

State Security Failures and the Formation of Informal Zonal Security Networks in Nigeria

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Abstract

The willful killings, maiming, raping and destruction of farmlands in various villages in Nigeria by Fulani herdsmen masterminded by Miyetti Alah has given rise to the formation of informal zonal security networks in Nigeria. Amotekun was first formed by the South Western governors to defend their people from the ravages of Fulani herdsmen; this was followed by (ESN) Eastern Security Network formed by Nnamdi Kanu to defend South-East and South-South from Fulani terrorist group since president Buhari has failed woefully in this task. The refusal to obey the initial request made by president Buhari requiring states in Nigeria to map out acres of land for ruga settlement is the reason behind this terrorism carried out by the herdsmen because the refusal has made the Miyetti Alah resort to arming the herdsmen with Ak47 to perpetrate killing and destruction of farmlands so as to cow Nigerians into absolute submission. This paper uses documentary method for information gathering and through the use of frustration aggression theory the paper explains how the attempt to clampdown on (ESN) by president Buhari has popped up aggression leading to skirmishes between the informal security network and the Nigerian security personnel. This paper discovers that the refusal to map out land for ruga is the reason behind Fulani terrorism, and recommends, among others, that president Buhari has to detach sentiment, strategize the army for absolute defence and security of Nigerians first, then have a dialogue with the leaders of these informal security networks for eventual dissolution of the informal security network.

Keywords: State security, informal security, Eastern Security Network, failure of Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria from the onset is a cesspit of ethnic massacre, unlawful and senseless killings or pogrom directed against Nigerians by a set of people or individuals. Probably, the same ethnic killings or pogrom directed against a particular ethnic group in the country could account to one of the reasons the country collapsed in 1967. There are many problems facing Nigeria as a country, but one of the most challenging problems among all the problems is insecurity. Insecurity is the state of being open to danger, lack of protection. A country that is unable to protect her citizens and armless people from the ravages and senseless destruction of lives and property by a set of individuals who are either licensed or allowed to carry arms to unleash mayhem on the people do not deserve to exist. Security of lives in Nigeria has been a serious issue since the inception of Buhari's government because the military under his watch has become so docile and weak that

securing the lives of Nigerians seems to be a difficult task thereby leaving Nigerians vulnerable in the hands of the terrorists who attack them sporadically.

According to Oddih (2007:180), “the fundamental objectives and directive principles of Nigeria’s policy as contained in section 13 and 14 of Nigeria’s 1999 constitution; it shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judiciary powers to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of the constitution. That the federal republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice, that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government and that the participation by the people in their government shall be ensured in accordance with the provision of the constitution”. This points out the fact that security of the lives of the people is the primary responsibility of the government which every government must strive to maintain but under this current administration, the reverse is the case because if we begin to ask ourselves if our lives are secure under this Buhari led administration we will end up answering no because Nigeria under this Buhari’s government is a death trap where every living soul is threatened by Fulani terrorist (Herdsman).

The present security challenges facing Nigeria today is a clear indication that Buhari has failed in his statutory duty as the chief security officer of Nigeria to protect life and property of Nigerians. His approach towards curbing insecurity affirms every accusation leveled against him of being complicit in the ongoing Fulani Herdsman, unknown gunmen and bandit attacks against innocent Nigerians.

Perhaps, the creation of informal security networks in some parts of Nigeria is in response to the seeming failure of the state authorities to ensure a serene atmosphere that guarantees the safety of Nigerians, thus paving the way for people to resort to self-help. Amotekun was the first zonal security network created on the 9th of February 2020 by the joint action of all the south-western state governors of Nigeria, comprising Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo and Osun states. This informal security outfit is meant to defend their people from the ravages of the killer herdsman who have continuously destroyed farmland, attacked and killed, maimed and raped people in the geopolitical zone. The killer herdsman have since 2015 ravaged communities in the western part of Nigeria, with the utmost intention to conquer and takeover their ancestral land for grazing of their cattle. For example, suspected herdsman brutally attacked three female farmers in Irele-Ekiti Ikole local government area of Ekiti state, this was a month after two farmers were

shot dead by herdsmen in Isaba-Ekiti, in the same local area”, (Daily newspaper p.5). The leadership of the Fulani herdsmen, ‘the Miyetti Alah’ have expressed concern over the emergence of Amotekun. The emergence of Amotekun apparently triggered fear within the leadership of the Fulani herdsmen which prompted the chairman of the Miyetti Alah, Alhaji sadiq Ahmed to state that Amotekun lacked the legal framework to exist as a security body. (Akinyemi and Agiram, Vanguard news 10 February 2021 pg. 9). According to him, it is the responsibility of the federal government to provide security for the citizens. It is the exclusive right of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to set up security network and reserve the authority to maintain a monopoly of legitimate use of power and force over all the citizens in the country. Therefore, any parallel security outfit is illegal and unacceptable (Ahmed, 2021, p. 9). Without doubt, President Mohammed Buhari is Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, and it is his statutory function to strategize the military for absolute defense and security of Nigerians. Also, the 1999 constitution of Nigeria made defense an exclusive subject which only the federal government can legislate on. However, the deliberate and seeming unwillingness of Mr. Buhari to make use of this power has led the defenseless Nigerians to embrace self-defense mechanism through the establishment of informal security outfits.

