GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: ITS ATTENDANT CONFLICTS, TERRORISM AND INSECURITY

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Abstract

The paper examined Governance in Nigeria, its attendant conflicts, terrorism and insecurity. The paper sets objectives to be pursued in the discourse as to examine the concept of governance; the origin of conflicts in Nigerian governance as well as issues of terrorism and security in the Nigeria nation. In pursuit of the above, the paper examined various issues in the nation's history and expressed disappointment in the Nigeria governance, noting that Nigeria has not toed the fertile ground for stability, unity and security of the country having traced the background to conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria.

The study reveals the various possible causes of conflicts and terrorism in the Nigeria political system which has resulted in the threat to security of the nation since independence. The issue of ethnic supremacy was fingered along other issues responsible for conflicts and terrorism following a carryover from the governance of Uthman Dan Fodio which started in 1804 to conquer Nigeria from the North to the sea in the South. The pursuit of that governance by those wishing to actualize the aspiration was found to have inexorably brought about security invasion in the country. It is the opinion of the paper that anyone or group pursuing the hidden agenda to "Conquer…" the country by destroying the life of others must be anathematized for it.

The paper concluded and recommended that all forms of discrimination among Nigerian citizens should be eliminated in order to create room for national development; no one ethnic group should see itself as being superior to others in the same country; governance must work for the survival, unity, stability, peace and security of the country, among others.

Keywords: Governance, terrorism, conflicts, security, political system, government and citizen.

Introduction

Between 1967 -1970, Nigeria was in the throes of a bitter civil war in the premise that Nigeria may be one. That was the symbol of the war which eventually came to an end in 1970 and was declared a "No Victor, No Vanquished" by those who prosecuted the war.

Those who were in the fore-front of the negotiation for a cease fire then to end the war, advocated for a "United Nigeria that will ensure all forms of security to all citizens" (Cervenka, 1977: 105).

It is no gain saying the fact that Nigeria since independence has really not walked on a fertile ground for peace, unity and security. This arises from the various agitations for control of power of the nation as a result of misplaced priority. In that vein, so many things happened leading to the crises of 1966 which eventually culminated into civil strife, and then of course, the unavoidable war which claimed millions of lives with property destroyed. All the crises was based on the struggle for power which also has a base on the unhealthy amalgamation of the North and South into an entity called Nigeria by the ill-famous administration of Lord Fredrick Lugard in 1914.

The history of the Nigeria political system had been very turbulent leading to several crises in the nation. For instance, the crises the nation experienced in 1966-1970 arose from the 1964-1965 election riots in various sections of the country.

According to the narrations of Tonwe (1995: 383) and (Orobator, 1996: 17), politics during the First Republic was very turbulent. The Western Region during the period was particularly very volatile because the interested parties tried to take advantage of the situation to install their political interests.

Nigeria conducted a federal election full of heavy malpractices with the attempt to place the Northern based Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) party in power in 1964. Then the Western Region elections of 1965 spiraled along the line of the 1964 election placing the West Regional based Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) a junior partner in the NNA alliance as the winner, even though there was a protest from the Southern based United People's Ground

Alliance (UPGA) which was a merger of the National Council of Nigeria Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG). These elections were embroiled with widespread bloody communal riots resulting in the death of several innocent citizens while the Federal Government appeared incapable to quell the crises (Orobator, 1996).

This paper lock into governance in Nigeria: its attendant conflicts, terrorism and security. In pursuit of the above, the objectives of the research are as follows:

1. To define governance,

2. To examine the origin of conflict in Nigeria governance, and

3. To analyse issues of terrorism and security in Nigeria governance.

The Concept of Governance:

Governance according to Webster Dictionary (2001) is the exercise of authority, the giving of a direction and control. Governance is that aspect of politics which aims to formulate and manage the rules of political arena in which state and civil society actors operate and interact to make authoritative decision (Hyden, 1999). In the views of Dozie (1999) governance relates to the totality of the process entailed in the exercise and management of the collective will of a people or group as embodied in the visible organs or constitution of a state.

