Philosophy: A Pathway to National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is a nation that is endowed with vast human and material resources yet plagued by national maladies as poverty, corruption, a dwindling economy, unemployment, youth restiveness, rapid societal decay and far-reaching security challenges to mention but a few. These issues have brought about retrogression in development. There is need for radical transformation to regain her former glory and forge ahead with a consistent agenda of reform which Nigeria stood and stands, in dire need of. This paper tries to explain what philosophy is and how it can proffer solutions to curbing insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Philosophy, National peace, National Security

Introduction

Many countries globally are threatened by the issue of extreme insecurity and this has prompted the urgent quest for a suitable solution to achieving internal national security. Nigeria is not left out of this menace as the internal security is threatened on a daily basis by militants "Boko Haram" an extremist Islamic sect, clashes between Hausa and Fulani herdsmen, religious crises and others. As provided by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) chapter 11 section 13, 14b: "The security and

welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government…". Security is a hydra-headed concept that permeates different aspects of human endeavour that include food, political, cyber, economic, personal, health, environment and financial. According to the United Nations Development Programme "Human security recognizes the inter linkages between peace, development and human rights. It equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights." (UNDP on Human Security, hdr.undp.org) pg.3

The objective of this study is to examine the crucial role of philosophy in curbing insecurity in Nigeria. To achieve this aim, we first clarify some concepts that are relevant to the subject at hand. This is followed by the causes of insecurity in Nigeria, philosophy and National development and conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

To give appropriate focus to this paper, it is necessary to first of all clarify the key concepts used. These are philosophy, national peace and national security.

The Concept of Philosophy

Philosophy as an academic discipline has no generally accepted definition. It is rather defined by the areas of specializations of the philosophers. Philosophy is derived from two Greek words, 'philos' which means love and 'sophia' which means wisdom. It is a reflective activity that begins with the act of logical thinking and love for knowledge. According to Omoregbe (2007:4)

> Human experience is thus the source of the reflective activity known as philosophy. The experience could either be man's own experience of himself (subjectivity) or his experience of the world around him (objectivity). Hence philosophy could start from subjectivity or from

objectivity. The early Greek philosophers began from objectivity.

Philosophy is concerned with human life existence, society and problems associated with them. It desires to bring solutions to every problem which includes the present state of insecurity in Nigeria.

The Concept of National Peace

National peace and national security can be likened to two peas in a pod for where there's peace, security is guaranteed. For effective and sustainable development which is the paramount desire of any nation, these concepts must be present. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines peace as "a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area". National peace refers to the time a country is not at war, under the threat of war or even plagued by strange diseases. In other words, it is a state in which there is no violence or threat to human security. In 1981, the United Nations declared 21st of September of each year as the international Day of Peace in the world (www.org/events /peaceday).

The Concept of National Security

National Security refers to the internal safety of people and property in a country. In Nigeria, different forms of security threats are experienced on a daily basis. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines this as "the activities involved or protecting a country, building or peace against attack".

Causes of National Insecurity in Nigeria

Several factors contribute to the insecurity of a nation. The major ones are the inefficiency of the security apparatus put in place by the government of a nation, justice, in terms of unequal distribution of wealth and amenities generated in the country; disobedience in the form of citizens refusing to be law abiding, and, extremism in terms of particular sets of

people holding tenaciously to their convictions and rejecting any compromise. In the case of Nigeria, the security agencies such as the military, the police and the Civil Defence are seen as the major security agencies. Among the three, the police is seen as the security agency nearest to the people. In a time of insecurity, the police is expected to act as the friend of the citizens to secure them and arrest any ugly situation that could lead to the loss of lives and property. However, over the years, the average Nigerian has continued to see the police as an enemy rather than a friend. This attitude is not unconnected with the attitude of the Nigeria Police that has continued to exploit the citizens through dubious means. In a civilized world, policing is supposed to be done by those who are not only educated but who have volunteered for the job and are committed to do it. Another thing that contributes to the inefficiency of security outfits is the failure of the government to exhibit the necessary political will needed for the agencies to fight insecurity. The Nigerian governments have continued to give less consideration to security votes. If the government fails to provide the security agencies with enough financial aid, insecurity would continue to loom large in the country.

