

RURAL SECURITY AND SUSTAINED PEACEFUL MANAGEMENT OF INTRA AND INTER COMMUNITY CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA- CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE.

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ABSTRACT: *The study is geared to investigate sources of intra, inter conflicts and management of security along with the role of religion in sustained crime free and peaceful society in Nigeria. The study showed that improper management of intra and inter conflict has pillaged human environment, fractured co-existence and became economic ruination of many people. The study adopted historical research method. The findings include problems of irredentism among communities, local governments, states, nation and internationals. And that issues bordering on faith, belief and practices generate unity and group sentiment as such becomes volatile. Unemployment is both potential and active source of intra and inter-community conflict in Nigeria. The study also underscored that leakage of information on crime and criminality marred security and peaceful management of communities in conflict in Nigeria. The study stressed that sustained crime free and peaceful society borders on concerted efforts of leaders in governance, churches, law enforcement agencies and the general public along with fair-play, equitable distribution of infrastructure and employment opportunities as well as appointive positions along with citing of projects to various segments in Nigerian society.*

KEYWORDS: Rural security, Peaceful management, Community, Conflict, Christian Religion etc.

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of how we began, how we came to where we are, will help us to position ourselves to where we would want to be in the future. The beginning of rural society started with the earliest people (Bushmen) who were small in their number, as they stayed together. In the earliest rural society, quarrels among children were settled peacefully through gentle separation and without feud. When the children grew up, tensions appeared that could not be settled completely through separation rather such situation developed into something much more than mere quarrel.

It is established fact that it takes two to quarrel, and the number of fights can be expected to increase with the number of the possible two -person combinations which, in turn, increases at something close to the square of the population. Pfeiffer (1977) agreed with Chagnon (1968) that life style of the children of hunter-gatherers differed from that of the children of the Bushmen farmers. The hunter-gatherers differed from that of the Bushmen farmers. "The hunter-gathers confined their children within their immediate camp area. Adults were nearby to checkmate fights as they occurred, while children of the earliest farmers visited villages,

drove animals for pasture unsupervised". Fight and fights built up in intensity along with aggressive horse play, pushing and name calling as well as more crying might had ensued.

The history of intra and inter community conflicts, therefore, began with the earliest society which developed into club fights, spear fights, treacherous feasts, ambushes, and all-out warfare. The earliest set of people sought orderly society through failed alliances, and Pfeiffer is of the view that there was recorded case of an invitation of outsider to rule the people in the interest of peace. The sustenance of peace process went through the transitory local leaders, with limited powers. Kings with absolute powers gained headway slowly to big men and to chiefs' coalition leading to the emergence of chiefdom. Rural society gradually developed through the formation of clans and kingship grouping with attendant clannishness of contemporary society.

Therefore, the intention and thrust of this paper is to establish that rural security and peaceful conflicts management could be engineered through Christian religious import that would induce productive and distributive economy, as headway towards total development of Nigerian rural society. In secure rural society, people would constantly generate and mobilize energy for running self-perpetuating communities capable of making life worth living for the majority of its inhabitants in all dimensions or aspects of human efforts to improve on her living conditions and environment. As such, society premium shall be attached to elimination of poverty through wealth creation, freedom from oppression, freedom from the tyranny of material wants and comforts of its members.

Conceptual Framework

There is a deliberate attempt to create a frame of understanding for which the following terms have been surveyed namely: conflict, security, peace and management, along with leadership. Conflict is a state where ideas, interests, faith, policies and time generate arguments, disagreements, oppositions, quarrels or struggles that culminate into armed conflict or war. It is a severed relationship that results into a state of unrest, emergency, and insecurity.

According to Williams (1974), competition could "escalate into a conflict when competitors fail to follow the guiding rules, and a competitor who kills rival just to win, has gone beyond the bounds of competition". Sometimes, conflict may lead to total disorder or breach of public peace, but in most cases in crisis endemic areas, the slightest provocation has brought untold sufferings and disaster on individuals or parties to the conflict.