Oarhe and Aghemelo (2003:379) agreed with Hyden (1999) that governance is synonymous with good government. Erhomosele and Obadare (1996) pepped that the salient trapping of good governance include accountability, predictability, organizational effectiveness and competition.

Good governance, Oarhe and Aghemelo have argued, must guarantee socio-political stability, as well as economic growth of the nation and the well being of the individual citizens.

A good government must not only sustain the stability of the nation, but also the security of her citizens.

Conflicts in Nigeria Governance:

Conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups (Francis, 2009). Armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. The worst forms of armed conflict include mass murder and genocide against unarmed civilians (Francis, 2009).

As stated earlier, major conflicts in Nigeria has origin in political struggle to control power through elections. Nigeria is a volatile mix of insecurity, instability, corrupt political institution, poverty and ethnic supremacy. Corrupt political institution and poverty are fertile grounds for conflict and terrorism to thrive.

Governance and Political Conflicts in Nigeria: The Origin

On October 1, 1960 Nigeria gained her independence from the British government. The nationalists in nascent state decided to try their hands in politics to run the country. There were three (3) regional based political parties for the control of the society. The three parties were the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Easter region. In the Northern region was the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduana of Sokoto himself while in the Western region was the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

All the political parties as they were had their political philosophies reflecting their regional beliefs and interests/culture which became a barrier to break through the cultural and geographical boundaries with a view to embracing national feelings, interests and patriotism (Otoghagua, 2007: 49). Sir Ahmadu Bello was protecting the interest and culture of the Northern people. Chief Obafemi Awolowo on the other hand was also defending the Yoruba's interest, the same with Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of the Eastern region. Although these parties existed, it was only in form based on their regional philosophies without national interest. Sir Ahmadu Bello who was holding on the political power in the North was an ardent follower and a patriot defender of Utman Danfodio's religious philosophy and Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who also maintained the same faith and belief. These two political gurus in the North were much willing to follow and

achieve the philosophy of their master (Utman Danfodio) started in 1804 "to conquer Nigeria from North down to the sea" (Otoghagua, 2007:50) (meaning the South in this respect). Expectedly this type policy and philosophy would certainly incense the minds of the Southerners as a whole. This is the background to all the inflammatory statements heard during politics in Nigeria.

All the inflammatory utterances made by political party members were born out of accumulation from the previous mistrust and resentments from both parties: the NPC and NCNC, build up against each other, especially with readiness of the Nationalists from the Eastern and Western regions demanding for independence from the British government. Under the circumstance, no inflammatory statements were more threatening from both sides of the NPC and NCNC political parties than a statement credited to the organizing secretary of NPC, Malam Yufus Dantfoso, on 20th June, 1960, that "although the NPC and NCNC were running the Federal Government, the NPC does not regard the NCNC as a reliable partner". In this vein he called on the NPC supporters "to prepare for any eventuality" (Otoghagua, 2007: 50).

The above lend credence to the submission that such inflammatory remarks were a carry-over from the spirit of mistrusts and resentments the NPC as a party held against the NCNC party led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, especially for the roles the Nationalists from Eastern region played which he was a part in the agitation for the British to grant the request for independence to Nigeria even though it was made clear by the North that they were not ready for it.

In view of the above, the partnership entered into between the NPC and NCNC to form government was woven in circumstances of mutual mistrust and resentment between the members of the parties in the coalition government coupled with the "hostility created by the unfavourable socio-political imbalance in the post independence Nigeria."

This was the position, a situation where the three parties of the NPC and NCNC in coalition government with Action Group in the opposition, were on each other's throat until the collapse of the first republic in 1966 (Otoghagua, 2007:51) and the eventual" war which started in July 1967 and ended on January 1, 1970.

The rest of the republics were not left out of the political skirmishes and conflicts as it were.

For instance, the second republic experienced political violence. According to a report, "in the second republic, politics turned physical, not intellectual, warfare or other means. Political violence was on the increase. There were clashes upon clashes. The NPN against the UPN, NPN against the NPP, and NPN against the GNPP, the NPN being the only recurring decimal in these political battles" (Dele, 1985).

