

A THREAT TO THE EXISTENCE OF CONTEMPORARY MULTINATIONAL NIGERIA: BAD GOVERNANCE, THE ZEITGEIST OF TERRORISM, BANDITRY, AND SECESSIONISM

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract: A surge of secessionism is threatening contemporary Nigeria's survival, while unrepentant terrorists and bandits represent a major threat to the country's political stability. Unfortunately, the public outside the northern region of Nigeria has shown scepticism about the government's response to terrorism, banditry, and secessionism. They remain convinced that the government handles bandits and terrorists leniently while prosecuting secessionists harshly. In contrast to those who are sceptical about the government's approach to bandits and terrorists, the findings of this study showed that the government's reaction to terrorists and bandits is neither soft nor lenient but seems to be so owing to the sect's strategic mode of operation. Furthermore, the study found that secessionists are an easy target because they are vulnerable, known, and traceable. The study went on to identify the three concepts and determine the groups' major aims, and conspicuously highlighted the group threatening the existence of Nigeria and the ones threatening the existence of Nigerians in Nigeria. Data was chiefly garnered from secondary sources such as online news, textbooks, reports, and reputable journal articles relevant to the study. Descriptive and analytical approaches were adopted in the dissection of the data. The study concluded that the persistence of political horizontal inequality at the federal government level and the reluctance of the government to clamp down on Fulani herdsmen bandits wreaking havoc on host communities are potential drivers of secessionism.

Keywords: multinationalism, political horizontal inequality, banditry, secessionism, terrorism, stick and carrot approach

Une Menace à l'existence du Nigeria Multinational Contemporain : La Mauvaise Gouvernance, L'air du Terrorisme, Le Banditisme Et Le Sécessionisme

Résumé : Une vague de sécessionnisme menace la survie du Nigeria contemporain, tandis que les terroristes et les bandits impénitents représentent une menace majeure pour la stabilité politique du pays. Malheureusement, le public en dehors de la région nord du Nigeria a fait preuve de scepticisme quant à la réponse du gouvernement au terrorisme, au banditisme et au sécessionnisme. Ils restent convaincus que le gouvernement traite les bandits et les terroristes avec clémence tout en poursuivant durement les sécessionnistes. Contrairement à ceux qui sont scientifiques sur l'approche du gouvernement envers les bandits et les terroristes, les résultats de cette étude ont montré que la réaction du gouvernement envers les terroristes et les bandits n'est ni douce ni indulgente mais semble l'être en raison du mode de fonctionnement stratégique de la secte. De plus, l'étude a révélé que les sécessionnistes sont une cible facile car ils sont vulnérables, connus et traçables. L'étude a ensuite identifié les trois concepts et déterminé les objectifs principaux des groupes, et a mis en évidence le groupe menaçant l'existence du Nigeria et ceux menaçant l'existence des Nigériens au Nigeria. Les données ont été principalement recueillies à partir de sources secondaires telles que des actualités en ligne, des manuels, des rapports et des articles de revues réputés pertinents pour l'étude. Des approches descriptives et analytiques ont été adoptées dans la dissection des données. L'étude a conclu que la persistance des inégalités politiques horizontales au niveau du gouvernement fédéral et la réticence du gouvernement à réprimer les bandits bergers peuls qui font des ravages dans les communautés d'accueil sont des moteurs potentiels de sécessionnisme.

Mots-clés : multinationalisme, inégalité politique horizontale, banditisme, sécessionnisme, terrorisme, approche du bâton et de la carotte

Introduction

The contemporary Nigerian society despite its relative infrastructural growth is clobbered with human security issues posed by terrorism, poverty, banditry, and miscellaneous attacks from kidnappers, gunmen, and killer herdsmen. However, Nigeria is not the only country in the Sahel region facing human security challenges, but it is a known fact that Nigeria is the most affected by it, as its internal and external sovereignty are incessantly challenged by primordial groups such as the Biafra and the Oduduwa Republic agitators.

There is almost no doubt that the country's chronic security concerns are a push factor fostering extreme ethnic sensitivity, calling the existing international legal personality of Africa's most populous country into question. Indeed, the modern Nigerian populace is more divided than ever before along ethnic, religious, and political party lines, owing to faults mostly related to governance, colonial inadequacies, and basic causes such as primordial identity.

Several arguments have been offered by the public to this effect; some groups believe that the problem is attributable to the colonial establishment of a multinational Nigeria, which is usually referred to as "colonial faultiness." Some believe that the incumbent is incompetent, and that insecurity across the country is a result of his incompetence. Some researchers, on the other hand, blame the burgeoning killer Fulani herdsmen activities on climatic conditions such as drought. However, all of the above arguments are, to a large extent, valid.

The definition of the concepts of banditry, terrorism, and secessionism, which will serve as a pointer to the identification of each group's principal goal, is central to the objective of this study. The dissection of the concepts will aid in establishing whether the three groups in question are synonymous or not. This goal is motivated by the ongoing feud between the Nigerian government, opinion leaders, activists, and opposition parties about whether bandits and secessionists should be branded as terrorists or not. The government is pushing for the secessionists in the South-East to be declared terrorists, while the other groups mentioned above are pleading with the government to declare the bandits as terrorists.

Furthermore, the article will briefly examine why secessionists are easily traced by the Nigerian government and why terrorists and bandits often evade or repel state counterattacks. The Nigerian military and paramilitary response to the secessionists convinced observers that the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) is indulgent towards terrorists and bandits but punitive towards secessionists. This is a widespread myth and a fundamental error that this study aims to objectively refute. This is not an attempt to conceal or justify the FGN's acts of commission and omission.

The aim of conceptualization in this study is to deconstruct and provide clarity in order to reduce the chance of erroneous language usage in the context of banditry, terrorism, and secessionism in the contemporary Nigeria. Furthermore, the previous questions are intended to outline the objectives of each of the aforementioned groups. The study's findings will help ordinary people distinguish between bandits, terrorists, and secessionists, as well as grasp their various motivations. Furthermore, it will bring each group's primary goal to the foreground. Throughout the article, the following questions will be addressed: What is the ultimate goal of the Islamic terrorist organisations in Nigeria? What is the ultimate goal of the bandits? What do secessionists hope to accomplish with their activism? What efforts has the FGN taken to put an end to the raging inferno of terrorism, banditry, and secessionism that is threatening the political stability of Nigeria? What are the extinguishable conflagrations engulfing modern Nigerian society?

