

The Buhari State and the Origins of Banditry in Nigeria

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Abstract

Although the origin of banditry in Nigeria is far beyond the Buhari State, he was voted into power largely on the premonition that he had the capacity to tame the scourge of terrorism, banditry and insurgency that became incipient immediately after the military handover of the reins of power to civilians in 1990. But from 1990 up to 2015, the nation began a fall down a slippery slope and by 2022 the nation had gone down the valley of conflicts of all hews. This paper which adopts doctrinal method, attempts a critical survey of the social problem of insecurity in Nigeria particularly in the nature of terrorism, banditry and insurgency, relating the survey to the role of the Buhari State which has been widely complicit in the conflict even though the administration had persistently claimed that its patriotism is deep and un-wavered. The paper further interrogates the administration in the face of the violent activities of Islamic militant groups in the north and separatist agitations in the east and west of Nigeria and against the background of their propulsion of the herder-farmer conflicts all over the country. The study finds that the Buhari State is indictable as it is shown to be partisan; and had largely reneged on the ideological vortex upon which it was propelled to power leaving the ship of state adrift perilously towards the 2023 vacation date of the administration.

Keywords: Buhari, Banditry, Boko Haram, Insurgency, Grazing.

1. Introduction

The jealousy with which the territorial integrity of a nation is guarded by any regime in power is well known in international law. It can be submitted that after the cold-war, the threat of inter-state conflicts in Africa has drastically reduced. But it has been noted that this decline has given way to intra-state conflicts largely propelled by ethno-religious and conflict mineral wars than political capture of state power. Non-state actors have taken the centre ground of the current conflicts. All over the country the signs of banditry are writ-large. Separatist agitations in the west and east have held the nation on the jugular. Islamic terrorism and banditry have also painted the north red with millions of children and women quarantined in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPs). Agriculture and animal husbandry which were benefiting from recent introduction of technological break-through and application of chemicals to plant and animal farming have been held hostage by the cross conflicts. The nation has lost count of the number of deaths and those wounded. Human life no longer matters in the country. Education and freedom of worship have been infringed and trampled upon deliberately by both the state and non-state actors. This study tries therefore to interrogate the origins, spread and costs of banditry in Nigeria.

The Tony Blair Institute Report written by Audu Bulama Bukarti (cited in Kumolu, 2021b) investigated the origin of Boko Haram, its founders, funding, internal battles, strengths, sustaining factors and capacity to carry out deadly attacks. The report drew extensively from eye witnesses, interviews and associates of the three out of the four founders of the sectarian group: Mohammed Yusuf, Mohammed Ali and Mamman Nur. The report submitted that Boko Haram identified the social vulnerabilities in Maidugari communities lacking education to radicalize. The vulnerable communities were turned into funding channels. Funds were solicited from them and well meaning and respected individuals in the communities. It is believed to be the first terrorist group in Africa and the second most dangerous and deadliest in the world. It funds and supplies from 2011 onwards were largely gathered from the vast land and water resources of the Lake Chad, taxation from communities, smuggling of drugs, cigarettes and medicines. Despite its internal wrangling and factions Boko Haram remains united by the core message of the group that western education is evil.

The activities of the sect have resulted in the evacuation of over 20 percent of the villages in the north east, west and central. Hundreds have been murdered and maimed very day. Over 1,000 school children have been abducted in eight months, 300 still in captivity and rape of women and girls have become a daily occurrence. In Dabna in Hong Local

Government Area of Adamawa State, for instance, the brutal murder of 23 persons was committed by Boko Haram with the connivance of local conspirators over land dispute. The conspirators were herders in the area and it was a reprisal attack by the herders over an attack on the herders in 2020. There had been an earlier battle between the herders and the farming natives of Dabna community which had resulted in casualties on both sides which had held several peace meetings to avoid reprisal attacks by the herders only for them to invite the sect in their aid leading to the killing of 23 persons. Boko Haram was reported to have ordered that women and children must remain indoors as they did not come for them yet, the sect mindlessly burnt down everything in sight after bombing all the worship centers in the town belonging to LCCN, Methodist, Catholic and RCCG (Yusuf, 2021, p. 14).

In Dikwa community, for instance, Ali Dikwa had admitted that the people of Dikwa had been under Boko Haram since the Jonathan administration and that there is a hidden agenda between the sect and the Buhari State and that by the time the agenda is fully unveiled, people in the north will suffer especially as ISWAP and Al-Qaeda had become part of the square box. While the Buhari State and its men look away, the bandits, insurgents and Boko Haram smile to the banks with ransom and Nigerian blood. It had become clear that the regime had the capacity to deal with the sect but had chosen to allow the sect and its tentacles to fester (Ladelokun, 2021, p. 17).

The Buhari State's earlier claim that it had neutralized and technically defeated Boko Haram had turned out to be a ruse and propaganda (Saskia, 2019). The sect had become more determined and deadlier in the whole of the north. The average northerner had become more concerned about terrorism, banditry and insurgency than agitators of separatism and self-determination. As submitted by Col. Umar (Rtd), if the truth was to be told, the Buhari State had exhibited the poorest skill in its management of national diversity (Wuyo, 2021, p. 14).

