

Religion and initiatives of agencies in Nigerian security: A biblical Perspective

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country that is currently bedeviled with a lot of crimes. This experience has led to serious insecurity of lives and properties. It is the aim of this paper, therefore to assess security situation and the various measures that have been taken in solving the problems and the objective is to evaluate how the Bible can be relevant in abating the problems of insecurity. The work adopted both historical and exegetical approaches and discovered that ethnic and racial repression of some tribes in Nigeria is the major cause of insecurity. Consequently, the work recommended that Biblical teachings of respect for life and love for neighbors must be embraced for Nigeria to remain as a peaceful one nation.

Key Words: Security, Nigeria, Biblical Perspective

Introduction

Security means safety, freedom from danger and anxiety.¹ It is a relative term. It is the sum total of all measures, actions and precautions taken to safeguard and protect persons, classified documents and installations against manipulations, destruction, abuse and degradation. Thus, national security is derived from personal and group security. It is a collective term used to describe all necessary measures taken by a country to discover, assess and defeat all threats to its well-being, arising from external or internal sources.² Insecurity, therefore, is a condition of being under threat. Security is one of the major concerns of the State. For instance, one of the stated policy objectives of Nigeria is that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government...³ It is in this respect that formal organizations are established. They include:

- i) The Nigeria Police
- ii) The State Security Service
- iii) The Nigerian Armed Forces
- iv) The Customs and Excise
- v) The Nigerian Immigration Service. e.t.c



The Prospects of the Law Enforcement Agencies Since Independence

The Law enforcement agencies are statutorily saddled with the responsibility of maintaining internal security. But unfortunately the insecurity that is ravaging Nigerian society today is an expression of the failure of these agencies. The failure dates back to the colonial era. The Colonial Masters employed divide and deceits in the governance of the territory. The Police Force became a potent agent of coercion at the disposal of the Colonial Masters. It was not accountable to the people but to the colonizers. Its excesses against the community were not checked either. This excessive attitude was later inherited at independence by successive governments. Hence, Nigerians viewed and still view policemen as weapon of violence and subjugation; extortionist and bearer of bad news, trouble and disgrace⁴.

Over the year, the Police Force has undergone various reformations and re-organizations aimed at correcting the above perception about it by the members of the public. However, the Police Force in Nigeria like most organizations is structured in a hierarchical order. This encourages bureaucracy, which has often led to the inefficiency in organizations. Its aspirations for prompt service delivery in the maintenance of law and order and particularly reduction of crimes has been whittled down by this factor more than any other. Attempt to professionalize the force could be gleaned in the introduction of modern telecommunication equipment, manpower training and recruitment of graduates, computerization and motorized patrols. It was presumed that such professionalism would effectively enhance the efficiency of the force in reducing crimes.

However, observers believe that the failure of the Police in Nigeria is due to their reliance on technology rather than the community for their activities⁵. The State Security Service (SSS) for instance is a faceless body. Its relationship with the public is somehow ephemeral. The establishment of Public Relations Department is one of the efforts to close ranks between the security officials and members of the public in order to reduce or erase the perceived hostility of the populace toward them.⁶

Internal Initiatives to Maintain State Security Since Independence

1. The Use of Vigilante

The public biased and ill-disposition and most often the perceived inefficiency of the pro- government agencies saddled with the job of maintaining peace, law and order has necessitated the idea of vigilante group as alternative or complementary to Statutory Agencies. In Nigeria, the vigilante system becomes popular because the more the masses fortified themselves through improvised iron doors, barricades and heavy fences to deter armed robbers the more wild and

vociferous the bandits become, most especially from the mid 1990s. Also, the

introduction of Operation Danisa or Operation Zaki in Borno State; Operation Sweep in Lagos State; Operation Crush in Ondo State are some of the internal arrangements to maintain security⁷

2. Ethnic Militias

The activities of the ethnic militias form part of the struggles to maintain internal security. For instance, the Arewa People's Congress (APC) of the Hausa, Oodua' People Congress (OPC) of the Yourba; Egbesu' Boys of the Ijaws; Bakassi Boys of Anambra e.t.c. , all arose as a result of their desires to protect their respective sectional interests, within the corporate entity Nigeria. They all have served in the recent time as strong fortresses in foiling the nefarious activities of the people of the underworld in their various communities. But they soon become rivals to the formal Agencies. The Police see the militias as violent and quite out-herod in their approaches to doing things. They were consequently outlawed by the Obasanjo government who declared them as oti-ose.

However, the fact remains that the government itself cannot wash its hand clean from our national insecurity. The American government in the recent time has warned her citizens not to visit Nigeria that the country is not safe. A leading United State Human Right Watch accused the Nigerian government of being responsible for killings, torture and harassment of its critics over the last two years. The report entitles "Renewed Crackdown on Freedom of Expression" says that opposition leaders, political protesters and journalists have fallen foul of the security forces⁸.

3. Amotekun Security Initiative of the South West

This is a Western Nigeria Internal Security Network which was established by the governors of the South Western Nigeria. The establishment of Amotekun came because of some security challenges. Particularly, the issues of kidnappings, ritual killings, raping, banditries, armed robberies, assaults on farmers by the herders and terrorism.

