

RELIGION AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This paper examines Religion and Insecurity. It however, focuses on Nigeria experience. Thus, the concepts of the subject matter were viewed such include: religion,, insecurity, causes of insecurity, visa-vis religion and insecurity: Nigerian experience. However, Nigeria as a multination's with different ethno-religious groups had been bedeviled with insecurity in an ethnic cum religious dimensions. Hence, religion is "relatively-bounded system of beliefs symbols and practice that addresses the nature of existence and in which communion with others and otherness is lived as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially-grounded ontology of time, space, embodiment and knowing". Insecurity on the other hand, is the state of being subject to danger of injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. It is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confidence or anxiety about yourself. Insecurity can also describe the state of being open to danger or threat. The economy that may have you worried about job insecurity. The study noted that the causes insecurity in Nigeria include; kidnapping, militancy, unemployment, fear of distrusted government, etc not withstanding some recommendations are made based on the study as a way forward.

Introduction

In modern history, internal strife has burdened Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria (Abdul, 2012). After independence, Nigeria experienced frequent coups and long periods of autocratic military rule from 1996 until 1999 when a democratic civilian government was established.

The past fifty years, in particular, have witnessed numerous coups as well as regional, religious, ethnic and secessionist violence. Another reason for insecurity is the act of piracy in the Niger Delta which seems to have characterized much of the current period of democracy. In the past two years, however, new forms of discord, distrust, have emerged in which religious

extremist, armed militant, and ethnic militia groups threaten to bring about greater insecurity than those that preceded them. The older forms of militia groups have metamorphosed into armed groups and have intensified their activities.

According to Shafiu (2011), recently, there have been high incidences of insecurity that have resulted to deaths and psychological trauma for individuals and families in the country. This requires citizens to be much more security conscious considering the threat by religious extremist to bring about greater insecurity than those preceded them. Other security indices also includes the persistent tension between the north and the south of Nigeria, growing unrest in the Niger Delta re and other parts of the country resulting in rise in violence incidents and kidnappings. Ethnic tension, religious differences, unemployment and numerous social and political grievances are all fueling the unrest in Nigeria and contributing to flashpoints for violence and creating insecurity in the country.

The current security situation in Nigeria has forced the religious and political leaders to a 'rethinking national security' as Ibrahim Bashir of the daily sun puts it. This situation demands Nigeria security agency in collaboration with the religious leaders to rethink and focus our national security resources on the unique character if security threats in Nigeria. (Ibrahim, Daily Sun Thursday, March 24, 2011. P.4.). Nigerians are daily becoming more and more apprehensive about the security implications to the country before, during and after the elections.

According to Shafiu (Daily Sun, Friday January 21, 2011 p.19), the general anxiety over the nation's security is germane and should be a source of concern to the government". The weakness of the Nigeria's Criminal Justice System has been exposed greatly. This has posed a challenge and showed in the ineffectiveness and delay in the implementation of the policy. General Owoye Andrew Azazi has given some imperative, one of which is...the need for a more robust legislation on Anti-Terrorism Act must provide the institutional and co-ordination frame work for the combating and elimination the acts of terrorism in and against the federal Republic of Nigeria...provide for additional judicial guidelines to the Criminal Justice System for the effective and speedy prosecution of terrorists and must clearly enable NSO to conduct their anti-terrorism measures and activities across many of our national ethnic-centric, religious, political and social biases. Very important is whether the government will be willing to take the bold steps necessary to clearly articulate, communicate

and implement whatever policy that is in place. Political instability sometimes results from uncontrollable state of insecurity in a nation.

This seminar paper will place the current insecurity in Nigeria in context by defining and viewing the causes, effects and the rise in violence indices which have characterized the Nigerian society in recent times; highlight the challenges; assess its political, religious and cultural implications to the nation. Let us begin with understanding the terms which are frequently referred to in this paper.

Definition of Terms

The Word "Religion"

According to Barbour, (2006), there are many definitions of religion and only few are stated here. The typical dictionary definition of religion refers to a "belief in, or the worship of, a god or gods" or the "service and worship of God or the supernatural". However, writers and scholars have expanded upon the "belief in god" definitions as insufficient to capture the diversity of religious thought and experience.

