

Conflicts in Northern Nigeria: 16 Years of Civil Rule in Perspective

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ABSTRACT

It is a well known fact that, the Nigerian state is desperately in search for peace, particularly in the North as peace has eroded most parts of the region. People and government appear inestimably confused on how to reassert sanity and order in that milieu. Hence, protraction of violence especially in the last 16 years of civil rule. This work ostensibly delved into a brief but vivid historical account of conflicts in the region, taking its composition into consideration, while also establishing the nature of the impasse, as reasons for its persistence, despite some purported steps aimed at engendering peace were equally examined. Psycho-cultural conflict theory illuminated the study which concluded that, peace is achievable among the worrying groups but government must take the lead, as some practical recommendations served as our point of departure.

Key Words: Conflict, Civil Rule and Northern.

Introduction

The eve and eventual birth of the twenty-first century saw peace take its flight in most parts of Africa, with the protraction and escalation of conflicts increasingly entrenched, thereby making peace the greatest value of the continent. The continent has so far been enmeshed in complex socio, political and economic debacles, whose effects are of unprecedented intensity, which resulted in a “series of devastating intra-state conflicts ever experienced in a single continent anywhere in the world in the last decade and a half” (Galadima, 2006:295). This perhaps prompted the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs to declare eight of the fifteen “complex emergencies” in Africa (Herbst 1998; Clliers and Mills, 1999 cited by Galadima, 2006), as conflicts ravaged Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan and Uganda. Somalia was until recent time described as a collapsed state as Western Sahara continue to struggle with Morocco, just as Eritrea and Ethiopia have not fully stopped fighting. D.R. Congo, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Burundi and the youngest state in Africa South Sudan are experiencing

varying degrees of conflicts. Darfur region of Sudan is still attracting peace keeping mission.

Nigeria, the self acclaimed giant of Africa is not insulated from the abyss as the intensity of conflict in the country roar, since the return to civil rule in 1999, with armed struggle increasingly becoming the norm. Rather than bring forth, the long awaited public good of peace and development, the return to civil rule brought along conflicts and violation of right of unimaginable proportion. Nigeria's nascent democracy has made headline news on the gruesome murder of five Students' Union leaders in Obafemi Awolowo University, Hausa/Yoruba killings in Lagos, Ife/Modakeke hostilities, Hadeijia, Jigawa crisis, Tsagari/Share conflict in Kwara, Ijaw/Urhobo/Itsekiri uprising, Umuleri/Aguleri violence, Odua People's Congress near warfare, Transport Union uprising in Ibadan and Lagos. Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra imbroglio and Ezillo/ Ezza bloodbath, Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta and other Niger Delta militant group attacks in the South-

South, Odi massacre in Bayelsa, Zaki Biam onslaught in Benue, crises over planned introduction of Sharia in kano, Kaduna, Bauchi and reprisal attacks in Aba, Onitcha, and Oweri. Tiv/ Azara as well as Agyragu conflict in Nassarawa, Tiv/ Jukun and Fulana confrontation in Taraba. Fulani/Tiv/Berom clash in Nassarawa, indigene settler recurrent brouhaha in Plateau, relocation of Ikere College of education as well the location of the Federal University crisis in Ekiti state, Gwari/ Fulani confrontation in January 2013. Boko Haram terror and Army/ Shitte movement face off in the North among others. In fact, Ezeibe (2012) identified thirteen violent conflicts between July 1999 and September 2004 in Northern Nigeria.

The various conflicts were with scores of casualties as lives and property were destroyed on a large scale, particularly in the North, where the menace has largely crippled productive activities. The scene has propelled the declaration of state of emergency in different states in the region. The first was declared by President Olusegun Obasanjo in Plateau State in May 2004. President Jonathan in December 2011 declared it in fifteen local government councils across Borno, Niger, Plateau and Yobe States. A year has hardly gone by since 1999, without a major outbreak of crisis in Northern Nigeria. Boko haram now appear to be the king in the region as they hold sway despite intimidating presence of joint military task force later christened operation lafia dole after the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari as executive president. This has instigated the thinking that the region is fast becoming Nigeria's Somalia!