Following the establishment of Amotekun by the governors of south-west governors, their south-eastern state counterparts established their own security outfit called “*Ebube Agu*”. The security outfit was meant to curtail the nefarious activities of the Fulani herdsmen in the south eastern Nigeria. The failure of the south-east state governors to fund and make the security outfit active, coupled with the increasing killings perpetrated by the Fulani herdsmen, encouraged Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a proscribed separatist group by Nigerian state authorities, to establish another informal zonal security network known as Eastern Security Network (ESN) on 12th December 2020 , to, among other things, defend the South-East geo-political zone from the marauding Fulani herdsmen who have been attacking and continued to attack people within the geopolitical zone. Indeed, the inaction and inability of the south eastern governors to do what their counterparts in the south-west did for safety of their people was alleged to be deliberate and selfish political action tended to please the caliphate to the peril of their people. It is as a result of this perceived sabotage by the south-eastern governors that brought the emergence of Eastern security network into existence (Nwaiwu, Vanguard Newspaper 16 December 2020:13). The

recent attack on Ebonyi state particularly Amaezu, Nkalaha, Obegu and Umuhuai communities in Ishielu local government area of Ebonyi state on the 29th of March 2021 and the immediate response made by (ESN) to repeal the attackers is an indubitable fact that ESN is on the right path.

According to Okuku, (Daily Sun 5th April 2021, p.12) “the attackers were armed with cutlasses and AK47 rifles, they were herdsmen on a mission to kill the entire members of the communities, by the time the dust settled the following morning more than 15 corpses were picked up” it was after the attack that the governor of Ebonyi state Umahi having seen the gruesome massacre of people under his protection declared that the attack could be capable of causing civil war if allowed to continue. The response of the Igbo social cultural organization Ohaneze Ndigbo has shown that the people have risen up to support self defence as their leader professor Obiozo described the killings as senseless and gruesome adding that the reaction of the youths is a natural reflex. (Ndujihe 2021, p.26).

President Muhammadu Buhari as a result of his seeming intentional inaction to defend the lives of Nigerians appears to be losing grip of the legitimate monopoly use of force in Nigeria. This is because many geopolitical zones in Nigeria in an attempt to embrace self-defence, have created informal security forces with armies that adopt guerrilla-like tactics against the state security personnel and the Fulani herdsmen. These non-state security actors on several occasions have engaged in an armed conflict with the security personnel (the military). Currently, Nigeria experiences ethnic extermination, massacre or carnage, senseless maiming and raping of innocent people that is why Ejike and Nwosu believe that if the government fails to perform the functions or purpose of their trust, the people have every right to revolt. (Ejike & Nwosu 2010:63). Nigerians voted Buhari into power to protect the lives of Nigerians from both internal and external threat which should be the primary purpose of his government. But unfortunately, with regards to security Buhari’s government has failed Nigerians and people are revolting by picking up arms and creating standing armed groups to combat the terrorists and their sponsors. Taking up arms by (ESN) against the federal security is an incontrovertible harbinger of doom portending revolution.

According to Ejike and Nwosu (2010, p.63), “John Locke believes that the individuals have every right to revolt against the government if the government fails to protect their rights”. Nigerians elected Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 due to his campaign

promises to end insecurity, provide employment for the teeming unemployed youths, among other election campaign promises. Unfortunately, six years into his administration, Nigeria's security situation became worse than before President Buhari took over office. In response to the inaction of the federal government to the plight of Nigerians, in October 2020, Nigerians, irrespective of ethnicity and religion, unanimously came together and protested against the Buhari-led federal government. The EndSars protest was a demonstration of citizens' disenchantment with President Muhammed Buhari led federal government in terms of the insecurity condition in Nigeria. The unfortunate shooting and killing of unarmed protesters by soldiers from the federal troupe, which brought the protest to unsuccessful end, was a clear indication that the federal government of Nigeria was and is behind the growing insecurity in Nigeria.

One of the reasons the killings, maiming and raping by herdsmen are intensified in various villages in Nigeria is the outright rejection of the request made by the government of president Buhari requiring all the states in Nigeria to map out land for ranching. The rural grazing (ruga) was a controversial policy introduced by President Muhammed Buhari to create land reserves for Fulani herders to live, grow and tend their cattle, produce milk and undertake other activities associated with the cattle business without having to move around in search of grazing land for their cows. This request was rejected by Nigerians as it was not only contradictory to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but was also seen as a political strategy by the Fulani for land conquest hence the absolute intensification of killings by the herdsmen to cow Nigerians into submission. It is important to note that President Muhammed Buhari is a Fulani ascent and had been seen to have been implementing Fulani agenda since his assumption of office in 2015.

