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BEYOND AMNESTY: A RETHINK OF SOLUTIONS TO NIGERIA’S SECURITY CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The article sets out to examine the strands of amnesty programme that the Nigerian government and some individuals within the Nigerian milieu see as ways out of the challenge of insecurity that the country is bedeviled with. In the face of the growing militancy against the Nigerian state and oil multinationals in the Niger Delta, amnesty was explored by the federal government; and at a level, the programme could be said to be successful. Presently, Nigeria is witnessing the inferno of terrorism being unleashed by Boko Haram (BH). There have been calls from varying quarters that the government should dialogue with the militants; and the government made calls for such; however, there equally have been calls for amnesty for ‘repentant terrorists’. These calls for amnesty however provoke crucial thoughts about the appropriateness of amnesty programmes in resolving the burgeoning crisis within the Nigerian statecraft.

Given the foregoing, this study seeks to understand the amnesty programme. Accordingly, it contends that this scheme, which is presently serving its course, might turn to an abysmal pursuit in the long run. Against this backdrop, the study seeks to identify the factors that feed into crisis in Nigeria, examine the appropriateness of amnesty programme for resolving security challenges in Nigeria; and point out the way to go. In achieving these goals, the study explores both primary and secondary sources of data.

KEYWORDS: Amnesty, Boko Haram, Nigeria, Niger Delta, Militancy, States

INTRODUCTION

It is often said that ‘to err is man, to forgive is divine’. This notion has, for most times, been preached in religious settings. Hence, anybody that diverges from this ‘forgiveness path’ is mostly seen in bad light, the offence committed notwithstanding. As such, many a person seem, while experimenting with actions that could harm their neighbours, insensitive to the fallouts of their actions. Rather, they share the view that irrespective of the graveness of their actions, perhaps seriously affecting another person, they would be forgiven!
Another dimension to this is the fact of state pardon that is granted state offenders, who already, are incarcerated. This is mostly meant, probably during state celebration of something tangible, as a memorial of such a date. This, more so, is granted, either by the Governor of a state or the President of the country. In the light of this, one realises that to an extent, certain individuals might regain their freedom during certain celebration, even as Mr. Theodore Orji, Abia state Governor, in a Christmas mood “… granted state pardon to eight prisoners in the state ….”¹ It could also be granted in order to reinstall certain privileges to those that are given state pardon. An instance of this was the pardon granted by the Council of State to:

“A former governor of Bayelsa State, Chief D. S. P. Alamieyeseigha … Others were former Chief of General Staff, General Oladipo Diya; former Chief of Staff, Supreme Military Council, Major-General Shehu Musa Yar’Adua; Major Bello Magaji; Mohammed Lima Biu; Shettima Bulama; Major-General Abdulkareem Adisa and Major Seun Fadipe²,

with the pardon of Chief D. S. P. Alamieyeseigha and Shettima Bulama still generating furore, even as Bill Gates, “America’s richest man… has cancelled his scheduled March 27 official visit to Nigeria, in response to the controversial pardon granted by President Goodluck Jonathan ….”³

In more civilised societies, the US to be precise, “…only federal criminal convictions, such as those adjudicated in the United States District Courts, may’, under the constitution, ‘be pardoned by the President. In addition, the President's pardon power extends to convictions adjudicated in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and military court-martial proceedings.”⁴ The essence of this is to show that state pardon is not restricted to Nigeria. This act can also be traced through history. This was displayed when Pontius Pilate requested that the masses should choose whom they would have him pardon between Jesus Christ and Barabas, of which, Barabas was preferred by the citizens.

A higher dimension of this is the amnesty programme that the Nigerian federal government is presently using as the magical wand with which it conjures respite in its major oil producing region. Put differently, the amnesty programme has assumed the template of the magical word –abracadabra- with which the government in Nigeria is proffering solution to the myriads of crises that are crawling out of the country’s Augean stables. Initially, it was the Niger Delta crisis, which was characterized by the spectrum of militant activities of oil pipeline vandalization, oil theft, kidnapping of, initially, oil expatriates, but later, the Nigerian segment of workers in the oil multinationals and some other citizens whose families could
afford the ransom. In addition to these were piracy, and illegal handling of arms and ammunition, which bordered on criminality, and with which they engaged the Joint Task Force (JTF) that the federal government dispatched against them; as well as employed in their vandalisation bid. For instance, sequel to JTF attacks on militant camps, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), as Celestine Bassey claimed, launched a series of attacks on petroleum infrastructure and destroyed:

“Nigeria Gas Company Pipeline, Escaravos to Warri Petroleum Products, Marketing Company, Abiteye-Escarvous 121 inch pipeline, Utota flow station, Makarabo-Abiteye pipeline, Makaba 5 and Abiteye wells, Abiteye jacket 1 Christmas tree, Shell pipeline conveying crude oil from Bille-Krama to Bonny Export Terminal, Shell’s forados offshore platform, Chevron’s Okon manifold, and Atlas Core depot in Lagos.”

Going beyond the amnesty granted the Niger Delta militants, it is assumed in government circles that the same modus operandi could, alongside the already initiated military approach of Operation Restore Order being conducted by a special JTF, serve the purpose of restoring the disturbed peace of the northern region of the country; a situation reached through the bizarre activities of Boko Haram (BH), an extremist Islamic sect.