Clifford (2004), define religion as "a relatively-bounded system of beliefs symbols and practices that addresses the nature of existence and in which communion with others and otherness is lived as if it both takes in and spiritually transcends socially grounded ontologies of time, space embodiment and knowing". This definition is intended, they write, to get away from the modernist dualisms or dichotomous understandings of immanence/transcendence, spirituality/materialism, and sacredness/secularity.

Clifford (2004), Defined religion as "the belief in spiritual beings". He argued, back in 1871, that narrowing the definition to mean the belief in a supreme deity or judgment after death or idolatry and so on, would exclude many people's from the category of religious, and thus "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motives which underlies them". He also argued that the belief in spiritual beings exists in all known societies.

Insecurity

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. Cole and Brett (2010) affirms that above definitions of insecurity as "a state of being not secure, lack of confidence; to enable us understand this term, we now turn to the meaning of the

word 'insecure' which the Advance English Dictionary defines as 'not confident about yourself or your relationships with other people; not safe or protected. This definition further expounds the meaning of the term to include not just the general meaning but it touches the individual person "not being confident about one self".

Insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confidence or anxiety about yourself. It can also describe the state of being open to danger or threat. The economy may have you worried about job insecurity. Or maybe it's the insecurity of rocky relationship that keeps you up at night.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

According to Beattie, (2004), there is a dramatic increase in violence, terrorism and the like, in Nigeria today. Lawless sects are raising the tempo of their campaign in various parts of the country. We hear a series of bombings, shootings and killings, kidnappings, armed robbery, arson and so on. These take place from north to south, east to west and almost on daily basis. The phenomenon "insecurity" has been extended to cover other spheres like economic, social and political insecurity. In this paper, our concentration will treat the topic historically – as it affects the life and property of the citizenry. Let us now examine the cause of this problem.

1. Kidnapping: this is another visible sign of insecurity in the country. The perpetrators of this crime do not spare anyone in this new wave of crime that seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non contact crimes (Mbachu, 2008). Since the act began in Nigeria, aged, children, male and female have been kidnapped for ransom. This has made life unbearable to the citizens. People now live in fear of falling victims to these criminals.
2. Militancy According to criminal law, militancy is violence, illegal force or the illegal use of unjustified force or the intimidating effects created by threat of this act. This word became pronounced in Nigeria when the Niger Delta took up arms against government exploration and environmental degradation of their area due to oil exploration and exploitation. This does not only exist in the Niger Delta area. Other parts of the country have witnessed militants who commit atrocities worse than the youth of Niger Delta whose area is given the "brand name" until recently the word 'insurgency' was alien to Nigeria society. Muiyiwa (2001), maintains that the activities of the militant Islamic sect popularly called "Boko Haram" have opened this chapter of militancy in Nigeria.

Shootings, bombings, kidnappings, arson, car and suicide bombing in various parts of the country are said to be handiwork of 'insurgence'. These activities have heightened the spate of insecurity in the nation.

3. Fear of Distrust on Government: what the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of its people. This has therefore; impact on the general human security of h people as the situation promotes fear, limits the people's ability to develop economically.
4. Unemployment The rise in crime wave in Nigeria since the mid 1990's was as a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality, which are abetted by inefficient and corrupt police and customs forces (Nwachukwu, 2000). The idle minds became devil's workshop. These people who are mostly youths and easily recruited into militant groups and trained into rob, kill, kidnap, smuggle, hijack to mention but a few. Accurate unemployment rates are difficult to obtain and generally means little in a society where many who work are marginally employed and where begging is a socially accepted occupation. This is a true assessment of the Nigerian situation.
5. Porous Borders: in free flow of migrants from other countries to Nigeria through our unguarded borders allows criminals to enter the country without check.
6. Proliferation of Arms and Ammunitions: several arms hauls have been ceased at our air and sea ports, some in very large quantities. This is not good for the country. These arms and ammunition ends up in the hands of criminals who apply same in their nefarious activities in the country thereby making life insecure for the people of their locality (Bediako, 2004).
7. Illegal Armed Groups: illegal importation of arms and ammunitions has made possession of arms by individuals and group very easy. We can name groups like Niger Delta Militant, Odua People's Congress, Bakassi Boys' MASSOB that possess arms and ammunitions.
8. Oil Bunkering: Nigeria being one of the largest oil producing nations suffers from activities of illegal oil bunkering. This activity is promoted by the spate of insecurity in the country. This is back-up with the criminals who are ready to die in Nigeria water ways. This therefore makes the coastal areas of our oil producing states unsafe.
9. Labour Activists: Early in 2012 the Nigerian Labour Congress call for a nationwide strikes as a result of increase in price of fuel by government. They accused the government of insensitivity to the suffering of the people

