

The National Question in the Face of a Nigerian Spring

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Abstract

The greatest phenomenon challenging the continued corporate existence of Nigeria can be identified as the army of unemployed surging across the country which the State has continued to fail to design an eco-military model to gainfully engage. It is not the scare of a coup but civil insurrection. When the Arab spring broke out leading to the fall of the Tunisian, Libyan and Egyptian strong regimes, the Obama administration seemed to have pointed towards sub-Saharan Africa, probably Nigeria as the next global sphere of spring. But it did not happen much to the chagrin of the Nigerian left and civil society organizations. One important point was that the nation was under a political administration that was never ready to excite the populace negatively like the Buhari administration has been known to do. All previous administration of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had pandered to the resolution of the national question as soon as it reared its ugly head. But the All Progressive Congress (APC) foisted Gen. Buhari and fingered the rosaries of the national question with its potential impact to oust the Jonathan administration from power. Yet, the question has not been abated or averted since the commencement of the 4th Republic. This paper which adopts the doctrinal method underscores the various factors driving the Nigerian insecurity crisis towards the tipping point of a spring. It finds that there is neither uniformity nor synergy on the part of the Federal and State governments and the people in combating insecurity. Rather the Federal government's policies have come to be informed by nepotism, corruption and incompetence instead of the general principles of true federalism recommended by the paper.

Keywords: National Question, Insecurity, Nigerian Spring, Amnesty and Banditry.

Introduction

As opined by Issa (2021, p. 18) most negative predictions about Nigeria, with the benefit of hind sight, have at best been absurd and ridiculous, and at worse, foolish and laughable. Issa continues, 'There must be a collective realization that we are dealing with legacy problems of underdevelopment, mass poverty and inequality which fuel current high youth unemployment and violence of varying dimensions.' The solution may not be in form of anger and addictive baseless fears when Chief Robert Clarke SAN predicted the end of corporate Nigeria within six months. But the national question has continued to crop up in bolder relief to the extent that northern Traditional rulers have reacted to the persistent calls for the fragmentation of the Nigerian State from different quarters. The rulers believe that the agitations should be seen by the Federal government as wake-up calls to improve the security architecture of the nation. A situation where those whose responsibility it is to protect the citizens are themselves being subjected to mindless attacks can only be for the reason of instilling fear into the psychic and moral fabric of the nation in order to bring it

down in a spring-like agitation due to pervasive insecurity amongst the people (Vanguard, 2021, p. 9 & Vanguard, 2021, p. 9).

Statement of the problem

Since the return to civil rule in the 4th republic, insecurity has gradually taken the centre ground of national discourse raising the critical issue of the national question and the descent of the nation into a spring as took place in north-African Arab countries of Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria. The factors that led to the revolutionary movement can be seen to exist in Nigeria in addition to the fact that the military weapons and the Islamic extremist organizations involved in the Arab-spring have swiftly found their ways into Nigeria. These are unemployment, underdevelopment, corruption, incompetence in governance; and ISWAP, ISIS and Boko Haram. The Buhari state and the Islamic extremists have also been suspected to be in *pari delicto* on the one hand, while on the other hand, its state policies and appointments largely informed by nepotism and marginalization of the southern ethnic nationalities (particularly the Igbo and Yoruba) have aggravated the effective management of the security architecture of the nation leading to the mushrooming of separatist agitations across the country. The proposed solution of granting amnesty to bandits and insurgents in the crisis has also not gone down well with critical sections of opinion leaders in the country. In the circumstances of this situation, a Nigerian spring is being anticipated.

Theoretical framework

Arab spring theory:

To Professor Akinyemi (as cited in Yakubu, 2021, p. 5), the Owerri attacks on the Police and Prisons smell of sabotage. The way arms had flooded into Nigeria is as if the Country is a war zone: 'Maybe it is going to be a war zone; may be, they are telling us of the shape of things to come.' Akinyemi argues that the moment Gaddafi was dislodged in Libya during the Arab spring, his arms depots were looted and the arms found their way to the south into Nigeria. At the same time, Boko Haram was flexing its muscle with Nigeria and it was regarded as a rightful platform for which the arms could find usage. A risk analysis has been done by researchers and their conclusion is that we are not headed for a picnic; but a turbulent future in Nigeria. Different violent groups are being funded by people with money to procure the arms and these arms are finding respectable acceptance and usage in Nigeria. And the evidence of the usefulness of the arms can be found from all calculations as Boko Haram insurgents have taken up the north-east and herdsmen and bandits have taken all over Nigeria and the arms are still flooding in and nothing is being about it by the Buhari state.