Methodology

This study followed a qualitative research methodology approach, as evidenced by the utilisation of secondary sources such as internet news, textbooks, reports, and other data that were found to be relevant to this study. In order to precisely define and explain banditry, terrorism, and secessionism, which jointly threaten the political stability of contemporary Nigerian society, a descriptive qualitative research design was used in this study. The primary goal of the descriptive qualitative study design is to validate and debunk specific narratives in Nigeria about terrorism, banditry, and secessionism. This is a research design that is useful in discussing the research topic and providing solutions to the questions that have been raised. Furthermore, it is quite explanatory, as evidenced by how the ideas were meticulously defined and the data was analysed. By doing a background check on the journal house and reporters, as well as comparing published reports to uncover rogue components, the validity and

dependability of data gathered from secondary sources were examined. Similarly, the study gathered unbiased data that was then rigorously examined. However, due to time constraints, a lack of financial resources, and security concerns, a primary study could not be conducted. Secondary source data, on the other hand, is just as reliable as primary source data because it is documented and reported by credible journals and media outlets.

What is terrorism?

Terrorism is not a new notion to humanity. Against this context, Mansbach and Taylor (2012:278) asserted that terrorism may be traced back to centuries and is frequently connected with religion. In the first century AD, the Zealots, Jewish opponents of Rome's rule of Palestine, openly murdered Romans to infuse dread in the Roman authorities and their sympathizers. Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) have both utilised this strategy in the past, and it remains their modus operandi hitherto. The Yola CAN Chairman chapter, for example, was broadcast and beheaded in order to instil terror among Nigerians, Christians, and the government. This is not to say that Muslims are not directly affected by the threat posed by terrorist organisations in Nigeria.

Etymologically, the word 'terrorism' is traceable to the French word 'terrorisme', and to the Latin term which means to frighten. The ancient Romans used the term "terror cimbricus" in 105BC to describe the fear that erupted as they prepared for an invasion by a formidable warrior clan. It was taken into consideration many years later, during the ruthless leadership of Maximilien Robespierre during the French Revolution (Harper, 2021; Crime Museum, 2021).

Terrorism or an act of terror may be characterised as violent demonstrations, awful leadership that endangers human security, banditry, kidnapping, or anything else capable of frightening mankind. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the concept of terrorism took on a new shape with a religious connotation, specifically Islamic extremism.

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According to Mansbach and Taylor (2012:234), Washington justified the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq as a new "frontline in the battle against terror." Both ancient and current definitions of terrorism correctly reflected the actions of Boko Haram (BH) and ISWAP in contemporary Nigeria. Boko Haram is an extremist Islamic organization that believes machine politicians and ersatz Muslims have taken over Nigeria's northern region. As a result, their objective is to confront Nigeria's Federal Government in order to build an absolute Islamic society based on Sharia law (Walker, 2012). The National Counterterrorism Centre (n.d.) maintains that Boko Haram means Western civilisation is forbidden. It will not be an invalid claim that Islamic extremism is the nucleus of both Boko Haram and ISWAP, ordinarily by dissecting the content of their identities.

Banditry

WordReference (2021) maintained that the conception of "banditry is traceable to the 16th century from the Italian word bandito, which plainly means banished man. In addition, bandit means an outlaw, a marauding band, or a person or group who indulges in taking unfair advantage of others. Similarly, Brenner (2021) defined banditry as an organised crime that incorporates kidnapping, armed robbery, murder, rape, cattle rustling, and environmental resource exploitation.

Banditry is a type of organized crime conducted by outlaws that usually involves the threat or use of violence. A bandit is someone who steals, raids, and primarily performs crimes such as extortion, robbery, and murder, either alone or as part of a group. Bandits are not primarily driven by politics; rather, they are driven by money. These are genuine descriptions of the bandits operating in Nigeria's northern region and migrating in small numbers to other parts of the country to maraud, extort, or kill. In modern Nigeria, there has been an expansion of bandits in the northern region, who operate in a manner comparable to well-known terrorist organizations. They do, however, pose a conundrum for Nigerians and international observers because their activities closely resemble those of terrorist organizations. However, no one knows what their group's identity or name is, and no one knows what their primary objectives or ideals are because their activities change on a daily basis. Bandits have been spotted attacking mosques and murdering Muslims. Therefore, they are a threat to all (Mosadomi, 2021).

But one thing they all have in common is a desire for financial gain. Recently, the eastern part of Nigeria has been suffering a political kind of banditry that resembled guerilla warfare but was later shown by the Nigerian joint taskforce to be nothing more than cannibalism and banditry. Similarly, the Southwest region is plagued by ritualists who make a living by pillaging and killing commuters in order to barter their body parts for money (Iheaka, 2021; Azeez, 2021; TVC News Nigeria, 2021). The political or religious component of banditry is not as visible as it is in terrorist actions in Nigeria. However, both bandits and terrorists pose a threat to human security. The conceptual definition is important to minimize identity confusion and to explain the goal or purpose of each of the aforementioned groups.

Similarities and dissimilarities between the terrorists and bandits

Terrorists and bandits are, without a doubt, interchangeable from a superficial and uncritical standpoint. Similarly, this is a popular viewpoint among Nigerians who want the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to proscribe the bandits as a terrorist group, since they, like Boko Haram and ISWAP, are causing devastation in the country. Terrorist groups and bandits, in contrast to this imprecise idea, vary on numerous fronts. Terrorists, like ISIS, ISWAP, Boko Haram, Al Qaida, and Al Shabab, have an identity, an insignia, a slogan, and occasionally international partners. Bandits, on the other hand, lack a clear group identification, insignia, or international networks.

They are, nevertheless, comparable to terrorists in the sense that they use weapons and attack the state and its citizens. In Nigeria, for example, bandits include cattle rustlers, killer herdsmen, marauders, kidnappers, ritual killers, and political thugs. These groups are philosophically driven by financial necessities rather than ethnic allegiance, religious preference, or political goals. Furthermore, the bandits terrorizing Nigeria's northern area have no known name, emblem, or slogan, but their actions are painfully felt by their victims and bystanders.

Furthermore, in terms of values, they are vastly different since terrorists are ideologically bent on usurping the government and state, whereas bandits are only concerned in financial gain. The fact that they both pose a danger to Nigeria's internal sovereignty does not imply that they have the same agenda. The activities of bandits and terrorists, on the other hand, are similar but not the same as the approach and ideology of secessionists in Nigeria. However, at an extreme, the ways of secessionists can mirror the terrorists as it is the case with the Cameroonian Ambazonian secessionist group proscribed by the Cameroonian government (Okereke 2018:11).

Secessionism and Self-determination

The concept of secessionism is not new to international politics, following the Westphalia Treaty of 1648 that birthed the conceptualised notion of nation state. Secessionism in a simpler term means balkanisation or fragmentation of an entity into smaller fragments or units. It was the case following the fragmentation of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) which birthed the existence of autonomous nation states in Eastern Europe (Kohen, 2006: ii).

The two Sudan used to be a unilateral state, but following the wave of secessionism, the South Sudan was born. Similarly, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia are all a product of secessionism or separatist movements.