Behind most of the insecurities witnessed in some countries, especially, Nigeria, is agitations based on injustice. The Niger Delta Militancy that latter became a global phenomenon has its basis as allegation of injustice. According Victor Inoka:

> *There have been the claims by the littoral states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers, that the natural resources located off the shores of their respective states be treated and regarded as located within their respective state, (Inoka, 2003:27).*

The claim, as noted by Inoka, gave rise to the Niger Delta Militancy that is yet to be totally resolved. There has equally been constant agitation from members of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB/IPOB) from the South Eastern part of the country. This

socio-cultural militia usually cause insecurity anywhere its members display. They allege that since after the Civil War in the 1970s, the South Eastern part of the country is yet to be fully integrated into the main stream political affairs in the country. Consequently, they feel that this part of the country is unfairly treated and neglected. Hence, they seek secession from the entity called Nigeria.

Nigeria, like other countries of the world, also witness the activities of miscreants, those who choose to disobey the law, thereby causing untold harm, fear and insecurity to others who may be law abiding. Thus there are hoodlums, thieves, kidnappers, rapists, and even traitors amongst the citizens of Nigeria. Kidnapping is one the country's challenges, one of the cases is that of the 276 Chibok girls who were taken away by the B oko Haram on the night of 14-15 April 2014 from the Government Secondary School State in Chibok, Borno State. These girls were aged between 16 to 18 years old(www.bbc.com>world-africa-32299943) On the 19th of February,2018, at 5:30pm, another set of 110 schoolgirls were also kidnapped by the Boko Haram from the Government Girls Science and Technical College [GGSTC],Dapchi, Yobe (www.vanguardngr.com/tag/dapchi) The activities of these groups of people have intensified due to the inefficiency of the security outfits. There is also the activities of cultists whose identity remain secret such that some members of the security outfits may be their members while pretending to fight them. Recently, religious extremism in the name of Boko Haram, continues to cause insecurity not only in the North Eastern states of the country, but in all parts of Nigeria. Apart from the ex-Niger Delta Militants who have received amnesty and are currently receiving relief from the Federal Government, another group, the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) has emerged, also dependents on Federal Government relief packages. Added to this group displaced by Boko Haram are those displaced by either the natural or artificial occurrence of flood. In every corner, the country cries of insecurity. Efforts are being made from various angles to ensure

that the problem of insecurity in Nigeria is solved. The question now is, what and how could philosophy help?

Philosophy and National Security

Right from its origin with the lonian philosophers, the discipline has one major focus, that of identifying problems and pointing to solutions for such problems. Philosophers have speculated on the problem of national insecurity. Even when they have not pointedly mentioned it, they have continued to propound theories which could enable nations to waddle out of insecurity. Several theories of the philosophy, directly deal with the causes of insecurity identified and discussed above.

The social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau attempt to establish why the government should secure the lives and properties of the citizens. According to them, the citizens have by consent entrusted their security in the care of the government in the sense that failure to secure them would amount to the government becoming a failed state. Hobbes made it clear that the major function of the state is to ensure the security of the citizens. According to him, it was because life in the state of nature was solitary, brutish, nasty and short, that the individuals consented to surrender their powers to the absolute sovereign, the Leviathan, that has the power to curtail the excesses of people who could hitherto be uncontrollable, (Hobbes,1968:189). Locke on his own maintains that once the government fails in achieving those functions for which it was established, it would have no reason to continue existing. The theories of these philosophers establish the reason why government, through its laws and security agencies should ensure the constant security of the citizens of a nation. They show why the government should see it as a mandate to ensure that its citizens life without fear of insecurity. In the words of John Locke, "the great end of men uniting in to common wealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property…" (Locke 1980:16). If the Nigeria governments has adequate knowledge of the social contract theories and their implications, perhaps they would not toy

with the issues of security in the country. Following the theories, inefficient security outfit is a misnomer. Thus, the government has the responsibility to ensure that security agencies are not only adequately equipped but that those who are employed in such agencies are those who could do the job effectively.