Weak security theory:

For Akinyemi, Nigerian army is under paid and there is a United Nations report on the Army that has been suppressed. But a similar report on the police is circulating. Instead of 345,000 Police that we have, we need over one million in Nigeria. Nigerian army barracks and

cantonments built in the 1970s and 1980s could not have been easily overrun as they are being currently done by Boko Haram and insurgents if there had been upgrades. Recently, a report had claimed that just four bandits turned in 26 AK47 rifles and over 109 general purpose rifles and machine guns indicating that Nigeria is fast becoming another Congo even though we still have periodic elections.

Usman (2021, p. 17) has come forth to disclose what Nigeria Police Officers earn even as Akinyemi has volunteered that data on the Nigerian Army is being kept under wraps although about 300 of them recently resigned publicly citing corruption. A Police Recruit earns N10,115 monthly; Police Constable II earns N42,000; Constable I earns N43,998; Corporal earns N45,737; Sergeant earns N50,534; Sergeant Major earns N63,992; Inspector II/Cadet Inspector earns N87,000; Inspector earns N130,171; Cadet ASP earns N130,000; ASP II earns N139,171; ASP I earns N153,989; Deputy Sup. Of Police earns N168,820; Superintendent of Police earns N179, 813 and CSP earns N220, 160. When compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the world, the margin is a far cry. Now, Usman queries: 'Is this the force Nigerians are banking on to fight crime and insurgency successfully?' This is the same force that is facing attack and elimination in the south-east. For the first time in Nigerian history hoodlums and criminals have brazenly displayed total disregard for constituted authorities by taking the war to Police stations.

The first incident that signaled worrisome dimension to the level of threat to the national question and seeming lack of confidence on security agents was the ENDSARS protests. At the end of the monumental massacre that had a fluid leadership, 22 policemen were extra-judicially killed by the rampaging protesters and scores were injured with life-threatening conditions in hospitals. 205 Police Stations and formations and other critical private and public infrastructure were also damaged (Usman, 2021, p. 17).

Peoples versus territorial theory:

The people have a crucial role to play in time of insurgency. The onus is on traditional rulers, religious leaders, community leaders, professional associations, family heads and others in position of leadership to make communities incommensurable to criminals. For instance, President Buhari charges, 'As a security agency I charge you to be relentless in carrying out your statutory duties of keeping our borders safe while you ensure that criminal elements do not find Nigeria as a safe haven to hide and perpetrate their criminality' (Tordue, 2021, p. 9). But the problem of the security agencies in charge of borders is that border communities gang up against them, kill them and burn down their patrol vehicles. They think that the bandits who smuggle arms across the borders are more beneficial to their lives than security agents. And furthermore, the Customs, for example, has had 17 years existence in Nigeria without open recruitment since 2004 (Tordue, 2021, p. 9).

Asuni (as cited in Onoyume, 2021, p. 21), a peace expert and human rights activist in the Niger Delta zone, agree with the Minister of the Interior, Aregbesola, who posits that the war should be taken to the criminals. She canvasses that the insecurity situation in Nigeria

had become so threatening that the current approach had to be jettisoned. The better approach is the need to get all the security agencies to work together as one rather than taking territorial approach to the war. Addressing the same issue, Professor Soyinka (as cited in Ogunnaike, 2021, p. 10) had stated to the Police, 'You are too jealous of your position, of your uniform and where there should be cooperation, there is competition which is silly. Let us now go beyond that and recognize that Amotekun (an emerging State Police) is simply to complement what you are already doing adequately.'

The role of traditional rulers cannot also be jettisoned. Governor Makinde of Oyo State opines, 'I have said before that security cannot work without intelligence gathering and we cannot gather intelligence without getting closer to the people. In all the troubled areas across the state, the royal fathers often get information before we do, and that is why it is important that we must collaborate with them' (Badru, 2021, p. 15). According to Asuni and the views variously canvassed by the Oni of Ife on the role of traditional institutions, traditional rulers have a serious role to play in security issues. They know their kingdoms' trouble makers and subjects; they can identify them. Many times, security officers come into their domain without informing them what they have come to do and their challenges. Traditional rulers are willing to work with security agencies if given a constitutional role to play. The constitutional provisions which seem to have taken away issues related to crime from all other institutions and have deposit them with the Police appear to be too onerous for the agency alone. To Asuni, 'One thing they (traditional rulers) need is protection and anonymity. They want to ensure that nobody will come and harass them' if they give out information to the Police. However, Asuni canvasses further that some traditional rulers and political leaders are sometimes involved in sponsoring criminal activities especially in the north. In the south, in the maritime sector, traditional rulers also know the sea pirates operating in gangs with their colonies. 'Your colony may be in Bayelsa and you launch and bring your hostages to your colony in Cross Rivers'. So, the king should be able to know what is happening in his domain. They can be part of stemming the crimes. Government has to involve them in security plans and should not be doing everything alone. It should partner with the people and their kings. They have a huge role to play in securing their kingdoms. Civil Society Organizations should also be targeted and integrated into the security architecture.