Secessionism can threaten the international legal personality of an existing state or reduce the geographical coverage of an existing nation. For instance, should the Odua Republic and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) actualise their primary objective of being autonomous entities, it naturally follows that Nigeria's geographical coverage will shrink significantly if the country did not go into extinction.

The concept of secessionism and self-determination are closely related but dissimilar. Therefore, there can be self-determination without secessionism as it is in the United Kingdom (Scotland, Ireland), China (Hong Kong), and Canada (French and Anglophone regions). Contrariwise, secessionism and self-determination can be smugly interwoven as it was in the case of USSR balkanised nations such as Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, and Pakistan from India. Analogously, South Sudan seceded from Sudan, which is evidently an indication of the mutuality of self-determination and secessionism.

The right to self-determination is mentioned in numerous international human rights agreements, like in the UN Charter, in un general assembly resolutions. But they do not specify who can claim this right and what the right grants. The State Department says it does not know who has the right to claim a right to

state independence from the United States. The international system has consistently upheld the inviolability of existing nation-state borders, regardless of how and when they were established, says a report by the State Department (Carley, 1997).

As a result, international law recognizes the right to self-determination, yet it is a contradictory provision because international law requires nations to defend their physical borders. Against this context, states tend to be hostile to secessionists. However, as previously stated, the two ideas at issue are mutually incompatible. According to international law, states have the legal right to defend their territorial integrity. Similarly, indigenous peoples' right to self-determination is recognized by international law. These rules favor both territorial integrity and secessionism, which is rather contradictory.

What is Boko Haram and ISWAP ultimate objective in Nigeria?

Based on their operations, Boko Haram and the ISWAP are certainly terrorist organizations, akin to well-known terrorist networks such as Al-Shabaab, Al-Qaida, and ISIS. Terrorist organizations all have an overwhelming proclivity for Islamic fanaticism. Western scholars, on the other hand, say that terrorist groups' methods deviate from Islamic principles. Furthermore, throughout their respective administrations, George W. Bush and Tony Blair proclaimed that the fight on terrorism was not similar to the war on Islam (Bar, 2004:27).

The tactics of Boko Haram and ISWAP resembled those of the now-defunct Maitatsine cult of the 1980s, which held that Muhammad should not be regarded as Allah's messenger. It is acceptable to refer to the defunct Maitatsine as the forerunner of Boko Haram and ISWAP. These three terrorist organizations are all deviations from Islamic principles, yet they all have a common objective. Furthermore, according to Bar (2004:28), modern international Islamist terrorism is the result of twentieth-century Islamist extremism. Similarly, Boko Haram and ISWAP are also offshoots of Islamist aspirations, as they are fixated on battling what they call western civilization in Nigeria; it is evident in their names, slogans, and mode of operation.

Boko Haram, for example, etymologically implies "Western education or civilization is prohibited" (Walker, 2012:3). Similarly, due to the group's operational operandi and identification, ISWAP, a rival terrorist organisation to Boko Haram, may be considered to be identical. Boko Haram is opposed to Western culture, to which Nigeria's multinational state has adhered. Similarly, ISWAP seeks an Islamic state in Nigeria that is similarly committed to subverting Western culture. As a result, it follows that the primary objective of Boko Haram and ISWAP in Nigeria is to seize power from Nigeria's central government and establish an Islamic state. This conclusion is obvious in the beliefs of the late Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the Nigerian Islamic terrorist organization. Walker phrased it this way:

"Mohammed Yusuf stated in interviews prior to his death that the organization's goal was to retreat from a society that had grown corrupt and beyond help. His gang would then establish a new civilization whose main goal would be to be close to Allah. Prosperity and success would naturally result from that goal, and his virtuous gang would eventually take over mainstream culture. Where "Western" culture had gone wrong, according to Yusuf, was in straying from sharia norms. Yusuf based his worldview on his understanding of the thirteenth-century philosopher Ibn Taymiyyah. Taymiyyah, who was often referenced by Salafist radicals, called for this in the face of leadership by Muslims who did not act benevolently and exploited their position to oppress. Individuals withdrawing from that corrupt system and fighting it with violence was acceptable to Allah (2012)."

The late Mohammed Yusuf's statement, cited by Walker (2012) above, prominently demonstrated that, despite the dissimilar philosophies of Maitatsine, Boko Haram, and ISWAP, their shared objective is to wrestle power or authority away from the Western-oriented government elected by the people and for the people. To put it another way, they aim to undermine liberal democracy, the English language, and Western education.

This solitary deed by Boko Haram/ISWAP is rigorous and obvious enough to convince onlookers that the terrorists operating within Nigeria's borders' primary objective is to take Nigeria away from Western-oriented authorities. As a result, it would not be incorrect to assert that Boko Haram/ISWAP are not motivated by the goals of secessionists and bandits, but rather by the desire to have complete control over Nigeria.

What are the bandits' ultimate goal?

Terrorists and bandits are not quite the same thing, as evidenced by the preceding pages. They are, nevertheless, as damaging and might jeopardize Nigeria's internal sovereignty. Bandits such as gunmen, killer herdsmen, ritual killers, kidnappers, cattle rustlers, and other assailants engage in cruel and terrible acts that saturate modern Nigerian society....

Kidnapping, ritual killing, and bizarre killer herdsmen have become commonplace in Nigeria's Western, Eastern, Southern, and Middle belts. However, a widespread notion in modern Nigeria is that assaults in most regions of the nation are coordinated by killer Fulani herdsmen, however such a claim should not be entirely believed to prevent instilling ethnic stereotyping.

Nonetheless, some Fulani herdsmen have shown expansionist inclinations across the country, as evidenced in Plateau State and other Nigerian states. This is not to suggest that members of other ethnic groups in Nigeria are not participating in banditry-related activities (BBC, 2021; Malumfashi & Kaina, 2021; Majeed, 2021; Ahovi & Olatunji, 2021; Shobayo, 2021).

Indeed, Governor Aminu Masari of Katsina state has stated unequivocally that the bandits are primarily Fulanis, and that they are ordinary people who speak the same language as he does and practice the same religion as he does, and that Fulanis from West, North, and Central African countries are frequently recruited by the Fulani bandits to wreak havoc on Nigeria. He went on to say that they are primarily cattle ranchers. Tragically, a widow who was kidnapped on her way to Imo from Lagos, stated that her kidnappers had cattle and were stationed in the forest. This is a description of a bunch of abductors that exactly matches the description of bandits in Katsina state (Oyero, 2021; Adedipe, 2021).

Recent events such as the abduction of students from schools and commuters, and the attack on the National Defence Academy (NDA) has subjected observers to confusion whether the groups wreaking havoc in Kaduna State and proximate states are terrorists or bandits. In fact, the government was called upon by the public to proscribe the bandits as terrorist. However, proscription of the bandits as terrorists might be misleading because in as much as there are similarities in their activities, bandits and terrorists remains unidentical. As put by Lai Mohammed, the incumbent Minister of Information avowedly stated that a group can only be proscribed provided their identity is known (Adewole, 2021; SaharaReporters, 2021).