Amotekun was formed on 9th January, 2020 at Ibadan Oyo State. The headquarters was officially located at Ibadan by the six founding governors. In order to consolidate Amotekun for easy operation, the six States contributed 133 vehicles. In addition, 600 motorcycles and special uniform were provided for Amotekun operation. The members of Amotekun were recruited from young graduates, local hunters, Oodua Peoples Congress , Agbekoya, and vigilante group in the South West.

However, the Federal Government of Nigeria condemned the formation of Amotekun and they declared it as an illegal security outfit. But the South West Governors reacted to the Federal Government when:

- i. Ondo State Assembly passed the Bill for the establishment of Amotekun Corps into law on 3rd March 2020;
- ii. the Lagos State Assembly passed Amotekun Bill into law on 6th March 2020;

iii. Osun Assembly passed Amotekun Bill on 7th March, 2020;

iv. Ogun State Assembly passed Amotekun Bill on 4th March, 2020;

v. while Ekiti State Governor signed into law the Amotekun Bill on Monday 16th March, 2020; and

vi. Oyo State inaugurated the Board of the State Security Network and Amotekun Corps on 21st June, 2021. Part of the functions of Amotekun are:

- To complement the Police and other security agencies in the south West;
- to enforce the open grazing law which the Southern Governors enacted in their various States, and
- to abate the rising cases of kidnappings, armed robberies and banditries in the South West.

Biblical Perspective of Security

Biblically, insecurity refers to any phenomenon that endangers human lives and properties in the society. God has the divine capacity to protect people who obey his commands:

If you obey the Lord your God and faithfully keep all his commands... The Lord will defeat your enemies when they attack you. They will attack from one direction, but they will run from you in all directions... If you do evil and reject the Lord he will bring on you disaster, confusion and trouble in everything you do, until you are quickly and completely destroyed... You will find no peace anywhere, no place to call your own; the Lord will overwhelm you with anxiety, hopelessness, and despair. Your life will always be in danger. Day and night you will be filled with terror and you will live in constant fear of death. (Deut 28:1,7,65-67).

The Bible clearly describes insecurity as the direct disobedience to God. Hence insecurity such as the destruction of farms and crops by the herders is an expression of human estrangement from God (Deut 28:15,39). The Bible authoritatively states that unless the Lord protects a people their security efforts are futile (Psalm 27:1-2). Now that Nigeria has become engrossed with insecurity despite the various formal and internal measures adopted by the governments and people of Nigeria, it is imperative for Nigeria nation to adopt ways of God.

The Bible says that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pro 14:34). And that: "The wicked shall be turned back into hell. Even all nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). God's desire is that people and nations should be righteous to enjoy divine security. God wants nation to obey him and also comply with certain moral and religious norms to experience peace.

The neglecting of these virtues and religious norms will turn the earth to hell for humanity. Therefore the general practice of Biblical virtues and norms exalt a nation. But vices bring horror and pains to its inhabitants. For Nigeria to overcome insecurity the following Biblical virtues and norms must be observed:

i. **Truthfulness:** The Bible teaches truthfulness, sincerity and righteousness as virtues that exalt a nation (Pro 14:34; Eph 6:14; Pro 20:28). Everyone in Nigeria must go back to these virtues.

ii. **Stealing and Fraud:** The Bible forbids stealing and all inordinate desires for wealth (Exo 22:31). While Nigerian leaders institutionalize corruption the youths adopt various forms of fraud as a means of livelihood.

iii. **Murder:** The Bible outlaws all forms of murder, (Exo 20:13; Matt 5:21-22). The killing of human being is a detestable act to God. The commandment against murder can be seen as a legal issue governing human relationships in the Bible. Among the violent acts forbidden in the Bible are human sacrifices, rape and shedding of innocent blood. To kill another human being goes against acceptable behaviour approved by Jesus Christ (Lk. 9:55-56). Hence, no person must kill a fellow human being.

Recommendation

This paper advocates respect for human life as the only way for Nigerian nation to overcome insecurity. It is only when people take life as sacrosanct that the horrendous killings in our society can stop. Respect for life will abate the high rate of ethno-religious and socio-political wanton destruction of lives and properties which have turned Nigeria to a state of anarchy and banditry.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the security problems in Nigeria and the various abortive measures that have been taken to curb the crimes both formally and locally. Insecurity is indeed, a threat to national unity. Hence, if Nigeria will remain together and develop as a nation, the avowed banditry, terrorism, kidnappings and ritual killings must be eschewed and biblical virtues and norms embraced.

References

¹ The New Webster's Dictionary, (Dumbury: Lexicon Publication, 1993)

² V. Olatoyegun, Religion and the Challenges of Reason in the Maintenance of Global Peace and Security (An Unpublished Articles), 5.

³ Section 14 (2) (b) 1999 Nigeria Constitution.

⁴ E.O.A Alemika Community Policing in Nigeria – Problem and Prospects of Police Public Partnership (Lagos Conflict Management Workshop,2001),7.

⁵ Alemika 8.

⁶ Olatoyegun, 6.

⁷ Olatoyegun,7.

⁸ Sunday Tribune, Daily Newspaper, January 6th, 2021.