2. Theoretical Framework

The use of theoretical framework became emphasized from 1960s to the present when it became clear that Commissions charged to look into the causes of violence then discovered that one of the major obstacles in the way of understanding the social problem of violence was the lack of a general theoretical framework with which to grapple with the perceptions, motives and attitudes that impel groups towards violent behavior and the social conditions undergirding it (Onuoha, 2008, p. 65). Theory is a guidepost in all fields of human study in order to follow tested scientific research instead of guesswork and speculation (Ovaga, 2012, p. 23). It is a set of properly argued ideas intended to explain facts or events and the principles upon which a subject matter of study is based. It is a set of interrelated concepts, precepts and systematic views of phenomenon (Oruebor, 2007, p. 18). However, theoretical frameworks are subject of intense debate and argument. In fact, the history of thought is the history of conflicts of theories and controversies.

2.1 Conspiracy, frustration-aggression theories

One of the major theories upon which the explanation of the origins of banditry and insurgency in Nigeria has been based and argued polemically is the conspiracy theory. Arguing within this framework, Ovaga in his study of the Boko Haram sect had cited Ifijeh (2011) to the effect that late Ambassador Saidu Pindar and Senator Ali Ndume were the notable sponsors of the sect; and that the sect was used and or was being used to rig and win elections in the north east. He found further that the sect had reached an agreement with former Governor Ibrahim Shekarau to be receiving N5 million later increased to N10 million monthly in order to cooperate and compromise the electoral processes in the region which was its hottest bed; and that as soon as Shekarau left office and the allowance was withdrawn by a subsequent State government, bombings began in the region until recently when the sect became linked with international allies and went out of control in the West African sub-region. Such allies include but are not limited to ISIS, ISWAP and Al-Qaeda.

This theory has been so pervasive that it has been widely argued that bandits are foreigners who had been imported into the country from Libya, Niger, Chad, and even Benin Republic to win election for Buhari or foment trouble in the alternative or to implement the open agenda of Islamization and Fulanization of the Nigerian space; an agenda that was blew into the open by former President Obasanjo and Gen. Theophilus Danjuma. Although Buhari had given flint to the credibility of the conspiracy theory when he was nominated by Boko Haram as its Chief Negotiator with the Jonathan administration, he had repeatedly argued that the crisis had more to do with the fall of the Libyan strongman during the Arab-spring when the arms depots of the despot were let loose to find ready use by bandits who fled from the spring into Nigeria. Similar arguments have been made to the effect that the crisis could also be traceable to the West African sub-regional wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone that involved Samuel Doe, Charles Taylor, Koroma and Gbagbo. But the flint which Buhari's appointment as the Chief Negotiator of the Islamist-extremists raised is evidence that can be easily doused by a similar appointment made by Niger Delta militants of Professor Soyinka as their Chief Negotiator to the Obasanjo administration when banditry became rife in the Delta region.

A host of other international scholars and personalities have reinforced the Buhari's Arab Spring thesis including Professor Bolaji Akinyemi and to some extent, Governor El Rufai of Kaduna State. In fact, the El Rufai narrative of how he had sojourned across Africa to intimate Fulani communities and nations that the Buhari administration and his in

Kaduna State which had gained power from the Jonathan administration were their own and thus should let down the red-flag of insurgency and banditry had been very graphic. It situated the socio-economic conditions that even led the ordinary Fulani and his tribal stock into insurgency and banditry. The conditions included cattle rustling, stock theft, deprivation of grazing space and shortage or blockade of water resource. It was a rendition that was entirely constructed within the relative-deprivation theory or frustration-aggression theory of Dollard. Dollard (cited in Okpata, 2012) assumed that all aggressions have their roots hinged on frustration of one or more actors' goal or achievement. It was premised on the understanding that human needs are numerous and insatiable but the means of satisfying them are limited. It was a theoretical derivation from the notorious economic theory of demand and supply.

2.2 Drug, porous-border theories

As prefigured earlier, the twin theories of conspiracy and relative-deprivation have come under virulent attacks by other scholars and recent evidence. Though El Rufai had made the Fulani believe that the governments of Kaduna State and the Federation were their kindred's his memorandum to the Buhari state shortly thereafter showed that the Islamic State of West Africa Province and Boko Haram had routed its insurgency into the formation of parallel government in over 15 local government areas in his state. They threaten locals to disengage from participation in population census and electoral processes towards 2023. They adjudicate without authorities over the populace and disorient them from their commitment to the legitimacy of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as represented by the Buhari state. They dissuade the public to refuse to pay tax but instead to the bandits which had kept a tight military armed patrol over the ungoverned spaces. In other words, the sovereign territorial integrity of the nation had been brought to question and disrepute.

Furthermore, Audu Bulama Bukarti (2022), a Fellow of Extremism Policy Unit of Tony Blair Institute for Global Change has opined that the conspiracy theory that the governments of Jonathan or Buhari had imported or recruited Boko Haram bandits in order to retain or gain power or even propel an Islamization agenda is patently false. He believes that there is no iota of evidence in support of such a thesis. It is an exercise in propaganda and falsehood. He argues polemically that an overwhelming majority of the bandits are not foreigners but Nigerians 'born and bred in Nigeria'. What is driving the crisis of banditry in Nigeria is 'drug, guns and Chinese motorcycles coming through the porous borders.' Arguing that since 2015 when the Buhari state came into being there had been over 13 to 16 jail-breaks, no officers (the rank and file of which had been largely infiltrated by Boko Haram) had been brought to book. And the ease with which recruitment is made by the bandits from the jail-breaks only goes to demonstrate the handiness of a 'twisted ideology of Islam' in an era when so much money is available for those who are not even ideologically motivated to be recruited for purpose of false folk heroism.