Conspiracy theory:

But the role of the people is most times scuttled from the pinnacle of the State. The Wakili phenomenon in Ibarapa land in western Nigeria can demonstrate how frustrating it could be to fight the terrorist herdsmen. A concerned stakeholder states, 'I told the OPC (Odua Peoples' Congress) operatives not to arrest Wakili because the Oba of Ayete and Ibarapa land told me that there is a Presidential order on Wakili and that he should not be touched. When the team that went to arrest Wakili got there, I was called and I told them that our group should back down from the operation and that those going there to apprehend Wakili

would be arrested.' The stakeholder continues, 'Oba Ayete said a top Presidential aide called him and warned him that nothing must happen to Wakili. All the steps taken by OPC and the team were already known by the Presidency.' The threat played out because all the OPC operatives that were involved in arresting Wakili were in turn arrested and spirited out of Yoruba land to Abuja. Wakili had over 1,000 cows with foot soldiers working for him. The stakeholder continues, 'If you observe well, Wakili pretended that he was not well. They burnt the man's house but the police turned around to claim that they also burnt (his) wife in it. That is the case the police will use against the OPC boys. It was a trap set for the OPC... and they will be jailed for it... OPC (operatives) have been moved from Eleyele Police to Force CID Alagbon in Lagos en-route to Abuja' (Akinrefon et al., 2021, p. 5)

The Wakili saga later turned full circle (Akinrefon et al., 2021, p. 10). While the herders backing him alleged that OPC killed one Fatima Umar, (Wakili's sister or wife) during the raid on the man, OPC claimed it was far from the truth. Contrary to the claims that the 75 year old Wakili was involved in kidnapping and killing of Yoruba indigenes, the herders wondered how a 75 year old blind man could be responsible for these. To make the case complicated, Gizori, a Wakili foot soldier claimed that aside the houses and six motor cycles and bags of food stuff set ablaze, N5million meant for their members was burnt. Wakili had spent over 20 years in Ibarapa land without previous criminal records and two of his children were admitted to hospital for treatment at Igbo-Ora as a result of the raid according to Gizori. But Olumo confuted Gizori. Olumo states, 'Visit Ayete, Igangan and Tapa to listen to residents about the atrocities of Wakili.' The Ayete Monarch, Asawo of Ayete, Oba Emmanuel Okeniyi states conclusively, 'We could not apprehend the kidnappers; the victims said those who kidnapped them were Fulani. Whether Wakili was involved or not in kidnappings we may not know. One of my Chiefs owned the land where Wakili was resident but for sometimes Wakili has been involved in the destruction of farmlands in Ayete and left the farmers in penury. As we speak, most of the farmers who are victims of Wakili's atrocities have not recovered. It got to a point the Baale of the area told Wakili to leave the area; but he refused to leave; and that led to him being dragged to court.'

The Monarch of Itmofin Ayete (Ogunnaike, 2021, p. 9 & Akinrefon, 2021, p. 10) believes Wakili settled in Kajola since 18 years ago without the knowledge of anyone, 'When I got wind of his presence in Kajola, which is one of the villages under my jurisdiction, I invited him to my Palace. He honoured my invitation and I asked him of the person that permitted him to settle at Kajola; he told me that all land belongs to God. I told him that though all lands belong to God, He puts them under the administration of some people and by the grace of God, Kajola is under my watch. Some years later, I started to hear of his notorious atrocities. I tried to send him out he refused and I sent a quit notice from the State High Court and he resisted. The OPC came and arrested him and there was a shot out and in the end, he was handed over to the Police.' Above all, Police charged three OPC operatives for conspiracy, arson and murder of 45 year old Fatima Umar on 7th March, 2021 at Kajola village, Ayete.

Another Federal government's scuttle from the pinnacle in the south eastern Nigeria can be cited. This involved Governor Ugwuanyi of Enugu State who later denied the incident. He stated, 'I put a call across to the President, Mohammed Buhari. I was put on hold for over an hour and 15 minutes. This call was made in the presence of 13 men and four women. The President's aide told me that the President will get back to me. The President through his aide after four hours told me that (he) the President will do something about it. My relative (Sly Idoko) was among the people who witnessed this call. On hearing that the Police have not arrived at Uzouwani, I called GOC 82 Mechanized Division for help. I was referred to the President again. This time around I was put on hold for nearly two hours again. While waiting to speak to the President, news came in that the attack I was planning to prevent has actually taken place. Within an hour after the Fulani coordinated attacks the Commissioner of Police and the GOC who referred me to the President had mobilized their men to stop retaliation' (Egberi, 2021).

