

INSECURITY AND INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: A CASE OF NEGLIGENCE OF FORCES AND THEIR ONTOLOGICAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS

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Abstract

Many attempts have been made to trace the causes and as well proffer solutions to the problems of insecurity, violence, insurgency, killing and agitation for secession, in Nigeria, in the recent times, yet the problems get complex as the days go by. Is it not ironical that a country so endowed with human and mineral resources suffers all round setback?¹ Perhaps Nigeria's situation, with all those natural gifts, will be a case of a workman who were gifted some powerful machines; he does not know their values, yet closed up to any avenue from where the knowledge would come. Many have traced the causes of our problems to struggle over land ownership, distribution of resources, corruption, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and ethnic and religious tensions. All these are but symptoms. And every effort and energy has been channeled towards treating the symptoms rather than carry out a proper diagnosis. This paper argues that the one problem from where other problems shoot out is selfishness. Whether religious, ethnic, tribal, or political, they all have selfish undertone; an individual intends to enrich his vital force (self) and dwindle the vital force of the others; or a group of individuals play down the collective vital force of the others so as to enrich themselves. In any way, it is selfishness. And it has commensurate reactions from the affected parts (victims). And so, through the method of analysis, this paper intends to show that our problems are consequences of some negligence of the ontological role of Forces in all dimensions of our life and existence within our African milieu. Our problem is the case of treating the other "self" or "selves" as if they are insignificant. Whenever a 'self' is treated badly or wounded, the community of 'selves' suffers it. And until we allow each force (self), with all the things that make it a self, a proper place in the scheme of things, the situation will hardly get any better. In the final analysis, the preference of one 'self' over another, or a group of 'selves' over the others, breeds problems such as chaos, violence, insecurity, killing and insurgency.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Insurgency, Negligence, Forces, Ontology and Interconnectedness*

Introduction

Giving that ontology, so defined, deals with being, the nature of being and issues about existence and becoming, to venture into any discussion, therefore, on the recent problems of insecurity, insurgency, and killings, which have left our society in chaos

and disharmony, without viewing our discoveries and findings as a negligence of the ontological implications of force, will amount to a waste of mental and physical energy and saliva in the case of verbal discussions; and then a waste of energy, ink, paper and resources in the case of written discourses. We make this assertion because vital force is a peculiar trait of African philosophy and cosmology, which defines and shapes the framework within which the interwoven concepts of personhood and community, as extensions of Africa's concept of "being", are founded and reified.ⁱⁱ Moreover, vital force is at the core of Africa's understanding of life which is deemed to begin from the creator, from whom everything created springs. In sum, vital force permeates all creation, including every aspect of the environment from where the person and the community jointly suck sustenance.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, any attempt, through any act, behaviours, attitude and human custom, which militates against vital force or against the increase of the hierarchy of the 'Muntu' is bad.^{iv} It means then that the destruction of life is a conspiracy against the divine plan. And the Muntu, which in human sense signifies vital force endowed with intelligence and will, knows that such destruction is an ontological sacrilege. Thus, it is immoral and unjust.^v

We can then affirm from the foregoing that negligence, which leads to the dwindling of a particular vital force, either in human beings or lower beings like animals, vegetables, and minerals is inspired by selfishness. Such selfishness could be individual or group oriented. When it is group based selfishness, the propagators seek to blindly defend ethnic, religious, socio-political and tribal interests to the detriment of the other people (who they consider either lesser or no humans at all), culture, religion, political opponents they view as threats. In such calculated act, a force, vital-force, in one individual or a group of individuals, or their natural endowments is dwindled, so as to satisfy the selfishness of certain individuals. And to defend themselves and preserve their nature-given gifts, the people affected by such purported negligence recourse to any available means of defense. This is the bedrock of violence, insecurity, insurgency, threat for secession, and killings. The thrust of this paper is to establish that we cannot violate the smooth running or order in nature, the intermingling, interpenetration, intercommunication, and rapport among forces and expect a peaceful, tranquil, and a calm society. Such expectation is a mirage, a hallucination. No one bits nature and expects it to keep quiet.

