Psychosocial Issues of Religious Fanaticism, Insecurity and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's national development striving since her independence in 1960 has been plagued by a plethora of social, religious, political and economic factors and the most challenging of which are religious fanaticism and insecurity. This paper therefore, takes a look at the Nigerian national development portrait since independence; the place of religion in national development; religious fanaticism in Nigeria; security situation in Nigeria since independence, religious fanaticism and insecurity in Nigeria. It also examined causes of religious fanaticism and insecurity in Nigeria; psychosocial issues of religious fanaticism, insecurity and national development. The paper concludes by blaming the current upsurge in the rate of insecurity in various parts of the country on the activities of religious fanatics who make themselves available in the hands of unscrupulous, over-ambitious and power-drunk politicians to achieve selfish political ends. It thus, recommends, among other things that the government should embark on massive industrialization in order to create employment opportunities for the teaming population of unemployed youths which constitute the major victims of religious fanaticism in Nigeria.

Key Words: Religious Fanaticism, Insecurity and National Development

Introduction

Religious fanaticism and insecurity are now much-talked about issues in contemporary Nigerian society. Insecurity, terrorism and violence have not only found their ways into all nooks and crannies of the society but have equally dominated the social, religion, political and economic lives of the citizens. Nwagbara (2007) in Awusaku (2013) corroborates the above by remarking that the inability of the different levels of government in Nigeria to live up to their crucial and basic responsibilities has led to the intensification of security challenges in Nigeria. The present level of security problem in the country is very alarming and worrisome. No day passes without one hearing blood–chilling news of scores of people massacred by the Islamic fundamentalist sect, Boko Haram, Hausa Fulani Herdsmen, armed robbers, Yahoo – plus, Malaysian boys, militant groups and so on. Nigeria is becoming more and more insecure everyday as on one knows what many happen the next minute. People now live in fear and uncertainty everyday including men of the armed forces, who are supposed to guard and protect the ordinary citizens.

The most fundamental source of security problem in Nigeria today is religious fanaticism which is associated with terrorism and intolerance, particularly in Northern parts of the country dominated by Islamic religion. The activities of the Islamic sect, Jama'attu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram have rendered Northern Nigeria insecure, destroying and endangering the lives and properties of non-Islamic worshippers in their bid to sanitize the area (rid the area of Western education) (Tanu, 2012). The frequent reportage of their killings, bomb attacks on Churches, Tertiary Institutions, Police Stations and Army Barracks without adequate measures or quick response from the government to control the situation or bring perpetrators to

book indicates that Nigeria is heading to a failed state. No nation submerged in the quagmire of religious fanaticism and associated security challenges makes meaningful political and economic progress. This paper therefore, examines psychosocial issues of religious fanaticism, insecurity and national development in Nigeria with the aim of making useful suggestions as the way forward.

Conceptual Clarifications
Psychosocial Issues

Hornby (1995) defines psychosocial as of behaviour having both psychological and social aspects. Psychosocial issues therefore denote those issues that affect the mental, emotional and behavioural characteristics of a specified person, group or activity in the society. It is a combination of psychological and social effects, impacts or problems associated with a phenomenon.

Insecurity

Insecurity is the exact opposite of security and it means, according to Hornby (1995), a lack of security a state of uncertainty or the state of being subject to danger, vulnerability etc. It equally means threat to life and property, threat to peace, security and effective social living (Ota, 2012). Otto and Ukpere (2012) see insecurity as lack of protection from hidden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life in homes, offices or communities. It also embraces lack of stability and continuity of livelihood, lack of predictability of daily life, absence of protection from crime and exposure to psychological harm (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor – Robaro, 2013). In Nigeria, there is a preponderance of inter-ethnic conflicts, religious crisis, violence, fear and hostility which combine to emasculate peaceful and happy living and

national development striving (Mezieobi, Mezieobi & Mezieobi, 2013).

Religion/Religious Fanaticism

Religion has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Religion is defined by Mc Gee (1980) as a set of actions organized around the sacred that is a non–empirical source of power, transcendence, mystery and awe. It is also defined as a system of beliefs and practices directed toward the ultimate concern of a society (Akama, 1997). Emile Durkheim in Nwokoye (2006) defines religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite a people into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them. The moral community is not only called or known as a church, but can be known as Muslims, Hndus, Jains, Traditionalists, Taoists, Confucianists Buddhists and so on. Religion traditionally defined what the goals of human relationship should be in every society. Religion is aimed at giving meaning and purpose to life; re-enforcing social unity and stability; serving as an agent of social control of behaviour, promoting physical well-being and motivating people to work for meaningful socio-economic development in the society (Ofusaia and Eboh, 2015).