BH’s terror attacks were initially directed against police stations and some other public buildings in Geidam and Kanamma, towns in Yobe State of Nigeria, in late December 2003. These attacks however snowballed into serious security challenge, for which the federal government seeks assistances from extra-African powers, especially the US and EU. An instance of this was when the “Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mr Aminu Tambuwal, sought the cooperation of the British government in efforts to tackle the challenge of terrorism in Nigeria.” Equally, in the bid to make the European Union (EU) delegate to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ambassador David Macrae understand that “… the crisis in northern part of Nigeria (is) an isolated case … a new phenomenon in the country …”, Abba Moro, the Minister of Interior, “… called for assistance from the regional body (EU) to complement the efforts of the Federal Government in tackling activities of terrorists in Nigeria.” This coincided with the period when Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of Public Affairs insisted that “… US (is) consulting “extremely closely” with Nigeria on counter-terrorism issues … (sort of) a broad and rich counter-terrorism dialogue … which included efforts to support steps to cut off funding.”

Granted the increase in terror activities by BH, and the threat of ex-militants to resume their attacks, particularly with the recent sentence on Henry Okah in South Africa, prior to which they had “threatened to bomb telecommunications giant MTN, SACOIL and
other investments by South Africans in Nigeria …’, and the blowing of the pipeline that belongs to ‘Italy's Eni SpA, ENI, which lost "around 4,000" barrels per day of "equity production" from the incident’,

one wonders about amnesty as an adequate solution to crisis in Nigeria. In this stead therefore, this paper seeks to understand the appropriateness of the programme as a mechanism for guaranteeing security within the Nigerian project. A way to go from this outset becomes an analysis of the multilayered factors feeding into crisis in Nigeria.

Nigeria: A Crisis Producing Mould

Presently, that Nigeria is an amalgamation of numerous nations has become a mantra. This, of itself, serves as the nursery from which crises are generating! At a point in the development of the world as we have it today, men were of the same language. Sequel to their lofty goal of constructing the Tower of Babel, an edifice from which man, while at its height, could touch the sky, God decided to alter their language. From this point onward, men scattered all over the globe, speaking different languages.

In spite of this, the British, through Lord Lugard, under the pretext of national interest, bonded people of varying languages, cultures and belief systems, using the cement of colonialism, into what is currently regarded as Nigeria. Put differently, the British colonial government, in 1906 amalgamated the colony of Lagos and the Southern protectorate; and by 1914, it successfully amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates into Nigeria. This could have vexed God, who ab-initio, decided that men should live distinctly, with those speaking the same language and of the same culture, living together as a people! This forms one of the dimensions in which the Nigerian project could be producing crisis.

At about departure, the British decided for the most pliant nation within their colonial project to assume the mantle of leadership in the politically freed Nigeria. This process produced late Alhaji (Sir) Tafawa Balewa as the selected for the post of Prime Minister of Nigeria on October 1, 1960. This happened since, as David Anderson put it, “the North, with its Islamist culture, was very conservative and had enjoyed a close relationship with its British colonial rulers. The British had ruled through the emirs. The British government was concerned that the result of independence might lead to partition. They regarded the Northern region as a bulwark against opposition.”

This informed the posting of Sir James Robertson as the new governor-general at a time when his compatriots were leaving Nigeria in drove. “It is now widely known”, as Chinua Achebe recalls, ‘that Sir James Robertson played an important role in overseeing the elections (or
(lack thereof) at independence, throwing his weight behind Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who had been tapped to become Nigeria’s first prime minister.  

This deprived the new country of having the charismatic and philosopher-king style of leadership that could have placed it on the path of peaceful existence and emergence in global affairs. Sequel to this, and within six year duration, Nigeria had become, not just a cesspool of corruption, but a country where the dwarfs of favouritism, tribalism, nepotism, misappropriation of funds and electoral malpractices had grown into giants.

What flows out of this is the transference of loyalty to one’s ethnic group rather than the Nigerian state, thus dictating, even till present, the extant relations within the confines of Nigeria. Differently put, nationalism at the ethnic rather than at national level, forms the core of the relations witnessed within the country. This is currently, at a level though, serving as the gun-powder for the ‘barrel of crises’ in Nigeria, which is being exploited to foment trouble for the government. This submission is hinged on the backdrop of the multi-ethnic group that forms the country, thereby bringing to bear the diversity of cultural groups that are more than 250 in number. Rather than attempting to channel such diversity towards attaining a viable national development, Nigerians are continuously holding on to their ethnic origins to which allegiance is largely focused at the expense of nation building. This consciousness about ethnic background fed grievously into the Nigerian Civil War, and is presently feeding into ethnic prejudice and mistrust, political crisis, and socio-cultural conflicts. More than this, these vices have permeated the whole gamut of the Nigerian state, be it employment, education, religion and admission into federal institutions.

