***How Much Might?***

The legitimate powers of the executive President as enshrined in the constitution are quite valorous. Colonizing and manipulating other state's institutions for personal aggrandizement makes the President a man of prowess and a supreme being who is capable of doing and undoing things. This might can win elections; it can secure federal jobs and appointments; it can grant oil wells; it can arrest and prosecute; it can grant immunity; it can suppress protests and kill dissidents; it can detain, jail and incarcerate; it can flout court judgments and orders; it can impeach, sack or force resignation; it can protect, rescue and frighten; it can frame, blackmail and frustrate; it can make or mar and can be discriminate or indiscriminate. The might is not just powerful but a source of power for the coterie, cabal and clientele networks of the chief executive.

Albeit, there is a subtle limitation to how much the might can smite. This is repercussive of the Niger Delta militants' bravery of President Obasanjo's terror; the masses' resistance of President Jonathan's deregulation attempts; Obasanjo's alleged third term ambition and the failure of Jonathan to, amidst control over the government institutions, command his victory in the 2015 presidential election.

### ***Federal Might in What Time Period?***

There is no specific time matrix or template to forecast or predict a trajectory for the manifestation of federal might. Though mostly premeditated, some are a spontaneous reaction to emerging 'threats' which might prove costly to reelection or free flow of power from the chief executive. Thus, immediately after assumption of office, some chief executives display this might as a signal to parties that "disloyalty", "dissident", opposition, inter alia, will not be tolerated. For instance, the patterns of President Muhammadu Buhari's anti-graft war in his first eight months in office did not just echo the presence "a new mayor in town" but a display of federal might against the opposition (Ekpo, Chime & Enor, 2016:67-69), some of whom are still incarcerated despite series of bails granted by several courts.

However, election periods and its eve harbor the most ridiculous drama and display of federal might. For instance, the ordeals of former vice president, Atiku Abubakar, in the hands of his boss, Olusegun Obasanjo started immediately the former resisted the later's third term ambition but got worse and most palpable during the eve of the 2007 elections. Also, the federal might against Bukola Saraki was disguised as a CCT innocent trial but became a war of invasion and attrition when it was clear that he was about to decamp to the opposition. On elections eve too, there are too much coincidences especially in the transfer of police commissioners and inspectors. Even so, every federal might exerted prior to elections are meant to send 'messages' which is most loud during elections. In essence, abuse of federal power can occur before, during and after elections but they all convey a cycle of message which is communicated through power politick.

### ***Federal Might Defined***

In its innocent and etymological state, federal might, we have conjectured is and limited to:

the privileges enjoyed by the center in a traditional federal arrangement. Or perhaps, the exclusive power and control of the central government over certain state institutions, jurisdictions and prerogatives as against its "equals". It could also be construed to be the constitutional strength and advantage accorded the center by other federating units. It is, by this etymological conjecture, jealousy within the confines and ambits of the supreme laws upon which such a federation hangs.

Having done a situational analysis on the manner and style of federalism in Nigeria and the context upon which federal

might is most often applied and utilized by politicians, we have arrived at a definition thus:

federal might is the judicious and/or extra-judicial utilization of government institutions and its agencies by the ruling federal government for and/or against its friends, opposition-controlled states and dissident voices before, during and after elections and at clashes of interests, not just for its immediate party aggrandizement, but to prove political points of supremacy, “being in-charge”, intimidation, rascality, power politics and coercive diplomacy. It is a corruption and manipulation of federal institutions for individual and group gratification.