Conflict starts with misunderstanding that degenerates into gradual hatred. As events unfold sentiments intensify emotional reactions, as group develops self justification propaganda and condemnation for opposing parties. The attitudinal changes, fanned by propaganda that described opposite groups as bestialities, rapists, untrustworthiness, selfishness, irresponsibility and cruelty sustain the conflict. While patriotism produces bitter hatred of the other section and a reconciliation of the combatants become more subtle as attempt to resolve the impasse may result to more conflicts.

The term security is a guarantor of safety measures taken to prevent lawlessness, violence or all precautions taken towards threat to human life as well as legal protection against possible harm or loss. Technical usages denote that security prefixed and suffixed postulate social security and security risk as instances. Social security is a system in which the British government pays money regularly to people as low income and non-income earners, while in

the United States the system pays moneys regularly to people who retired from their jobs or families of deceased workers (John, 1992:). Security risk implies that a situation threatens the safety of individuals, organizations or a nation for which demonstration is an insecurity alert.

Peace is a condition in which there is no war or state of freedom from disorder within a given setting, locality or nation with inhabitants living according to law. Peace is a state of calmness, quietness, freedom from anxiety, completeness, soundness and well-being (Douglas, 1962). It may mean material prosperity or physical safety and spiritual wellbeing associated with truth, justice, fair play and up rightness. It is deployed when one seeks the welfare of another, when one is in concord or harmony with another, when one seeks the good of a locality, city or country through elimination of discord, as proper functioning of instituted body in harmony.

Management as a term is planning for unknown future, decision making and controlling of the affairs of organization, institution or state. It is concerned with getting things done through people, in a complex world by complex people. The focus of management is efficiency *and* effectiveness in the discharged of duties or obligations. According to Egwu (2004) Management is focused on the behaviours of people in organization, the structure of the organization and the management of the affairs of the organization. The core of management is the organizational behaviour and the organizational concept that explains the behaviour.

Leadership as a term is an art, learned and perfected, it is a concept of getting things done by people; doing things for people and doing through the people. True leadership is the process of getting the elements to mix, and some people do not mix well with others as exemplified in water and oil. A good leader has the skill .to combine and mix elements through mechanical, chemical and nuclear reaction processes. Leadership deploys three dimensional approaches.

Wiwcharuck (1973: 52-53) says:

Those who do things to people exploit them and productivity is low and wasteful; those who do thing “for” people seem sensitive with deep regard to the welfare of the people, than the work the people ought to do which the leadership does. Those who get things done “through”, the people, encourage participation in governance.

Good leadership is the combination of the three typologies. When a leader is not satisfied with the people’s performance, he can exercise disciplinary action, in which case, he has done something to the people. If the leader is impressed with the people’s proper execution of project, he may reward them; thereby he has done something through them and for them.

Nature and Causes of Intra and Inter Community Conflicts

People’s complaints serve as insecurity alert to leaders who listen and take necessary steps to avert conflicts either within the corridors of secular governance or Christian churches. When people lament over their complaints, which fall on deaf ears, they feel pushed to the wall and may take laws into their hands so that conflicts would ensue. Armstrong (1969) agrees with Hamilton (1966) that a man cannot have human dignity if he allows himself to be abused,

kicked about and beaten to the ground. But, where lawlessness has become the order, individuals must protect their persons and property.

The hoodlums or street corner men want to establish their own families, fulfill responsibilities culture prescribed for husbands and fathers. They struggle to achieve distinctive goals and values of the larger society, but since they are unemployed, would resort to hawking petrol on the streets and storing it in homestead in order to be relevant. The danger of black market is overwhelming as environment, lives and property could be set ablaze. Others may resort to stealing, armed robbery and kidnapping (Eikbomun, 2007).

The police and vigilante groups protect lives and property. Sometimes the services of the police are inadequate in rural areas, and 'the vigilante group complements the efforts of the police. In some areas, the vigilante groups are set up by the top representatives and leaders of the community, without recourse to the police. In most cases, such vigilante groups consist of jobless and wayward boys. The efforts of such Vigilante group will negate that of the police force, and could be used by those that instituted them to fight opponents or enemies, as such vigilante groups are paid by those that constituted them and conflict will remain in the society (Eikbomun, 2007).