Another strand of issue in Nigeria’s crisis mould is the resources blessing, particularly oil and gas resources, which seem to be bringing curse on the country. Or how would one explain a country that is richly endowed with natural resources, even land for farming, but majority of its people are wallowing in poverty! This endowment seems to be depriving the leadership of the country the need to engage in serious thinking as to the gamut of development that the government should direct such earnings into. Hence, the easy money, rentals and royalties for instance, from mineral resources is enervating the thinking capacity of those in the cockpit of the Nigerian statecraft to the extent of merely celebrating the trading relations they are able to secure for the country, particularly with extra-territorial powers that merely seek to achieve their national interests of exploration and/or exploitation of the countries numerous resources.

Funny enough, such extra-regional powers hardly seek the advancement of the country to the stage of full-fledge development; thus, one wonders what the celebration of
trade-alliances is for, when the extra-regional trading partners would only assist in the atrocious deepening of the countries feet in underdevelopment, by ensuring, through the huge funds offered, that Nigeria keeps being a bringer of raw materials, and an importer of hi-tech machines and consumer goods.

More than this, the exploration and/or exploitation of these resources, oil for instance, is feeding into frustration amongst the natives of the areas where such resources are gotten. This is mostly because the hen that lays the golden egg is often-times, as against the early dates of the country, starved of the needed nutritious feed. Another dimension to this is the destruction of the ecosystem that seems to trail the exploration of resources, particularly oil in the Niger Delta, a situation that has enjoyed much space in literature. For instance, it is observed that:

The first oil spillage in Nigeria was recorded on the 9th of July 1970 in Bomu which is in Niger-Delta. There were about 4, 625 major oil spillage reported incidents involving release of more than 3,000,000 barrels between 1976 (and) 2002. Between 1980 and 1990, approximately six percent, twenty five percent and sixty - nine percent of total oil spilled in the Niger Delta Region were on land, swamp and offshore environment respectively. The World Bank environmental specialists have noted that every year, the Niger Delta Region is polluted by two or three billion cubic meters of oil from three hundred separate spills. Over the years there have been cases of oil spillage in Burutu Local government area and other villages in around Niger-Delta region.\(^{13}\)

Going past this is the fact of such easy money that accrues to government’s coffers spurring corruption to high place in Nigeria. This vice has grown over the years in the country, and has presently become a Leopard’s skin for Nigeria that the country is finding so difficult to do away with. This informs Achebe’s submission that “corruption has grown more bold and ravenous with each succeeding regime.”\(^{14}\) For instance:

Abdulrasheed Maina allegedly misappropriated about N195 billion, according to the Senate Pension Probe Committee headed by Aloysius Etuk and Kabiru Gaya. This has resulted in extreme difficulties in getting money to pay thousands of pensioners their due. ... until recently, the government’s attitude towards the whole incident had been non-committal. Many even believed the government was tacitly providing him a hedge against arrest and investigation. At a point when money meant for police pensioners was said to have been embezzled, and many retired policemen were queuing up for days on end to receive their
non-existent stipends; … the Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Abubakar, who was ordered to produce Maina at the Senate, said he was nowhere to be found, (but) the PRTT boss was said to be cruising around town in bulletproof cars, under heavy police protection.\textsuperscript{15}

One of the innumerable effects of this situation of endemic corruption is its producing frustration amongst the citizenry. On one hand, corruption incapacitates the government from providing the citizens with the necessary indices of human security; while on the other, it instills the notion of ‘steal huge funds from government coffers and become a celebrity’ in majority of the populace. This cancerous growth is stifling the development of the units that form Nigeria, and may bring about combustion of the country in a not-too-far-future. As such, a United Nations meeting concluded that: Corruption in government is pervasive at all levels of public management, including, in (Nigeria), the deliberate mismanagement of national economies for personal gain. … Corruption is pervasive and is apparently expanding. … [I]t has become systematic and a way of life in (Nigeria).\textsuperscript{16}

Two other factors feeding into crisis in Nigeria are the misery of inequality and poverty that the corruption in the country is churning out. It is pathetic that about 100 million Nigerians still have to live below a dollar a day in spite of the huge sum the government makes on a daily basis, and its claim that the economy is growing.”\textsuperscript{17} These twin evils are feeding massively into frustration, particularly amongst the youths whose youthful days are being spent in poverty; which is leading to aggression amongst the citizens. A hungry man is an angry man, so goes the saying. In a society where the three necessities of food, clothing and shelter are out of the reach of some, if not most of the citizens, then such a society should expect incessant crises. This scenario is playing out in Nigeria, yet elected government officials keep engaging in, and bragging about the white elephant projects into which they are channeling the countries monies, and which may not necessarily impact meaningfully on the lives of the masses.

Perhaps, it is that the political elites are of the perception that increased national income, vast employment opportunities, improved standard of living, a growing middle class and accelerating urbanization might form the architecture of a formidable challenge to their [political elites] stance and/or position within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These malaises are some of the evils that feed into crises in Nigeria. The next section considers the amnesty that forms the locus of the present administration when crisis resolution is concerned.
Amnesty Programme: A Make-Shift Solution to Nigeria’s Insecurity Challenges or a Permanent Panacea?