In modern Nigeria, Boko Haram and ISWAP are not renowned for demanding ransoms, but this is the focus of bandits who have a history of exploiting the Nigerian government and victims. At one time, they requested that the victims' parents in Kaduna give them with basic supplies such as imported rice, beans, and cooking oil (Punch, 2021; TheNEWS, 2021; Altine, 2021; Asadu, 2021; Abiodun, 2021). Similarly, the testimony of one "Emmanuella Anyanwu" about her ordeals at the hands of hoodlums who kidnapped her en route to Imo from Lagos state clearly indicated that the bandits' interest revolves around monetary benefit. Her account is as follows:

They told me that they were kidnappers and they abducted me because of ransom. They said if I didn't have money, they would take my life. I asked them how much they wanted, but one of them was furious I was asking them questions. I told them I needed to know what they wanted as ransom. They asked if I had N10m and I told them there was no way I could get that kind of money. I told them I would give them N500,000 from the money gathered from my village. One of them said I was a fool and they told me to sit down (Adedipe, 2021).

Collation and dissection of bandits' activities, especially in the Northern region of Nigeria, has proven that the bandits are not evidently politically, ethnically, or religiously motivated, but are conspicuously motivated by economic needs. This is a fact attributable to the criminogenic nature of capitalism, especially when looked at from the prism of the fact that Nigeria is in recession, and many youths are unemployed. The huge income garnered from banditry has inevitably made the vice a lucrative and an attractive one.

It would not be a flawed premise to conclude that the bandits are just an organised group using banditry as a means to an end. It can even be argued that the increasing operation of bandits is a response of unemployed able men to the government's poor management of Nigeria. Similarly, the ultimate goal of secessionists might equally be an indirect response to the persistent state of bad governance in Nigeria, which has accelerated poverty.

What are the secessionists' ultimate goal?

Secessionism is a threat to the survival of a multinational or multicultural society since it frequently threatens to revert linked societies/nations to their primordial configuration (Stewart, 2010:4; Mansbach & Taylor, 2012). While secessionism is a threat, it should not be viewed as illogical or unethical because it is frequently a response to contentious sociopolitical and economical concerns such as political horizontal inequality. The term "political horizontal inequality" refers to a situation whereby a group is more favored by the status quo, to the detriment of other ethnic groups in a multicultural society. For example, the Odua Republic and Biafran agitators continuously hammer on the claim that the Hausa and Fulani are the only privileged groups in Nigeria; therefore, ethnic groups in the Federal Republic of Nigeria are highly unequal politically (Langer, et al., 2007).

For instance, the Odua Republic and Biafran agitators openly said that the Hausa/Fulani excesses could no longer be tolerated due to their dominance in Nigeria's politics and other key sectors, such as the Federal Government parastatals. The Hausa ethnic group in Nigeria wields a significant political position in Nigeria due to its size. Sadly, the Hausa seem to be dominated by the minority Fulani ethnic group due to the conquest of Uthman Dan Fodio. To the Fulani ethnic group, the Hausa ethnic group is a potential tool. This might have one thinking that the Hausas and Fulani are culturally similar or identical; contrary to this, culturally they are dissimilar, but only identical in the context of religious inclinations. Across the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Fulani are the closest to the Hausas, who are the majority in Nigeria. The prominence and political influence of the Hausa and Fulani in Nigeria has inevitably led to a surge of political inequalities, which is basically the root cause of secessionist fervor in the East and Southwest.

The prominence and political influence of the Hausa and Fulani in Nigeria has inevitably led to a surge of political inequalities, which is basically the root cause of secessionist fervour in the East and Southwest. The secessionists are of the opinion that since the Hausa/Fulani are fixated on the centralized system of government, which is contrary to the regionalized system of government, the country should rather disintegrate. In the worldview of the secessionists, their aspirations are believed to address all that the union of Nigeria could not address since decolonization in 1960. However, the inevitability of political horizontal inequality, which is the root cause of secessionist fervor in Nigeria, is attributable to colonial fault lines. The more extreme political horizontal inequality gets, the more impacted ethnic groups question the premise upon which Nigeria was created.

According to Akinrefon (2020), "in a joint statement by the International General Secretary of Yoruba One Voice, Dr Sina Okanlomo, and the Head, Directorate of State of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Mazi Chika Edoziem, jointly stated that the 1914 amalgamation of the Nigerian autonomous regions into an entity lacked the populace's backing. As a result, it has created an unbroken path for the exploitation of the people of Nigeria's southern axis.

They recognized Nigeria's success as a country throughout the period of regional autonomy 'self-determination.' However, the imposed unitary/centralized form of government that has existed thus far has severely failed the people of Nigeria.

Furthermore, they avowed that the administration of President Buhari, has failed Nigerians because it lacks the ethos of statehood and federalism as embodied in Chapter 11 of the Nigerian constitution, which is the source of government authority. They also believe that "terrorism, banditry, instability, forlornness, discrimination, murders, unemployment, inequality, corruption, scandals, brutality, oppression, and extortion" have become all too common. According to the secessionists' thoughts recorded in Akirefon (2020), they respect the regional governance system's triumphs during Nigeria's golden period. It was a time when the central government was weak but effective, and regions were autonomous and financially buoyant because they were compelled to endogenously source for means of generating income, as opposed to the centralized system practiced in modern Nigeria, where most states, particularly those in the north, rely on the central government for survival.

The agitated Nigerians calling for a restructured Nigeria raised alarm that the incumbent President's body language lacks the ethos of statehood, which is also a violation of the federalist ideals enshrined in Chapter 11 of the Nigerian constitution. The secessionists' narratives clearly demonstrate that the underlying reason of their agitation is evidently the ongoing poor governance and widespread political horizontal inequality. Furthermore, several actions of the federal government of Nigeria clearly indicate the feeding of horizontal disparities in Nigeria. For example, despite being a northerner, the incumbent

Governor of Kaduna State, Malam El-Rufai, revealed that students from the northern extraction of Nigeria seeking admission into universities are given special preference by the Federal Government so that they can have an edge over students from other regions of Nigeria. Here's how he phrased it:

"The north has traditionally lagged behind in terms of education. We have consistently been the disadvantaged area since independence, despite receiving advantages, JAMB scores, and other benefits. This has not helped; in fact, it has made our people lazier. In light of the disparity in JAMB and FG (Federal Government) results, I believe people should be encouraged to work hard and compete, and we are prepared to make our students in Kaduna State competitive not just in the state, but also worldwide (Oyero, Stop preferential cut-off marks for northerners, El-Rufai tells JAMB, 2021)."