Relative deprivation theory:

Closely related to the negative posture of the government is the stereo-typicalism of Governors like El-Rufai (Ado, 2021, p. 13). Sobowale (2021, p. 15) for instance, was very condescending on El-Rufai when he canvassed that El-Rufai had never hidden his disdain for anyone who is not Fulani and Sunni Muslim. And his actions and utterances since becoming the Governor of Kaduna State (for some, since coming to national limelight after becoming the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja) have proved beyond reasonable doubt that he is not prepared to be the Governor of all the diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups co-existing in Kaduna State. He cares only for Fulani Herdsmen. Sobowale argues, 'As everybody who has lived with the Fulani knows very well, real Fulani herdsmen are not terrorists, murderers or pyromaniacs. Those invading southern Kaduna who are being compensated by El-Rufai, are world class sadists who drink human blood. That is why they are labeled the 4th deadliest terrorist group in the world.'

But El-Rufai thinks otherwise. He canvasses that the problem with the average Nigerian is the gross misconception that the other Nigerian from the other ethnic group is the main problem and this is the main reason Nigeria has not made significant and substantial progress in spite of its huge, abundant material and human resources. It is a mutual feeling by virtually everyone that most of the states, like the central government, are poorly run. But the point of departure is the responsibility for the appalling state of a country with huge potentials that has scandalously continued to be an embarrassment to itself and the black race. The consequence is that Nigerians on a daily basis take themselves for granted in addition to very terrible low opinions of each other. Nigerians judge each other by stereotypes, a source of the constant tense relationship which has most often become the norm. The delusion that some sections of the country are angels and the others are the clogs in the wheel of progress must be vehemently challenged and condemned. The reality, El-Rufai argues, does not tally with such narratives.

In the Nigerian era of 'leave our land', the temptation is high to nurse such misgivings of stereo-typicalism. Even in South Africa, the situation may be worse. It must therefore be stated that Mosop, Arewa, Ipob, Opc and Oduduwa groups and such other 'leave our land groups' and protagonists are not in any way different from far-right groups like the Alternative fur Deutsch-land in Germany and Laga Nord in Italy, that are well known for pushing anti-immigration rhetoric. It is urged that the Federal government must not succumb to these extremists that clearly pose serious internal crisis and affront to the constitution and continued unity of the country by negotiating with them. Nigeria must present a united front to defeat these extremists while swiftly implementing proposals like State Police, decentralization etc. No country has defeated terrorism by negotiating with it; Israel, USA and other nations fighting terrorism do not negotiate with terrorists (Nanlong, 2021, p. 17).

Literature review

Amnesty for Insurgency:

Two precedents seem to inform the vaunted call for amnesty for insurgents. In fact the northern insurgency has been pampered and grown to equalize the Nigerian civil war victims and the Niger Delta militants. According to Nanlong, there was a time northern elders allied with Boko Haram that anybody who killed Boko Haram was meting out injustice on the north. President Buhari was one of the staunchest advocates of such northern elders. But upon Boko Haram becoming a frankincense monster, and upon Buhari's assumption of office in 2015 after ridding on the crest of the monster to attain power, he seemed to have distanced himself from the monster and came closer to 'herdsmen'. Because every Nigerian citizen is a citizen of the world, and Nigeria operates constitutionalism and every right comes with responsibility under constitutionalism and every citizen must conform with the law of the locality he finds himself, there is no way President Buhari can afford to publicly identify any longer with Boko Haram. At least he cannot do so and continue to claim to govern the south and be its Commander-in-Chief. Then, Bola Tinubu (Odumakin, 2021, p. 16) had correctly characterized Buhari but later to eat up his words as, 'An agent of destabilization, ethnic bigot and religious fanatic who, if given the chance (to rule) would ensure the disintegration of the country. His ethno-centricism would jeopardize Nigerian's unity.'

The vacuum created by Buhari's exit has been occupied by the likes of renowned Islamic Scholar, Sheik Abubakar Gumi (Vanguard, 2021, p. 8). Because monstrosity is indefensible, defending Boko Haram and advocacy of granting its members and indeed all insurgents, bandits, kidnappers, solid minerals thieves, amnesty has been an uphill task. But Gumi is undeterred. The fore-knowledge that bandits are complaining that they were used during elections (Buhari's four attempted electioneering incursions into the State House, Abuja) and they have not been given what they were promised enables Sheik Gumi to shoot straight for amnesty for Boko Haram et al. He canvasses, 'Strangely, we found out that

bandits are victims too. They were victims of profiling. So many of them were arrested and punished for just looking like herdsmen.' He argues further that there is no reason bandits should not be pardoned when those who instigated civil war (Biafra) that killed millions of people were granted pardon. For Nigeria to get out of banditry and achieve peace, bandits must be forgiven. 'If the country could pardon coup plotters who committed treasonable offences in the era of military administration, the bandits can as well enjoy similar forgiveness even better under democratic rule.'