As noted above, oil-rich Nigeria has been hobbled by political instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and poor macroeconomic management, malaises which have overtime fed into the myriads of crises that are assuming the norm in the country. This situation fed into the rise of militancy in Nigeria’s Deltaic zone; a situation that was recently partially quelled through the adoption of amnesty for the repentant militants in the Niger Delta. In recent time, the government, while seeking to resolve militancy which was fast assuming pandemic height within the oil-financial-nerve of the country, decided for amnesty for ‘repentant militants’. The programme, introduced by the late President Umaru Yar’Adua, has to a large extent, reduced the appalling bloodbath and militancy in the region; and that this achievement is temporal is becoming apparent. It however paved way for oil companies to resume their normal exploration and exploitation activities, thus providing the necessary boost to the oil-reliant Nigerian economy. Now, oil output has increased from slightly less than one million barrels per day [bpd] in 2008 to between 2.4 and 2.6m bpd. To that extent, it is correct to regard the programme as a success.

At international level, the human relationship is seen, particularly by realists, in the optic of egotism and anarchy, two elements that form the core of realists’ arguments; it is however assumed that the government in every country should be able to restrain an aggressive display of these traits within its confines. Currently, egotism seems to be the rule in Nigeria, even as it gradually consigns the country down the aisle of anarchy. This brings into play the issue of Boko Haram’s unending attacks on innocuous Nigerians.

The Islamic fundamentalist sect, Boko Haram [BH] is dreaded for its series of brutal attacks, especially with its claim of responsibility for the brutal campaign of attacks “targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary men, women and children, wreaking havoc across northern Nigeria”¹⁸, particularly since late 2010. The group, out of the display of aggressive egocentrism, claims to abhor Western education, thus the appellation of Boko Haram; which translates to ‘Western education is sin’. More than this is its core mission, which is the superimposition of strict view of Shari’a law on the secular Nigerian state. Perhaps, this was because of the perception that the introduction of Shari’a law in 12 northern states in Nigeria was insufficient. Whether it is still pursuing such agenda, and if the Nigerian government would agree with it are yet to be known, although the
Nigerian government has been making serious military reprisals on the havens of the extremist Islamic sect; while Nigerians, particularly those in the northern part of the country, are still suffering the burden of the onslaught by the sect. This raises serious questions about the genuineness of such claims, even as the group targets Muslims who opposed it. As Peter Pham claims:

The mounting toll of victims included the brother of the Shehu of Borno, the traditional ruler of the Kanuri people of northeastern Nigeria, southeastern Niger, western Chad, and northern Cameroon; Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullahi Bolori, a prominent Maiduguri cleric who had criticized Boko Haram; and Ibrahim Birkuti, a cleric in southern Borno State who was also well known for his criticisms of the sect.¹⁹

If ‘mission alternate Nigeria’s secularism with Shariah’ is still genuine and paramount on the agenda of the sect, a successful restraint against terrorism demands an understanding of how deep such belief is; hence late National Security Adviser, Owoye Azazi hinted that “… I don’t think it’s everybody (in Boko Haram) who believes in the level of violence….“²⁰

When persons of about the same complexion, religion and human nature as us start committing or applauding suicide bombings and dastard attacks on those whom they want to proselytize or gain follower-ship from, then there must be reasons, details of which are sparse presently, and which could have been encouraged by Nigerian government’s policy or rhetoric.

Rather than seek an understanding of such raison d’etre, there have been calls for amnesty for members of this sect. Prior to these numerous calls which recently inundated the Presidency, was the call for dialogue made by Nigerian helmsman, President Goodluck Jonathan. He was noted to have insisted that: the Nigerian government would dialogue with the Islamist organization, Boko Haram, if they clearly identify themselves now and say this is the reason we are resisting, this is the reason we are confronting government or this is the reason we destroy some innocent people and their properties…then there will be a basis for dialogue.²¹

In spite of the President’s submission that “…if they don’t identify themselves, who will you dialogue with?“²², the call for amnesty for the members of the deadly sect did not merely increased, but from highly placed Nigerians. Starting with the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Abubakar III, who posited that “… a presidential amnesty to even one member of the sect, could make others to lay down their arms for peace to reign in the nation“²³; to Bola Tinubu, a former governor of Lagos State and the National Leader of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), who claimed that “for the innocent ones among them,
there must be amnesty. We cannot fight a war in our own country against minor crimes and minor people. We would only end up multiplying these people by trying to use force against our own citizens.”

More so was the view of Nuhu Ribadu, an erstwhile Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) boss and presidential candidate of the ACN in 2011 that: Jonathan was wrong to have said he will not grant amnesty to Boko Haram; he should not fail to protect the people and when people call saying we are tired, we are down; even if it means to dialogue and have a solution to the whole process, he should opt for such.

You cannot say they are faceless because faceless people do not do things like this. Faceless people cannot be responsible and daily you see them on Facebook. Faceless people cannot be in your custody; ghosts cannot be people that are in the community, people who at a point wanted to dialogue.”

Equally in the role call was the former Head-of-State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who was reported to have said that “the government should consider granting the Boko Haram sect amnesty as that [is] the only option it [has] at the moment.” The questions that beg asking at this point become: is amnesty really the necessary panacea to Nigeria’s innumerable insecurity challenges, of which Boko Haram terrorism and Niger Delta militancy are mere dimensions of? And if it is solution enough, would it last long or are those craving it pursuing a short-term solution, thus becoming deluded? These questions are pointers to the fact that the granting of amnesty to militants and terrorists alike may not necessarily bring about the desired security that the Federal Government craves, even as the Boko Haram militants rejects the offer of amnesty that is fast becoming the currency in Nigeria’s governmental circle. Rather, the programme would lead Nigerians, politico-military elites inclusive, on the path of delusion that the Nigerian insecurity challenges are being resolved, whereas such daunting security problems are getting swept under the carpet.