The building of a large social system demands social and cultural mixing together of minority and majority groups. When the majority adopts the minority in their neighborhood or business, and the minority accepts the culture of the majority, a large system is formed. Integrated society eliminates ethnicity, nationality, racism and unequal treatment. When the minority group is properly annexed to the dominant group, group with higher social standing and privileges, the larger system stabilizes. But when the majority discriminates against minority in employment, education, and citing of projects, inequalities will set in, as inequalities in education have direct impact on inequalities in jobs and appointive positions. In the face of failed integration the minority group suffers broken promises and violated treaties (Federico, 1925).

In rural areas, land is owned by families and boundaries are not properly defined through survey. The land tenure system has a feature of common boundary among communities and her neighbouring communities. The development of rural areas has informed the creation of Development Centers, Local Government Areas and States. But mistaken boundary lines and the death of local experts in boundary settlement generate current intra and inter communities' conflicts. The creation of organs of administration and citing of government projects, have severed people, land and culture, as well, leading to inter community disputes or conflicts, known in history as the problem of irredentism.

The peoples; belief system has a binding force that enables members to see themselves as belonging to an entity that guarantee their unity (Foster, 1974). They distinguish members from non-members, and expect a behaviour pattern from one another than they do not expect from outsiders. Operational elements in a group are recurrent interactions, consciousness of a kind and group sentiment that has made issues bordering on faith highly volatile. For instance, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants were parties in the seventeenth century religious conflicts that produced the present day conflict in Northern Ireland (Merton, 1957). Problems associated with religious matters are potential causes of intra and inter community conflicts.

Some rural areas are complex, competing, and the environment -exert pressure where people struggle to cope with opportunities, incentives, rewards, as well 'as with, deprivations and prohibitions therein. The working class sees their job as means of providing basic needs for their families and sustaining the education of their children, as they hope for a better future. The middle class sees themselves as partners in determining their positions in the society, and are focused on educational development of their children, expecting prestigious and secure careers for them. Christian religion decries secularized society and people has become individualistic as such when economic slum occurs, the problem of unemployment becomes difficult for personal solution. Unemployment as joblessness, produces poverty -stricken, unstable member of household, who rejects anything responsibility that would warrant the role of provider for any length of time. The unemployed has transitory friends, and tends toward outside world with hostility, as such produces potential source of intra- and inter-community conflicts in Nigeria.

There are rules and regulations that guide the civil service, public service, and private sectors of the economy of Nigeria. Management expects paid staff to be efficient in their jobs while workers anticipate prompt payments of their entitlements. When the management fails to pay or sacks workers indiscriminately, contrary to standing rules and regulations, workers' union and management start a process of negotiation to solve the impasse (ASUU, 2012). The spokesmen of the management and the workers' union will seem- to be relatively friendly, at a round table consultation. When the peace accord has broken down, union members shall embark on warning strike, while management will threaten workers with sack and the register of attendance to work shall be monitored. As the conflict develops into full strike, group sentiment and propaganda shall be deployed to enlist individual's loyalty to his group as any' member of management that suggests compromise solution shall be termed a saboteur. The settlement of such strike becomes difficult as no group will be willing to make concession that shall warrant compromise agreement. Strike is an example of intra conflict in the community.

An ideology is a set of ideas that expresses the feelings of a people, an interpretation of historical situation from value perspective of a group and projection of goals to be sought by collective actions that promote and justify group interests. Ideology helps to identify people who are responsible for an act or who should be made scape goats in an issue. But ideology has functioned as intellectual framework for revolution, reformation, expression of resentment or frustration. Indigenous ideologies abound among rebelling natives, peasants as well as among workers as masses of uneducated and oppressed. Ideology can result to intra-conflict and degenerates into inter-community conflict.

Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution, Christian Religious Perspective

Our discussions so far have revealed conflicts among individuals, workers and employers, and communities fighting over economic stakes in order to gain access to sources of food supply, to trade routes, and markets as well as raw materials. Christian religion has ethical principles impacted to individual members of the society that revealed how conflicts and crises have been peacefully managed and settled to generate societal progress. In settling crisis between employees and employers, union leaders and management should put aside interest, place higher value in work organization, creating enabling work environment, establish effective human relationship, supervise or monitor as well as adopt dialogue and persuasion along with compromise to ensure cooperation and industrial harmony, in order to increase productivity for the common good. The formation of workers union is of primary

essence, a source of friendly interactions for members in the expression of group feelings, of shared goals and norms that control group behaviours, while employers keep to industrial rules, and frictions will be checked through just laws (Harold, 1949).