It is against this backdrop that proponents of the Odua Republic and Biafrans have validated their desire for a split Nigeria, which would eventually lead to the country's demise. The ultimate objective of the secessionists is to strip Nigeria of its international legal personality, which would effectively destroy the country's existence, whereas the terrorists' goal is to take over the government, and the bandits are merely driven by economic necessities. Each of the aforementioned groups' goals prompts the following questions:

- Which among the secessionists, terrorists, and bandits poses the greatest threat to Nigeria's existence?
- Clearly, secessionists pose a threat to Nigeria's survival.
- Which of the three groups does the state consider to be the most imminent threat?
- The secessionists are the most urgent threat to Nigeria's stability of the three factions.
- Which of the three organizations poses the greatest threat to the government and the people?

The secessionists pose a threat to the government and the state, whereas Boko Haram poses a threat to the government and the people but not the state. The bandits, on the other hand, pose a direct threat to the people and the administration, but not the existence of the state.

However, secessionism in Nigeria should be discouraged, based on the reality of nations like Pakistan and South Sudan, where secessionist achievements have not resulted in political and economic stability.

What actions has the Nigerian Federal Government (FGN) taken to put an end to the raging inferno of terrorism, banditry, and secessionism that is destroying the country?

In order to preserve peace and order in a country, the government or leader chooses the most effective approach. However, it may be a carrot or stick approach, and it could also depend on the sort of regime. Human rights are understood to be at the heart of liberal democracy. In a liberal democracy, a carrot strategy is commonly used in situations of public resentment. In an illiberal democracy, such as Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Eswatini, and other authoritarian regimes, the stick method is typically the rule. This is evident in President Paul Biya's approach to the conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone area, late Zimbabwean President Mugabe's attitude to opposition groups, and President Museveni's response to Bobby Wine, Uganda's opposition party leader and presidential contender. Contrariwise, the Nigerian government, in its response to secessionism, banditry, and terrorism has indulged in the use of carrots and sticks approaches.

The "carrots and sticks" technique may be traced back to Pavlov's conventional theory of motivation. The unilateral or fusion of reward/diplomacy/negotiation and punishment/kinetic/lethal reaction to societal crises, whether terrorism, banditry, or secessionism, is central to this strategy. According to Udoh et al. (2019:11), recent research has revealed that in conventional warfare methods, the stick strategy is the norm, but the carrot approach, also known as the water approach, is frequently only considered in circumstances of kidnapping or scenarios where victims are kept hostage. However, the above-mentioned authors quoted a theoretical research observer who stated that when offenders are recalcitrant, a stick or kinetic reaction is less expensive.

Based on the above assumption, the Nigerian Federal Government's strategy of negotiating with refractory bandits and rehabilitating surrendered Boko Haram and ISWAP members is prohibitively costly owing to the policy's ambiguities. These are persons who have previously been exposed to the use of firearms and can revert to their old habits at any time, particularly in a nation where residents' private

lives are rarely scrutinized. It will not be an error to infer that the Federal Government of Nigeria's carrot approach to bandits and surrendered terrorists is a luxury the country can not afford in the long term. When viewed objectively, a kinetic response against banditry and terrorism may be a realistic option.

Nigerian government stick/kinetic response to terrorists, secessionists, and bandits

The triple zeitgeist currency, which threatens Nigeria's security and survival, has unavoidably pushed the Federal Government of Nigeria into unmeasured deployment of the military and paramilitary forces in the East, North, West, and South areas of Nigeria. The Nigerian military has launched several operations, including Egwu Eke I (Operation Python Dance I) and Egwu Eke II (Exercise Egwu Eke II), Operation Lafiya Dole, Safe Haven, Whirl Stroke, Thunder Strike, Operation Delta Safe, Operation Awatse, and others (Obi, 2017; Enenche, 2020).

Sadly, despite the unmeasured use of military force, terrorists, bandits, and secessionists became increasingly agitated. However, the aggressive approach resulted in the detention of the Biafran leader, who fled from Nigeria to Europe before being apprehended by Kenyan officials during a visit to the nation. Similarly, the warlord of the Odua Republic was apprehended in the Republic of Benin, and the military and paramilitaries have murdered and detained a number of bandits and terrorist commanders and members.

Unfortunately, terrorism, banditry, and secessionism persisted; but the Odua Republic agitators appear to have been weakened lately by the arrest of Sunday Adeyemo, also known as Sunday Igoho. Based on this assumption, it is not a faulty premise to say that the Nigerian Federal Government's kinetic strategy has only proven beneficial in the Yoruba axis of Nigeria, while failing miserably in the East, South, North, and Middlebelt (Mac-Leva, et al., 2020; Kabir, 2021; Ukpong, 2021; Nnochiri, 2021).

The Nigerian government's response to the trio endangering the country's political stability has generated both support and criticism across the country. In reality, the Nigerian people and ethnic groupings are more split than ever (Okoro, 2021; Udoffia, 2021), with some Nigerians openly supporting the government's reaction and others openly denouncing it. This is not to suggest that the majority of Nigerians are not fed up with the country's insecurity.

Why did the government's strategy succeed on secessionists but not on bandits and terrorists?

The secessionists have been the most affected by the Nigerian military and paramilitary kinetic approach of all the groups confronting contemporary Nigeria. In reality, several Nigerians have concluded that the Nigerian Federal Government's response to the three groups challenging the federal government is biased. Simply because the Nigerian government, with her kinetic approach, was able to curtail the excesses of the secessionists (Ogundipe, 2017), their leaders are confined. The Biafran leader is in the custody of the Department of State Security (DSS), while the leader of the Odua Republic agitators is incarcerated by the government of the Republic of Benin.

The terrorists and bandits are chiefly northerners, and their activities are limited to the northern and Middlebelt regions, although the presence of the bandit Fulani herdsmen has been sighted in other regions too. Despite the Nigerian Army deployment of troops and heavy artilleries to the north, the terrorists and bandits grew stronger. This is a reality that has left all Nigerians surprised due to the size of the Nigerian Army. However, some Nigerians are of the opinion that the government is not sincere in fighting the terrorists' bandits, as certain claims made it known to the public that terrorism and banditry are locally sponsored by some Nigerian elites in the north (Emelike & Iniobong, 2021; Njoku, Olumide, Sunday, Akhaine, & Oladimeji, 2021; Adedokun, 2021).

Many people turned to social media to accuse the federal government of employing military and paramilitary force against the secessionists while simultaneously rehabilitating and bargaining with Boko Haram and bandits (SaharaReporters, 2021; Oyero, 2021). As a result, the public was outraged by the government's deradicalization and disarmament of repentant terrorists. Regrettably, they came to the conclusion that the government's reaction to secessionists is harsh, whilst their approach to bandits and terrorists is soft. It is, however, an erroneous premise because deradicalization and disarmament are both approaches to reducing insecurity.