Bukarti demonstrates that terrorism, banditry and kidnap for ransom are so economically lucrative that even the Buhari state paid as high as N900 million for the Kaduna Train kidnap incident and yet the bandits did not comply with the terms of the negotiated settlement with the administration handled by Tukur Mamu leading later to his arrest. Situating the crisis further in the 'incredible corruption within the military' defence of the Buhari state and the known fact that bandits are more equip than the Nigerian military, Bukarti believes that these factors are further compounded by an outlay of vast ungoverned forest spaces which only the bandits are able to explore and find fortress but which are inaccessible to both natives and the Nigerian military forces and their heavy equipment and vehicles.

3. Conceptual clarification

Although conceptual analysis may not be far-reaching in the understanding of the phenomenon of insecurity in Nigeria, basic review of the nature of the insecurity in the country may be necessary.

3.1 The trinity curse

Backwardness, poverty and the disadvantage of the north have for ages been used by northern politicians and traditional leadership to ensure that Nigeria never makes progress. This trinity curse has been weaponized for corruption and selfish-gain. The curse equally gave birth to Boko Haram (Nnanna, 2021, p. 16). Pedro Azogu (cited in Ovaga, 2012) stated the trinity curse as follows: 'All the children from the same background who were denied western education but trained to kill are now the same people killing those that had deprived them of social and economic well-being' in the north. Northern leadership that had indoctrinated 'almagiris' that Islamic education was the only weapon that they needed to arm themselves with in a modern world of tech-education could not provide them with any meaningful and tangible source of livelihood. Azogu and Ovaga argued further that envy and jealousy developed against the leaders who had equipped themselves and their children with western education in tandem with what was obtainable in Saudi Arabia and indeed the civilized Muslim world. The claim that western education was evil could not be reconciled with the lifestyle of the leadership vis-à-vis the accumulated grievances of the downtrodden. In an environment of distrust and mistrust created by Boko Haram preachments it was not surprising that an inconsequential ban on riding motorcycle without helmet could lead to a widespread riot culminating in the death of over 800 persons.

Judgmentally, the north is reaping from the age long underdevelopment of its people. But far more important takeaways from his study are not the threatened sovereignty. It is that business and people are fleeing the north and it is not unlikely that the upsurge of the appearance of young unemployed northerners in the guise of urchins and casuals in the southern states, on the move without address and identity, are fleeing the volatile north and constituting themselves into bandit gangs.

3.2 Between banditry and separatism

Unlike Boko Haram which is propelled by Islamic ideology and whose members can become insurgents and terrorists, banditry is not. Bandits are a gang of armed men seeking to destabilize the society for economic gains. It is an economic crime and an act of robbery. But these fine distinctions and clarifications are blurred in Nigeria. Okereke (2010) has already made the point that West Africa has several ungoverned spaces that harbour and provide sanctuaries for bandits, terrorists and insurgents with its characteristic porous borders encouraged by ECOWAS protocols of free movement. In fact, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somali represent a continuum on the Sahelian transit route porous and free to the movements and breeding of terrorists. The Sambisa Forest in Nigeria for instance has long been acknowledged as a notorious safe-haven for all the categories of non-state actors considered in this study. Such vast tracts of forest reserves can be found in Kaduna, Niger, Zamfara axis and indeed all over the country. And the question whether they are terrorists or insurgents or bandits or kidnappers at any given time and what modus operandi they adopt at any given time are inconsequential. In the social milieu of insecurity and absence of law and order, anything goes.

In other words the following fine distinctions that terrorism and not banditry or insurgency are motivated by political, religious, cultural, psychological, economic, ideological, racial considerations are also difficult to sustain. Or is it sustainable to categorize their activities within organizational, allegiance, functional, provocative, manipulative, symbolic, or authorized terror as done by Okereke and Onuoha. That their activities are violent, made to court publicity, occur in remote environment of relative peace or volatile spaces are immaterial in the Nigerian context of insecurity. No particular pattern has been established or has emerged. And claiming responsibility for attacks is irrelevant to them and they have a choice not to. It is such that the concerned public and even the state are in quandary as to the motives of these activities. Many issues are left to conjecture.

Separatism on the other hand is a pre-state term which is employed when nationalities are under a foreign authority as in colonialism. Those agitating for a separate state are seeking self-government. The agitation acknowledges the pre-existence of a state or nation-state. It is usually a right at the level of decolonization according to Lawal (2021, p. 17) who renders a strong snag to the effect that: If every ethnic, religious, linguistic and political group were to get involved in separatist agitation, there would be no limit to fragmentation and, peace and cohesion would become prejudiced. Separatism is also a principle and not strictly a right if the state has already gained independence but a group is alleging marginalization and deprivation as being contended by Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho. There is thus a difference between Yusuf, Shekau, Kanu and Igboho. While Kanu and Igboho are drawing attention to the rights of Igbo and Yoruba to self-determination arising from relative deprivation and marginalization they argue that their ethnic groups no longer enjoy the rights guaranteed by law and should be allowed to exit the union. Agitation is an expression of illicit deprivation. Extreme agitation leads to secession. A concomitant of separatism is the national question.