Whereas in the 1979 constitution, section 207 provides inter alia:

> *"No association shall retain, organize, train or equip any person or group of persons for the purpose of enabling them to be employed for the use of display of physical force or coercion in promoting any political objective or interest or in such manner as to arouse reasonable apprehension that they are organized or trained or equipped for that purpose".*

Each party contravened this aspect of the constitution, 1979, as entrenched. For example, each of the parties was having home-groomed army of criminals and thugs being paid by them. These were fully armed and deployed against opponents. There were about four of such armed groups by the parties, namely: Shagari Movement, Okpara Brigade, Jim's Vanguard and Ikemba Front. In the West, there were acts of thuggery and the destruction of lives and property at different locations became the hobby of the youths. In 1965, this was exactly the case. There is no gain saying the fact that the fire of violence was not only carried out in the ancient Oyo but also in Ondo. In the same vein, Akure "was on fire", Owo was not left out as the spark of the crisis which pervaded towns and villages as well.

There were reports of party members of NPN and UPN being burnt to death, houses set ablase. Such dastard acts were carried out by thugs of the prevailing parties, NPN and UPN in the above mentioned places. Beside Oyo, Ondo, Kaduna, Niger was also engulfed in the violence. By the time the Federal Government tried to step up action to curb the situation by banning public gathering as well political meetings and processions in states where violence was most prevalent, great damage had already been done.

Having traced the origin of conflict in Nigeria governance, we shall now proceed to the discourse of terrorism in governance.

Terrorism in Governance

The definition of the term "terrorism" has never been an easy one. It has been as thorny as there have been several attempts to define the word. Till date, there has not been an accepted definition. An attempt to define the term has always met with stiff disagreement as the term was seen in different perspective in the academic circle. Argument about the definition is still raging (Alika and Oviasuyi, 2016). It is perhaps due to the subjective nature the word "terrorism" has been defined, that it became difficult to have a universally accepted meaning of terrorism. As Imobighe (2006) put it:

> *"The word has been treated to various interpretations of the term, so much so, that there is an apparent confusion as to what really constitute terrorism".*

Terrorism as it is, is an act that need to be prevented and that was the reason in 1937 the international community came forth with a convention to prevent and punish acts of terrorism as a crime against humans. With the convention, terrorism was seen as "all criminal acts directed against the state, intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of a particular person or group of persons, or the general public". In defining terrorism proper, the 1937 convention added in its definition of terrorism as "all acts as well as attempts that cause death or bodily harm to heads of state or government, their spouses and other public figures, that cause damage to public property; that endanger the lives of the public; and the deal with arms and ammunition for the commission of any of these offense in any state" (Imobighe, 2006).

Terrorism therefore is an act perpetrated in the sense of imbalance, directed against the individual person or group of persons in a particular area of a country, or their interest, with a view to causing pains, fear or bodily harm and create panic in the minds of the public, in order to coerce the target to submit to the dictates of the terrorists.

This is what terrorists do to achieve their wish or demand whether at the local, national or international level.

Coming down home in Nigeria, the use of terrorism within the last decade is frightening. The method of carrying out an act of terrorism everywhere is the same. The intention is the same,

to achieve a purpose.

In a constitutional democracy such as ours, if we have it, everyone knows that major decisions are made by one-person-one vote under due process. Winners and losers could come from all over the place under designed checks and balances. In a functional democracy, fair-vote losers do not feel like losers and are never likely to lose tempers out of pique at losing as often experienced in Nigeria body politic.

It is expected that maturity and democracy, not conflict or terrorism, are the reason democracy is often chosen as decision-making of best resort for all people as well as for the people in any nation. But Africa-Nigeria is different. Why? In governance, what should occupy the minds of those in the herm of affairs is to focus on the things to do for the people in order to make the people great and happy and not what should divide and kill us.

Sometimes people might think that those in poverty might feel propelled into terrorism but that is not true. Terrorism is sponsored by the affluent in the society not necessarily by those in poverty. Well, it is not yet known what poverty might mean to some people so as to equate it with terrorism. it is possible poverty ridden minds might be used to carry out an act of terrorism, otherwise they do not have the means and resources to do so without sponsorship as in the case of Nigeria.