Clarification of Terms

Insecurity

Insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confidence or anxiety about oneself. Insecurity could also refer to the nervousness one experiences when one feels vulnerable and insecure.^{vi} It is also the state of being subject to danger or injury.^{vii} Insecurity could also be a feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty. Such feeling produces

anxiety about one's goals, relationships and ability to handle certain situations.^{viii} We can also view insecurity from the point of lack of assurance or confidence, especially in regard to one's safety, or the security or stability of something. Insecurity is a kind of anxiety about an assurance for security.^{ix} Collins Dictionary defines insecurity as a lack of confidence. It is a state of being worried, anxious, afraid, uncertain, unsure, timid, self-conscious, open to attack, unshielded, and ill-protected.^x

Insurgency

The term "insurgency" has root in the Latin word *insurgentem*, which literally means "to rise against". From here it could connote to fight or rise against the people or person in power.^{xi} Insurgency could also mean a revolt, armed rebellion against authority when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents (lawful combatants).^{xii} Buttressing this, Robert R. Tomes in his article "Relearning Counterinsurgency Warfare", presents some tactics and methods that distinguish one act of insurgency from another. They include the following: first is the cell-network form of insurgency. This form maintains secrecy. Second is a form of terrorism, which is used to foster insecurity among the population and drive them to the insurgents for protection. Third is multifaceted in nature. It tends to cultivate support in the general population, often by undermining the new regime. And the last form of insurgency is a complete attack on the government.^{xiii}

Upon a closer consideration of the foregoing, we will discover that a lot of issues beg the question. Can insurgency rise from nothing? Is insurgency not a reaction to some meted or perceived injustice and inhumane treatments? Can there be an insurgent act in a situation where there is either a type or a system of government that takes care of at least the basic needs of the people, and if there is, to what extent? Is it not becoming clearer that selfishness, manifested in negligence, corruption, nepotism, and religio-political fanaticism are all the breeding places for insurgency, militia, guerilla warfare, terrorism, which will eventually translate into insecurity, chaos and violence? Is insurgency not an effect of a cause? Is insecurity not an advanced effect of selfishness, either of an individual or group of individuals? The awareness and concerns that this paper raises is that a keen attention be given to the root cause(s) of insecurity. And the problem will be solved more when we name the root cause, which is selfishness. Any other supposed cause is an offshoot. Until the vital force (the nature's gifts of intelligence, mental or power of transcendence, skills, potentialities) that each human being carries, either as a person or as a people, or the regional vital forces a region carries in their natural resources (minerals, vegetations, and animals) are recognized and given the needed attention, any talk about how to solve insecurity, remains an illusion. Such talk is a castle on the air. We will see further how all these forces (vital

forces) of nature play out in the status of a people, especially if they want to grow or develop.

The Notion of Force

Very essential to the understanding of Force or vital force, within African ontology, is our awareness of how vital force is intimately and essentially linked with the concept of 'being'. This explains why Tempels sees 'vital force' as the most fundamental and basic concept in Bantu thought. In his discourse on 'Force', Tempels argues that God is the one, who possesses Force in Himself. He is the source of force of every creature.^{xiv} Everything on earth: humans, animals, vegetables and minerals have been endowed, essentially with vital force, through God's creative force.^{xv} About this, Jim Unah notes that in ancient African societies, the theory of forces was more or less a common community property. Nevertheless, each group marked out by a distinct language, culture, history, mores, socio-psychological experiences and economic realities enunciated one form or the other of the theory of forces. However, the variants in their understanding never played down the fact that forces interact, intermingle, and interpenetrate one another in an egregious sense.^{xvi}

Again, there is hierarchy among forces. The hierarchy is based on the strength of their vitality. Even though all beings possess vital force, each does so according to its level of being, nature. This affirms that nature is a principle of operation in a thing. And each obeys natural laws, which is the determinant of how a being operates in accordance with its specie.^{xvii}