3.3 Conflicts and national question

The national question pertains to the composition of the nation and the fundamental basis of the political existence of the nation as an entity. It has to do with the continuous debate on how to order and reorder the relationships between the various ethnic groups composing the nation to ensure equality, freedom and peace. A nation that is buffeted by banditry is not a nation in peace and a people who cannot trust on its government to enforce law and order is at the wimps and caprices of outlaws. Conflicts of the worst genre would be its lots and progress and democracy cannot belt on its shores.

To Hassan and Fatai (2013, p. 176) conflict ensues from basic problems associated with all human populations. The tugs and pulls of differing ethnicity and differentials in distribution of economic wealth, access to power and leadership and competing definition of what is right, fair and just breed conflict. Some are ignited by non-material issues such as ideology, religion and ethno-nationalism. Only a factor may not drive a conflict, a combination of factors and forces do. It is when it goes violent and intractable resulting in loss of life and property that it becomes a cause for concern. Perhaps beneath all conflicts is the territorial question. According to Saka Lukman (2013, p. 171) while the nature, contexts and dynamics of conflicts change from time to time and from place to place, the human suffering and tragedy resultant from them remain constant and over the years, this has resulted in gross human rights abuses which have had the potentials of attracting international reproach and foreign intervention in the internal affairs of other states (Ogaba, 2013, p. 14). Complimenting the above, Onuoha (2013, p. 299) has submitted correctly that the domicile of Salafist radical Islamic group and Al Shaabab in Somalia in addition to other strong indications of security deficit in Africa has informed the suspicion that Africa has become a breeding ground for terrorists groups. Such indicators were further highlighted by

Onuoha when he stated that the US had fingered Africa as a future potential terrorist haven because of her proximity to the Arabian Peninsula, housing motley of failed and fragile states, poverty and youth unemployment and vast regions of ungoverned spaces.

As these conflicts are being driven by non-state actors, the Nigerian state has not shown a sufficient clean bill of non-committal in the conflicts other than chasing Separatist Igboho into jail in Republic of Benin and arresting Separatist Kanu from Kenya and keeping him in custody. In the north it has arrested Tukur Mamu for being behind the Kaduna Railway kidnap. Mamu, Publisher of the Desert Herald Newspaper, was allegedly working alongside terror groups in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, Libya and West Africa prompting the Egyptian security authorities to nab him while on a lesser hajj and turning him over to Nigeria. He was claimed to be a negotiator who received more ransom from the Buhari state than was paid to the terrorists (Daily Trust, 2022). It also did not take long before traditional rulers who had given traditional titles to notorious and confessed bandit leaders were brought to book. Emir of Yandoto, Aliyu Marafa, turbaned Adamu Aleru as Sarkin Fulani! Aleru was declared wanted by Police for killing over 100 villagers in Katsina State. Emir of Zurmi, Abubakar Atiku was also deposed. He died in Dubai. He was deposed by the Buhari state together with Emir of Dansadau, Husaini Umar, on 27th April, 2021 for linkages with banditry in Zamfara State (Daily Advent, 2022).

3.4 Conflict minerals

In Zamfara State, solid minerals (gold) can be mined by the citizens without any prior authorization by Federal government and the State government appears to have the eminent domain over solid minerals. On the other hand in Rivers or Delta State, a citizen cannot mine oil minerals without the approval of the Federal government and the State has no eminent domain over oil and gas. Non-State actors in militant Islamic groups are beginning to grow in power and influence among local communities in States like Zamfara, Kaduna and Bornu. In these states, many local governments areas and communities have come under the intense onslaught of terrorists, bandits, insurgents, kidnapers and Islamists operating under myriad guises in total disregard of the legitimate authority of the Federal government and the States in matters concerning, census, minerals, taxes, education, religion, markets, revenues, family and even politics.

The activities of these non-state actors appear to indicate that the Nigerian state does not dominate its territorial space to exact its legitimate monopoly of force over the nation to enable its citizens exercise the full meaning of life in a democracy (Amuta, 2022). The threats from these state actors are so brazen that reference could be made to the Secretary General of Miyetti Allah, Alhaji Saleh Alhassan, threatening that the non-state actor shall arraign Governor Ortom of Benue State before the International Court of Criminal Justice for the imprisonment of over 400 herders in the State. Such radical postures have weakened most State Governors in the south into lack of political will evidence of which can be found in the inability of the State governors to implement the ban on open grazing.

4. Literature review

The leader of the Cattle Breeders Association in Imo State, Ibrahim Salihi does not believe that banditry started recently. He opines that it began during the Abacha regime and that they came in from Niger Republic and Central African Republic. He canvasses that an ethnic group amongst the Fulani carry Ak47 and they are the very wicked. He believes that Miyetti Allah aligns with the group and uses the group in revenge attacks.

Although Boko Haram had been very well known to have devastated parts of northern Nigeria especially the north-eastern part and the sect had bred bandits and insurgents of various hues, the sect has never been pronounced and designated by the Buhari State as terrorists. In fact, law enforcement agencies appear to condone their acts of terrorism and sabotage of the country's territorial integrity. On the other hand, the Buhari State has taken it upon itself to designate Igbo youths as terrorists without much ado. Igbo separatist agitations have been alleged to be founded on growing injustice, nepotism, marginalization, condonation of herdsman attacks and the insistence of the Buhari State that pastoralists must have unhindered access to ancestral lands (Okoli and Agbo, 2023, p.13). It has been argued by the learned Counsel representing Mazi Kanu, the IPOB icon, that the enterprise his client is engaged in is not banditry but seeking the restoration of the defunct state of Biafra through referendum which is a protected political right of self-determination under British and Nigerian Laws as enunciated in Cap A9 Article 20 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 (Vanguard, 2021, p. 11).