Although, conflicts are not new in Northern Nigeria, as the region has since the eighties witnessed an upsurge of such conflicts (Best, 2007). What is only new is the resort to terrorism and the determination of the conflicting parties to annihilate one another coupled with frequency of violent conflicts in

the region particularly from 1999 conspired to instigate our interest in this study.

Concept Clarification

The concepts that attract our discourse for the purpose of better understanding of this work are *conflict* and *civil rule*. A brief discourse is showcased on them as shown below:

Conflict Scholarly definitions of conflict abound, with some seeing it in the same way, while others see it differently. The diverse perspectives of scholars made Akpuru-Aja, Nwaodu and Udochu (2012:31) to observe that, "scholar's perception and theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon itself manifests conflict situation". Of course, serious dispute is an inevitable phenomenon in human community, since people pursue different interests. It is the different interests that spur-up conflict, especially when such interests are not compatible and pursued with less maturity. Perhaps that was what made Schmidt cited by Abiodun and Igbalajobi (2012:18) to contend that, conflict is a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources. And that the groups involved may not only try to obtain the desired values but may try to neutralise, injure, or eliminate rivals. Coser cited by Akpuru-Aja, Nwaodu and Udochu (2012:31) noted that, "its major causes include ethnic competition for the control of the state, struggle for regional secession, warfare arising from state collapse, border disputes, poverty, corruption, human rights abuses, frustration, oppression, insecurity, and foreign domination among others". In fact, Akpuru-Aja, Nwaodu and Udochu (2012:31) put it succinctly, when they argue that "conflict refers to physical confrontation, clash, controversy, hostility, tension, disagreement, competition, struggle etc among individuals and groups in a society", it is in line with the above and for the purpose of this work, that we see conflict as hostilities among individuals or groups over the pursuit of different values or interests, which results

in physical injuries or death of the parties involved, due to the use of ammunitions.

Civil Rule refers to the governance of the Nigerian state by elected individuals since 1999. It emphasises the making of decisions on what and how, for the Nigerian state by elected personnel and the period so covered is 29th May 1999 & 30th December 2015. During this period, values are authoritatively allocated by elected persons or their appointed representatives or officials.

Theoretical frame work

This study is illuminated by psycho-cultural conflict theory. The theory explains conflict along psychological feelings, arising from the interactions of people of divergent cultures. It locates the cause of conflict in ethnic or cultural identity, and hatred among the ethnic groups which “grow out of the feelings of powerlessness and memories of past persecution” (Crighton, 1991, Horowitz, Volkan and Roths cited by Faleti, 2009:50) and conflicts driven by cultural identities take long for it to be resolved. Although, such conflicts can be resolved.

Taking a clue from the above, we see conflicts in Northern Nigeria between May 1999 and December 2015 as propelled by cultural identities between the Hausa/Fulani and other minority groups, which grew out of reservations from the unpleasant interactions they had in time past. The two main groups see one another as being responsible for their woes and this increased their commitment to annihilation of each other. Boko Haram which is the talk of the moment also grew out of the feeling especially as members of the group were recruited at inception on the pretext that western ideas including education polluted their society and the inhabitants. Incidentally, minority groups were seen as promoters of western norms and values by the Hausas. We also share the view that the conflict is surmountable, if a purposeful leader is in place. After all, the people subscribed to

oneness in the early reign of Sir, Ahmadu Bello.

Background to Conflicts in Northern Nigeria

Northern Nigeria is a conglomeration of over a hundred ethnic groups, with the various groups having different accounts of their historical episode as they migrated into the regions from various places chiefly for adventure and the desire for safety during warfare. The various groups also attempted to dominate the other through warfare as typical of every traditional society. The Hausa race however was and still the most populous of the various ethnic groups.

Hausa community was divided into Hausa ‘bokwa’- true born and Hausa “banza”- bastards, under the powerful rulers, who ruled according to custom and tradition, but the introduction of Islamic religion in the region “in the twelfth or thirteen century” (Boahen: 1974:40), and its eventual firm root, following fresh band of Muslim Wangara and Fulani traders and scholars, who entered the land from Mali in the fourteenth century (Boahen:1974) as well the first royal convert which occurred, when Ali Yaji B. Tsamia, the Sarki of king of Kano converted in the fourteenth century (Mier, 2000) opened a new chapter in the land.