Hornby (1995) defines fanaticism as the practice of being fanatical with religion or having an extreme irrational zeal or enthusiasm for religion or one's faith. Religious fanaticism is the use of religion to achieve negative or ulterior purpose other than these ones highlighted above by Ofusaia and Eboh (2015). This is the manipulation of religion for personal aggrandizement and selfish political ends. Religious fanaticism denotes religious activities, views, actions and practices that are excessive and far

beyond the norm and essence of religion. This is clearer when expressed as the art of holding extreme views, ideas and actions which make religion an instrument of destruction, tension and crisis in the society, instead of an instrument of social cohesion and stability (Nwokoye, 2006).

National Development

National development has attracted different definitions from a number of scholars of political science, sociology, economics, history and other fields of academic endeavour. Njoku and Tete (2013), conceptualize national development as a continuous process of systematic transformation of the overall social, economic, political, scientific and technological life of a nation via reflective thinking, sound decision-making, effective planning, active participation of the citizens and their attitudinal will to give such transformation a chance for the improved better life conditions of the mass of the people. It is a development that is characterized by the ability of a country to protect the fundamental human rights and responsibilities of its citizens and eradicate social, political, economic, religious, cultural and educational instabilities in order to improve on the social living of the citizenry (Nweke, 2003).

National development involves structural transformation of the economy, politics and culture of the society that permits the self-generating and self-perpetuating use of the people's potentials (Offiong, 1980). It is the organized effort of a nation to raise the standard of living of its people through the development and utilization of its human material and physical resources (Orisa, 2013).

Nigerian National Development Portrait since Independence

Nigeria has witnessed many lofty development plans since independence in 1960 which failed at the implementation stage. If the Nigerian national development plans had been consciously and effectively pursued or implemented by our national policy and decision makers, Nigeria would have for a long time wriggled out of its under developed status. Nigerian economy has remained largely dependent on foreign technology and aids in the midst of abundant human and natural resources.

Since the attainment of political independence in 1960, Nigeria has not only enunciated objectives of its national development plans but has also adumbrated several national development plans. According to Anyanwu and Brown (2013 p103), the objectives of Nigerian national development plans include:

i.   To increase the real income of average citizen.
ii. To reduce dependency on foreign power;
iii. To reduce unemployment
iv. To distribute income more evenly among individuals and socio-economic groups
v.   To develop better and more efficient technology and
vi. To reduce rural-urban migration.

Nigeria has also had several national development plans such as the First National Development Plan, 1962 – 1968; the Second National Development plan, 1970 – 1974; the Third National Development Plan, 1975 – 1980; the fourth National Development Plan 1981 – 1985 (Anyanwu & Brown 2013). These and other development plans that took place between 1986 and today did not bring about any remarkable developmental change in Nigeria. The same thing is applicable to all development-oriented programmes

of both the federal and state governments which were meant to improve the living standards of the Nigerian citizens. The hydra-headed problems that attained national development plans in Nigeria have made everything about National development plan in the country to be described as "unrealistic" (Anyanwu & Brown, 2013).

There is rather an increase in the rate of poverty, unemployment; dependency on foreign goods and technology and naira values keeps on depreciating on a daily basis. This has made life difficult for many Nigerian citizens as their living standard deteriorates every day, leaving them depressed, emotional disturbed, anxious and diffident about their ability to face tomorrow. The Nigerian society has indeed been much affected psycho-socially and the ugly trend might continue unless something drastic is done to address Nigeria's national development challenges.

The Place of Religion in National Development
The role of Religion in Nigerian National development cannot be underestimated. Religion is an important agent of peace, unity, moral reformation and social change. This is regardless of the fact that religion has severally been misused by some individuals to cause untold problems to individual, group of people and the general society. God, however, intends to use religious people to restore the loss image of Nigeria and put the country back on the path of survival and national development as in the case of Israelites (Awusaku, 2013).

