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- Authors should adopt the MLA referencing style and endnotes should be used instead of footnotes.
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THE ROLE OF CHURCH LEADERS IN NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA CONTEXT

Peter Olanrewaju Awojobi, PhD.

Abstract

One of the hallmarks of a developed nation is the Security of lives and property. Security is the mother of invention and development. This is because without adequate Security for all and sundry no meaningful development can be achieved. This is the reason why some nations of the world vote huge amount of money in their annual budget for Security. Existing studies on Security has always focus on the role of Security agents like the Armed forces, the Police, and the legislators with little or no attention paid to the role of Church Leaders in national Security which is central to the understanding and tackling of Security challenges facing the Nigerian society. The thrust of this study is to examine the role of Church leaders in national Security in Nigerian Context. Historical method was used for the study. Study revealed that, security is holistic because it addresses all issues that threaten human existence. Church Leaders are to use their position in the Nigerian society to promote adequate security of lives and property. Moral education in churches will foster peace, unity and harmonious relationship among different ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria. As the mouthpieces for God, Church leaders are duty bound to speak on the ills in governance and the society so that peace and tranquility can be achieved in Nigeria.

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Keywords: Role, Church Leaders, National Security, Society and Nigeria.

Introduction

Security of lives and property is a global phenomenon. All over the world people are concerned with protection of lives, crops, clothes, houses, land, trees, water and other things that cannot be named. There are Security challenges all over the world today. The rate at which terrorist groups are growing is very alarming. In some nations of the world, people cannot sleep with their two eyes closed. Nations of the world spent a lot of money on their military for citizens to live in a safe and secured environment but adequate security is yet to be achieved. It therefore appears as if the end to insecurity in the world is not in sight.

Nigeria like some nations in the world is currently facing some security challenges. There are terrorist groups operating in Nigeria at the moment. The Nigerian government with all her security architecture has not been able to tackle insecurity in the land. The Boko Haram insurgency in the northern part of the country, banditry activities and kidnappings are very common in most part of the country today. The Nigerian Army and other security agents in the country are making efforts to fight this menace but their efforts are yet to reach appreciable results. Nigerian road are not only in deplorable conditions but are not safe because of the activities of the kidnappers. It appears no part of Nigeria is safe anymore as there are cases of insecurity all over the country.

Besides, there are challenges in the area of food Security in Nigeria. Bandits and Boko Haram members have taking over some farm land in Nigeria. Some Farmers in Nigeria cannot go to farm for the fear of being attacked by Bandits and Boko Haram. This has made the prices of commodities to rise. Many Nigerians today are finding it very difficult to make two ends meet.

This study therefore examines the role of Church leaders in national security in Nigerian context. In this study, all Christians whether lay and clergy who occupy one leadership position or the other in the Church are regarded as Church leaders.

The Nigerian and National Security

Security of lives and property is crucial to the existence of any nation and any attempt by anybody or group of persons to undermine it will always meet with

stiffer opposition. In most cases each nation of the world designs their own security apparatus without recourse to other nations. Prior to the arrival of the colonial masters, Africans were divided along ethnic boundaries with each group with her own security outfit. In African Indigenous tradition, all means are used to protect children, young, adult and property (Adamo, 2005: 69). However, these methods were considered archaic and fetish and as such jettisoned by leaders as they adopt the modern methods.

Today, one of the serious challenges facing Nigeria is insecurity. It appears that the present government in the country cannot handle our Security issues. This has led to loss of lives, displacement of communities, food shortage, economic recession, and the likes that have bedeviled the country today. Nigeria that is fondly called the giant of African by reason of her population is currently facing serious security issues. Studies show that According to the Nigerian Political Bureau of Statistics (1989), Nigeria occupies an area of about 923,768, with a population of about 145 million people in 2006 (NPC 2006) and it was estimated to be over 200 million in 2018. The territory is occupied by more than 350 ethnic nationalities that are found in a fairly well defined location with divergent religious and other beliefs. Religious crisis, conflict, peace, development and security seem the most recurrent terms gaining wide currency in the 21st century (1989: 21). Humans value security and peaceful living because they are both a social or global public good. National security and integration of the divergent ethnic nationalities for peaceful living has become the political slogan of our time (The Guardian, 2013:8A).