It is to this extent that it is often suggested that the Buhari State is working in cahoots with the bandits. But the Chief of Defence Staff had always maintained that anyone like Rtd. Gen. Theophilus Danjuma who was 'hallucinating' with the idea that the military or other security agencies were conniving with bandits needed a mental check up (Badru, 2021 p. 11). Two persons that may have to go for such medical check-ups are Ayo Akpadokun and Dapo Akinrefon. The first believes and the second reports that anybody that is under the illusion that there is no conspiracy between the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the bandits should 'perish' the thought because there is no reason on earth that the government can give and demonstrate that by commission or omission it is not in connivance with the bandits because none of the non-state actors have been brought to book (Akinrefon, 2021, p. 47). Yet, the showing of the Buhari State is

not far from the insinuation that it is part of the banditry. The President was not far from the question when he stated, 'In 2015 when you voted me you did so knowing I will put an end to insecurity particularly in the northeast. But the unintended consequences of our scattering them in the northeast pushed them further in-country which is what we are now facing and dealing with.'

The argument of the President and the logic behind it do not land well on the templates. How dealing with insurgents in the extreme northeast could have led to their spread in-country to the south and west of Nigeria leaves much to be believed and desired. Guy Ikokwu (cited in Ndujihe, 2021, p. 35) had put a complete lie to the claims of the President. Guy claims that the reality of the situation is that the Buhari State is shifting the areas of insecurity from the northern states to the south-west, south-east and south-south which had hitherto been secure and peaceful thereby making the country the worst model of political accommodation of diversity, power and resource sharing.

Although the army had disagreed in very strong terms with the allegation that security agencies are colluding with bandits, the army admits that there are black legs within the security architecture of the nation but that blackmail was more to be fingered in the allegation of collusion as opinion leaders ought to have been more patriotic and benevolent in criticism. But the criticism dies hard. Bandits are alleged to be operating with a lot of people in the security system. It is considered a business otherwise it is difficult for the sophisticated weapons in the hands of the bandits and insurgents to cross the border into the country if money is not exchanging hands between the insurgents and the Nigerian security agencies. Arguing that government had to do more in dealing decisively with the bandits, opinion leaders believe that a tribal war between herders and other tribes is already going on in the country and that it is being compounded and condoned by the partiality of the Federal government military forces and openly supported by Islamic militant groups (Omonobi, 2021a, p. 9).

4.1 The grazing law debacle

A critical writer, Nnanna (2021, p.16), has submitted the argument that the war at the doorstep of the Buhari State had been on for eleven unbroken years with the country housing nearly three million refugees in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPCs) with 98 percent of them being northerners and that the war is being perpetuated by northerners against the north, and that the war had reduced the north which had hitherto been one of the most peaceful regions in the world to one of the most terrorized, crime-ridden spaces on earth.

A second argument that the President had put before the armed forces all that was required to fight insurgency relative to the available resources in the country is also difficult to believe in the light of the varied complaints of military officers confronting the insurgents to the effect that the insurgents had superior military power. Related policy attitude of the Buhari State on issues such as open grazing had not helped the State to rein in insurgency. It has been argued that the call by the President on the Attorney General of the Federation to dig up the gazette on cattle routes across Nigeria in the First Republic indicates that the President is out for mischief and is exercising himself in un-patriotism and retrogression (Amaize et al., 2021, p. 12). The President was indirectly responding to the claims of the Governors of the eastern states that there was no land in the east for grazing and that lands were owned by individuals rather than the state (Omonobi, 2021b, p. 13). The President was also signaling to the 1965 Fulani Amenities Proposal which was incorporated into the Grazing Reserve Law of Government of Northern Nigeria which incorporation arose because the pastoral Fulani had always had perennial conflicts with hosts who were sedentary natives (Teniola, 2021, p. 18).

According to Ajibola Basiru (cited in Ndujihe, et al., 2021, p. 4 and 41), there are no cattle routes or grazing routes in any part of Nigeria and the law on grazing reserves is only a State law (recognized by section 318 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federation) which even criminalizes open grazing. And there is a difference between forest reserves and grazing reserves. There are no designated areas called grazing routes or cattle routes as claimed by the President and the Attorney General of the Federation. Both were misled. At all events, grazing routes or cattle routes do not exist in the south. However, grazing reserves exist. There are 415 grazing reserves in 21 States of Nigeria with 141 of them in gazette by the Grazing Reserves Law of Northern Nigeria 1965. Of the 415 grazing reserves in 21 States Adamawa State has the highest number being 69 with 31 of them in gazette. Other States are Bauch, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara, Plateau, Ogun, Oyo and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Of the 17 States of southern Nigeria, only Oyo and Ogun have grazing reserves. Oyo has only one and Ogun has two. The 141 grazing reserves in gazette are about 2.7 million hectares of land and all the grazing reserves in Nigeria cover approximately 4,275,326 hectares of land.