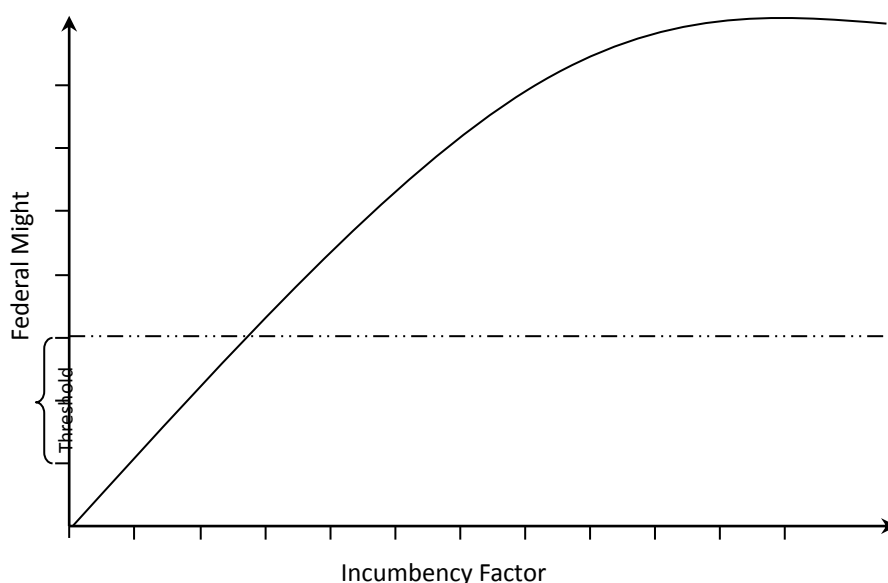
As we have demonstrated, federal might is exercised either for discriminate positive reasons or malicious and incongruous purposes.

## FEDERAL MIGHT VERSUS INCUMBENCY FACTOR

Having framed and conceptualized federal might to befit its routine usage and application in Nigeria, it is pertinent to perform a conceptual surgery so as to expunge it from, as well as demarcate the extent to which it is and could be crisscrossed with related concepts as incumbency power. In essence, we are going to establish a nexus between federal might and power of incumbency and as well conjecture the meeting and departing points for the sister concepts with regards to their general and peculiar application in the Nigerian political climate.

Incumbency factor also known as power of incumbency is a loophole that characterizes electioneering process in a democratic setting. As a phenomenon, it occurs in an election of which one of the contestants is the occupant of the position being contested (Akinola, 2018). It is the “change in the proportion of votes polled by an incumbent party candidate from that in the previous elections” (Chakrabarti *et al.*, 2005). It is a combined advantage of individual competency and incumbent privileges (Gelman, 1990:1153). Incumbency factor, Akinola (2018) has observed, includes but not limited to “the power of the purse, the fact of visible achievements in office, the fact that he or she needs no introduction, and, significantly, the fact that he or she can still do something great before election day to convince undecided voters about his or her capability and competence to continue to lead”. These privileges, Nwanegbo & Alumona (2011:126) have opined, create some electoral margin for the incumbent running for a re-election.

Though commonly mixed up in some literatures (see Okoye *et al.*, 2012), incumbency factor or privilege is not illegal or illegitimate. For the fact the law allows an incumbent to seek re-election into same office without relinquishing power first, signifies that such law sanctions the incumbent’s *legitimate* use of his office to promote his image for such re-election. The abuse and manipulation of such privileges is nothing other than corruption and abuse of power. Hence, Nwanegbo & Alumona (2011:126) has labeled such manifestation as “incumbency abuse factor”.



What then is the relationship between incumbency factor and federal might? What is the meeting and departing point? Incumbency factor as mentioned above constitutes a legitimate utilization of a current position of office occupied by a candidate to enhance his chances of re-election. Though it is ‘selfish’, it is legal and legitimate. It is the degree to which the incumbent is ready to

go in advancing his cause through available incumbent mechanisms that corrupts such privilege and thereby, criminalizes it. Thus, the moment the corruption of incumbency privilege by the chief executive passes a certain threshold (whether utilized in furthering his cause or that of his cronies, clientele and cabal networks), it becomes federal might against the opposition who lacks such privileges. The degree to which incumbency privilege is abused is directly proportional to the level of manifestation of federal might (if perpetuated by or with support from the chief executive). That is to say, the higher the abuse of incumbency power, the higher the manifestation of federal might against an opposition in an electioneering period.