National security is protection of the lives and property of the entire nation. This includes its citizens, economy, and institutions. This is considered as the responsibility of government. This is one of the reasons why the government of nations established security agents. Oluwawunsi opines that armies for domestic peace-keeping and maintaining national sovereignty have existed since the dawn of recorded history. Civil and national police forces have also existed for millennia (2013: 181).

The general concepts of keeping a nation secure are not new, the specific English term “national security” itself came into common parlance in the 20th century. Methodologies and strategies to achieve and maintain the highest possible desired state of national security have been consistently developed over the modern period to this day (2013: 182). However, Audu affirmed that the concept of national security is very difficult to define because the roof term,

security, has remained a contested concept. In other words, it has no universally accepted definition due to its many-sidedness arising from ideology and time frame being addressed, as well as the focus of analysis (2010: 23). Furthermore, the issue of national security is so fundamental to leaders that they are prepared to stake anything in defense of it. Hence, Olayemi observed that a nation is secured to the extent that it is not in a question to lose core values, life, property and liberty (2009: 223). National security also refers to the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy. Cyril declared that the primary objective of national security shall be to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, advance her interest and objectives to contain instability, control crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development progress and growth and improve the welfare and well-being and quality of life of the citizenry (2005: 221).

On the other hand, Gwarzo sees national security as freedom from hunger, or from threat to a nation's ability to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and interests, and enhance the well-being of its people (1998). From the above definitions, it can be observed that national security is not restricted only to weapons and military preparedness but encompasses political, social and economic well-being of the people. As such, any threat to any of these constitutes a threat to national security.

The present state of security crisis in Nigeria is very worrisome. By its very composition and nature, Animoshe submits that the Nigerian, nation-state seems to be prone to some forms of insecurity, assassination, ritual killings, armed robbery, pen robbery, kidnapping, ethno-religious violence, suicide bombings, arsons, floods, food shortage, unemployment, corruption, police and military brutality, impunity, lawlessness and a host of other sources of insecurity abound in this country (2006). Threats which constitute human wants in Nigeria are: economic security threat, food security threat, health security threat, environmental security threat, personal security threat, community security threat, political security threat and many other security threats affecting the human existence.

Generally speaking, the root causes of insecurity or security threats in Nigeria are poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, ignorance, poor or bad leadership/governance, family, disintegration, social, economic, political and other aspects of national insecurity will remain at stake in Nigeria unless these

underlined causes of insecurity are comprehensively addressed. However, Nimandi said the real security threat in Nigeria is the problem of underdevelopment, poverty, political instability, demonic governance and social injustice (2014: 36). These threats cannot be reasonably confronted by military preparedness. For instance, a general look at the plethora of crises and security threats to the Nigeria state reveal that these arise from underdevelopment, poverty, political instability, bad governance, corruption and social injustice.

Church Leaders and Civil Governance

A Church leader is a person that has been appointed to provide leadership for the flock of Christ in a particular local church or denomination. The church leader may be a lay man or clergy. The primary responsibility of church leaders is to care for and nurtures the believers. He or she is expected to use divine wisdom and Christian maturity to guide the congregation and individual members of the church into growing ways of life so that when Jesus speaks, the congregation will respond appropriately (Awojobi, 2020: 37). Since the church is domicile on earth, it is the responsibility of the leaders so ensure that the church fulfill her civic and spiritual responsibilities so as to maintain relevance and shine as light in the world. Like the ancient Prophets in Israel, the church leaders are the watchdogs of the nation. They are the mouthpiece of God who are expected to speak on issues that threatens national security.

Church leaders are to be keenly interested in all national affairs and encourage their members to do the same. Osazee opines that Church leaders have powerful influence on the activities of members of the society since religion regulates the conduct and behavior of people in the community and preaches vital virtues needed in the society (1997). This is the reason why Okebukola asserts that religion can aid democracy and good governance that is characterized by accountability, transparency, patriotism, fear of God, due process, responsiveness and the rule of law (2012: 3).