In the hierarchy of forces, God is the highest of all beings. He is the Force of every creature. He is 'the Strong One'. He possesses Force in Himself.^{xviii} The next is the spirit of the first ancestors, the arch-patriarchs of the tribe, founding members of the various clans. They are the propagators of the divine inheritance of the vital human strength.^{xix} Next is the other dead. These are only held in esteem pending on the influence and eminence of their force in their progeny.^{xx} The fourth in Tempels categorization is the human being. Man can renew his vital force by tapping the strength of other creatures.^{xxi} Below the human being, are animate being, vegetative beings and inanimate beings. All these possess their vital forces.^{xxii}

In sum, as a consequence of God's creative Force, everything on earth: human, animal, vegetable, and mineral, have been endowed, essentially, with a vital force. Vital force has both positive and negative poles. And even though each vital force has strength, each also has the capacity of being rendered potent or impotent.^{xxiii} What sorts of actions could render a vital force important? How can a vital force be enhanced? All these are the concerns of our succeeding discussions.

The Place of Human in the Hierarchy of Forces

We noted earlier that a certain hierarchy exists among the forces. A further claim is to state that in such hierarchy, all the being holds themselves in an absolute necessity. No being is of lesser importance or value. No being can occupy the place of the other. When a being is lost, a vital force is lost. And nature is impoverished. To distinguish one being from another will amount to either some categorical error or ontological misappropriation. Let us situate the human being in its hierarchical place. This will help us understand the nature of association that exists between the humans and the other beings (with vital forces).

Human being is a living force. It possesses life that is true, full and lofty. The human being is the supreme force, the most powerful among created beings.^{xxiv} It is endowed with reason (intelligence).^{xxv} He dominates plants, animals and minerals. In fact, plants, animals and minerals exist by divine decree. And they are created only for the assistance of the higher created being, human being.^{xxvi} Put differently, non-human forces are designated by God as existing for the sole purpose of use by human beings in order to strengthen human vital force.^{xxvii} The implication is that vegetables, animals and minerals are said to have attained their full potentialities as forces, in their capacities, so long as they serve the needs of the human beings, for whom they were brought into being. Would there be any ontological consequences when human life, a higher being, is wasted because of vegetables, animals or minerals? Better still, what happens when a human being or a group of individuals are classified unimportant in the whole circle of a society, and they are better wasted than allowed to exist? Our society has some answers to provide nature; otherwise, the solution to security remains a chase after shadow and an illusion.

Further, the conception of human psychology, within African metaphysical scheme, is indispensably linked to the central notion of the interconnections of vital force in the universe. For instance, no human being exists as an isolated unit. If they do, their vital force(s) would not survive as a specific and secluded entity. No strengthening of vitality would then be able to occur. Hence, the human being is essentially recognized as being an integral part of a community in which reactions and interactions take place. In fact, for Tempels, a Bantu cannot be alone being.^{xxviii} He feels and knows himself to be a vital force as long as he maintains intimate and personal relationship with other forces, which act both above and below in the hierarchy of forces. Hence, no human being is an independent entity. Each human being forms a link in the chain of vital forces, a living link, active and passive, joined from above to the descending line of his ancestry and sustaining below him the line of his descendants.^{xxix}

J. S. Mbiti later buttressed this individual-community affiliation and interconnectedness when he defined the being of an individual in African culture. For Mbiti, 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.'^{xxx} Both Julius Nyerere and Tom Mboya corroborated this view. For Nyerere, the African is born socialized. And Mboya maintains that the African 'self' is essentially social, a being in community. Thus, most African tribes have a communal approach to life. A person is an individual only to the level that he is a member of a clan, a community or a family.^{xxxi} All these explain why an African can die a martyr's death to protect his life, family, community, clan, and their nature's endowed resources.

What we can infer from the foregoing is that the effort and moral obligation to protect and preserve life and then natural endowments is not foreign to an African. Such gesture is never an artificial one. An African will feel humiliated, in fact, dehumanized if what belongs to him is taken carelessly. Such gesture, from our discussion, weakens the vital force in him. If the effect is on a community, the vital force of a community is lessened. And if this destruction of life, which is both a conspiracy against the divine plan and an ontological sacrilege persists, a people may go into extinction. What else can breed intertribal and interethnic war and fight, which renders a nation unsafe and insecure than selfishness, which makes a particular segment of a whole to treat the rest or some segments as if they are less humans or as beings without purpose or goal?