For instance, the incumbent chief executive always enjoys a cacophony of endless serenades from media houses, most especially, state owned and controlled elements. This unfettered publicity is a privilege of which the incumbent enjoys. However, if the incumbent, through legitimate means such as regulation agencies tries to block, censor or manipulate information against his opponents, then such privilege is abused and he is dangling on the threshold incumbency privilege and federal might. More so, if he brazenly uses state intelligence to threaten, jam, blackmail or even shutdown some opposition-friendly media houses, the he has crossed the red line for such do not just constitute an abuse of incumbent privilege but a federal might used to hack down opposition media channels.

	<b>Federal Might</b>	<b>Incumbency Factor</b>
Corruption	✓	X
Abuse of power	✓	X
Impunity	✓	X
Use of state institution	✓	✓
Legitimacy	X	✓
Selfish purpose	✓	✓

Nevertheless, there are some departing points between incumbency power and federal might. To start with, incumbency factor is legal and legitimate while federal might is illegal and abusive. Incumbency privileges if not properly tamed and controlled can metamorphose into abuse of power and manifestation of federal might at the center but federal might is evil and corruptive by nature. Incumbency factor manifests exclusively during electioneering period and could be abused by any office holder be it at the state or local government levels. Though also utilized during federal controlled elections, federal might as described above, manifests before, during and after electioneering process. While incumbency factor is utilized just for re-election sake, federal might is not just to win election “but to prove political points of supremacy, “being in-charge”, intimidation, rascality, power politics and coercive diplomacy”. Also, while incumbency power can be utilized and manipulated by chief executive of federating units in their local elections, federal might is an exclusive spoil of the President and is only enjoyed by him, his coteries and his friends. While incumbency privilege is of multiple sources, federal might emanates only from the manipulation of states’ institutions from the center.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF FEDERAL MIGHT ON POLITICAL SECURITY: LESSONS FROM EKITI 2018 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS**

Political security is one of the important dimensions of human security which deals with the sovereign principles of democratic and human rights, human dignity, political freedom and protection from state repression (Wagle, 2013). Political security, according to UNDP (1994) entails “living in a society that guarantees basic human rights and freedom of expression”. The concept of political security is also the security of an individual from violence and political suppression by the state. In fact, the main objectives of human security are peace and harmony in society and the individual freedom and security of citizens (UNDP 1994, Wagle, 2013). Therefore, security scholars argue that the definition of political security is freedom from fear where people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights, follows the rule of law and protects political rights. In fact, sources of political threat and insecurity are the state and security agencies. In order to counter the threat of political repression, people require that their rights be respected and they require protection from military dictatorship or abuse, political or state repression, the practice of torture, ill treatment or disappearance and from political detention and imprisonment (Wagle, 2013).

An intriguing aspect of political security which must accrue more attention is political freedom, freedom from fear and freedom to exercise franchise and take unrestricted part in leadership selection processes. Thus, the idea of peoples’ oriented government and the dire need of the masses to determine who leads them gave birth to democracy – a concept which is synonymous with political security. This is in line with the position of Nef (2007) who averred thus: “although all the micro and macro dimensions of security are equally central to the realization of human dignity, the political dimension holds the key to the safeguarding of all other securities. Politics constitutes the organizing principle of a community’s life. Without it, the realization of other forms of security would be impossible. Thus, substantive and procedural consensus, and above all democracy, lie at the core of political security”. Political security comes with many other human values, among them individual confidence, assurance, belief and certainty. In an electoral process, individual confidence is high when individuals perceive the process to be free, fair and just (Mataure, 2005). Since elections is foundational to the emergence of political leaders who uphold other intricacies of political security, elections is very fun-

damental in the definition of political security. This is why Rozborová (2013) has defined political security aptly as “free and fair elections”.