Do not mistake this view as conceiving amnesty programme as banal and/or share waste of time, effort and resources, especially when it has been used in ‘partially resolving’ (if one can say that) the groundswell of militancy in the oily-Deltaic region of Nigeria, a reason that made Turai Yar’Adua lend her voice to the amnesty call; rather, it is seen as a near short-term solution to the daunting security challenges that are becoming endemic, and which in more civilized states, would not be trivialized.
Flowing from the foregoing is the need for a re-think of amnesty and its purpose in the face of growing insecurity that Nigeria is bedeviled with, particularly from the government’s optic. Though, the programme has been used in finding a short-term respite to the problematic of Niger Delta, it should by no means continue to enjoy the benefit of space on Nigerian minds, rather, a lasting solution ought to be the pursuit of Nigeria’s politico-military elites. This submission is predicated on the fact that the ‘former’ Niger Delta militants already enjoying the amnesty ‘barbecue’ are yet to totally discard their passionate inclination towards militancy. The report in Sunday Tribune of the mayhem in Bayelsa comes in handy to validate this view. According to the report:

Angered that they had been perpetually shortchanged by their leaders, former militants in the creek unleashed mayhem … killing 13 policemen in Azuzuama in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

The death of the policemen followed a threat to resume hostilities … from the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) to the Federal Government over complaints that their leaders on the amnesty programme had consistently shortchanged them over funds released as their monthly emoluments.

If the Deltaic militants, who are said to already be on the amnesty programme are yet to divest themselves completely of posing as menace to their communities, what would become of the Boko Haram militants when they are covered by the amnesty garb? This is because those already on the amnesty, at the turn of events that seem to limit their gratification, have proved to return to the arms they surrendered as a sacrifice for the amnesty. It therefore becomes necessary for the government to check out how they (militants) keep getting such arms; perhaps one can think that the government was itself deceived by the militants who claimed to have surrendered all the arms in their armoury, even from the onset of the programme, that the borders of the country are so porous that arms get through at the borders easily, or that some of those entrusted with the security in Nigeria are giving out their weapons to anybody that could pay!

Beyond the foregoing is the fact that another generation of militants might evolve in the Niger Delta. This is because the government is merely tackling the challenges within the zone at the tip rather than address the root of the problems. When such younger generation arises, amnesty may not be enough to arrest their restiveness, thereby proving amnesty, a
programme that could be regarded as sheer ‘white washing’ of the zone’s problems, as sheer waste of time, energy and resources. If this is so, then how adequate is the amnesty programme that keeps enjoying enough space in Nigeria’s news tabloid, and even in the minds of certain politico-military elites? Since the foregoing has proved that amnesty is not an all out solution to Nigeria’s security challenges, it becomes imperative to rethink the path to follow in the ‘insecurity jungle’ so that the country can reach its desired security el-dorado in one piece.

This is more so since, even if the security challenges in either the north or south-south are tackled in the present through the amnesty programme, some other restive citizens in other regions may decide to take up arms in order to partake of the free salary, contract fees, attention and recognition that the government is presently according the militants from the Deltaic zone. For instance, it was reported that the “Federal Executive Council … approved concession of some sections of the nation’s maritime security to Global West Vessel Specialist Agency, GWVSL, the private security firm contracted by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, NIMASA …”29 The contract is with a “former militant leader in Nigeria’s oil-rich southern delta’ and ‘it is a $103 million deal … to patrol the West African nation’s waterways to stop piracy ….30

A Rethink of Panacea to Insecurity in Nigeria

Following on Hamza Alavi’s31 description of a post-colonial state, part of which Nigeria is, one realizes that the Nigerian state has the proclivity of being overtly authoritarian and bureaucratic. And this is so since the society is devoid of structural capability to limit the excessiveness that the Nigerian government and/or its officials might be displaying. This creates inertia in the citizenry, a situation often explored by the [s]elected officials against the masses, perhaps to ensure their lots or loots within the Nigerian statecraft.

In this vein, Nigeria does not really have legitimacy over its people, particularly when its officials are so concerned with satisfying themselves and their surrogates (most of whom merely assist in nurturing the over-bloated ego of the political elites) alone; and are willfully misusing the state’s fund for personal aggrandizement and gratification. This situation has overtime incited some of the citizens (and is part of the claim of BH for its dastard activities and the recent MEND’s onslaught) to see the country as a prime target for vandalisation, exploitation and attack, since it does almost all of these vices to its citizens. This legitimacy
challenge is thus limiting Nigeria from being able to get free obedience (obedience devoid of fear of punishment) from its citizens.