An environment of hopelessness permeates all strata of society, and a siege mentality develops which inhibits constructive negotiation for any resolution of society (Nwanolue et al, 2013). The present condition of Nigeria epitomizes a state of hopelessness, a state of vulnerability and frustration where citizens in their various environments do not sleep peacefully; where farmers no longer go to farm to grow and produce food for their families as a result of the fear of being raped and killed by the terrorist herdsmen and where travellers now see travelling as a harbinger arising from the fear that Fulani herdsmen have gained notoriety for kidnapping travellers on highways for ransom. It is evident that the notorious perpetrators of these atrocities

against human lives have succeeded in making Nigeria a hopeless country where everyone lives in fear of being killed or having his or her farm destroyed with impunity. President Muhammed Buhari's administration has recorded many deaths across the country. Unfortunately, the president appears unconcerned about the victims of Fulani herdsmen attacks; but the President appears much more interested in protecting the perpetrators of this mayhem (the herdsmen) against the wish of Nigerians who demand that the killer herdsmen be brought to justice. Buhari on several occasions has urged Nigerians as well as the hapless victims of Fulani terrorism not to revenge but to hand the apprehended Fulani herdsmen over to the police who are never arrested or prosecuted by the Nigerian government or security personnel. President Buhari has often told Nigerians not to revenge against Fulani herdsmen. (Vanguard newspaper 17 February 2020:5).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Frustration-Aggression (F-A) theory which was propounded by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrev and Robert Sears in 1939. In its original formulation these theorists stated that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour presupposes the existence of frustration and that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression. (Breuer & Elson, 2017, p.1). This frustration aggression theory tries to explain that frustration begets aggression and that when an individual is frustrated, the possibility of such an individual resorting to aggression in order to achieve an aim is apparent especially when there is a force, trying to prevent him/her from achieving the aim. The willful destruction of lives, crops and farmlands by Fulani herdsmen without provocation, and the federal government indifference towards the violent activities of Fulani herdsmen has brought frustration among Nigerians. The federal government which has the constitutional authority to defend the citizens internally and externally has ostensibly abandoned this constitutional responsibility. More worrisome is the federal government clamp down on the personnel of the informal security outfits, particularly the eastern security network, without the arrest and prosecution of Fulani herdsmen who commit all kinds of crimes, including killing, maiming, kidnapping and destruction of crops and farmlands of law-abiding citizens raises concern of federal government complicity in the prevailing insecurity in Nigeria. Travelers are now afraid of travelling on Nigerian roads because of the activities of the herdsmen, kidnappers and bandits. Under the precarious situation, some geopolitical

zones in Nigeria are left with no option than to form informal security networks to protect lives and property within their respective zones. The result was the formation of Amotekun in South-western Nigeria; Eastern Security Network (ESN) in South-eastern Nigeria and various vigilante groups in other geopolitical zones in Nigeria.

The federal government consistent clampdown on the informal security outfit, without corresponding clampdown on the Fulani herdsmen, has brought frustration on the operatives of the informal security network which occasionally resulted in aggressive gun battle between the operatives of the informal security outfits and the state military operatives. For example, in January 2021, there was a clash between the ESN and a combined team of Nigerian security operatives in Orlu, Imo state (Ujumadu, 2021, p.10). A continued clampdown on zonal informal security networks like the Eastern Security Network, has given rise to the emergence of unidentified armed groups known in Nigeria as 'unknown gunmen' which adopts guerrilla war tactics to fight the state regular army. Certainly, when injustice becomes part of the state system, civil disobedience becomes the norm. It is within the compass of the above that the frustration-aggression theory can be understood and applied.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Force does not douse the flame of agitation, rather dialogue does. The paper concludes that one of the reasons why insecurity is increasing in Nigeria and the resultant formation of informal security networks is because President Mohammed Buhari has bluntly refused to perform the function of his office as the chief security officer in Nigeria. Furthermore, the obvious shielding of Fulani herdsmen from prosecution raises concern of government complicity of the current security problems in Nigeria. The paper recommends first, that the federal government must refrain from any action or inaction that portrays it to be selective in its war against insecurity in Nigeria. In this respect, the government must demonstrate that Fulani herdsmen with its nefarious activities are not sacred cows. Secondly, the government must restore the trust of Nigerians by respecting the constitution. In this regard, the federal government must refrain from its unpopular policy of forceful acquisition of individual/community lands for grazing realizing that livestock is purely informal business that is only beneficial to the owners. Furthermore, the federal government must respect the provision of the constitution which authorizes it to acquire land only in public interest.

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