as well as ignoring the insecurity challenges in the country. According to Fagan (2006), peaceful protests by labour and the other civil society groups have severally been high-jacked by miscreants and inflicted pains on people and made life in our cities insecure.

10. Wrong Political Ambition: the desire for a political office not evil but to nurse negative reasons for that ambition can result to one doing anything to attain it. Ben Okolo writing from Johannesburg, South Africa observed that “the current crisis which started in Bauchi and has engulfed other states in the north has elements of theocratic ambitions in it”. Ogunada (2002), also was of the view that the perpetrators of the violent activities in parts of the country are operating with a hidden agenda. They have intention of enthroning their own type of government which is selfish, criminal and unpatriotic as Nigerians. With such ambition they can try the country ungovernable or insecure.
11. Electioneering: election period in the country seem to be the moment of serious security challenge. Shafiu S. Zurmi (Daily Sun, Friday January 21, 2011 p.19) “while the major political characters intensify their efforts at winning the support of the Nigerian public, ordinary Nigerians are daily becoming more and more apprehensive about the security implications to the country before, during and after elections. The general anxiety over the nation’s security is germane and should be a source of concern to the government” dr. Fanon once said “those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable”.
12. Ethnic Violence: we have heard in some area like Plateau and Benue states reprisal attacks by ethnic militia unleashing security in these areas. While security in some parts of the country, like the South-south, southeast and southwest has been compromised, the northern has been always shown a propensity for violent conflicts did not disappoint the security watchers. Stating with usual religious/ethnic oriented conflicts to the Jos ethnic/religious/political conflicts in 2008 till date, the northern states have shown that security of persons and properties is still far from being realized.
13. Desire to Actualize Ethnic Agenda: this has become a phenomenon in Nigerian society today. Because of certain unsatisfactory or unfavourable situation politically, economically, developmentally and so on they would want to be separated from Nigeria. We hear of, movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the south, movement for the actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South East, Oodua People’s Congress (OPC) in the West, Boko Haram in the North,

BAKASI BOYS, Fulani HERDSMEN, and VIGILANTE groups all over the country. Each one of these groups has reasons for their agitation (Michael Ezemonye. Vanguard Dec, 2011.p.8)

Religion and Insecurity in Nigeria

Following the above background, the question of what is right and wrong (Ethics) lacks concrete definitions in the context of Nigerians since her dominant religious groups have contrary believe about ethics. For instance, the issue of violence via killing of lives, destruction of properties was totally abhorred in the Christian religious but the Muslim counterpart indulge in it without feeling remorse. In other words, the Christians value lives as precious while other religion consider killing of lives as holy as otherwise.

However, the essence of national development as a multidimensional ideology that requires proper coordination of the entire structure. Of course, religion and ethics have strong role to play in determining the status of national security of a given nation like Nigeria. Besides, we cannot forget in a haste to talk about religious fanaticism/extremism as a serious factor behind the cause of insecurity in Nigeria today. It is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation unity, economic growth and development.

Religious Fanaticism/Extremism: Religious fanaticism and extremism have been among the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. The previous and recent incidences of attack on churches and Christians in Northern part of the country by Muslim extremist have rendered several states in the north unsafe for life and properties. The damage of these extremists have caused can be seen in the following words. Religion has unleashed on mankind...it has left in its wake, a heavy toll of destroyed lives and wanton destruction of property. It has delayed workable political agreements and brutalized societies. Religious violence has been responsible for the collapse of one political order or the other throughout history. It has given rise to assassination of various Heads of States or Government in recent times...leads to irretrievable break up of internal harmony, and leads o foreign intervention. (Ogunade, 2002)

Conclusion

The danger of insecurity cannot be over emphasized. When a nation is saddled with the problem of insecurity every other plan are stalled. Nigeria a country with a population of over one and fifty million people cannot allow insecurity to derail her political and economic development plans. The country's young

democracy is being threatened. Recently, we have experienced increased in violence activities in Nigeria which has claimed several lives and properties. There is therefore urgent need to tackle it before it makes the country ungovernable.