It is the argument of this paper that what is propelling terrorism in governance in Nigeria of today is nothing but power imbalance. Power is not balanced in Nigeria as it were, but terrorism does not appear to be coming from those in disadvantaged position in the issue of power balancing. Rather it is coming from those in hegemonious position. And it is the hand of Esau (Britain) in the unfair creation of Nigeria. Great Britain created the hegemony we are seeing in the Nigeria of today. Since independence of this country, Britain's attitude toward or in the affairs of Nigeria has been very inimical. It was Britain under Prime Minister Harold Wilson, that fuelled the Nigeria Civil War that ravaged the country between 1966 – 1970.

As it is reported in Cervenka (1977: 97), Britain supplied the most decisive war weapons valued at £10 million while the war raged with the intention to wipe out a segment of the country. Great Britain is the hand of "Esau" over Nigeria. They refused to put a stop to the war rather they encouraged it.

Let that be said. In the present day Nigeria, we now have the National Assembly comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate which have the power to decide or preside over issues affecting Nigeria but they appear to be mute over important issues and so Nigeria is boiling with terrorists activities all over. Instead of acting up, they are lining millions and billions of Nairases in their pocket at the detriment of the nation.

This might be the reason for the call for "restructuring" though a thorning issue in Nigeria governance. And that might be the only way out for the country to laugh and not to cry.

One important issue as noted in Alika (2018: 167) is the issue of ethnic supremacy which is strongly responsible for terrorism and the mass killing of innocent and unarmed citizens in the country, a situation where certain ethnic group claimed supremacy over others in the same country. Terrorism in Nigeria as of today, has a semblance of what happened in Europe between 1791 – 1794 usually referred to as "Reign of Terror" during the French Revolution. Jacobin was behind the mass killing of people when he was running the state. The terrorists acts carried out against the citizens was state sponsored. Since Jacobin runs the state, those responsible for the massive killing were never referred to as "terrorists". (Alika, 2004: 23).

Terrorists acts in the present day Nigeria has similarity with the French Revolution of 1791 – 1794 where the state sponsored terrorism waged against the citizens. Those who sponsored acts of terrorism never regard or call it terrorist activities and hence the state by implication, the Federal Government of Nigeria under President (Gen) Mohammadu Buhari (Rtd), refusal to declare Boko Haram and the Herdsmen killers waging acts of terrorism against Nigerian citizens as "terrorist group" though the state had been severally called upon to declare the group "a terrorist group" in the country.

Having placed on record the possible causes of terrorism in Nigeria governance almost a decade ago, the next thing is to shift the discourse to security in governance.

Security in Nigeria Governance

Security is the state of being secure; especially, freedom from danger, risk, care, or apprehension, etc (Webster, 2010). By this definition, we shall proceed to discuss security in

Nigeria governance.

Every individual of the Nigerian society is expected to be safe, free from danger of any sort and no life is to be put into risk unnecessarily by any other. The safeguard for life and property in any given nation, is the ability to provide security – through good governance. Good governance guarantee security for all within the nation. Security bothers on care and the alleviation of suffering.

Sometimes security may be seen as a collective responsibility but it is mostly entrusted and thus concentrated in the hands of those elected into governance. Good governance and security go together.

For decades, sustainable peace and security had continued to be elusive in Nigeria governance. Nigeria has experienced civil war; it has severally passed through turbulence of political crises more than any other incidence all because of failed governance or lack of good governance.

Under failed governance anything goes; arms are freely acquired illegally without recourse to law. The proliferation of arms threatens security especially where a segment of the society has the privilege to carry arms while others are precluded to own one. Under the scenario the security of those not privileged to own arms will most certainly be at risk. If government felt the need to grant the privilege to own arms, it should be granted to the whole and not just only a part.

There is no segment of the nation that does not require security. All citizens in the country need protection, of course, they are hungry for security, they are thirsting for security, therefore they should not be starved of this need.

In the face of insecurity confronting the entire nation, security for all should be made paramount in governance of the country. If it is legal for a section of the country to carry arms, it should be legal too for the rest to do so.