The Interconnectedness of Forces

Any effort to deny some interconnectedness, relationship, affinity, or association, will create a chasm that nothing else will fill it except a recognition of how nature orderly situated all beings in their proper place. The force that each being is endowed with, is contemporaneous with such being. None existed before the other: this made Tempels to say that for the Bantu, force is being and being is force. Tempels assertion is deeper than a face value judgment can exhaust. Force in Tempels estimation should be understood as a "nature" of a thing. Force should be translated as the principle of operation in a being. Such principles come with a being. Though it may not manifest fully, it reaches its actuality through motion, which is the act of a thing in potency in so far as it is in potency. This also made Tempels argue that force is not the accidental quality of a thing. Force is intimately and essentially linked to a being. All these are to enable us penetrate and have a robust discussion about the interconnectedness of forces. Remember, African metaphysics is holistic in nature. And reality in African metaphysics is considered as a closed system. Thus, everything hangs together and is affected by any change in the system. Further, African metaphysics is organized around a number of principles and laws. These principles and laws control the vital forces. The principles referred to above, are about the interaction of forces: God and humankind interact; human beings interact among themselves, human beings and animals interact,

and finally, human beings and material things interact. With this hierarchical placement, the forces form a ‘chain of being’, where God, the creator and source of all vital forces, is at the apex.^{xxxii}

All forces are integrally connected. They share an intrinsic relationship. There is an interaction among forces.^{xxxiii} This explains why nothing moves in the universe of forces without influencing other forces by its movement.^{xxxiv} Such influences and association of forces follow some set laws. Thus, the African metaphysical universe is not a chaotic tangle of unordered forces blindly struggling with one another. While there are possible necessary actions, there are also other metaphysically impossible actions by reason of the nature of the forces in question.^{xxxv} For instance, even though there is ordering, dependence, potential and mutual interaction among forces, it is only God, who is ultimate in his knowledge that knows all beings.^{xxxvi} With their limited knowledge, the human beings should not play the role of God, especially in determining, beyond their capacity, what affects the other force(s).

The interaction of forces also has some ethical implications. It fundamentally reproaches any actions that discount the strengthening of individual and communal vital forces. It condemns conduct such as fraud, theft, dishonesty, adultery, and fornication. Those actions are believed to exert destructive influences within the community. Further, it influences negatively the vital force of each individual within the social group.^{xxxvii}

There is also this belief that every act, every detail of behaviour, every attitude and human custom, which militates against vital force or against the increase of the hierarchy of the (Muntu) human being, is bad.^{xxxviii} And the human being, as we have echoed above, knows that such destruction is an ontological sacrilege. It is far immoral, and as such unjust.^{xxxix}

Implications of Negligence on the Security Situation of Nigeria

The simple and the fastest means to destroy Nigeria completely, is to deny either directly or indirectly that there is a security challenge in the country. The other side of the same coin is for the leaders to deny that they do not know the cause(s), and as such cannot proffer solutions. The cause is selfishness, either of an individual or a group of individuals. The act of indifference and negligence, which has made the leaders concentrate on the symptoms rather than tackling the disease itself, was only birthed by selfishness. Perhaps, being aware of what they stand to gain, those who ordinarily should arrest the situation, by responding to the yearning and longing of the affected people, prefer to sustain the tension so as to maximize profit. A philosopher was once asked, “From what you are observing now, if there is a Third World War, how

sophisticated do you think it will be?” And his response is “there may not be a Third World War, because we may have finished ourselves before the war commences.” This thing could be applied to the security challenge in Nigeria. Many political leaders may exploit the situation to enrich themselves; but none of them is sure whether their lives will extend to the next minute. Anyone can be a victim of this recent menacing violence, insurgency and insecurity. And until we go back to the drawing board, things may not get any better. Any attempt to resolve security challenge may meet with futility.