Religion inculcates fear of God, peace, love and good moral life in people in the society. Fear of God and peace are necessary conditions that provide individual citizens and the government the opportunity to put in their maximum potentials in the socio-

economic and political development of the nation. A peaceful environment makes for both internal harmony that makes people's reasoning and creativity to function effectively and social harmony that spurs all to pull ideas and resources together to surmount great challenges and achieve great facts in all aspects of the national life (Awusaku, 2013). Good moral life, respect for laws and order, good citizenship and responsible personhood, which religion teaches and upholds prepare the ground for effective thriving of national development.

Religious Fanaticism in Nigeria
Religious fanaticism with its associated problems such as terrorism, religious intolerance, crisis and violent demonstration and confrontation is not a new phenomenon in Nigerian history. Mezieobi, Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2013) observe that religious extremism and its attendant terrorism, in 1980 alone, claimed 4177 lives and property worth millions of naira. Nwokoye (2006) traces the origin of religious terrorism to Muslim move to introduce sharia law into the Nigerian legal code in the middle and late 1970's. This was associated by the display of uncanny ambition by Northern political elites towards national elevation of Islam over and above Christianity. This is the reason why almost all religious crises are historically connected with sharia crisis. In 2000, sharia crisis raged in Northern states, threatening the security, peace and unity of Nigeria as sharia law was forcefully introduced into the legal codes of states like Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara and so on, without minding the implication for non-Muslims in those states. (Nwokoye, 2006). The earliest religious crisis was the Maitatsine crisis which occurred in parts of Kano and Maiduguri in the early 1980's which claimed many lives and properties worth millions of naira. Similar religious crisis took place in Jimeta-Yola in 1984,

Zango Kataf in Kaduna in 1992, Muslim – Christian clash during a Christian procession at Easter in Ilorin Kwara state in 1986 and other crisis such as the violent clash with the Yoruba traditional worshipper and Hausa groups in Ogun and Ondo state in 1999 and Gomber sharia violence of 2000, which reportedly claimed 609 lives and over 1944 houses destroyed. A total of 746 vehicles and about 123 Churches and 55 Mosques were set ablaze (Onuekwusi, Igbokwe & Anene, 2012).

In Bauchi, a religious crisis erupted in 1991, in a place called Tafawa Balewa between Muslim extremists and Christians over a piece of suya sold to a Muslim boy by a Christian. Another crisis rocked Bauchi in 1992 as a result of slaughtering of pigs on the abattoir by Christian butchers which was unacceptable by Muslims. Jos was really shaken in 2001 by a religious crisis that erupted in the area which is a predominantly Christian area. The cause of the crisis was attributed to Christians' rejection of a muslim appointed as NAPEP co-ordinator for Jos North local government. Muslim fanatics got infuriated and started attacking Christians after their Friday Jumat prayers. Christian had no option than to fight back and the fight which lasted for days resulted in colossal destruction in the area (Nwokoye, 2006).

This Islamic extremist sect, Boko Haram unleashed terror on residents of Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe, particularly Christians from 26-30 July 2009, killing over 700 persons and displacing 3,500 persons. The same 2009, Plateau state witnessed a resurgence of religious terrorism in Jos, the state capital. While the police declared that at least 320 persons were killed, the health workers and local leaders placed the death toll at over 550. Over 40,000 people who were mainly Christians were rendered homeless (Onuekwusi, Igbokwe and Anene, 2012). In October 1st 2010, bomb explosion near the Eagle square Abuja killed 12

people and injured so many others. Another bomb attack by Boko Haram in Barkin Ladi, Jos Plateau on 24 December, 2010. Similar attack took place in Mogadishu Mammy Market, Abuja on 31 December, 2010 and resulted in the death of 10 people. This extremist Islamic sect also bombed Army Barracks in Bauchi on April 26, 2011 which left 3 people dead and scores of people injured. They also engaged in multiple bombings in different locations in Northern Nigeria (Abuja, Bauchi and Zaria) on May 29, 2011 and 13 people were killed and 40 people injured as a result. Their November 4 attack in Damaturu, Yobe state claimed 150 lives (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014).

The terrorist attack of Boko Haram in 2012 at the Bayero University in Kano on Catholic and Protestant worshippers at the Sport Hall and Open Air Theatre respectively where Professor Jerome Ayodele and Andre Leo Ogbonyomi and thirteen other Christian worshippers were killed attracted serious public outcry. In another development in Kaduna State, 24 persons were killed and 130 persons were injured as the Boko Haram launched attack on Christ the King Catholic Church, Evangelical Church of West Africa and Shalom Church at Trikania. A photo Journalist with the Daily Independent Newspaper, Mr. Nathaniel Jibrin was matcheted because he professed Christianity when he was asked to identify himself (Tanu, 2012).