Meanwhile, heavy fighting (jihad) broke out in Gudu in 1804 which extended to other Hausa land, as Uthman dan Fodio, a popular and respected Fulani Muslim preacher led Muslim community resisted the attack of “King Yunfa of Gobir, along with other Hausa Kings” (Gwandu 1988 80). King Yunfa, a former pupil of Fodio, and his father-his predecessor had earlier enacted against the wearing of muslim veil, turban(head gear), public preaching of Islam unless by Fodio alone, & ordered a return to traditional religion, by all converts (Gwandu 1988). The peasants, already frustrated by heavy taxes and injustices in the land greatly contributed

to the fall of Hausa royalty and this made Sharia to come to lime light, as Uthman dan Fodio introduced it in all conquered territories. The Sharia system brought the Hausa states under a federation, with the state capital being in Sokoto and Gwandu and this brought considerable unity among the Hausas, as the Fulani race also came into prominence.

The Hausa/Fulani community also engaged in “slave-raiding expeditions in the middle belt (Mier 2000: 151)”. The minority groups and the Hausa/Fulani group threatened the existence of one another, but the Hausa/Fulani community was seen as a great threat. This formed the basis of the hatred between the Hausa/Fulani and the minority groups. Therefore, when Christianity was introduced by missionaries, the minority groups accepted it as a means of unity among themselves and resistance to the perceived threat of the Hausas (Kukah, 2000). This partly explains why conflicts appear religious, in the north. The new administration under the Emirate system soon met its waterloo, as Lugard’s West African Volunteer Force crushed it with its fading legitimacy, occasioned by a return of the elite to the pre-jihad corrupt way of life. Although, the people put up great resistance, British attack was not without some support as some of the people celebrated, as they sang “nasara ka dede ba ka zoba, ko bah au dokin hawainiya ne?” which means “white man, you took so long to come, is your horse a chameleon?” (Danbazau cited by Mier, 2000:153).

The invasion seceded the sovereignty of the Hausa/Fulani emirates to Britain. British colonial rule consolidated the already tensed relationship between the minority groups and Hausa/Fulani community, as they made no attempt to unify or create an understanding between them. Rather than make them live together, “Sabongiri” strangers quarters were built for non-Hausas including Southerners resident in Hausa communities.

This could not afford the people of the opportunity of having understanding among themselves. It needs being stressed that, the British indirect rule system worsened the situation. The necessity of politics, however, made Sir Ahmadu Bello to work effortlessly, for the unity of the North, through his Northern People’s Congress (NPC). He reasonably distributed projects and political offices among the ethnic and religious groups. This explains why the slogan of NPC was “one North, one people irrespective of religion, rank or tribe”.

Independent Nigeria was like a period when storm is experienced in a bucket of water as the administration soon met its waterloo, starting with the Action Group Crisis of 1962 and dispute over the 1962/1963 population census. The Northern version of the crisis, was the 1964 wrath of the Soldiers and police, experienced by Rafin Gora community in the present day Katsina State, on the directive of the Native Authority, for associating with Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), that was sympathetic to Southern political elites. Dandunni village, also in Katsina suffered the same fate (Falola, Uhomobbi Mahadi an Anyanwu, 2007). The Tiv riot in the present Benue State added to the devastating experience of the period as the riot continued till 1966. The Tiv uprising and military operation that followed in the area, delved an untold blow on the future unity of the North, which people in the 1980s, 1990s and the 21st Century have come to live with.

The Tiv Crisis, 1964 general election and the Western regional election crisis of 1965, brought law and order to nothingness, as anarchy raged, thereby “paving the way for the ascendancy of the specialist of violence, the military” (Ake, 1996:6), who eventually turned the scene to a semi warfare, through coup of 15th January 1966 and counter coup of 29th July, 1966. This was followed by crisis in

the North, over Aguiyi Ironsi's unification decree of May 1966 and the September killings as well as eventual civil war between the Federal government led by a Northerner from Christian minority group- Yakubu Gowon and Republic of Biafra.