Put differently, since public officials in Nigeria are most unwilling to address issues that could impact meaningfully on the lives of the mass of the people, particularly using the commonwealth of the country, the country has assumed the status of a serious target for attack. The country’s approach in relating with its citizens thus contradicts the knowledge that the “prime directive of the state behaviour’, as John Hobson claims, ‘is to meet the economic and social needs of individuals … states must ultimately conform to the needs of individuals … paradoxically by conforming to the economic and social requirements of individuals, states are able to buck the logic of anarchy …”

Flowing from the above is the view that the federal government would do well if it can guarantee human security in Nigeria. Rather than the impromptu actions whenever there is any form of security imbroglio, it should adopt the human security strategy as against seeking to guarantee regime security, which is mere security of the incumbent. This is because, hardly would any citizen, except for those who are not merely of vitriolic minds, but are deepened in virulence and cynicism, be willing to attack such administration that guarantee their welfare. Differentially put, if the Nigerian government would persist in advocating what is good for the people, majority of the citizens (leaving space for the minority whose minds are evilly-crafted) would know that they have no other friend, or that they have no preferred friend than the government that is already guaranteeing their demands.

In order to achieve this feat, the government needs all the resources it can muster. It therefore needs to, on one hand, curb corruption that has risen to celebrated heights; and on the other, desist from encouraging or running the virus tagged ‘lootocracy’ as programme within Nigeria. This is because the assumption of political or bureaucratic office is presently seen in the country as an opportunity for phenomenal looting of the state treasury; and this pandemic virus forms a prime item on the menu of factors feeding into the strands of insecurity ravaging the country. In view of this, Alaba Ogunsanwo suggests we need not look far for the threat to Nigeria’s security; rather, as he puts it:

… from within Nigeria … is the greatest threat … the [mis]utilization of our resources, they call it ‘lootocracy’ day. Although they put democracy, it is ‘lootocracy’ day. It is a looting system of the treasury that is going on. So in that type of situation, you don’t talk about
security, what security, what threat? They don’t feel anything. The leadership doesn’t feel anything or you call them the rulers, they don’t see some of these things as threat at all.\textsuperscript{33}

If looting/corruption is well taken care of, the fund for practicing human security, which Kayode Soremekun argues “is meant by the security of the populace. In terms of a populace that is contented and is well fed, that has access to the basic indices of life like food, water, health and schools”\textsuperscript{34}, would be readily available. Thus, human security that straddles economic security, and even concerns citizens’ access to the resources and finance requisite for sustainable levels of welfare; societal security that relates to the sustainability of different patterns of language and religio-cultural identity and custom; as well as environmental security that entails the careful use and maintenance of the biosphere that serve as the necessary platform for all other human enterprises, would be guaranteed.

In other words, Nigeria will, according to the Fundamental Objectives and Principles of State Policy contained in Section 16 (1) (a-b) and (2) (b-d) of its constitution, be able to:

… harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy; (and) control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity … The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring: that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage, old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.\textsuperscript{35}

Beyond guaranteeing of human security is the need for accountability, which would help ensure continuity in the process that would have been initiated by the attempt at human security. Through this, the governed will be able to get those ruling them to account for their numerous activities while in office. This would, to a large extent, impel the elected to carefully discharge the responsibilities attached to their offices. This becomes necessary since in the present Nigeria’s landscape, “unaccountable public agents are unwilling to bring issues that impact on collective life to the decision of the people; they resist transparency in their decision making structures; and they tend to concede to the claims of powerful individuals and groups over the claims of the whole electorate.”\textsuperscript{36} In order for the citizens to repose their
confidence in their [s]elected representatives, transparency becomes necessary; particularly from the government in which such representatives are functioning. This would serve to make the people feel, even if not real, they have some hold on their representatives, whom they feel are defending their interests.

More than the above, the safeguard of the borders that Nigeria shares with its immediate neighbours would at this time serve the purpose of quickly restoring the searched for peace and security to Nigeria. Nigeria shares borders with Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Chad; as well as some maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea. The immediate ones that need to be closely monitored are the proximate ones with Benin, Cameroon, Niger and Chad. This is because, on one hand, such borders serve as entrépot through which arms, ammunitions and other materials that are being used for terrorist ends infiltrate into Nigeria. For instance, it was reported that the “Federal Government has identified 1, 497 irregular routes being used by illegal immigrants to gain entry into the country’, a situation that is actually disturbing, since ‘some of the illegal immigrants had been allegedly playing active roles in the security challenges facing the country.”37 And serious enough is the dimension of arms smuggling, which is not only illicit, but quite dangerous. This is because conflict zones present individuals with easy access to arms; and some of Nigeria’s neighbours are around conflict zones. Therefore, conflict zones like Central Africa sub-region38 (which equally covers some of the Gulf of Guinea states) and North Africa region (that recently witnessed the Arab Springs, the melodramatic height of which was in Libya) are presently sources from where small arms and light weapons (SALW) could be accessed. This becomes disturbing since proliferation of arms comes with serious implications. Granted this, Amadu Sesay explains that the death toll from small arms dwarf that of all other weapons systems –and in most years greatly exceeds the toll of the atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In terms of carnage they cause, small arms, indeed, could well be described as ‘weapons of mass destruction.39

The veracity of this claim could be gleaned from an attack in Bauchi State, Nigeria, where “eleven people were killed … when suspected armed robbers attacked an old generation bank in the Tafawa Balewa Local Government Area … just as three bomb explosions rocked two churches in the Bauchi Metropolis.”40