In peaceful resolution of conflict between majority and minority groups, group leaders hold a round-table discussion, accommodation and tolerance will strengthen their common interest, to outweigh points of differences without party giving up their goals, sentiment, values, but will rather agree to avoid crisis situation by keeping to rules religiously. The police force work closely with gang members to give awards to members of the group that help to stop fights as well as help to merge the gangs with the police, the third party.

Groups in conflict could be challenged with a situation that offers benefits to the warring communities, if they abandon crisis behaviour. Employment of the youths in the areas, and citing of projects in such communities, should be deployed. Threatening the positions of the sons and daughters of opposing communities to resolve the impasse within two weeks or lose their appointments will foster peaceful resolutions of conflicts (Dubin, 1956).

Unemployment crisis could be addressed through technical education skill acquisition, granting financial aid to individuals to establish business centres, offer free education to indigent children, along with payment of monthly allowances to the unemployed as reduction measures towards achieving peaceful management of conflict in rural areas. Christian churches should sensitize members on the need for being law-abiding citizens of their communities.

Strategies for Sustenance of Security and Peaceful Rural Society

There are three essential parts of security which include the security agencies, the government, and the citizenry. The sustenance of security and peaceful rural society is dependent upon the cooperation and effectiveness of relationship among the public, the government and the security agencies.

In case of the death of servicemen, including police, through violence should be deeply felt by the citizens and, government should ensure prompt payment of gratuities to bereaved families. Government should provide welfare package to the families of ex-service men who died in conflict environment to include education of their children up to university levels would establish the relevance of the ex-services to men humanity and society. The serving officers would be encouraged to remain focused on the job.

The police need re-orientation, training and retraining of their personnel to awaken their underlying interest as servicemen, to burst crime without aiding or abetting crime. The re-screening of the police force will reform and purge the system of unscrupulous elements in police uniform. Training and retraining would further develop the personnel's proper understanding to treat confidential information on crime and criminality, with secrecy, to preserve the informant, as well, sustain peace and security of the society.

The citizens need value re-orientation in order to restore societal core values of good parenting, respect for other person's rights, and privileges. The public reorientation will empower the society to question sources of young people's stupendous wealth and emphasize that money is not everything. The society should turn to appreciate or celebrate people of integrity, honesty, wisdom and hard-work as against ill-gotten wealth as source of societal strength and peace.

Nigerian government has to critically analyze the security system, implement highly articulated programs of reform to restore confidence of citizens, police, and business investors in the society. The police should be equipped with sophisticated weapons and ammunition as well as gadgets that will enhance them in undertaking proactive engagements with the provision of helicopters and personnel armored carriers than the current reprisal attacks. Philanthropists in the society should donate patrol vans to complement government efforts to equip security agents in order to burst crime and ensure crime-free society. Such reform agenda should pursue aggressive economic programs to improve the economic base of the general public that will create an atmosphere of peace and tranquility in the society. Welfare packages for the police should also include improved conditions of service, enhanced pay, free accommodation regularly maintained and regular promotions, as and when due.

Government welfare packages geared to sustain peaceful rural society should include job security for the employed, and the provision of gainful employment for the jobless that are ready instruments for the disruption of the peace of their localities and establishment of skill acquisition centre and rural electrification as well as access roads for evacuation of farm produce along with access to financial facilities and information too. The formation of vigilante groups to compliment the efforts of the police should be done in conjunction with the police, community leaders and top representatives of the society. Allowances to such group should be paid by local authorities.

Public sensitization programs on the responsibilities of parents in proper upbringing of their children and wards, on the dangers of reckless living and on criminality among youths should be undertaken by a team of educators from church leaders and development centres of the area, as a persuasive approach towards crime reduction and sustained of peaceful localities.

In conclusion, security consciousness should be in the heart of everyone in Nigeria, since insecurity deters progress and peaceful co-existence. Collective participation of the police, the citizens, the government and the churches, should generate corporate actions that would burst crime and criminality, to create and sustain crime-free rural societies in Nigeria.

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