Antagonists of insurgency amnesty:

Of several opponents for the grant of amnesty to insurgents Nnanna (2021, p. 16) is swiftest. He argues that positions taken by the likes of Sheik Gumi show why there is no wonder that with all its human and material endowments Nigeria has failed as a national experiment. 'There is a world of difference between the Nigeria you and I see or are hoping for and the Nigeria, that those from the northern Moslem world (Arewa) see or are hoping for.' The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is being used by the Sharia north to create a false sense of nationhood among the gullible ones while underneath, the Sharia and Caliphate rule is being implemented with a messianic zeal. Nnanna continues: the picture Sheik Gumi Jr. who is from Zamfara State captures is, 'That of a cleric who is calling for amnesty for the northwest bandits. The Moslem leader who alleges that "Christian soldiers" are being mobilized to kill the bandits, which is a call for them (bandits) to target Christian populations and spare the Moslem ones or reposition their criminal enterprise into a religious war.'

To understand Gumi, the origin of the Northwestern banditry is necessary. In 2014 there was nothing like security threat in the northwest except Boko Haram attack which was later restricted to the northeast. A former APC leader, Alhaji Abubakar Kawu Baraje claimed APC is the sponsor of banditry. A certain Military Politician (Buhari) had on May 15, 2012 wept before his supporters and told them that if he lost the next election, 'The dog and baboon would be soaked in blood.' He got away with it and went on to win the election with Jonathan stating that, 'Political power is not worth the blood of any Nigerian.' If the security agencies had followed up 'We would probably not be talking about northwest banditry.' The story had been in the public sphere that in preparation for the 2015 general election, some northern leaders assembled ethnic fighters from all over the Sahel, trained and armed them. Luckily, the war was temporarily averted. But the foreign terrorists assembled in the forests of the northwest were typically abandoned to their fates. This has been the pattern in the militarization of the Nigerian political space by politicians. The origin of all armed and militant groups in Nigeria – Niger Delta militants, Boko Haram Islamist terrorists and the Northwest bandits – are the same. They were armed by politicians who sought to win elections by all means. Thereafter, they were abandoned. With their guns, they started helping themselves by targeting the ordinary innocent citizens. And there is hardly anything the politicians can say (Nnanna, 2021, p. 16).

Fasan (2021, p. 7) in *Nigeria the Beautiful* is not far from the views of Nnanna that have been laid down in the foregoing paragraphs. For Fasan, the terrorists being indulgently called bandits are a creation of the northern political and religious class. The accounts of the terrorists and the accounts of their creators are the same sides of a coin. There are external and internal angles to it. Abubakar Kawu Baraje claims that the desire for political control led some stalwarts of All Progressive Congress (APC) to resort not just to self-help but importation or invitation of mercenaries of the same ethnic stock to help ensure victory for APC in the 2015 general election. As Odumakin (2021, p. 16) puts it, 'The Fellow (El-Rufai) started by announcing to international observers who would interfere in the 2015 election would be sent back to their countries in body bags. The Fellow as a Governor had gone to pay foreign herdsmen who were coming to avenge the killing of their cows in Kaduna with human deaths'.

Oil militancy and Islamic extremism:

Miyetti Allah Katul Hore sponsored Buhari with the provision of over N25 million for the purchase of his INEC form for the 2015 election. After the election and the victory of Buhari, they were let loose and abandoned to fend for themselves hence they took to the Federal government and State forests reserves. The same thesis is formulated for the birth of armed militancy in the Niger Delta in the immediate aftermath of the return to civil rule in 1999. In fact, ex-President Obasanjo pointed directly at Chief James Ibori of Delta State, Dr. Peter Odili of Rivers State and DSP Alameisiya of Bayelsa State as the Governor-Creators of the Niger Delta Militants. Ex-President Obasanjo had argued polemically that after using the militants to gain political power, ascendancy and capital, the Governors abandoned the militants and they became vulnerable and took to oil theft and sundry illegalities in the creeks. But Fasan is quick to point out that the foregoing is not the same thing as submitting that northern terrorists were trained by the militants of the Niger Delta. However the claim that they copied their agitation from the militants of the Niger Delta is not difficult to substantiate. But for Fasan, the very idea of equating murderous bandits and terrorists with coup plotters deserving state pardon is the sort of drivel that should not be allowed to gain currency from Gumi who is just about saying anything to retain the confidence of criminals that were spawned from the loins of their violent and sectarian rhetoric; who, as a retired soldier, ought to have known that there is no Muslim and non-Muslim battalion in the Nigerian military.