On the other hand, these neighbours could become havens for the members of the dreaded terror group that is currently challenging the sovereignty of Nigeria. For the purpose of clarification, the problem that Mohammed Marwa –Maitatsine- who reportedly hailed from Cameroun, posed to Nigeria could be recalled. In December 1980, Maitatsine’s armed
group, the Yan Yatsine undertook a mass slaughter in the streets of Kano, against which the military promptly launched counter-attacks. In these attacks, not only did Kano shuddered, but about 4,177 persons died, among them Maitatsine himself. Subsequently, in October 1982: almost two years after the death of the Maitatsine group leader, another crisis broke out in Bulumkutu, 15 kilometres from Maiduguri, Borno State between the Maitasine attackers and the military. About 3, 350 persons were killed in the battle. In early 1984, more violent uprisings occurred in parts of northern Nigeria. In this round of rioting, Musa Makaniki, a close disciple of Maitatsine, emerged as a leader and Marwa, the original Maitatsine’s successor. From the new leader’s activities, more than 1,000 people reportedly died in Yola, the capital of Gongola State in March 1984 and roughly half of the city’s 60,000 inhabitants were left homeless. Makaniki fled to his hometown of Gombe, where more Yan Tatsine riots occurred in April 1985. After the deaths of several hundred people, however, Makaniki retreated to Cameroon, where he remained until 2004 when he was arrested in Nigeria … 41

Following on this, it suffices to say that the federal government would only be doing the right thing by either improving on its borders administration or jointly monitoring these borders with its neighbours. Nigeria would only be doing itself deserved honour if it improves on the proper administration of such frontiers with its neighbours, or outright closure as the situation may warrant. The outright closure may prove a hard path to take and not be in tandem with the ECOWAS Charter and/or any bilateral or multilateral treaty that Nigeria may have with its neighbours; but the country’s stability and the security of its citizens are more important than any agreement it shares with them. And it is from its stability that such neighbours could benefit.

Given the extant egocentrism that prevails within the global system, and certain harmful acts against Nigerians by some of its neighbours, the thought that Nigeria’s neighbours may be serving as haven for the Islamic militants that are harassing the country cannot be easily put away. This view is against the backdrop of obvious asymmetry in economy, resources endowment, territorial and/or population sizes; and the relative calmness in the country. This is more so since some of its neighbours actually took some ruinous actions in time past against the well-being of some of its citizens. Two instances of this were the surreptitious damming of River Al-Beid at Maga and Yagaowa in Borno by Cameroun in 1980/81, which created a disaster in the rich farming districts around Ngala Local Government Area. In total, about 68 villages were affected, which … resulted in hundreds of thousands of people being dispossessed and tens of thousands of livestock perishing 42;
and the recent massacre of some Nigeria’s nationals in the Bakassi Peninsula by Cameroonian Gendarmes, an action the Nigerian government is still seething over. It is important to ask: why did the Gendarmes killed those persons? No other reason could be more plausible than the desire of the Gendarmes and/or their government for the Nigerian populace in the region to vacate their priceless win.

Hence, irrespective of the impact that the current spate of terrorism might be having on the country, they (its neighbours) may not hesitate allowing Islamic fundamentalists to explore the differences in their legal standards, which diverge from that of Nigeria, mostly on the basis of the official adoption of the Anglo-Saxon Common Law regime and the Latino/Civil Law practices in Nigeria and in the French and Spanish-speaking neighbouring countries respectively. To this end, Asiwaju submits that:

Discontinuities in the legal traditions, as between the colonial inheritance of the British Common Law in Nigeria and the French or Spanish Civil Law in the adjacent countries, plus the dependent difference in the interpretation of the law and the perception and recognition of rights and wrongs, have provided for criminals asylum situations in the different sides of the Nigerian boundaries …

This suggested border closure would enhance the focus on attempts at local resolution of terrorism in the country, since there would not be any entrance or exit from within the country. This would thereby help limit the opportunity of attempts at attacking Nigeria and its citizens, and escaping to neighbouring countries. This wisdom is against the background of:

… All of the states in the system are enmeshed in a global web of security interdependence. But because most political and military threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, insecurity is often associated with proximity. Most states fear their neighbours more than distant powers; consequently, security interdependence across international system is far from uniform.

These submissions are potent enough to assist Nigeria in realizing its desire of Africa that is rid of running into the embrace of major powers, some of whom were the conventional colonizers of the continent; and are yet to fully divest themselves of their hold on the continent. This is because if Nigeria is able to singly pull its counter-terror attempts off, it would serve as a reference for the Africans. And this is exactly what Kwame Nkrumah was saying when he argued that “If we can, as independent African states, show by our own efforts that we can settle our own problems in Africa, then we shall be setting an example to others.”
Really, terror attacks in Nigeria have led it into some degree of parley with some extra-regional powers, even as “security experts from Nigeria and the United States of America (USA) … (planned) combating terrorism in Nigeria.” Confiming this, US Consul General, Joseph Stafford insisted that “US had been assisting Nigeria on security through the Bi-National Commission with different groups working out the mode of US intervention …” But “… the United States will not commit a single pair of military boot into a country’, as Gbemi Adedipe, former Nigerian Defence Attache to UK, claims, ‘without the economic team being on the ground to begin to make moves to explore and exploit the economic resources in that country for the benefit of America.” Such assistance to a large extent may not necessarily be without its daunting attendants that may not bode well for Nigeria. It thus becomes important that Nigeria goes the whole hog alone.