As it is there is a great threat to security in Nigeria. This is observable all over. There is need to eliminate whatever is leading to threat to life by governance. Almost all the constitutions in the world guaranteed right to life, The Bible and the Quran also guaranteed same and

respected the sanctity of life. For instance, the Bible says. “Thou shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13); the Quran says. “[Do not] kill (or destroy) yourselves, for verily God hath been to you most merciful if any do that in rancor and injustice, soon shall We cast them into fire…” (Surah IV: 29 – 30).

In the views of Mohammed Abed al-Jabiri and Mohammed Mahmoud El-Imam (1995: 67). “Life is a gift from God to man. It is his right and he is obliged to safeguard its physical and spiritual components. No one is to violate a person’s life, either physically or spiritually”.

In keeping with the above, Nigeria government must do everything within its power to put a stop to the threat to security of the nation and the individual citizens.

At this point, it is germane to state that a true adherent of Islam does not kill because he tenaciously believe in the Quran injunction. “Do not kill or destroy yourselves” (IV:29). It is also true that he believes in the freedom of belief as it is written:

> *“Let there be no compulsion in religion; truth stands out from error…” (Surah II:256).*

The Holy Quran also stressed that if it were the will of the Lord, all would have believed in the same religion and it states thus:

> *“If it had been thy Lord’s will, they would have believed, all who are on earth. Will thou then compel mankind, against their will to believe?” (Surah X:99).*

Mohammed and Mohammed (1995: 68) concluded that “God would have forced them to believe, but as it is He left it a matter of choice”.

At this juncture, it would appear inappropriate to compel or force anybody to convert to Islam or become a Muslim. To do so would strongly be against the spirit and practice of Islam as stated above.

If members of the National Assembly made up of men and women who are strong adherent of the Bible and Quran, are sincere to serve their country Nigeria, they ought to be able

to advocate or do something understood to be fair and effective for everyone; something potential to the saving of life and property in the nation. It is yet to be understood, of course, illogical, how we can talk about security without war being outlawed reliably and politics pledged to eliminate everything capable of causing war. As it is today, war drum beat is sounding to the ears of all Nigerians while the Senators and Representatives appear to play the lamedock without doing something to arrest the situation, except those few who are really concerned about Nigeria as their only country and no other.

It is the opinion of this paper that the only way to ensure peace and security without conflicts in Nigerian governance is to have a Federal Government that is responsive to the security need of all citizens. That not being done, security may likely be elusive and evasive.

It is pertinent to ask why National Assembly of this country cannot debate how to restructure politics capable of abolishing certain situations, beliefs and attitudes that threaten all of us equally in this nation? Then let us study, communicate and debate outlawing war squabbles and deal successfully with its causes. Governance must consider this is an era where security must be taken as an imperative and everyone knows the importance of security and how devastating war is. One thing we must realize is that when there is outbreak of war in modern day Nigeria, no one and no place would be spared. So something must be done by those in governance.

Conclusion

Ethnic cleasing or mopping as noticed in the country is embedded in the bad blood and mutual mistrust arising from the past events in the nation. The mistakes of the past should not be allowed to take root as to lead to the disintegration of the nation. Any one or group, therefore in the pursuit of a hidden agenda to "conquer…" others in the same country where the right to life is constitutionally guaranteed as enshrined and also in the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran, must be anathematized for it.

The constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979 and 1999, particularly section 41(1) and chapter IV, section 42(1) guaranteed the right to life and the freedom to reside in any

part of choice within the country, without discrimination. The constitution placed Nigeria as a secular state not to be ruled by a particular religion in the spirit of oneness.

What is experienced in the present day Nigeria is a reversion; a situation where citizens from other states of the federation have been discriminated against as expatriates, killed or maimed, property own destroyed at one point or the other in a country presumed to be one entity. This is also at variance with the spirit to "keep Nigeria one", a reoccurring voice during the civil war. Nigeria can be one if all acts of terrorism and discrimination are eliminated in governance by all means and at all events.