The implication of the above scenario is that, Easterners who are Christians came to be seen as enemies of the Hausa/Fulani race because they executed the first coup that killed prominent Northern political and military chiefs. In 1975, the coup that banished Yakubu Gowon government was plotted by Hausa Muslims, while Murtala Muhammed was assassinated by Sukar Bukar Dimka, a Christian from the minority group in the North. This fractured the relationship between Hausa/Fulani and Northern minority, considering the fact that, Gowon was a Christian and Murtala Muhammed was a Muslim. The North again, resorted to the pre-Ahmadu Bello unification of the North era. It is now understood, why conflicts in the North take tribal and religious colourations. Hence, Hausa/Fulani versus Northern minority/southerners. Today, Northern Nigeria especially states with multi-ethnic colourations are vulnerable than any other region in the country, for the above reasons. This further puts premium on the relevance of the psycho cultural theory for this study.

Nature of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria in 16 Years of Civil Rule

The nature of hostilities that have consumed invaluable lives in Northern Nigeria between may 1999 and December 2015 can best be understood when classified, as they were induced by the following:

1. **State:** These conflicts are functions of actions or inactions of government and its agents. The inaction of government for instance has made illiteracy and poverty to ravage the land. The people in turn, visit their frustration on innocent citizens, who are also victims of socio, economic injustice. The

millions of "almajiris" in the North find violence profitable as it provides avenue for looting of people's property. In fact, the protracted conflicts in Jos, Plateau State, are a product of the division of Jos into the Jos North and Jos South local government councils by Babangida led government. Indigenes opposed it while settler Hausas favoured it. The escalation of crisis in Yelwa Shendam in 2004 was blamed on Plateau State Governor, Joshua Dariye by President Obaasanjo as the Governor took to international travel while his state boiled. Also, the purported rigging of election in Jos North by the State Government, led by Jonah Jang, precipitated the December 2008 upheaval in the state, where violent conflict is now protracted. The most was the wide spread allegation of distribution of arms fund totalling \$2.1 billion dollars for the re-election bid of former President Goodluck Jonathan in year 2015 by his National Security Adviser- Colonel Sambo Dasuki in what is now called Dasukigate in Nigeria. It needs being clearly stated that the illegally collected money was said to be for the motive of purchasing ammunitions for soldiers in order to confront the evil insurgency called Boko Haram that have displaced over one million Nigerians, destroyed lives and property across the North East and proclaimed sovereignty over twenty-one local government councils in the North East.

2. **Community:** In this case, "people of different communities and in most cases with inseparable boundaries, due to proximity are pitched against one another" (Fatai and Igbalajobi, 2012) on issues like ownership of land, location of government project, chieftaincy matters and political benefits, especially "our turn syndrome" as well as ethnic rivalry. The conflicts in Kaduna especially Kafanchan were partly over traditional rulership as Maier (2000 : 209) aptly observes "another source of tension has been the long-standing demand by the Christian minorities to be ruled by their own chiefs instead of the Muslim emir". The

heinous violence that followed the 2011 Presidential election in most Northern states in Nigeria was predicated on the view that, the North ought to produce the occupant of the seat of President till 2015. Equally, Indigenes/settlers crises in Plateau state are better understood within communal context.

3. Religious: This refers to conflicts that have religious undertone. Actually, most of the conflicts in the North may not strictly qualify as religious as popularized by the press. Most of the crises are tribal but the various ethnic groups are of different religious persuasions as stated earlier. Meanwhile, an example of religiously motivated crisis was the impasse over the planned introduction of Sharia in Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi in 1999/2000. Unfortunately, there was no crisis in Zamfara, where it was first introduced in 1999. Activities of Boko Haram, which is the gist of the moment, also deserve a mention.

Little was known about the group before 2009, when they struck hard on Police stations in Maiduguri Borno State. Although, they came under heavy military fire of the federal government under late President Musa Yar'Adua, as a large number of them including their purported leader Muhammed Yusuf who was captured alive, were summarily murdered. It was in 2010 that, they re-appeared stronger, more dangerous and determined on the scene as they hardly fail to make headline in the news. Army barrack, Police headquarters and United Nations building all in Abuja were visited with horror. Also, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Kano, Gombe, Kaduna, Plateu and Taraba States have so far experienced their abyss as they attacked markets, churches, mosques, relaxation centres and other public gatherings. The group which allegedly worked for Alimodu Sheriff for the 2007 Governorship election before they fell out of favour preaches restraint from Western ideas including education as source of corruption and advocate the introduction of

Sharia in the north, as an instrument of social justice and social reform.