CONCLUSION

While the foregoing is not a criticism of the amnesty granted to the Niger Delta militants, and the current government’s drive towards granting amnesty to the members of the dreaded Islamic sect, Jamaatu Ahlil Sunna Lidawati wal Jihad, otherwise know as Boko Haram; it has been used to point out some of what should be done if genuine peace would return to the northern Nigeria’s landscape, and/or the rest of the country. Though amnesty was, and even presently being celebrated by local and international agencies and observers, the scheme seems not merely “a right step in the wrong direction, aimed at the wrong target” alone, but is assuming the status of a norm; and this study thinks it will not bode well for the country in years to come.

Rather than an impromptu scheme like amnesty, the present government would be taking steps in the right direction if it seeks to ensure human security (which forms one of the major arguments of the paper), since a guarantee of the welfare of the citizens could incite the citizens to expose individuals within their societies that harbour harmful desires against the government that seems to be concerned about their interests. Thus, in lieu of pursuing regime security that seems to be the norm on the larger African landscape, the Nigerian government should allow the welfare of its citizens to be at the front of its burner, as this would afford the citizens the enabling environment for development. A pointer to this is the workability of the current price tag that the United States has placed on the leader of Boko Haram. As reported: The United States took an unprecedented step, yesterday, when it posted a price tag of $23million, an equivalent of N3.3 billion on the head of top Al-Qaeda-linked terrorists in Nigeria and West Africa. Nigeria’s Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, attracts the
highest reward of $7 million (N1.1 billion) for anybody that can provide information that can lead to his capture.\textsuperscript{50}

This might work wonders given the biting poverty that many citizens are experiencing; hence the willingness with which they would pointedly report the hideout of Shekau. This is more so since the present drive for amnesty, which the terror group rejected by claiming that “we are the one to grant them pardon …”\textsuperscript{51} could only heighten the intensity with which certain persons within the country turn to violence so as to address any form of injustice against them, since amnesty seems a reward for violence.

The question that we would be asking ourselves then becomes: how many persons and/or groups, and how many times would the government grant amnesty? This would particularly become so since the salarium that accompanies such pardon could lure some other persons to take to arms. If one of the responsibilities of the hobbessian leviathan is to ensure the security of its citizens, the Nigerian government should work beyond its amnesty card so as to put in place a near permanent solution that it can improve on. “By addressing inequalities which are often root causes of violent conflict, by strengthening governance structures, and by providing humanitarian assistance, development assistances’, which Don Hubert claims ‘complements political, legal, and military initiatives in enhancing human security’\textsuperscript{52}, the government and the citizens alike would realize that there would be less need for constituting committee of any sort meant to define a comprehensive and workable framework for resolving crisis of insecurity in the country.

More than this, by resolving this serious security challenge bedeviling it by itself, Nigeria would be proving to the rest of the globe that Africans are sensible and can resolve their crisis by themselves. This would help to reformat the optic within which Africans are regarded in international politics.

Beyond this however, Nigeria, while still closely monitoring and/or closing its boundaries to its immediate neighbours, can still work with them in improving the regional security structure. “The role that Nigeria can play’, as Alaba Ogunsanwo put it ‘is to try to encourage stability and good governance in those countries because without that … those places would be unstable. If they are unstable, Nigeria would also feel the heat.”\textsuperscript{53} In order for Nigeria not to feel the heat, particularly by becoming an asylum for refugees, who could target its citizens, it would need to work, either on or with these neighbours so that some level of security for the individual becomes the prime objective of such neighbours. By so doing, a situation of regional security would exist, which could later develop into security trajectory within the zone.
More so, Nigeria can use the pressure of its border closure to get its neighbours to agree on some workable modalities for controlling the proliferation of arms within the zone, get them to combat the nefarious activities of some dangerous persons within their confines, and thereby being able to get a handle on the way arms infiltrate its borders; as well as on how some immigrants pose serious threat to its existence. With this, those with the proclivity for disturbing societal peace would have little or no arms with which to conduct their unholy acts; while persons with bad intentions could be restricted from gaining entrance through its borders. Its neighbours would then serve the purpose of security shield for it. This becomes so since they form important routes through which arms and ammunitions get to citizens within the country, and passage for persons of questionable intentions.

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Books/Allen Lane, 2012, pp. 50.


19 Ibid., p. 4.


21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.


29 See http://beegeagle.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/Nigerian-ex-militant-forges-security-contract/?page=all#pagebreak, viewed on 22 June 2012, 12:22 am


33 Personal interview, Alaba Ogunsanwo, Professor, Leads City University, Ibadan, 1 June 2012.

34 Personal interview, Kayode Soremekun, Professor, Covenant University, Ota, 19 January 2012.


The geography of the sub-region stretches over the following eleven countries: Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe.


Interview with Commodore Adedipe G, at the Naval Headquarters, Abuja on July 12, 2012.


Ibid.


Personal interview, Alaba Ogunsanwo, loc. cit.