Thousands of people died in the Boko Haram bloody attacks between 2013, and 2017 which have assumed terrifying dimensions because of their partnership with the Al-qaedaian Islamic terrorist sect, which operates at a global level. Today every Nigerian is apprehensive and alert due to the fact that Boko Haram terrorist can strike any moment.

Security Situation in Nigeria since Independence

Security challenge has remained an incubus which continued to torment Nigeria since its independence in 1960. The amalgamation of heterogeneous religious, cultural and linguistic groups into one political entity (Nigeria) by Lord Lugard in 1914 generated a lot of political heat which continued unabated till the time of Nigerian Independence in 1960. Each ethnic group in the new union was conscious of domination by the other in government affairs and this had precipitated a lot of controversy in the nation's polity.

The emergency of various ethnic militia, vigilantes and secret cults in various communities and tertiary institution, political thugs and so on, contribute significantly to security challenges in Nigeria in different dimensions and forms (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). Ethnic-religious conflicts have ravaged Nigeria since its independence in 1960. It has caused serious distrust and suspicion among various ethnic groups and among major religions in Nigeria (Christianity and Islam). Ethno religious conflict is a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group or another in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, fear and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014).

The frequent and persistent ethnic conflicts and religious clashes between Muslims and Christians is a major security challenge that confronts Nigeria. The way and manner religion is practiced by members of the two dominant religious groups, have not always been in the national interest as both Muslims and Christians desire to dominate each other in the religious and political scene. This has made it practically difficult to achieve religious peace and political stability in the country (Nwokoye, 2006). Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002) in Ewetan and Urhie (2014) remark that the problem of ethno-religious conflict worsened with

the emergence of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethnic religious identities.

The issue of poor relations between religious and ethnic groups in a pluralistic society like Nigeria has disrupted peace among the contending groups. This could be seen from the Tiv/Jukun crisis that displaced so many families and claimed so many lives from both groups; and the recent Ebonyi and Cross River state boundary clashes that led to the destruction of many houses and people's lives. These crises interrupted the social and economic activities of the people and slowed down the pace of development in the affected areas as there was mass migration of people from these areas to peaceful areas. Most of the migrants were camped in refugee camps as internally displaced persons (IDP) in different locations. Such ethnic conflicts threatened the security and peace of the individuals and groups living in the affected areas (Unugo and Nwafor, 2018).

The activities of the militant groups in the Niger Delta region have made the region insecure and unsafe for both habitation and business activities. The militants kidnap and take hostage staff of oil companies in the region both Nigerians and Foreigners. They destroy and vandalize oil pipelines and even abduct and kill military men sent on peace-keeping mission in the region. The prevailing security challenges in the nation send a fearful signal to Nigerians that the government could not offer them protection, which is its primary duty to the citizens. This is seen in the level of violence that goes on in the country, the rate armed robbery and kidnapping cases, cultism in communities and tertiary institutions; massive attack and killings of inhabitants in so many communities in the North by Hausa-Fulani herdsmen; bomb attack by Boko

Haram insurgents, political thuggery, electoral violence, religious crisis, and so on.

Mezieobi, Mezieobi and Mezieobi (2013 p78) corroborate the above when they assert that "there is no security of lives and property in Nigeria for the mass of the people who are largely on their own security wise and are helpless in the face of perpetual terrorism"

Religious Fanaticism and Insecurity in Nigeria
Security of lives and properties of citizens of this country is becoming increasingly difficult to be realized by the government as all reasonable efforts and resources put in so far into security have failed to yield any meaningful fruit. The security situation in the country is made more challenging by the activities of religious extremists whose extreme, nefarious and obnoxious religious actions manifest through terrorist attacks on other religious, groups; burning of worship centres that belong to other religious bodies; bomb attacks, firings of guns and matcheting of worshippers in a religious gathering; use of threat or force to influence a member of a particular religious group to drop his or her religion in preference to another and so on. Religious extremism and insurgency of Boko Haram have posed a serious threat to people's security, peace; happiness and freedom in contemporary Nigerian society, especially in Northern parts of the country. They have made the area insecure through planting of bombs in Churches and Mosques, markets, police, barracks, army barracks and other strategic places. According to Human Right watch, about 2,800 lives were lost to terror-related violence between 2009 and 2012. Their uprising, bomb attacks and killings in Jos, Bauchi, Maiduguri and Yobe are still fresh in the minds of Nigerians. As observed by Unugo and Okafor (2018), the activities

of the Islamic extremist and terrorist sect, Boko Haram have caused untold stories to many Nigerian families and organizations by wanton destruction of lives and property unleashed on victims in the country. They have put people in fear and panic as no one knows where their next target of operation would be. Religious extremism has continued to cause a breach of peace and security in the country and this clearly point to the nexus between religious extremism and security challenges.