4. Retaliatory or Reaction: This refers to those conflicts that are in response to the killing of the kinsmen of the Hausas/Fulanis, in other regions as well as those propelled by the Fulanis over the killing of their cattle by those whose farm land were destroyed by their cattle, while looking for grazing land. In fact, this is the main cause of violent conflicts involving the Fulani race and this has been the case in Benue, Nasarawa and recently between the Gwari and Fulani in Abuja. Reprisal attacks are common in Kano and Plateau states, by both Hausa/Fulani and minority groups.

Why Conflicts Persist in the North ?

The persistence of conflicts in Northern Nigeria along ethno-religious, communal and political lines, which have been responsible for past conflicts despite the acknowledgement of armed conflict as a cog in the wheel of development and progress of the region and the country at large has continued to alarm the minds of patriots. The following are some of the reasons for the continuous surface of such conflicts:

1. Governmental Failure: Obviously, the persistency of conflicts in the north implies that government has failed in its duty of ensuring orderliness, "security and welfare of the people" (Federal Government Nigeria, 1999) which the constitution said shall be the primary responsibility of the government. The federal and state levels of government have not been proactive enough in their bid to nipping the scourge in the board. Regrettably, accusing fingers are sometimes pointed at government, thereby putting pressure on its neutrality. The obvious cause of conflict from North-West, North-Central and North-East, is joblessness on the part of the youth. Rather that address this trend, more workers are retrenched as seen in textile industries, banks and some privatized companies. If northern

Nigeria must know peace, the scourge of “almajiri” must be addressed. At this point, a bit of understanding of “almajiri” is necessary.

“Almajiri” are male children that find their means of sustenance at the mercy of people. They have no hope of the next meal and they have no access to good clothes including foot wear and shelter as well as parental care. They are kept with Mallam (Muslim Scholar) who in most cases find it difficult to feed his family. They are kept with the mallam as early as four years in some cases, while their peasant parents mostly go back to their states and hardly come to check the progress of such children. The Mallam, who is constrained by economic tsunami gives plates to the children in the morning after little teaching of the Qur’an to go beg for alms from which they will feed. The practice continues for as long as possible. The children neither go to school for Western education nor undergo vocational training for skill acquisition neither do they have moral in any respect as they hardly internalize the Qur’anic instructions. The view of Bozimo (2010;10) that “perhaps we pray knowing nothing about religion other than name” is useful in analyzing “almajiri”. These children of alms are always at the mercy of peer and amoral influence. As they grow into adulthood, they part ways with their Mallam and graduate to potential hoodlum ready to terrorise the community at any point in time. They neither have worth nor value for themselves nor others.

This practice is over two hundred and fifty years in the north, when African communalism was in place but Muslim peasants have refused to let go the practice following the collapse of communalism occasioned by European intrusion and eventual monetisation as well as capitalisation of the economy.

Government should not expect anything better from the “almajiris” other than what is in practice. One would have expect

northern Governors especially the Muslims among them to have outlawed this practice and integrate the victims of parental abuse to the society through completely free education with free meal as a source of attraction, while they also work with their guardian (Mallams). Rather than act, northern Governors only lament.

Equally, government draft in military to the scene of conflict and usually, they suppress the violence, although they also unleash maximum terror on innocent citizens but at least fragile peace is engendered. When little peace is experienced, rather than aggressively consolidate on the peace using the opportunities that such period provides to objectively address the worries of the parties, the federal government either declares state of emergency or set up judicial commission of enquiry whose report will neither be implemented nor made public. How do we explain that the killings in Borno, Benue, Jos, Nasarawa and other places have continued despite the reports of various commissions of enquiry?

Of interest is also the crisis involving the Fulani cattle-rearers. If Nigerian leaders are serious, are they not supposed to have made research into how cattle rearers get food for their cattle in other countries, without destroying farm land, so as to solve Fulani related crisis. The re-emergence of the deadly Boko Haram group in December 2010 is a source of concern as allegations abound that Boko Haram was deliberately preserved by President Jonathan for political reason. It was said that, the aim was to reduce population of the North and also make it possible for government to loot the treasury under the guise of fighting insurgents. These allegations need serious investigation especially as atrocities of the group was the major reason advanced by the federal government for postponing the presidential election from February to March 2015 when it was abundantly clear that the opposition All

Progressive Congress was likely going to come out victorious in the election.