The vital forces of a people cannot be dwindled by destroying their lives and means of sustenance and a call for peace will be hearkened to. Apart from the religious regulations that restrict the killing or wasting of another’s life, nature abhors the waste of human blood. Whenever a human life is wasted, nature is wounded. Whenever the sweat of the human beings is wasted; their means of livelihood destroyed, nature is wounded. And when nature is wounded, we are wounded; because nature cannot efficiently take care of our needs in such bleeding conditions. The earlier we discover that nature is wounded and killed in our people, who are killed carelessly every day, the closer we come to being a better people. The Western world and America have discovered this. This answers for the reason why they have different activists fighting for the right of many things, ranging from animal right to the call not to destroy the ecosystem. No effort to preserve nature and nature’s gifts is an exaggeration. And so we are where we are because waste of nature and nature’s gifts does not mean much to us.

Conclusion

I have made every effort to sustain both the goal and the tempo of this discussion. The reality of forces within African ontology is axiomatically empirical. The denial of its existence is often communicated by the lasting effect it leaves with both the individual(s) and the society that carried out such unsophisticated ontological gesture. To deny forces, in its hierarchy and interconnectedness, is to deny that beings in African ontological considerations have nature. Further, to deny beings some nature is to state that such beings lack the principles of operations. Such argument lacks some merits, because it contains within it some internal contradictions. For instance, if a being lacks nature (force), principle of operation, such being cannot be known and named. Because a being by its nature, obeys natural laws, which are the laws that determine how a being performs in accordance with its specie or nature. A further implication is that there is a denial of natural laws. Of course, this will be hasty to say that a universe that is characterized by a very glaring aesthetic orderliness lacks some laws. And when all these are accepted to be through, which are not, of course, except one wants to suffer some intellectual constipations, there will be no possible distinction

between one being and others, for they are not known: they lack nature or essence. A thing's nature, the force it carries, is the principle of differentiation in a thing. A particular being is called male, because another is female. Geographically, a place is named east, because there is west, and north because there is south. Beyond geographical naming, a location with its people and pattern of organization, which make them unique, is different from another location with its people and uniqueness. It will be evil and an ontological conspiracy against nature; and of course an ontological sacrilege, if a people play down the uniqueness of another and their nature's giftedness just to satisfy their selfishness. Such consciously chosen negligence of a people's vital force is the root cause of the chaos, insecurity, insurgency, and violence in Nigeria.

What name can we give the illegal movements of arms from a particular region to another outside selfishness? Those arms are never meant for the security of the people. Those arms are more sophisticated than what our security agencies carry. What else can we name the destruction of a people's farm products by herdsmen outside selfishness? What else can we name some purported stoppage of some food products from a particular region, while minerals and other products from the victim-regions still move unrestrictedly into the other region(s) outside selfishness? Are all these not some efforts to dwindle the vital forces that a people and a region carry? Whether consciously or unconsciously nature has a way it reacts when overly exploited.

And so, the issue of insecurity is not foreign to Nigerian society. What is novel about insecurity presently is the tempo it has assumed. Presently, insecurity has gone beyond a thing of News Paper. It can now be seen, perceived, heard and touched. Consequently, the people can no longer bear it. Nature is wounded in the people and things (their natural endowments). And to sit back and build castles on the air, in the form of Television analysis and Newspaper articles, without recognizing the vital forces, the giftedness, the principle of differentiation, the thing that makes a Yoruba different from Igbo, and an Igbo different from Igala, and Igala different from Hausa, and an Hausa different from Idoma, etc, we will not make head ways. The continual effort by a people to extinguish others from what belongs to all equally, buttresses a common claim that the amalgamation of Nigeria was a forced marriage. And when a marriage is no longer working, the best thing is to get divorced. But the case remains that we are aware of what poses challenge to the workability of the forced marriage. The recent agitations from respective quarters, need genuine attentions, otherwise insecurity will continue to have children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc. And all of us owe nature some explanations.

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