Federal might on the other hand is an anathema to all that political security represents and is most repercussive when utilized during electioneering period. This is so because it truncates the peoples’ will thereby denigrating on democratic principles while concomitantly stalemating institutional growth. While political security roots for free, fair and just elections; human rights, rule of law, strong and independent state institutions, federal might makes room for the evolution of a demigod in the form of a chief executive who arrogate executive powers, muzzle state institutions and wage an illegitimate and ignoble war against the peoples will. Thus, federal might is an abrupt abnegation from, and abrogation of the citizens’ political security for it doesn’t just suffocate their choices but enshrine a level of structural violence and hopelessness as important state institutions evolve to become political tools in the hands of the president. Attempts to resist federal might is always violent in nature as the chief executive would likely leave no stone untouched in the pathway to realizing his agenda. Let us take a cursory look at the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections to see how deleterious and demeaning, federal might could be to citizens’ political security.

Here, we attempt to bring to fore, the character and intricacies of the July 2108 governorship elections in Ekiti State, with the hope to assessing the presence of federal might, the attempt to resist it and how they affected the political security of the masses during the elections.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, 2017, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in press release signed by its General Secretary Mrs. Augusta Ogakwu, released a timetable for the conduct of the Ekiti state governorship elections which it scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 (INEC, 2018). This was a clarion call for the various stakeholders to mobilize their resources, not majorly to campaign and convince the masses, but to use all forms of incumbent power, calumny and federal might to settle their old scores and differences.

Retrospectively, the incumbent governor of the state Mr. Ayodele Fayose had in June, 2014, running under the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) utilized federal might to defeat the then incumbent governor, Kayode Fayemi of the All Progressives Congress (APC) with a total of 203,090 votes to 120,433 garnered by Fayemi (PremiumTimes, 2014). Not only did Fayose dislodge the incumbent governor but embarrassingly did so by clearing all the 16 local government areas of the state. The victory was however, adduced to be a pigment of distorted reality, a stolen mandate, and an executive rascality on the part of the PDP controlled federal government who sent in “huge starch of money and soldiers” to rob the people of their political security through systemic rigging and pecuniary enticement and manipulations. *SaharaReporters* had uncovered a leaked audio conversation between PDP leaders and politicians as they bribed Brigadier General Momoh. Senator Obanikoro is heard from the audio to have said “I am not here for a tea party, I’m on a special assignment by the President” (SaharaReporters, 2015a). According to one of the soldiers who witnessed the charades, Captain Koli, the PDP had planned and successfully left the people politically insecure be devising:

Several plans intended to bring about unlawful victory for PDP candidates in the Ekiti State races, including the forging of INEC ballots, the use of the military to facilitate access for PDP operatives and supporters, the creation of a list of All Progressives Congress (APC) members to be arrested, and the deployment of a special team of military to prevent APC voters from reading the polls (SaharaReporters, 2015a).

Even so, some APC leaders, including the then Rivers State governor, Rotimi Ameachi, were barred by security personnel from entering Ekiti State 48 hours to the 2014 governorship elections for the APC campaign and rallies. The plans by some APC members to distribute money and buy votes from all the 177 wards in Ekiti was also stalled by the security agents “who looked the other way when PDP was distributing two days before the elections” (Durotoye, 2014). There were thus, insinuations of foul play and conspiracy against the mandate of Kayode Fayemi by the PDP led federal apparatus; Fayemi being an opposition under the PDP led federal government had left, but not without the intension of returning the favour meted him by the PDP?

More so, the excitement which accompanied the emergence of Fayose as the Governor of Ekiti State was truncated in the unprecedented victory of the APC’s Muhammadu Buhari in the 2015 presidential elections. The shield of “immunity” and incentive of “opposition” had reduced Mr. Fayose to a proverbial wild cat who found succor in attacking virtually every initiatives, actions and inactions of the Buhari-led federal government. Retrospectively, Governor Fayose was involved in petty campaigning and character assassination in the course of the 2015 presidential elections; he had gone as low as placing a “death-wish advert on Buhari in national newspapers” (SaharaReporter, 2015b). With his emergence as the Chairman of the PDP Governors’ Forum, Fayose had constituted more ‘nuisances’, threw more tantrums and casted more aspersions in the guise of opposition to the ruling government.