Again, it also served as the basis for the fraudulent withdrawal of \$2.1 billion dollars in cash from the Central Bank by the National Security Adviser with the fund shared among cronies primarily for the re-election bid of the president. How do we explain that, the government of President Jonathan could not defeat Boko Haram in four years but did record reasonable gains against the group within six weeks when the government expressed determination to crush the group in January 2015? Also, how do we explain that President Muhammadu Buhari led government that came on board on 29th May 2015 was able to considerably destabilise and brought the group check before December of the same year using the same armed forces? The government of Jonathan is indeed a suspect.

2. Media Complicity: The Nigerian press have contributed a great deal to the development of the country. At the same time, they have consciously or unconsciously increased the tempo of conflicts in northern Nigeria. They have thrown fairness to all to the dust bin to the extent that, when there is an incident, one can accurately predict the sentiment that would follow the reportage. It is doubtful whether unity and security of the country is prioritized in their reports. Hausas are of the view that, Nigerian press are biased against them as they play down violence against them and amplify their own aggression. For instance, the mass murder of Hausas and the destruction of worshipers vehicles at a praying ground in Rukuba road on the celebration of end of Ramadan festival on 29th August, 2011 in Jos by the indigenes was reported on Radio Nigeria 7.00am network news of 30th August, 2011 as a clash between two rival youth groups in less than forty-seconds, but reverse has always been the case when Hausas unleash terror. The bad feeling

generated by this type of disposition is of immeasurable proportion as it increases hatred among the people.

Also, the attempt to make people believe that, every violent group is purely religious only make volunteers to be much more interested and join such group. For instance, the recent operations of Boko Haram suggest that, it has more members than in the past. Even when a religious group that turns criminal lay claim to religious inclination, the media has a duty to refute such claim by inviting credible uncompromising and popular religious scholars to wipe off the air on the issue at stake. To that extent, they call a criminal group criminal. The Editorial of the Nation (24th February, 2012) informed how Kabiru Sokoto reveals that they, Boko Haram rob banks. Although, there is need to make people understand how such group emerge but information must be properly dissected, so as to be devoid of ambiguity or lead to more hatred in the land. For instance, Nigerians of all religious persuasions find it difficult to know the exact demands of Boko Haram as they kill indiscriminately. In fact, Nigerian media portrays them as pursuing northern Muslim interest and agenda. Investigative and objective journalism must be taken seriously.

3. Indiscipline and Incompetent Security: Truly, our security agents especially the Police and Army officers are seen as embodiment of indiscipline, corruption and oppression by the populace. The officers we see on our streets who incidentally relate with the citizens on daily basis are grossly incompetent both in reasoning and action. A large part of them lack respect for human dignity, which is clearly an evidence of ignorance. These people cannot elicit the much needed support and sympathy of the populace, which is surely a necessity for combating crimes and conflicts because they need tip off from residents.

Rather than gain confidence and support of the people, they attract hatred.

They have also been variously alleged of complications in some of the conflicts. For instance, in July 2009, it was estimated that, security forces killed 1,000 people in their fight against Boko Haram. Children and handicapped were not spared (Punch, 24/02/2010). The case in Borno in 2011 where people were not also killed but where market were also destroyed as well as the killing of three people in Jos on 12th March, 2012 for protesting attack on Churches are examples. In fact, the mass murder of members of Sheik Ibrahim El-Zakzaky Shiite movement of Nigeria group must be properly investigated and possibly the International Criminal Court (ICC) should charge the culprits especially the Chief of Army Staff-General Tukur Buratai for genocide. The atrocities committed by the Nigerian army in Kaduna in December 2015 is capable of opening a new ground for long term crisis in the state.