Anyone can accuse the Federal Government of romanticizing Boko Haram and bandits on the basis of a flimsy premise or a foggy lens, especially in light of the government's carrot policy (negotiation with bandits and rehabilitation of the repentant terrorists). Similarly, the government's silent response to the

harmed Fulani herders in host communities is a major element reinforcing the populace's cynicism about the state's approach to insecurity. Despite common opinion, Nigerian government spending on military equipment has surged under this administration, since the government has acquired fighter jets, missiles, and other armament to tackle terrorism and banditry (Trading Economics, 2021; Vanguard, 2020; Abdulkareem, 2021).

While bandits continue to kidnap people and terrorists terrorize vulnerable communities, the Nigerian military is gaining ground against the two groups threatening the country's internal peace in few places. A considerable number of terrorists have just abandoned their weapons and are anxious to be rehabilitated in Nigeria, due to the effectiveness of the collaboration of the Nigerian air force and soldiers. Terrorists and bandits, on the other hand, continue to terrorize populations in Borno, Katsina, Niger, Katsina, and Kebbi. In the northern region of Nigeria where bandits, terrorists, and soldiers are functional, usually, there are casualties on both sides (Channels Television, 2020; Vanguard News, 2021; Nwedene, 2021; Abdulaziz & Gusau, 2021; Prnigeria, 2021; Okoye, 2021; Ayitogo, 2021; SaharaReporters, 2021; Abu-bashal, 2021; Rédaction Africanews, 2021).

It would be illogical to assume that the Nigerian government romanticizes terrorists and bandits just because they remain invincible hitherto. The widely held belief that the Nigerian government is stern on secessionists but mild on bandits and terrorists is fallacious. However, the Federal Government's response to secessionists is strong due to the following factors:

- The secessionists are domiciled in the city.
- They do not actually maraud and flee; instead, as is the case in Nigeria's eastern region, they maraud and hold their ground. Albeit, since the adoption of a guerrilla approach, they maraud and go into hiding.
- The secessionists are well-known to everyone.
- Bandits and terrorists can only be identified if they are armed.
- Tracking secessionists is easy, but trailing bandits and terrorists requires a well-thought-out approach.

Therefore, the philosophical configuration and values of the secessionists made them a soft target for the state compared to the bandits and terrorists that have mastered the act of concealing their identity, waylaying their targets, and retreating to an anonymous venue where they are fully equipped. The terrorists and bandits have confronted the soldiers on multiple occasions and conquered them, although, there are often casualties on both sides. The secessionists are vulnerable because they are easily spotted and not equipped. For example, Nigerian forces attacked and vandalized the mansions of secessionist leaders. On the other hand, Shekau and other terrorist and bandit leaders are difficult to penetrate and overpower by the Nigerian military since they are armed to the fangs and their hideouts are not known to the public (Ujumadu, 2017; Jannah, 2017; Akinwotu, 2021; Babangida, 2021; Ahmad, 2021).

The intellectual composition and goals of the secessionists made them a vulnerable target for the state. Terrorists and bandit have frequently ambushed and inflicted injury on the Nigerian armies, whereas secessionists are vulnerable owing to a lack of resources and a preference for a carrot approach to problem-solving by protesting. The Biafran secessionists, on the other hand, are gradually adopting a guerrilla strategy as the federal government insists on holding their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, in captivity. Unknown gunmen have attacked scores of police stations, despite being identified as bellicose sects of the Biafran agitators, and they have been seen enforcing a sit-at-home protest, in which any member of the community who violates the agitators' sit-at-home order is met with vandalism and humiliation (Opejobi, 2021; Premium Times, 2021; Akpan, 2021).

What are the extinguishable conflagrations engulfing modern Nigerian society?

Terrorism, banditry, and secessionism plaguing contemporary Nigeria are entirely attributable to inorganic factors such as bad governance and primordial sentiments (Omede & Omede, 2015). Unfortunately, some of the federal government's policies are fanning the embers of horizontal inequalities in the contemporary multinational Nigeria, as seen by their corollaries. Political horizontal inequality is fanning the embers of disunity, as evidenced by the Federal Government's proposal for open grazing, the prevalence of unquestioned killer herdsman aggression, political horizontal inequality, the rejection of

restructuring, and the encroachment of northern regions into territories completely alien to northern cultures. Kwara State, Southern Kaduna, Benue, and Plateau states are all regarded as northern regions, despite the fact that they are completely foreign to the Hausa/Fulani way of life. The Willinks Minority Commission attempted to resolve this colonial faultline, but its efforts were eventually disregarded.

Excesses of Miyetti-Allah and Sheik Gumi

Only the Hausa/Fulani axis in modern Nigerian culture seems unconcerned with secessionist aspirations, but certain Yoruba, Igbo and minority ethnic groups have been clamoring for a fragmented Nigeria owing to a history of political horizontal inequality. Ordinarily, a common Igbo has no issues with a common Hausa/Fulani, but incongruities arise frequently at the political level, owing to an imbalance of political opportunities (Osaretin, 2019; Archibong, 2018). For example, since President Muhammadu Buhari took office in Nigeria, the Miyetti-Allah has grown in popularity and issued a slew of declarations, leading some Nigerians to believe the organization is a government branch (olufemi, 2021; SaharaReporter, 2021; Akinrefon & ojomoyela, 2019; Toromade, 2019; Babajide, 2021).

Similarly, Sheikh Gumi's comments and involvement in banditry negotiations have sparked skepticism among Nigerians of various ethnic backgrounds; for example, the Federal Government's proposed grazing routes in northern Nigerian states indicate that the government favors the Miyetti-Allah community (Chidozie, 2021; Onwuka, 2021; The Guardian, 2021).

Mailafia, the opinion leader, made comments about the country's insecurity as a result of terrorism and was frequently summoned for questioning by the DSS, whereas Sheik Gumi, a pro-bandit Islamic scholar, freely expressed his views in favour of bandits but was only summoned once with levity by the DSS (Fasan, 2021; Sunday, 2021; Ochieng & Kiriungi, 2021; Nnaem, 2021; Opara, 2021; Ahovi, 2020; Ahovi, 2020; Ifuoma, 2020).

Such observations have led to the conclusion that Nigerians are ethnically uneven in the context of political privileges. In reality, many people believe that President Buhari's administration is working to further the interests of the Hausa and Fulani. The preference for Miyetti-Allah and Sheik Gumi is the most straightforward example of political horizontal inequality as the group and the aforementioned Islamic scholar freely expressed their views without rebuttals or questionings from the Federal government or the DSS (Jimoh, Daka, Njoku, & Lawrence, 2021). Coexistence will eventually be endangered in a multinational society when one ethnic group feels superior to others, as it is in contemporary Nigeria.