Consistent with the foregoing, Ewetan and Urhie (2014) observed that religious extremism has become disintegrative and destructive social element threatening the peace, stability and security in Nigeria. It has resulted in frequent and persistent violent confrontations and clashes between Muslims and Christians which have disrupted peace and security and destroyed lives and properties in Nigeria. There can hardly be security, peace, order and stability amid incessant terrorist activities, wanton destruction lives and properties occasioned by the activities of Islamic extremist sect, Boko Haram in many parts of the country, particularly in the North. Religious extremism creates general atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and tension among people.

Causes of Religious Fanaticism and Insecurity in Nigeria
A lot of factors is responsible for alarming increase in the rate of security challenges and religious tensions in Nigeria. There is indeed the need for a critical examination of these factors so as to tackle security challenges and religious extremism effectively in Nigeria. Some of the factors include.

Unemployment and Poverty: Majority of Nigerian are not gainfully employed and so are wallowing in abject penury and privation. Nwagbara (2007) describes unemployment as the

condition of not being able to sell one's labour power in the labour market regardless of being eager to do so. It is a situation in which people who are willing to work at the prevailing wage are unable to find jobs (Okafor and Onyishi, 2013). National Bureau of Statistics (2018) reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate data was 23.132% in September, 2018. This recorded an increase from the previous number of 22.728% for June 2018. According to National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate data is updated quarterly averaging 10.400% from March 2012 to September 2018. The data reached an all-time high of 23.132% in September 2018 and a record low of 6.400% in December, 2014.

Unemployment is the root cause of poverty, criminal behaviour and all forms of social vices in the society. Poverty as conceptualized by World Bank report (1995), is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living. Nduzhaga (2004) remarks that about 70% of the Nigerian people are living below poverty line. Observation shows that the unemployed and the poor who constitute majority in Nigeria, resort to all means and adopt every type of strategy in order to survive or make ends meet in the present hard times. A lot of unemployed and poor youths join Boko Haram, militant groups and criminal gangs as a way of surviving the biting socio-economic conditions that are prevalent in contemporary Nigeria. This situation generates and fans the flame of insecurity and religious extremism in the country. In this regard, Efemini (2005) noted that the twin problems of unemployment and poverty have caused the emergence and intensification of security challenges and all forms of criminal activities in modern Nigeria, where the government and the governed struggle to survive by hook or by crook.

Bad Governance: Government gross incompetence and corruption have made of its programmes and policies on security and crime control to lack effective and efficient implementation. Corruption is a hydra-head monster that has held the Nigerian states captive since independence in 1960. This according to Ewetan and Urhie (2014), has contributed to government failure and breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The state of insecurity in Nigeria, as they observe, is greatly a function of government failure, traceable to gross incompetence, systemic corruption and policy inconsistency. The government has demonstrated gross inability to tackle development challenges and distribute state resources equitably.

Weak Security System: This is one of the causal factors of security challenges in Nigeria. The government has not adequately funded the police and other security agencies. Nigerian security agencies are still making use of obsolete weaponry and security gadgets which makes them unable to contend insurgency and terrorism. (Ewetan and Urhie2014) .According to statistics given by the Amnesty International (AI), about 3641 persons lost their lives within the last three years in the activities of the Hausa-Fulani herdsmen attacks due to the government weak security system.

Political Motivated Violence: Politically motivated violence trailed Nigerian society since the collapse of the first republic in 1966. Electioneering campaigns since then have been characterized by violent conflicts, hate speech and name-calling, assassination of political opponents, thuggery, kidnapping of opponents and arson (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). Eme and Onyishi (2011) in Ewetan and Urhie (2014) observe that political contests are characterized by desperation and violent struggle for political power among

policians. This situation often provokes large scale political violence which poses a serious threat to national security.