The Animal Grazing Regulation and Cattle Ranch Establishment Law 2020 of Ogun State prescribes jail term of not less than three years without option of fine and forfeiture of the herd of cattle or livestock under control to the State for anyone who rear, herds or grazes any livestock in any part of the State except within permitted ranches (Ogunnaike, 2021, p. 10). Section 37 of the Grazing Law Cap C3 Laws of Kwara State makes it an offence for any person being owner of specific animal to allow such animal to graze anyhow outside the grazing reserves or trade routes. Now, couldn't the trade routes

be regarded as cattle routes or grazing routes? The distinction being made between trade routes, cattle routes, grazing routes, grazing reserves and forest reserves is rather intangible. The President and the Attorney General of the Federation were thus not far from the issues. However, section 40 of the Kwara State Grazing Law further prohibits the possession of firearms by any person in charge of such grazing animals.

Opinion leaders that are stalked against the President and his Federal Attorney General remain committed to the view that the global best practice in animal husbandry is ranching. They accuse the President and his Attorney General of being backward looking and myopic desiring to impose the ancient system of open grazing of their Fulani tribe which is prone to infuse crises and war and open the borders in the north to influx of strangers from the Maghreb. Characterizing the position of the President and his Attorney General as ‘placing cows on the dinning-table and citizens on the menu’ Obru-Egboro (2021, p. 46) still feels that despite outcries against open grazing, the Federal government is hell-bent on recovering 415 cattle routes wherever they may be found no matter whose ox is gored. Even when the routes have been overtaken by growth and development over the years the government looks adamant. Even when it is clear that it can become a conflict vortex the government still intends to ignite it. The President is believed to be on a vengeance mission since the days of his confrontation of Governor Lams Adesina of the old Oyo State to the 17 Southern Governors’ declaration against open grazing.

4.2 Land ownership question

The significance of land ownership in insurgency can be captured from the views expressed by the Chairman of all Framers Association of Nigeria, Ekiti State, Adeniran Algbada. He argues that herdsmen take refuge in the un-utilized expanse of land in the government forest reserves in the various States of the Federation to launch attacks on farmers and wreck havoc on farmlands. The reservations constitute security risks facing sedentary farmers and inhabitants. The forest reserves, cattle routes, grazing routes or trade routes serve as hideouts for hemp planters, killer herdsmen, kidnappers and bandits terrorizing the States arguing further that politicians and monarchs were in the habit and culture of allocating these lands to insurgents and turning around to buy and provide cows for them to herd thereby posing permanent threat to crop farmers particularly in the west of Nigeria (Ojomoyela, 2021, p. 10). The Monarch of Igangan in Oyo State, for instance, was a case in point. He was repeatedly advised to wane his cozy relationship with herdsmen because they were his arch enemies. But he did not heed the warning. Residents of Igangan had expressed anxieties about the relationship the Monarch was having with the Fulani but he argued that it was better in order to boost the economy of Igangan until it dawned on the Monarch that the Fulani had a hidden agenda when they struck the kingdom into crises that resulted in the death of 25 residents (Akinrefon, et al., 2021, p. 10).

From September 2017 to June 2018 farmer-herder conflicts had left at least 1,500 people dead, 300,000 displaced and distributed as follows: 176,000 in Benue State, 100,000 in Nasarawa, 100,000 in Plateau, 19,000 in Taraba and an unidentified number in Adamawa. The International Crisis Group does not seem to adopt the thesis of the Buhari State that its engagement of the insurgents in the north-east made them to move in-country. Rather, the Group believes that climate induced degradation of pasture and increased violence in the far north have forced herders to move southwards. It further opines that the expansion of farmlands and settlements in the south have swallowed up grazing reserves leading to indiscriminate grazing and conflicts in the south (Eze, 2021, p. 18).

Amnesty International on the other hand does not support the International Crisis Group or the Buhari State. It believes that the failure of the State to rein in insurgents and investigate communal clashes and bring perpetrators to justice had fuelled the bloody escalation in the conflict zones between the farmers and herders leading to at least 3,641 deaths and displacement of thousands in the past three years. The position of Amnesty International appears to have been borne out of the fact that security forces were often positioned close to the points and locations of attack which often lasted for several hours and sometimes days yet, they were slow to act in response or even yielded by abdication of duties. In some cases, security forces had prior warning of imminent attacks but did nothing to repel them or prevent the killings, looting and burning of homesteads.

5. Governments at Cross Purposes

The Federal government is equally seen to be working across purposes with the State governments in finding solutions to the insurgencies and the farmer-herder conflicts. While the southern State governments were inclined to ban open grazing as in Benue State, the Federal government was insisting on opening and providing grazing routes for cattle in the south instead of encouraging ranching. In fact, the consensus across the ‘cultured north’ as canvassed by Sulaiman (Kumolu, 2021a, p. 37-38) is one that emphatically repudiates the insistence on the passing of the anti-grazing law by the southern Governors as it potentially jeopardizes the interest of the lives and properties of the pastoral communities in the south. The unacceptability of the situation had been captured in the south-east where the pastoral culture has hardly gained roots. Ndigbo made the case as follows, ‘You are not feeding the people and yet you cannot allow the crops they toiled to farm to grow. You want animals to eat up their crops and when they resist, you kill them. It will not continue. It is

unacceptable...’ Okoli et al (2021, p. 24) argued that there was no way there could be a satisfactory and peaceful country if those who commit crime in the name of grazing their cattle were to go free while those who did not commit any offence were to be stigmatized and killed.