Killerherdsmen rampage

By implication, President Buhari's election has sadly increased the reputation of Nigeria's murderous Fulani herdsmen. The Fulani herders were on their best behavior before the election of President Buhari. They were noted for wielding pastoral staffs in their culture. Regrettably, they are better at using rifles than terrorists in modern Nigeria, where it is illegal to carry a firearm without a license. Many communities in Nigeria's East, West, Middlebelt, and Southern regions have repeatedly condemned Fulani herdsmen's daring and bellicose behavior in their communities (Sahara Reporter, 2018; Jannamike, 2018; Adebayo, 2021).

In host villages, identified Fulanis have been accused of livestock rustling, land theft, and assassinating natives with impunity. Those on the Plateau whose farms and cattle have been taken over by the murderous Fulani herdsmen are the ones feeling the worst heat of the bandit Fulani herdsmen (Vanguard, 2015; Ohanesian, 2019). Activities of the bad Fulanis across Nigeria, has triggered a widespread odium to the extent that the Fulani identity in Nigeria is tainted with negativity; in fact, the incumbent Governor of Katsina state avowedly claimed that majority of the bandits are Fulani (Sahara Reporter, 2021; Ahamed, 2021; Relief Web, 2013)

Scores of Nigerians have a problem with President Buhari's administration's handling of the Fulani herdsmen's excesses because, despite public outrage, the Fulani killer herdsmen's excesses continue. Nonetheless, President Buhari's administration instructed security troops to shoot and kill anyone wielding a rifle in the forest. Despite the restriction, AK-47-wielding herdsmen have been sighted, and several have been arrested (Olawale, Agwam, & Hassan, 2021; Asadu, 2021). Regrettably, the unlawful and inhumane practices of the bandit Fulani herdsmen are one of the key generators of primordial identities in today's multinational Nigeria. Sadly,

Restructuring and secessionist fervor

Many Nigerians, especially the ones from other regions other than the north, has exuded dissatisfaction with President Buhari's administration's handling of the Fulani herdsmen's excesses, bandits show of horror, and small-scale bandits in other regions. Recently, there was a protest in Abuja, where group of northern youths and some northern leaders called for the resignation of the incumbent President due to the poignant activities of the deadly sects that constitute a threat to the human security of Nigerians in Nigeria (Hassan-Wuyo, 2021; Ayitogo, 2020; Odeniyi, 2021). Because of the actions of bandits and terrorists, President Muhammadu Buhari's administration issued an executive order directing security personnel to shoot and kill any spotted civilian brandishing a rifle (Olawale, Agwam, & Hassan, 2021).

Based on the data collected of insecurity in Nigeria, it would not be incorrect to infer that while there were protests and terrorism under President Buhari's predecessors' reigns, organized banditry and Fulani herdsmen rampages were never as popular. In truth, the Miyetti-Allah and Sheik Gumi's views were not well-known prior to President Buhari's election. Surprisingly, following President Buhari's election, the Miyetti-Allah and Sheik Gumi rose to popularity and became a formidable voice on national issues.

The practices of some today's Fulani herders and bandits have bred national division, has inevitably spurred Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Sunday Igboho, the revolutionary leader of the Odua Republic, to prominence. The above-mentioned ethnic groups began by calling for the restoration of Nigeria to a regional system of administration similar to that which existed during the golden era (10 years after decolonization), but this was greeted with the Federal Government of Nigeria's disapproval (adejumo, 2021; Ladelokun, 2021; Mpi, 2021; Sikhakhane, 2021; Agbakwuru, 2021; Adebayo, 2017). The Federal Government of Nigeria's unwillingness to embrace a constitutional reform that will return the country to its erstwhile regional system of governance, coupled with the growing spate of insecurity and burgeoning political horizontal inequality, has exacerbated secessionist fervor in the country. However, Nigeria has a history of secessionism, which was at its peak during the Biafran War, staged by the Eastern region of Nigeria.

Sadly, factors that spurred the previous secessionist fervor are starting to protrude in contemporary Nigeria as ethnic groups other than the Hausa/Fulani are decrying the dominance of Hausa/Fulani in the strategic economic and political sectors of Nigeria, such as the ports, judiciary, customs, independent electoral commission, and the military. The inability of President Muhammadu Buhari's administration to maintain a firm position against the ravaging Fulani herdsmen and the rejection of a demand for Nigeria's restructuring prompted separatist groups in the Biafran and Odua territories to push for secession. In light of this, it is fair to argue that the Federal Government's reaction to insecurity across the country, as well as its body language, is to blame for the zeitgeist of secessionists challenging Nigeria's existence.

Secessionism in Nigeria can be seen as an approach that aims to release affected groups from the excesses of bandit Fulani herdsmen and lingering political horizontal inequality. However, secessionism is not a cure-all solution, as it might snowball into something more complicated upon the actualization of autonomy, as it is the case in South Sudan, where the newly formulated nation started grappling with issues of identity and governance that were absent during the quest for secessionism. Similarly, the existence of ethnic groups in the federation of Nigeria has abated intra-ethnic and interethnic rivalries. For instance, the Yoruba ethnic group in its autonomous era was characterized by intra-ethnic conflicts. In fact, the longest war in West Africa occurred within the Yoruba for a decade and six years; that is, the Kiriji war between the Ibadan and Ekiti axes of the Yoruba ethnic group.

Conclusion

In conclusion, modern Nigerian society appears to be more upset by developing political horizontal inequality, notwithstanding its economic and infrastructure challenges. The emergence of fervent separatist desires in Nigeria's eastern and western regions demonstrates the consequences of political horizontal disparity. Unfortunately, the federal government's response to the secessionists has caused widespread suspicion in locations outside of the north, with critics accusing the government of employing a carrot approach to dealing with terrorists and robbers.

Contrary to widespread belief outside of Nigeria's northern region, the government has dealt harshly with bandits and terrorists. Terrorists and bandits, on the other hand, have outwitted authorities by targeting less secure locations, military and paramilitary sites, schools, and commuters. This is owing to a

lack of an adequate early warning system in the affected areas, as well as a shortage of security personnel. Furthermore, secessionists are soft targets due to their objective, well-known identity, and residency, as well as the fact that they are less armed compared to bandits and terrorists, who are heavily armed and always ready to combat the military.

The government's carrot approach to a lethal cult, on the other hand, has unavoidably sparked accusations that the state is soft on bandits and terrorists but harsh on secessionists. As previously said, secessionists are a soft target, yet they are harmful to the state's existence rather than to the people. As a result, states are naturally sensitive to anything that threatens their existence, whether human or animal.