As has been pointed out, terrorism in Nigeria has a semblance of t he 1791 – 1794 "Reign of Terror" in Europe in which Jacobin was in the hem of affairs of running the state. He was behind the mass killings of citizens during the French Revolution. Jacobin sponsored state terrorism against the citizens. The same is assumed in Nigeria of today where much innocent souls have been killed and property destroyed. There is no doubt that the dastard acts of killings in the country is state sponsored. Otherwise how do we explain the government silence over the years against terrorists activities in the country? What has also come to play in the incessant killings of the other citizens of the country is supremacy in race where certain group believed they are superior to others.

Ethnic supremacy is fingered in the acts of terrorism waged against other Nigerian citizens. While the phenomenon lasts, the Federal Government has continued to maintain silence over the killings going on in Nigeria. It is noteworthy that this is being done even at the hills of the call to the Federal Government to declare the killers in Nigeria as "terrorist group". The Federal Government has done nothing to put an end to the uncivilized killings on daily basis.

The silence and the refusal of the Federal Government to declare the killers in the country a "terrorist group" has lend credence to the fact that the whole exercise of terrorist activities in the country appears to mean that it is state sponsored. The irk of the incessant killings witnessed here and there in the country daily, has been responsible for the people calling for restructuring of the country perhaps to the old regional base as an option.

It is pertinent to state that if the current wave of conflicts and acts of terrorism threatening security in the nation continued, perhaps there is one option left, that is, the consequence of

disintegration of the central government and the nation as a whole. It is a known fact generally that the existence of Nigeria as a State has been threatened vehemently and in the process Nigeria is fast becoming a failed State following poor governance. The imperative of the survival of Nigeria lies in good governance and leadership and as such should be pursued vigorously by those in the Nigeria governance.

International Law or the Law of Nations generally recognizes the sovereignty of a State. Sovereignty of a State is respected to the extent that no one State is permitted to intervene in the internal or domestic affairs of another State (Umozurike, 1995: 41). The idea of non-intervention in the internal affairs of a State was a proclamation of the USA during its independence war. This doctrine has since been reflected in the UN Charter. Article 2(7) of the UN Charter indeed for bids intervention in the domestic affairs of a State unless authorized by the UN Security Council. This is fair enough. The question is: should the enforcement or observance of this doctrine be done blindly as to ignore a situation where it is observed that crime against humanity has been committed?

Regardless of the enforcement of this doctrine of non-intervention in domestic affairs of a State and because there are behaviours that are not in conformity to this rule or doctrine, especially acts of terrorism or genocide waged innocent citizens sponsored by the State, there has to be room for prompt intervention where such cases are reported. This is why serious recognition is accorded terrorism and genocide as evil to be rejected and discouraged by the big Powers. Following the rejection of genocide or acts of terrorism, that is why the rights to intervene in the internal or domestic affairs of a State where necessary is important in order to save lives and property from wanton destruction.

In this respect, though Article 2(7) of the UN Charter forbids intervention in the domestic affairs of States, the UN severally witnessed interventions by the big Powers in some States. (Umozurike, 1995: 41) till date where it is appropriate to do so.

In the case of Nigeria, acts of terrorism had been waged against innocent citizens. Genocide had been committed usually regarded in international law as crime against humanity yet no intervention by the big Powers to put an end to it in keeping with the international law. This is why wanton destruction of lives and property has continued in Nigeria. The non-

intervention by the big Powers in the Nigeria case is not helping matters because it has created more opportunity for the genocide being committee so far to continue unabated.

In view of the above, the international community is called upon to see genocide committed in Nigeria as a crime against humanity and thus intervene.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

1) All forms of discrimination among Nigerian citizens should be eliminated in order to create room for development of the nation.

2) No one ethnic group should see itself as being superior to others in the same country.

3) Politics of bitterness should be avoided in Nigeria governance.

4) There should be sincerity of purpose in the heats of those in governance of the Nigerian nation.

5) Governance must work for the survival, unity, stability, peace and security of the country.

6) All forms of threats to security of Nigeria should be eliminated in governance.

7. The imperative of the survival of Nigerian nation should be pursued vigorously by those in governance.

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