The exportation of banditry to farming communities in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and other southern states and the refusal of the Buhari State to act created the vacuum that the likes of Nnamdi Kanu and Sunday Igboho have come to fill. According to Fasan (2021, p. 17) it is disgraceful that Governor El Rufai fails to see the connection between the rise of separatist movements in the west and in the east of Nigeria and the unequal treatment that the Buhari State metes out to its ‘equal citizens’. Fasan argues that while the bandits in the north are being molycoddled by the State separatists are being prosecuted and jailed in the west and the east of the country. He believes that El Rufai cannot in good faith claim that bandits should be separately treated because ‘they operate from within Nigeria without a central leadership’ unlike separatists. El Rufai fails to answer the question, ‘What Boko Haram does when it hoists its flags in parts of the country and declares an independent caliphate’

Putting it broadly, Anaba (2021, p. 60) submits that growing southern agitation is as a result of manifest injustice, inequitable distribution of the national resources among competing groups, marginalization of some identified groups and individuals based on ethnic considerations. It is the use of the vast powers of the central government to favour the agenda of the minority cattle breeding community and the use of government power for vendetta and other revenge agenda. Anaba believes that the government knew and there was no need to lecture it on the need to suppress its primordial instincts of bias, nepotism, partiality, and religious bigotry. This is because the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 had put the question of land ownership on the residual list and domiciled it with the State government as such the Federal government was only riding roughshod over communities in possession of their land in order to satisfy the land hunger of the kinsmen of the President. What could have better been done was to educate the kinsmen of the President that formal education for them was the best option to take rather than the belief that life can be lived by force and violence.

Furthermore, the President had been accused of senility only to remember what had happened many years ago than to think up solutions to current existential problems of the country. Dubbed a Supremacist by Dr. Uma Eleazu (2021, p. 62) President Buhari was believed to be signaling to a gazette on grazing routes that was contained in a northern historical document called Lord Lugard’s Political Memoranda. While it was true that there was desert encroachment from the north and particularly in the Sahel region and people were bound to move southwards, Eleazu has argued that such exigency should not become a license to displace other peoples on their ancestral homelands. The source of all the problems the country was facing according to Eleazu is the way President Buhari wanted to completely displace people from their ancestral homes and ferry in people from other places to come and live and displace them which cannot work in a modern Nigeria.

6. Buhari-Fulani Cards and Casualties

The President started playing the Fulani card since 2001 with the historical antecedent of how he confronted Governor Lam Adesina of old Oyo State. Invariably, Eleazu believes that the Buhari State regards Boko Haram as its ally as it believes that the sect is fighting infidels. It is good if sect bombs churches as far as the President is concerned. Eleazu continues to the effect that even when eventually he got elected to the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the first place the President celebrated the victory was in Niger Republic and throughout the period of his presidency, he has not hidden his bias against the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria by moving all huge construction of infrastructure in road network and gas pipelines to Niger Republic where he paternally hails from, accusing the President of having sympathy for his Fulani ethnic group but denying others the right to have sympathy for their ethnic groups. For Professor Anya (2021, p. 25), Buhari has to make up his mind whether he is the President of Nigeria or Niger or make Niger Republic the 37th State of Nigeria, as suggested by Ikechukwu Amaechi.

6.1 The culture of agitation

But growing agitation in northern Nigeria is driven by factors different from those in the south. It has been argued that northern leaders are responsible for the plight of the north. The leaders are not prepared to engage in peace dialogue and peace building. Ambassador Shehu Malami, Chair, Board of Trustees of Arewa Consultative Council believes that the insecurity in the north has resulted from the abandonment of northern youths by northern Governors and leaders. Their failure to address the negative socio-economic situation youths from the region were going through had pushed most of them into criminality setting the north backwards and that it would be catastrophic to delay any action to salvage them from lethargy, drugs and substance abuse as well as despondency and banditry (Nanlong and Hassan, 2021, p. 9). Although the culture of cattle rustling by pastoralist groups had been in existence since the beginning of the northern civilization as a demonstration of valour and courage, and sometimes accompanied by violence and war, it has been argued that the economic and cultural ties between the dominant communities of Hausa and Fulani have been ruptured

and farming activities across the States of the north have halted and commercial activities crippled despite advances in agric-technology for both cattle and crops (Wuyo, 2021, p. 7).

As a result of the foregoing, no fewer than 1,868 law enforcement agents have been killed in the northeast alone by Boko Haram between 2018 and 2020 considered as the three deadliest years in the history of Nigeria. The figure is about equal to the total for six years of 2011 to 2017 (Kumolu, 2021b, p. 17). As at July 23, 2020 10,000 lives had gone since Boko Haram gained ascendancy in July 2009. The figure included innocent civilians, terrorists, soldiers and officers of the Armed Forces. Crime Guard, a research group, gave out detailed figures as follows: 885 in 2009, 133 in 2010, 329 in 2011, 792 in 2012, 1,005 in 2013, 2,228 in 2014, 1,995 in 2015, 1,036 in 2016, 596 in 2017, 452 in 2018, 214 in 2019, and 431 in 2020. The Group's investigation suggests that failure on the part of government tends to give rise to brazen activities in the northeast due to lack of presence of government and its infrastructure (Usman, 2020, p. 13-14). This, according to Usman has weakened the ability of troops to respond to distress calls as the roads are not just there and troops have to carry their weapons for long distances after their vehicles may have been restrained by failed roads. These impassable terrains also make ambush easy for insurgents against the Armed Forces and most often, they are out-numbered and out-gunned by the insurgents. Since the war is not conventional being asymmetric (guerrilla) troops do not know the enemies most of the time but the enemies know the troops. In fact, the identity of people as to who is alien or a citizen has been difficult to determine. Information management also contributes to the complex situation on ground as the Armed Forces are easily infiltrated by the insurgents or their spies such that by the time operations are to take place, the insurgents are already aware. The porous northern borders have also been bane in the check against the infiltration of aliens from the northern countries of Chad, Niger, Central African Republic and Mali.