Perhaps, for the avoidance of doubts, it is necessary to restate the Gumi argument. The bandits and the insurgents 'I think is a population that is pushed by circumstances into criminality. The herdsmen and bandits are engaged in an ethnic war against other peoples including the sedentary Fulani.' The solution should be found in dialogue and understanding. It is not military hardware. It is dialogue and teaching. They are acting with natural instincts not special knowledge and they do not have any political ambition. They do not have a vision for the future. They are talking about existence; their livelihood was

destroyed because of the cattle rustlings that were going on for a long time, they are the first victim of it. So, we need to investigate how cattle rustling became a big business in Nigeria and how it affected the socio-cultural behaviour of the nomadic Fulani. They were pushed to criminality (Odumakin, 2021, p. 16). Incorporating Isa Yuguda's thesis into Gumi's argument would give the following line of thought: the Fulani have been neglected and treated poorly in Nigeria. The cattle herders who have been herding for the past 200 years all over the country cannot just wake up in the morning and become AK47 killers. The neglect of Fulani who are giving Nigeria a minimum of one million cattle everyday has not been fair. They have been chased out in Benue State as pastoralists. There have been millions and trillions of subsidies for farmers, have you ever heard the Federal Government subsidizing pastoralists? These people deserve the right to defend themselves. By right to self-defence Isa Yuguda is referring to Governor Bala Mohammed's theory of 11th February, 2021 wherein the Governor canvassed that the herdsmen needed the AK47 rifles they carry to defence themselves. A position which Governors Akeredolu and Ortom of Ondo and Benue States respectively consider anarchist because it implies that whether other Nigerians like it or not herdsmen must carry AK47 for self defence while non-herdsmen must remain unarmed to be perpetually victims of arms-wielding bandits (Odumakin, 2021, p. 16).

When Alhaji Salihu Mohammed of *Arewa Youths for Peace and Development* had threatened to demand open-public apology from Governor Ortom for calling Governor Bala Mohammed a terrorist, the National President of *Benue Alliance for Truth and Justice*, Mr. Peter Shande, had countered, stating that the crisis in Benue State had rendered over 800,000 people homeless who live in IDP camps. It was therefore provocative and an insult to the sensibilities of Benue people for Governor Bala Mohammed to support Fulani herdsmen carrying AK47 assault rifle while herding their cattle (Duru, 2021, p. 14). Yet the allegations still remain like a dye on a white cloth. Ibegbu Chuks, the former Secretary of Ohanaeze Ndigbo and Chairman of Board of Trustees of World Igbo People's Assembly, restates that the sponsors of insurgency continue to benefit from and by it. Ransoms being paid by victims running into hundreds of millions are being ploughed into illegal businesses. Some northern leaders are sponsoring kidnapping and banditry to make Nigeria unstable and ungovernable and prone to political distortions. The formula was employed during and against the Jonathan administration. Buhari, then a contestant, had sympathy for those plotting to make Nigeria ungovernable but he did not know that the wind sown then will turn into whirlwind and hunt his administration especially when the impunity of Nigerian security operatives has added lint to the fire radicalizing the different agitating groups in Nigeria (Okoli, 2021, p. 13).

Complicity of the presidency:

The complicity of the Presidency in the crises of insurgency has been easy to prove through Ortom, Governor of Benue State. On 30th May, 2017 Alhaji Bello Badejo, President, Miyetti

Allah Kautal Hore called on Fulani herdsmen across West African to invade Benue State to resist the implementation of the open Grazing Prohibition and Ranches Establishment law, 2017 and help them 'reclaim their land' (Ortom, 2021, pp. 34 & 35). This led to the genocidal attack of 1st January, 2018 killing 73. Calls on the President to bring them to the wheel of justice were rebuffed by the President. This emboldened the Fulani Nationality Movement (FUNAM) to make the outrageous claim of carrying on a 200 year old jihad to conquer and occupy Nigeria, claiming that there would be more bloodshed in Benue if the law was not rescinded. Through an ex-Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Kputum, what was happening to the people and government of Benue State was described as 'a mere communal crisis' and the law on ban on open grazing was the cause of the crisis. Point blank, the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. Buratai, called for the repeal of the law. Rotimi Amechi, the Transport Minister, exonerated herdsmen of the killings and Femi Adesina, the Media spokesman of President Buhari delivered the clincher, 'What is ancestral attachment? You can only have ancestral attachment if you are alive. If you are talking about ancestral attachment, if you are dead, how does the attachment matter?' According to Ortom, these statements expose the affected Officers of the Federal Republic as not representative of the Federal government but that of herdsmen and their sponsors thereby emboldening the herdsmen (Ortom, 2021, pp. 34 & 35).