The ethical theories of philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle furnish constant admonitions for ethical life in society. Insecurity caused by hoodlums, owe much to unethical behaviours. Many years ago, Socrates lay down that every citizen has the obligation to obey the laws of his or her society by virtue of his or her being a member of that society. If this teaching of Socrates is taken seriously by Nigerians, then a group of people could not just rise up suddenly and start unleashing mayhem on the populace in the name of civil obedience or religious extremism. Aristotle states that:

> And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state, (Aristotle, 1938:1258a).

What Aristotle is saying with this statement is that man is endowed with the sense of morality. According to him, for man to remain man properly called, he or she must live a moral life. A person who lives immoral life is more or less a beast. This means that kidnappers, thieves, especially, armed robbers, rapists and terrorists are beasts rather than humans. However, these group of individuals may be ignorant of their status as they perpetrate evil in the society. Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative advices that human beings treat each other as they would want to be treated themselves, (Kant 1959:49). This means that a thief should first of all ask himself if he or she would want the same kind of treatment meted on him or her. If this principle should guide ones conduct, we may come to have a nation where insecurity would be regarded as a thing of the past. This is because truly no individual would subscribe that unhappy treatment should be meted out to him or her.

Socio-political philosophers continue to theorize on how social injustices in terms of discrimination, in equality in the distribution of wealth and exploitation could be removed from the society. Aristotle taught about distributive justice where we maintained that justice means treating equals and unequals equally. Also, John Rawls through his views on the "original position" and "veil of ignorance" talks about equality in terms of the distribution of national wealth. According to him, each person in the original position, would be individuals or representatives of individuals, or groups, should have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. He adds that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefits of the least advantaged, and (b) attached to offices and opportunities open to all under conditions of fait equality of opportunity, (Rawls, 1971). If the views of Aristotle and Rawls are to guide the conduct of the government in Nigeria, cases of agitations based on allegations of injustice would not arise. Even where there is a clear case of injustice as agitators allege, philosophers have theorized on how to approach the situation without creating the atmosphere of insecurity.

The approach advocated by the philosopher, Mahatma Gandhi is noteworthy. Gandhi advocated for non-violent direct action in addressing cases of injustice. According to his principle of 'satyagraha', issues of injustice are to be settled through endurance and sacrifice. He states that, "in the application of satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy", (Gandhi, 1965:501). This approach subscribes to peaceful settlement of conflicts.

Conclusion

This work has been an attempt to articulate how philosophy could help in achieving national security. It is observed that the call on philosophy is worthwhile owing the circumstance in Nigeria today where insurgency,

militancy, unethical conducts and inefficiency of security outfits culminate in high level of insecurity. As the work shows, philosophy could offer solution to the problem of insecurity if the various theories on the nature and functions of the state ethics, and justice are highly considered by the stakeholders. It could then be rightly said that the high level of insecurity witnessed in the country could have stemmed from the neglect of philosophical principles. This equally goes to show that the teaching of these principles are not to be limited to the tertiary institutions as it presently is. In other words, philosophy should be taught in all classrooms and even the teaching need not be limited to the classroom. Every citizen of a country, especially, like Nigeria, has to be exposed to the principles of philosophy. Thus, philosophy could also be translated in the various dialects and languages spoken in Nigeria so that all and sundry would be exposed to its valued principles. This will ensure that the majority of the citizens of this country have a wide knowledge of such principles so that they can model their conduct in line with them. If this could be achieved, no doubt, insecurity may become a thing of the past in Nigeria.

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