The insurgents also had better technologies with the help of Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). The Islamic State of Iran and Syria and Al-Qaeda had also penetrated the northwest working towards expanding into the south-west particularly during the COVID 19 in 2019 – 2020 (Ndujihe, et al., 2020, p. 15). In Borno State particularly Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists had established over a decade of presence and undisrupted murderous attacks. They had audaciously imposed taxes on their strongholds and formed a well tailored administrative structure with the appointment of a 'Governor' of their own. In Katsina State 10 out of 34 Local Government Areas had been admitted to be under rogue elements. Within a period of three years 113 Traditional Rulers had been kidnapped. More than 13,000 lives or more had been lost in 10 years. The entire north had been facing humanitarian crises (Eze, 2021, p. 18). Parallel governments challenging national sovereignty in Kaduna State have also been admitted by the State Governor to the President in a well articulated classified letter.

6.2 Tragedies and tragedies-in-the-making

Increasingly, the country is being battered by government manufactured tragedies and tragedies-in-the-making (Onuoha, 2019, p. 10). In fact Buhari according to Eluemunor (2020, p. 22), ought to know as a person that his style of governance has accentuated and exacerbated the problem of disunity that has for long been the bane of Nigeria. The suspicion among the ethnic groups that make up the country has widened more than before he became the President. And social issues and problems surrounding cattle breeders, routes, settlements, colonies and policies have terribly severed the ties that bind the nation. Even democracy has come under threat and attack. Governors like Masari of Katsina State where the President maternally hails from have not even helped matters. Their ideological disposition to the crises in the north and Nigeria is bereaved of any sincere approach. Governor Masari, for instance, blames his citizens for being weak as they ought to be fighting the bandits 'with their teeth'. Explaining the use of this weapon of defence or attack, the Governor urged them: 'It is important for you to fight your enemy even with your teeth, bite him!' How relevant and effective this approach may be against insurgents who are armed to the teeth with Ak47 and other high caliber weapons remains to be seen (Ladelokun, 2020, p. 17). Governor Masari was, however, later to have the approval of the Buhari State to mount a state police bearing Ak47.

Even Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) which was established by the President in 2015 soon after he took over power left much to be desired. The framework was a multinational process to absorb surrendering bandits and have them put through a 16 week programme aimed at de-radicalization and reintegration of repentant bandits into the Armed Forces. The programme which was tailored along international standards, run by the military, overseen by International Organization for Migration and supported by European Union and United Nations fell to the ground like a pack of cards. According to Dr. Egbujo (2020, p. 22), the result of the programme was to litter the entire north east with orphans and widows, making millions benighted refugees. Many who attended the programme, according to Senator Ndume (an alleged sponsor of Boko Haram) never gave up the insurgent spirit. In fact they became deadlier and unrepentant. The moral burden the participants of the programme went through before those who did not and who became quarantined in Internally Displaced Persons Camps littered all over the north was heavy: It was how a person who left the village and joined Boko Haram and came back to murder his kinsmen and despoil his community could be recruited into a programme whereby he

is retrained and brought back to the same community to resettle on government milk. In fact, it could only be a wrong signal and for those in the IDP camps it is a bad example that can only lead to a vicious circle of dissidence.

7. Conclusion

For every regime in Nigeria since the return of civilian rule, there is a social crisis that peculiarly dogs it. As soon as the Obasanjo administration mounted Aso Rock Villa, the OPC, MASSOB, IPOB, Boko Haram (Sharia) and Oil Militants unfurled their divisive flags and began atrocious wars and agitations to wear down the security armour of the Nigerian state. The Obasanjo administration confronted them and took them head on. At the end of eight years, OPC was mollified being an agitation within the constituency of the President. But the others continued to vegetate. By the beginning of the Yar'Adua administration, the Niger Delta militants thumped up their fights to the point of undermining the economic essentials of the Nigerian state. A short-lived Yar'Adua administration waved the olive tree branch and handed over to Jonathan administration that was able to mollify the agitation with a huge cost in favour of the militants because, again, the militants were from the constituency of then President. Even the Buhari State had to concede and continue the mouth-watering pipeline surveillance contract to Tompolo for peace to rein (and at the risk of offending Asari Dokubo and other militants).

But Boko Haram and IPOB continued to vegetate during the Jonathan administration. In fact, Islamic fundamentalism and its abduction of school children by Boko Haram was one of the straws that broke the Jonathan administration's back. As soon as the Buhari regime came on board, it was thought that an end was in sight for Islamic militancy and banditry but to the consternation of the Nigerian cultured populace, the social evil spun out of control. Together with IPOB, Islamic militancy has largely demystified the magic wand and awe of the Buhari State and has exposed its sponsorship before the Nigerian people such that names are beginning to be mentioned in the prelude to the 2023 general elections. The level of insecurity that banditry has wrought on the Nigerian psychic is such that in time to come, it may be difficult to suggest and compare a worst period in Nigerian history to the eight years of the Buhari civilian state.

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