Thus, not just was Fayose an arch rival of Dr. Fayemi (who was now a friend and Minister in the APC federal government), but an adversary and “torn in the flesh” for Buhari and the entire APC government and officials. The subsequent appointment of Kayode Fayemi by President Buhari into his cabinet as Minister of Solid Minerals Development had placed him on a position of advantage to plan, manage and stage his *risorgimento* – a quest which, as would be discussed, robs on the political security of the Ekiti masses.



After defeating Segun Oni with a vote of 941 to 481 in the Ekiti APC governorship primary (Makinde, 2018), Fayemi resigned his ministerial position on May 30, 2018, to wrestle his second term mandate which “he was denied...by Ayo Fayose in the state’s 2014 governorship elections (Ogundipe, 2018). Though Fayemi was to battle it out with the winner of the Ekiti PDP governorship primary and the incumbent deputy governor, Professor Kolapo Olusola, it was visible to the blind and loud to the deaf that it was a “return march – a clash of the old titans” who were prepared to utilize any available means, strategy and stratagem to settle old scores; this environment defined the election climate of the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections.

Consequently, the Ekiti 2018 governorship election was not a theatre for the people to exercise their suffrage or freely choose their leader without fear, favor and manipulation. Desperation was seen on both parties – it was a do or die atmosphere in earnest. The earliest indicator and warning signal to the citizens of the anticipated robbery of their political security and right to free and fair atmosphere to elect their leader was sent by what is popularly christened “federal might” in the political lexicon of Nigeria. Of course in his speech at the Fayemi’s valedictory meeting at the Federal Executive Council (FEC), President Buhari had “hope[d] you [Fayemi] will get Ekiti back for the party” (Okogba, 2018). It is argued that such power-play was repercussive of the INEC’s announcement in July 9, of the deployment of 30,000 security personnel to Ekiti in the façade to “ensure adequate security...before, during and after elections” (Akinwale, 2018). If the number of these personnel is divided by the 2,195 total polling units in Ekiti, each polling units would be seasoned with some 14 security operatives. Aside the negative tension and psychological implications this mammoth security operatives engendered, there was either selective protection or complete anarchy in certain parts of the state. During the APC campaign in June 1, 2018, there was an attempt on the life of the governorship candidate by a purported “unidentified MoPol”, with an ex-lawmaker Opeyemi Bamidele sustaining injuries from gunshots (Balashodun, 2018). In June 14, a member of the APC, Mr. Willy Ayegoro was shot in the head at Atikankan, Ado Ekiti (Oluwale, 2018). About a month after elections on August 11, a high ranking APC member Mr. Bunmi Ojo was shot at close range at about 10pm at Ado Ekiti (Ogunmola, 2018).

High profile intimidations and political assassinations notwithstanding, there were overt cases of voting disruptions and other coordinated perpetration of abnormalities; this had informed the vituperation of the incumbent governor, Fayose that:

I want to state expressly that the police have hijacked the whole process; INEC might mean well but the process was tampered with by the police...As I speak, thugs are having a field day snatching ballot boxes under police watch; this is a national disgrace...there were cases of not only ballot snatching but ballot cleansing and clearing, even as the police and other officers cooperated by the looking the other way (Punch, 2018).

As alleged by the National Publicity Secretary of the PDP, Mr. Ologbondiyan, there were:

cases of harassment, intimidation and violent attacks on our [PDP] members and supporters by thugs hired by the APC, who are being aided by some compromised security men brought in by the APC to perfect the aggression against our members (Fabiye, 2018).

Though the APC and federal government denied any wrongdoing, the *VanguardNews* had captured scenes of disrupted election process and snatched cum scattered and destroyed sensitive materials across some polling units at Ado Ekiti (Johnson, 2018). The apogee of the intimidation, power game and drama was when the incumbent governor, Mr. Fayose and his deputy/PDP governorship candidate were allegedly assaulted and teargased by security personnel – an action which attracted series of opprobrium and condemnations (Ogundele & Fabiyi, 2018). These were manifestations of federal might at the expense of the peoples’ right to exercise their franchise in a peaceful, free and fair environment. In this game of chess, the masses were the most hurt, they were used against themselves and at the end the emerging winner might not be the actual winner – this is a brazen infringement on the political right and security of the citizens.