To Christians, God rules His people through chosen individuals. There is no government that can rule except God allows it (Rom. 13: 1-3). According to Awolalu, Jesus Christ was a political activist and Messianic revolutionist who like the zealots of his time who wanted freedom for Israel, did not separate religion, peace and security. His mission statement in Luke 4:18- 19 makes his ministry holistic. He declared that his ministry was for those suffering from various forms of bondages and oppression, including economic oppression or

poverty; physical oppression of diseases, disabilities, political oppression, injustice and oppressive rule, demonic oppressions, various forms of occultic practices and these same evils still plague Nigeria today (1987). The church leaders are to borrow a leaf from Jesus. The main task of the Church is what Jesus said in Matthew 28: 18-20. It is the duty of church leaders to be involved in activities that would bring peace, progress and tranquility to the nation where they serve

The Bible is replete with many examples of Godly people in political participation such as Joseph in Egypt who saved many from hunger and starvation (Gen. 41), Amos who warned leaders of his time, against injustice (Amos 4:7), Daniel and his three friends who changed the political equation in Persia (Dan 3:5-6), and Nehemiah who personally sacrificed to save his people (Neh. 1-2 & 5). In the New Testament, Paul refused to give up his political rights as a citizen when political authorities put him in prison and flogged him without giving him proper trial (Acts 16:37-38, 22-25).

Adams declares that throughout history, church leaders have always been the voice of the voiceless in speaking against injustice and oppression, the challenges of moral bankruptcy, corruption, poverty, disease and ignorance all call for Church leaders participation in politics (2007:118-120). When godly people, who have the fear of God, are in power/position, peace will reign and the society will be at peace. The nation will be secured. The fear of God in them will help them to rule according to God's dictates and not appease their selfish gain. Obijole posits that the Bible makes it clear that the three functions of the church in relation to State are: first, the church has a priestly function, which is to pray for those in authority and for the protection and healing of the nation (I Tim. 2:1-3). Second, the church has a pastoral duty, which is to provide teaching and direction to the leaders and those being governed (Matt 28:19-29) and to encourage Christians to be good citizens who obey the State and pay their taxes (Rom 13:1-17, I Peter 2:13) and to see that both the state and the citizens do nothing contrary to the word of God. The third is the prophetic function which is to declare the mind of God to the state and her citizens. The word of God opposes the state when it acts unjustly and turns against God (II Sam. 12:1-14, Dan 4:20-27, 5:17-28) (2012: 12).

The Role of Church Leaders in National Security in Nigerian Context

As mentioned earlier, church leaders have great roles to play in national security. The link between church leaders and national security is that of mutual

transmissibility of impacts and repercussions. Dopamu said, a country may have the best armed forces in terms of training and equipment, the most efficient police force, the most efficient custom men, the most active secret service agents, and best quality prisons, but yet be the most insecure nation in the world, as a result for defense and security problems from with-bad government, alienated and suffering masses, ignorance, hungers, unemployment, or even activities of foreign residents or companies, therefore, it is the duty of church leaders to bring peace, tranquility, togetherness and oneness (2006: 11-12). This is because; some of our political leaders are members the Church. Some of these political leaders consult their Pastors on issues in governance. Nwolise advised that Church leaders must provides meaning to comfort in life in the face of frustrations, pains, loss, and security against the mystery and vicissitudes of life. Hence, church leaders serve a security purpose in all human society (1985).

To facilitate understanding, the role of the Church leaders in National Security is considered under the following headings:

1. Moral Education

Church leaders by nature detest violence, cheating and acquisition of wealth through illegal and ungodly means. As a matter of fact, church is the very foundation of societal morality. The missionaries who brought Christian religion to Nigeria made Moral Education compulsory to all students and this helped in no small measure to reduce social vices and the crime rate, most especially in the 50s and 60s. However, immediately after the Government took over mission schools in the Mid-Seventies, things started to go bad. Church leaders should physically preach morality which deals with the rightness or wrongness of actions because a morally debased and bankrupt individual is a social as well as security risk to any nation. It is the duty of church leaders to inculcate morality in the lives of their members so that there can live peace in the society. In other words, the church leaders must ensure that their members are not only spiritually healthy but morally healthy as well. Church leaders should note that the moral and spiritual wellness of Nigeria and Nigerians is part of their pastoral responsibilities (Bostman, 2006: 26). They are to stand in role and status relationship to one another and possess a set of values or norms of their own to regulate their behaviour and society towards each other in matters affecting them. According to Ojularin church leaders must continue to preach peaceful contact and interactions between groups each

of which has an identity to make some inputs into their existence. In short, each of which has some scope and area of autonomous action but always exhibit sacrifice for a continuous friendship (Ojularin, 1995: 18).