Recommendations

1. Job Creation: As unemployment rises so also is the increase in violence and crime making the country insecure. This has been identified by scholars and leaders alike. Also an insecure environment will definitely result in job lose. Government should therefore tackle and arrest youth restiveness by investing on job creation.
2. Provision of Proper Legal Framework: the editorial in the punch newspaper of Wednesday 13th of July 2011 gave the following summary that addresses this fact and stands as a suitable recommendation: security chiefs who met with senators at a closed session on 5th July 2011 claimed that efforts to rein in the sect had often been thwarted by the judiciary through generous granting of bails....(they) were unanimous on the need to have a judiciary integrated into action plans instituted by the security agencies. This will encourage the security operatives in their work and hasten the process of bring to justice the perpetrators of criminal activities in the country.
3. Justice Dispensation: The Punch Editorial of July 13th 2011 made a very frantic opinion on the idea of fighting insecurity in Nigeria. In the fight against corruption in the public service and against cultism in the tertiary institutions, the anti-craft agencies and university authorities have often been up against a brick wall in the courts. The courts have been repeatedly blamed for frustrating justice delivery through all manners of injunctions, expert orders, and in some cases, outright acquittals. On this problem, I strongly recommend that the government should through the justice ministry check these excesses and discipline any judge found to collaborate with criminals to stall justice dispensation.
4. Provision of Basic Needs of the Citizens: The basic goals of any civilized society are the survival of security of life and property. These basic goals are not negotiable, no matter who wins or loss in election. Therefore, the ordinary Nigerians must be given protection at all cost through appropriate information, education, mobilization, job opportunity,

pressure group formation and legal requirements in our democratic politics.

5. Lack of or non-use of Intelligence Network: The failure of the security cluster in Nigeria to make use of its intelligence network to decode the security challenge the militant groups and all such sects poses to the peace and security of the nation leave much to be desired. The country's Early Warning System Mechanism to preventing such deadly conflicts from erupting should be developed. The intelligence sector and the conflict prevention mechanism of the country failed in many instances to pick up the tell tale signs and this is indicative of failure of the state structure. What the government should do is to develop the Conflict Prevention Mechanism in the county, including the establishment of n Early Warning System at all levels of government. Through the early detection of impending conflicts and its prevention, the government will be providing a safe and enabling environment for the civilian population, and for political and economic development to thrive.
6. Need to Strengthen the Nations' Economic Base: A weaken economy increased the publics' sense of insecurity. It is reported in Collier Year Book 1997 about People's Republic of Congo that "visitors reported an in surge of activities of quasi official militia that circulated in the street of the capital city of Brazzaville extorting money. To avoid similar situation in Nigeria the government must initiate project/programmes that will strengthen the economic bases of the country.
7. Precaution in the use of Force: The Nigerian government has to take precaution in the use of force to tackle the root cause of insecurity because government force seems to galvanize greater retaliation by the 'criminals' and the masses end up bearing the brunt - with more violence, deaths and destruction of innocent people, the poor and the rich.
8. Provide Good Governance: According to Abdu, the chief Imam of the university o Abuja, 'good governance is a panacea for insecurity in Nigeria' (Daily Sun Newspaper of 01/01/2012). If the government will focus on the welfare of the people by providing jobs for our teaming youth, infrastructure like good roads, water, electricity and housing and tackle the problem of falling standard of education and medical care, then insecurity would have been reduced to minimum if not eradicated.
9. Need for Collaboration: There is the need for collaborative effort in solving the insecurity problem in Nigeria. The government definitely cannot tackle the problem alone. The Religious Leaders and traditional rulers, civil society groups, Labour Union must team up with government to find

solution to this monster that is threatening the fabric of the nations' peaceful co-existence.

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