Ortom submits further that the current Nigeria Police is not really Nigerian but the Police of some people in power at the centre. Nigeria needs state and local Police. In 12 months, no fewer than four Commissioners of Police were posted to and reposted out of Benue State because of the influence of the Centre and the crisis gave rise to more than 483,692 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returning them to their ancestral homes had been impossible because Fulani herdsmen had taken over their lands in occupation. Even the Federal government through the Vice President, Professor Osibanjo, which made a pronouncement and a promise of N10 billion for rehabilitation of the IDPs failed to redeem the undertaking and President Buhari who promised to be for all and for nobody has been for Fulani herdsmen. It has been his established pattern to swiftly intervene on issues bordering on the atrocities of Fulani herders acting as their publicist in a fashion that assails the sensibility of other Nigerians, descending into the arena of conflict unabashedly polarizing the country along ethnic lines (Ortom, 2021, pp. 34 & 35).

Citing the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Ortom had argued that India had 303 million cattle, Brazil 226 million, China 100 million, USA 93 million, Argentina 53 million, Australia 27 million and Nigeria 20 million cattle. He argued further that his research on the establishment of ranches had made him come to the conclusion that national legislation on ranching was urgently required in Nigeria and that 24 out of 36 States in the country had farmer-herder conflicts. He believed his ban on open grazing and establishment of ranches law had the potential of launching the country into 21st century livestock production with international best practice in animal husbandry (Vanguard Comment, 2021, p. 18).

The Tinubu argument

Bola Tinubu (as cited in Ojiego, 2021, p. 4) seems to have an argument being someone who is speculated to have an eye on the presidency in 2023 and who is said to have been very instrumental in fashioning into place, the Buhari administration and who appears not to be directly drawn into the atrocities of the herdsmen. Being a Lagosian, the worries of the tribes of Lagos have equally been drawn into the fray. Tinubu warns against helping herdsmen and leaving the farmers unattended to as such may trigger resentment along ethnic lines. One of the subtle reasons which had been canvassed for the herdsmen within the relative deprivation theory had been that all subsidies in the agricultural sector had been in favour of the farmers and at no time in the past or in the present has government in the states or federal made any significant agricultural subsidy or loan or assistance in inputs to the pastoralist and that could be a reason for their volatility towards the farming neighbourhood. Tinubu (as cited in Ojiego, 2021, p. 4) argues that it is only when the violence is rolled back that the deep problems that under-grid the conflict can be addressed to uplift the farmer from his impoverished toil and move the herder toward the historic transformation which he must make.

Vital as security is to the resolution of the crisis between the farmer and the herder, it is not sufficient. Enhanced security may be the first step towards resolving the crises in the country but that cannot be the only step because unemployment and extremism coterminous with poverty must be addressed (Mbele, 2021, p. 5) or is it by hitching to emotional or one-dimensional analysis or blame typologies. Those who cast the conflict and the national question exclusively as a matter of ethnic confrontation are mistaken. It is not ethnic in factual origin or actual causation even though it may be ethnic in recrimination and impulsive action. According to Tinubu, the reasons for the current high level of severity are economic hardship resulting in dislocation, proliferation of weapons, general increase in criminality and weakening social institutions. Desertification, increased severity and lengthy dry season; diminution of water resources, impairment of land fertility, and population growth also contribute in their measures to the crisis (Mbele, 2021, p. 5).

Farmers have a right to farm their land unmolested and herders have a right to raise their livestock without undue interference. However, when conflict arises, clear principles and policies must be set forth to underplay the tension in order to allow both to proceed toward their stated goals and develop in harmony. What is happening has been terrible but not due to any intrinsic evil in either the farmer or the herder. It is borne out of situational exigencies. It is the tragic outcome of when desperate and alienated people are left too long unattended and when their understanding of the modern socio-economic and environmental forces affecting the terms of their existence is incomplete. Tinubu (as cited in Mbele, 2021, p. 5) states, 'We do both herder and farmer grave injustice by allowing the herder to continue as he is fighting a losing battle against the forces of modernity and climate change and against the farmer who is also a victim of impersonal forces.' The farmer's times have also been perilous and hardscrabble. Soil enhancement, better

irrigation and better rural roads, modern machinery is required to exit subsistence. In fact, the continued progressive reform of rural socio-economic relationships is required to help the herder to transit to a more sedentary but more profitable methods of cattle rearing (Mbele, 2021, p. 5).