Also worthy of note was the use of the masses’ physical and mental poverty to manipulate their choice in a manner that was malicious and degrading. The incumbent administration led by Mr. Fayose blatantly emasculated the people economically by refusing to pay the civil servants their salary arrears which had accumulated for months. As a devil theoretician, he hoped to use this to his advantage by “bribing” workers with a sudden welfare remuneration of N3,000.00 within few days to the election. A *BBC News Pigin* correspondent had obtained a video and interview of people trooping the governors’ office to collect N4000,00 in exchange for their political right and security of choosing their leader (BBC, 2018). The APC too was guilty of this infamy of financial inducement and blackmail of innocent but indigent population. In a video obtained by *PremiumTimes*, party agents were caught giving N5,000.00 to voters in polling unit 012 in Igbemo Ward of Irepodun-Ifelodun local government area of the State (Busari, 2018). It was even alleged by the PDP that APC were using “compromised policemen to offer each voter N10,000.00 ritual money at polling centers to vote for the APC” (Opejobi, 2018). These dastardly acts were not just embarrassing but revealed how economic insecurity can make the people vulnerable in the face of the those who want deprive or hamper their political right and security through peanuts.

Hence, it would not be out of place to say that the peoples’ right to vote, in clear and clean conscience, was obstructed in

the 2018 Ekiti gubernatorial elections. Cases of assaults, intimidation, threats, assassinations, bribery and financial inducement, thuggery and snatching of election materials, acute misinformation, calumny and all sort of demagogue and overt attempts at demonizing other candidates than sell party's manifesto, affected the political security of the citizens as it relates to freedom and right to vote without fear nor favor. The swamp of security officials who flew around had some psychological repercussions too. That an election was reduced to a combat between two sworn rivals meant that the citizens were just pawns and objects to be simulated in the ensuing power game. That federal might had changed hands too meant that it the exercise was not an election but a "payback time". Of course there is absence of political security where people cannot elect their leaders in a free and fair atmosphere; there is political insecurity where security personnel are compromised to favor a particular party; the people are not politically secured where their votes are neither protected nor counted; there is no political security where votes are exchanged for peanuts; there is no political security where people are persecuted for their party affiliations; there is political insecurity where there is federal might. Sadly, this was the situation in the Ekiti 2018 gubernatorial elections - an untold epistle of a politically vulnerable people robbed and rubbed on by the greedy few whose personal interest subsumes the general group aspirations.

## Conclusion

We have attempted a detailed explication on the concept of federal might and have given it a basic definitional framework for usage and further research. We have also attempted a succinct analysis in framing the relationship between the concept of federal might and incumbency factor as applicable in the Nigerian political arena. More so, we have highlighted the limitations which federal might posts against political security of citizens in Nigeria and have thus concluded that federal might is not just insidious but very harmful to the development of Nigerian political institutions upon which it democracy relies. The muzzling of state institutions by chief executive for selfish and primitive purposes creates great and powerful men and paradoxically, undermines democratic institutions and culture. Federal might is therefore deleterious and feeds bountifully on institutional weakness and loopholes upon which the strength of such institutions depends upon.

Therefore, greater commitment should be made with regards to institutional autonomy of sensitive government agencies. Security agencies should resist executive manipulations and remain apolitical. Institutions such as INEC, EFCC, ICPC should be taken off the shadows of the presidency. The executive should respect the judiciary and resist every temptation of meddling in its affairs. Absolute practice of the rule of law and separation of powers should be the watchword guiding the relations between organs and tiers of government. The president should know that his administration is transient but his office and other institutions are permanent – he should not offend posterity for ephemeral gains. Above all, laws should be made to cut down or checkmate the powers of the executive president and as well fortify the institutions under his control. States should be granted more autonomy to liberate the chief executive at the center of tyrannical dispositions.

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