Pervasive Material Inequalities and Discrimination

The failure of the government to carter for the material welfare of citizens equitably has often led to violent reactions by a large number of people. Some ethnic groups or sections of the society are often neglected, overlooked or discriminated against in government developmental projects, appointment, political patronage and this usually engenders violent reactions or revolt. Unfair treatment of members of one religion or ethic group in important political appointments or in provision of amenities as against members in other religions in Nigeria cause insecurity. The insecurity problem in Niger Delta and other affected areas stemmed from poor infrastructural needs of the people (Unugo and Nwafor, 2018). Ogoh (2008) in Unugo and Nwafor (2018) observe that in the affected areas of the Niger Delta region, there is no drinking water as a result of oil spillage in the river causing for the death of fished which in the government. This constitutes a threat to security in the area.

Psychosocial Issues of Religious Fanaticism, Insecurity and National Development

Religious fanaticism and insecurity are currently the bane of Nigerian socio-economic development. No nation can make significant progress in any facts of its national life amid institutionalized violence insecurity, religious terrorism and high crime wave (Awusaku, 2013). Security challenges and religious extremism have contributed to low level of socio-economic development in Nigeria. As pointed out by Ewetan and Urhie

(2014 p.58) insecurity has retarded socio-economic development in Nigeria in various ways, which include:

i.   Social dislocation and population displacement

ii.   Social tentions and new pattern of settlements which encourage Muslims/Christians or members of an ethnic group moving to Muslim/Christian dommnated enclaves.

iii.   Heightens citizenship question which encourages hostility between "indigenes" and "settlers"

iv.   Dislocation and disruption of family and communal life.

v.   General atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy.

vi.   Dehumanization of women, children and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instrument of war.

vii.   Deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity

viii.   Discourages local and foreign investment as it makes investment unattractive to business people

ix.   Halts business operations during period of violence and outright closure of many enterprises in the areas or zones where incidence of insecurity is rife and are on daily occurrence.

x.   Increases security spending by business organizations and governments and

xi.   Migeration of people from area or region where there is prevalence of insecurity.

In Nigeria, the increasing rate of religious terrorism and related terrorist activities in Northern Nigeria has almost crippled economic activities in that region (Ewetan and Urhie 2014). Peace is a necessary condition that provides individual citizens and the government the opportunity to put in their maximum potentials in the socio-economic, educational technological and political aspects

of the national life. A time of peace and security is usually a time of social progress stability certainty, financial investments and reaping of the proceeds from already invested capitals (Awusaku, 2013).

Conclusion

Religious fanaticism and insecurity have constituted a serious threat to lives, properties and the development of business activities in Nigeria since independence in 1960. The prevailing waves of insecurity and religious terrorism in Nigeria have made the country unsafe for both local and foreign investors. Many African counties have in the recent times, outpaced Nigeria in socio-economic, cultural educational and technological development because of incessant terrorist activities of the extremist Islamic sect, Boko Haram. Nigeria needs to address the problem of religious fanaticism and insecurity urgently and efficiently if any meaningful progress should be made in its national development efforts.

Suggestions

To show security challenges and religious extremism the way out of Nigerian society, this paper makes the following suggestions:

1. The government should try to invest widely in socio-economic development in order generate employment opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths, the most vulnerable group to act of insurgence and related insecurity. When the youths are gainfully employed, they will hardly make themselves available in the hands of politicians to cause trouble or a breach of peace in the society.
2. The various levels of government in the country should endeavor to embark on poverty alleviation programmes

through the provision of interest free loans to youths for the establishment of small scale industries, business centres, agricultural farms, poultry and fish ponds.

3. There should be effective funding and management of existing poverty alleviation schemes previously established by the government to ensure that the objectives for establishing them are fully realized.

4. The government should try to ensure even development of all parts of the country and equitable distribution of resources among the federating ethnic groups and states in the federation. This will stop unnecessary agitations that can constitute a threat to peace and security of the nation.

5. Religious leaders (Christian & Muslim leaders) should be encouraged to undergo sound training via qualitative religious education. This will help equip them with sound ethics, moral norms, values and right philosophy of life needed for effective religious leadership and nation building

6. Regular inter religious dialogues should be encouraged among various religious bodies in Nigeria to create a good and effective platform for deliberation on important issues affecting their welfare and relationship and for addressing conflicts and grievances among them for peaceful resolution.

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