Tinubu and the facts:

Do the facts on the ground bear Tinubu's thesis out? A critical survey of the activities of the herdsmen in the western region where Tinubu comes from seems to support and buttress Tinubu's theories. The Ologunba of Ogunba kingdom, Egelu in Benin Republic, Oba Adul Wahab Adio Oguniji called on Nigeria to emulate Benin Republic and ban open grazing. In the wake of 2021 Fulani attack on Nigerian border villages, 500 people took refuge in Igana while 300 stayed in Egelu. The clashes did not start in 2021 but more than 20 years previously. It normally occurred between October and March during the dry season. The herdsmen could not be directly confronted by Ogunba-kingdom vigilante group because of their superior weapons! There were three females among the Fulanis who attacked the villages of Asa, Ibeku, Agbon-Ojodu, Igbooro, Seke-Aje, Moro, Iselu and Isuku in Yewa Local Government Area of Ogun State. The victims left for Egelu and Igana in Benin Republic.

The annual attacks are during the dry season when herders would want to feed their cattle by all means (Ogunnaike, 2021, p. 12). The Traditional Ruler of Asa, Adele of Asa, Chief Matthew Akande Olukoku and Eselu of Iseluland, Oba Ebenezer Akinyemi confirmed that many residents of Agbon-Ojodu, Asa, Iselu, Ijale, Owode-Ketu, Oja Odan and Orile-Igbooro had relocated to Egelu, Owode, Igana, Gbokoto and Pobe in Benin Republic. The coordinated attack by herders claimed not less than 13 lives and properties worth millions of naira. They deserted for fear of further attacks and had camped in Benin in camps provided by government of Benin Republic as they no longer had confidence in the Nigerian government and protection by its armed forces. The Nigerians on exile state, 'How on earth can someone derive joy in destroying other peoples' means of livelihood just to sustain his own "business" and we say "we have government and that we belong to the same country?" Mayor Simon Adebayo, Mayor of Pobe, claimed that 4,477 Nigerians were taking refuge in Pobe including 2,163 men and 2,314 women. In total, 688 households were affected by the displacement of Nigerians in the inter-communal clashes between the Peulhs and the Nago in the border area (Ogunnaike, 2021, p. 9).

Sunday Igboho (Ola & Adeola, 2021, p. 10), a Yoruba Republic campaigner, believes that there is insecurity in the country and that Fulani people are raping 'our people and killing our people in the forests but the security operatives are not going there to confront them. Instead, they are offered ransom. It is just sad that government is threatening a common man living peacefully in the country.' Sunday Igboho was later to be declared wanted and he took to exile in Benin Republic where the Federal government trailed him to and apprehended him in an exercise towards trying him in Nigeria for treasonable felony.

In fact, bandits were reported by a Yoruba Group (Dayo et al., 2021, p. 11) to have gradually built armed fortresses in the south-west with links to kidnappers in Niger, Zamfara and Kaduna States. The fortresses were located at Yewa Local Government Area in Ogun State, Oke-Ogun in Oyo State and Idanre-Ondo in Ondo State. The Group warned that the fortresses should be nipped in the bud because the security next-work currently in place was designed and controlled by enemies of Yoruba nation. Another group, Ekiti in Diaspora, had cautioned Governor Fayemi of Ekiti State over herdsmen. The Group observed that as a result of increasing insecurity caused by herdsmen in the State, it was worrisome that the State would be contemplating warehousing herdsmen in the State and further increase the spate of killings and insecurity. By making Ekiti State a grazing destination, the State government had inadvertently plunged the State into future crisis and insecurity according to the Ekiti Group in Diaspora (2021, p. 10).

Conclusion

The factors driving Nigeria towards a spring are tremendous. While the Federal government is clearly working across purposes with its component State governments on various issues touching on policing and grazing, Islamic extremism appears to have taken the advantage of a favourable posture of condonation of insurgency by the Federal government to fester. The legacy problems of nepotism, unemployment, poverty and relative deprivation in a country with diverse and huge material resources have been aggravated. That a Nigerian spring has been late in coming does not obviate the fact that the circumstances that led to its occurrence in northern Africa do not exist in Nigeria. With increased hook-up of the populace to the internet and the increasing galvanization of the populace towards political awareness, a spring may be about the corner.

Recommendations

A multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria built on general principles of federalism should free its central hold on policing, security, minerals resources and energy development to the federating units.

Amnesty should not be granted for bandits and insurgents as that may open a floodgate for insecurity.

The gains which modern technology has brought to farming and animal husbandry should be encouraged and fostered.

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