4. Deceitful Political and Educated Elites:

The most ruinous adventure in Nigeria is the one committed by our political and educated elite. They tribalise every issue in a bid to gain popularity and attract privileges they do not deserve. Today, nobody is seen as a Nigerian but as Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Ijaw, Jukun, Tiv etc. The betrayal of loyalty is so enmeshed to the extent that, when an individual displays exemplary conduct, nobody talks about his tribe but every shortcoming is quickly attached to his tribe. In fact, people of every tribe are made to wrongly believe that other tribes are their problem, even during lectures in high school and higher institutions especially in the humanities and social sciences.

The argument in this context is that our political and educated elites from the Hausa and northern minority groups are playing on the collective intelligence of the people. They make the masses hate themselves, while they enjoy and prevent them from collective action, thereby preparing

the ground for eventual conflict. The published diatribe called “Kaduna Mafia” is a case in view.

Conclusion

The level at which violent conflicts ravage northern Nigeria today is a manifestation of the fact that, all is not well with the country as all the three geo-political zones in the region are affected. Meanwhile, all hope is not lost on peaceful co-existence of northern residents irrespective of socio, political and economic status and place of origin as well as tribe/region as they can forgive themselves and put their differences aside as Blacks and Whites did in South Africa as well as Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi. Government has to take the lead in this process, if result is to be quickly achieved.

Recommendations

It is clear from the above that, the attainment of peace in northern Nigeria is a project that must be consciously and vigorously pursued. Meanwhile, the recipe for the various conflicts will certainly differ since their causes vary but certain salient factors are observable in all the conflicts which will make the following suggestions useful in a bid to ensure peace in the country. The suggestions are:

1. Restructuring of Nigerian federal arrangement must be given priority. The restructuring should entail the power to make laws that best suit the feelings of the various states, and state police, while the federal government continues to control the armed forces and federal capital territory police. We do not share the view of those opposed to the creation of state police. It is our strong view that, the country is over-governed since she has 774 LG, 36 States and one Federal Government but with little impact and high burden on public resources. We therefore recommend the dissolution of the present local government councils and states, while the 108 senatorial districts with the exception

of the one in FCT are made states with no local government councils. This will make government closer to the people and will also make better impact on the lives of the people. A comprehensive formula for the working of this arrangement would be worked out. In this sense, most communal or ethnic conflicts would be addressed.

2. Provision of employment opportunities cannot be forgotten in a hurry as joblessness provides army of experts in violence. To achieve this, agriculture, power supply and good roads must be given the right attention. Also, our present capitalist model educational system that only produce specialists in one area, which in turn fail to make best use of human potential must be addressed. Our educational system must emphasise doing (skill/practical) to the extent that, every graduates will be an expert in a theoretical field like political science, along a practical work such as tailoring. The idea must start from the primary and secondary schools.

3. “Almajiris” must be integrated into the civilised society. This is only when the north will know peace. This can be achieved through aggressive construction of modern boarding schools in all parts of the north. The schools must be completely free, free meal must be given and Mallam must also be co-opted into the system. The practice of “almajiri” must also be outlawed. The schools, which will also provide skills for the adult wanderers will be operated jointly by the federal and state governments and once an almajiri comes in, he will be well treated and not allowed to depart the premises for at least four months. This is to make him internalise value for self and others. The establishment of “almajiri” schools by the federal government is a welcome development but the schools must be in thousands, the less than five schools established will not make a difference, as there are about ten million “almajiris” at present.

4. The various reports of commissions of enquiry into certain conflicts should be reviewed and implemented with utmost objectivity.

5. The government and people of Nigeria must develop inquisitiveness, to the extent that organizations and government of other countries that issues statement about the state of affairs or predictions about the country are made to explain the indices or premise upon which their conclusions were made. For instance, United States of America issued a statement in 2010 predicting the disintegration of Nigeria before 2015. Rather than ask why such a conclusion was drawn, they were called prophets of doom. Also, we can't completely rule out their influence in some of these conflicts. Therefore, our security agents must also look in their direction.

6. The Nigerian educated elites and press must put the interest of the country first in their conduct while also taking fairness seriously. We expect our educated elites and the media to check excesses of the political elites, set agenda for the nation and objectively refute deceitful and unpatriotic claims.

7. The security operatives, police, armed forces and others must be well tutored on conflict prevention, management and peace keeping as well as civic rights. We believe as pointed out earlier that, the making of police a state affair will do the country a lot of good.

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If a man does his best, what else is there?

~ General George S. Patton