2. God's mouthpiece

The imperative of church leaders for addressing the state of security challenges cannot be overemphasized. Adams advised that Church leaders can tailor and re-packaged Christian organizations to address, manage and control national security threats. Therefore, church leaders should focus on promoting, the security of individual citizens of the country in a number of ways (Adams, 2009: 316-319). As God's mouthpiece, Church leaders in Nigeria should speak against assaults and violence, social, rape, war, communal clashes, threats from religious fundamentalist/extremists, threats from individuals or gangs against other individuals or gangs, threats directed at children based on vulnerability and dependence (child abuse) and threats to self (Daniel, 2014). Church leaders should offer security from basic human rights violation in Nigeria. They should oppose political repression, systematic torture, ill-treatment and human rights violation. They should uphold good governance and visionary leadership, fight against corruption and embrace the principle of religious tolerance, social justice, discipline, integrity, fairness/equity, self-reliance, dignity of labour and patriotism. According to Michael and Markson, Church leaders should exert themselves as an emerging movement for sustainable transformational development through particular institutional arrangements and modes of social engagement. They must imagine, conceive, envision, and ideate peaceful co-existence as states of friendship, hospitality, cooperation, alliances and peace between two or more groups and their respective members' (Michael & Markson, 2005: 421).

3. Job Creation/ Food Security

Provision of productive and remunerative work should not be left to government and private sectors alone. Church leaders in Nigeria should get involved in the role, especially now in the face of poverty and acute unemployment of teeming masses of this country. Rather than acquiring private jets, expensive cursor, building mansion like temples, church leaders can invest in agricultural production, transportation, estate acquisition and sales, computer/business centre's, printing of recharge cards, bakery, textile and banking industries, block making etc, which will generate jobs for the Nigerian people. However, their involvement in business should not be for the

sole aim of profit making but from the sense of divine ministry to assist the indigent. There is starvation amid plenty in Nigeria. However people's access to food, shelter and clothing depends on their purchasing power. Many are denied of access to basic food simply because they cannot afford it. Thus, food security is closely related to economic security. Religions bodies can make free food available to the hungry and highly deprived people in Nigeria on daily basis. Church leaders in Nigeria should feed the hungry, cloth the naked, house the homeless etc., as a humanitarian approach to the ministry (Matt. 25: 34-40). Church leaders should not only be expert at collecting money from people but should also become expert at meeting the basic needs of members for food, clothing and shelter.

4. Health Security

The physical well-being of Nigerians is as important as their spiritual well-being. Therefore, church leaders in Nigeria should increase their involvement in the provision of health to people at affordable charges like what the white missionaries that brought the Gospel did. Although leaders of churches and ministries have made considerable achievement in the health sector, there is still room for improvement. It is disheartening that some hospitals owned by Christian organizations are inaccessible by a great number of poverty-stricken Nigerians due to neck breaking bills.

5. Environmental Services

Church leaders should use religion to promote environmental security. Church leaders should discourage human abuse of the environment through their messages and actions. In view of the fact that many environmental threats are chronic and long-lasting. Issues such as water pollution, air pollution, deforestation, poor sanitation; e.t.c. should be vehemently decried. Since cleanliness is next to godliness, church leaders should promote healthy lifestyles in Nigeria by frequently talking about it in their sermons.

6. Community Binding:

Church leaders are to be instrument for addressing threats to national and all class of insecurity in Nigeria. Osatowe suggests that they must act as sociological tool which develops from the need to foster a sense of belonging in human society and thus plays the role of community binding of social integration by “performing the functional role of reinforcing the collective conscience of the society requites for social order, stability, and harmonious co-

existence and in all human security” (Osatowe, 528).

In a nutshell, “security requires much more than hard power and sophisticated weapons. It also requires an appreciation for the complex ways in which our political, economic, and social institutions help make us feel secured” (Dunmoye, 2009). More so; an individual who has not satisfied his or her basic needs like food, clothing, health care, housing, education and work can hardly be called secured no matter how much weaponry the individual may have at his disposal. Church leaders in Nigeria should improve the lots of their adherents of this country rather than adding to their misfortune and deprivation.

Conclusion

This study has clarified the role of church leaders in national security in Nigerian context. It has shown the link between church leaders and national security. This study has indicated that in modern society, especially in this 21st century, security is not entirely hardware, military force or even traditional military activity, even though it encompasses them, but development, provision of social amenities and supply of human needs and feeling safe from a variety of threats. The expected roles of church leaders in the managing/control of national security threats through promotion of human security such as economic, food, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (Oladunjoye, 481)

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