The above highlights and analysis clearly show why the state appears to be more susceptible to secessionists. This is not to argue that the state is unconcerned about terrorists and bandits, but this study has proved that they are not easy targets owing to their tactics. Based on the information gathered, it was discovered that the state, via the DSS, routinely interrogates residents from other regions who raise concerns about the government's lackadaisical and inept response to insecurity in the country. This is clearly symptomatic of the existence of political horizontal inequality in contemporary Nigeria, which is surely one of the elements that has prompted secessionists and agitators to take action in today's multinational Nigeria. This is especially evident in the federal government's response to the late Obadiah Mailafia and Sheikh Sheriff Gumi, who used to play spin-doctor to bandits whose behavior mirrored that of terrorists.

In contemporary Nigeria, the special preference for a specific region and group has inevitably resurrected primordial sentiments, the direct manifestation of which is secessionism; indeed, the persistence of political horizontal inequality in Nigeria is clearly a reflection of primordialism's indelibility. Primitive emotions have always presented a serious threat to the Nigerian state's existence, prompting the federal and state administrations to launch attempts to bridge ethnic divides. Regrettably, the majority of the organizations set up to address persistent horizontal inequality are riddled with governance problems and human agency flaws.

The Nigerian state, for example, used consociationalism, also known as zoning, to address political horizontal inequality in an attempt to reduce primordial feelings along ethnic lines. Similarly, the federal character commission was created to remedy any and all political horizontal imbalances. Unfortunately, the superstructure of distorted ethnic narcissism in a multiethnic society has stymied both consociationalism and the federal character commission attempts of Nigeria's federal government, as the Hausa/Fulani region remains the country's most populous and politically influential region compared to the other regions.

Secessionists' call for Nigeria's separation is understandable given Nigeria's lingering horizontal inequality. Secessionism, on the other hand, is not a solution to Nigeria's continuing political horizontal inequality, corruption, poverty, underdevelopment, ineffective government, and unbalanced resource distribution. A politically restructured Nigeria as a consequence of a constitutional review will be effective in putting an end to secessionism in Nigeria and boosting security throughout the country by relieving the federal government's burden.

According to secessionists' popular belief, a disintegrated Nigeria divided into ethnic provinces will bring concerns about political horizontal inequality to an end. The secessionists' utopian vision is somewhat implausible, especially when considering the social realities of ethnic nations like Lesotho and Eswatini. Despite the fact that the two countries described are mono-ethnic, they are both plagued by weak governance, human rights violations, economic troubles, corruption, and unequal income distribution. As a result, secessionism is not the most viable answer to Nigeria's current sociopolitical and socioeconomic problems. Insecurity, underdevelopment, secessionism, and economic concerns might all be addressed by a regionalized governance system. These problems are likely to be alleviated if a regional governance system is explored, as regions would be permitted to determine their own fate.

In modern Nigeria, the ethos of secessionism is obviously based on Hausa/Fulani domination. As a result, concerned ethnic groups must work together to counteract the overwhelming Hausa/Fulani. Affected ethnic groups should band together and balance their forces against the majority Hausa/Fulani, just as South African blacks did against the apartheid South African government. Calling for Nigeria's breakup as a result of Hausa-Fulani excesses is a cowardly move.

Similarly, downtrodden black Americans have fought for equitable political representation since the days of Du Bois, James Weldon, Johnson, Walter White, and Thurgood Marshall, and have earned supporters such as Malcom X, Martin Luther King, Barak Obama, and the current Deputy President, Kamala Harris. This is to argue that political horizontal inequality is not alien or new to a multiracial and multicultural society; many countries have faced political horizontal inequality, but civil society's tenacity in demanding good governance has lowered the incidence of political horizontal inequality.

Secessionism in today's Nigeria is primarily motivated by insecurity, which is compounded by political horizontal inequality, as evidenced by secessionist movements in areas other than the north. As a result of the recent wave of insecurity, a majority of Nigerians feel that the federal government is incapable of preserving Nigerians' lives and upholding the country's territorial integrity. The violent behavior of identified Fulani herdsmen in Nigerian regions outside the north has reinforced the unwelcome notion that the Fulani ethnic group seeks to take over host communities and islamize Nigeria. These assumptions were the sole source of secessionist support in Nigeria's east and west.

A decentralized government architecture, in which authority is transferred to states and municipalities, on the other hand, will provide states entire control over their own security. A measured canon supply of security troops at the state and municipal levels has significantly impeded state governments' ability to handle insecurity. Devolution of power and decentralization of police are practiced in countries such as the United States and South Africa, where states and municipalities are empowered to handle own internal security. Although the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), a think tank of the Nigerian Presidency, advised the central government that community policing would help to reduce insecurity in the country, the central government has been hesitant to implement the policy. In reality, the government's obstreperous stance in the context of police decentralization has paved the way for the rise of ethnic vigilantes such as the Odua People Congress (OPC), Amotekun, Hisbah, and the Eastern Security Network (ESN), which may undermine the military and paramilitary in the long run. The development of ethnic vigilantes is clearly indicative of civilians' loss of faith in the state and its military. It is also a direct response to the government's act of omission and commission. The government failed to fulfill its commitment to safeguard the people and also failed to embrace the appeal to return the country to a regional governance system.

The federal government of Nigeria seeks to protect the coexistence of Nigerian groups, according to this study, but is unwilling to heed the demands of disgruntled groups in Nigeria's eastern and western areas. As previously stated, secessionists believe that a regionalized Nigeria with a decentralized police force will alleviate the current state of insecurity in the country.

The government's unwillingness to heed the secessionists' demands has unfortunately heightened secessionist sentiment and insecurity in Nigeria's eastern region. However, secessionism will die naturally if the government uses the federal character commission objectively, restores Nigeria to a regional system of governance, and decentralizes the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). As a result, devolution of power should be explored in order to preserve Nigeria's existence. As a result, devolution of authority should be explored in order to save Nigeria's existence.

Recommendation

The Nigerian government should collect statistical data on federal political representation in order to create scientific confirmation of the existence of political horizontal imbalances in Nigeria.

Policy strategy

NIPSS, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and the Federal Character Commission (FCC) will conduct quantitative and qualitative research on political representation along ethnic lines at the federal level to assess whether or not political horizontal inequality exists in Nigeria.

Recommendation

The Federal Government of Nigeria should consider extending a carrot/non-kinetic approach to the secessionists in order to demolish the edifice of secessionism in the East and West.

Policy strategy

The Presidency, in partnership with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPR) and the National Orientation Agency (NOA), should reach out to the secessionists to put an end to the conflagration.

Recommendation

The state should host a meeting with important stakeholders and opinion leaders from across the country.

Policy strategy

The Presidency, the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), first-class monarchs, respectable clergy, prominent Islamic leaders, credible opinion leaders from diverse ethnic groups, and economic elites should convene talks to discuss the country's reformation without resorting to a referendum.

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