TACKLING THE NIGERIA SECURITY CHALLENGES: THE ISLAMIC PANACEA

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Abstract

Nigeria as a country, due to rampant corruption and immoralities, is currently witnessing terrible challenges. There are many political, social, religious and economic pending issues. Poverty has been the order of the day. An average Nigerian live below red line. Mass unemployment in the country produces thug and fuels thuggery. Jobless youths see thuggery as more profitable than anything including education. Militancy spread everywhere. A country whose situation is this must be faced with grave security challenges and of course, this is exactly the true state of affairs in Nigeria. However, Islamic Heritage contains a rich tradition of high values and norms of behavior, which governs personal, professional and business life. This paper discusses the instrumentality of effective use of the Islamic panacea in tackling moral degeneration and insecurity that have both become the bane of Nigeria.

Keywords: Islamic values, Insecurity, Injustice, Terrorists, Corruption, Nigeria

Preamble

The Nations within the spongy Nigeria are still struggling to live in good harmony. To gauge the state of Nigeria today, look no further than "the security and welfare of the people", which the 1999 Constitution declares "shall be the primary purpose of government". (Editorial report of The Punch 18, Daily Trust 29). Hence, safeguarding the lives and properties of the people become the first and most critical responsibility of governance.

However, millions of Nigerians are in abject poverty, staring to *Allah* for deliverance from the shackles of an uncaring Nigerian system that refused to provide for their social basic needs including good roads, food, shelter, healthcare, better infrastructure, overall welfare package and of course, the security of life and property. Unfortunately, the immediate past leaders except very few, blinded with their corruptive style of governance, mortgaged the future of Nigerians; the results are being witnessed today (September 2012). People are killed on a daily basis from incidents of attacks, assassinations and road accidents. Insecurity has become the monster likely to frustrate the government efforts at realizing its goals.

Though, there is no heavenly divine religion that teaches violence or destruction of properties, Islam, one of the major divine religions in Nigeria is named "peace", it preaches "peace" and absolutely rejects insecurity. No doubt, Islam provides for adequate and absolute peace and security.

Over the period of time, Islamic tenets used by the Muslims who had become rulers, mentors, and guides of mankind, spreading light and goodness, right and justice, freedom, brotherhood and equity proved them to be truly the "best nation evolved for mankind". Jurists from East and West alike paid special attention to Islamic jurisprudence. They shed light on how they ensured the interests of both individuals and community and fulfill the needs of nations and peoples and how they are framed in meticulous language and superb style surpassing by far any other jurisprudence. It is indeed the greatness of Islamic tenets that makes it able to cope with the needs and meets interests of people. (Knuts 4).

Generally, it is the primary responsibility of the government to ensure the security of life and property. So, much is expected from the leader and security services. But politicians, religious and community leaders also have important roles to play. It is on this ground that this paper is written.

The paper views the instrumentality of effective use of Islamic values in tackling the complex security conditions in Nigeria. After this preamble, the paper surveys security challenges. Then, it focuses on the causes of insecurity. Study and assessment of the government efforts at combating insecurities is carried out. The paper then brings to the fore the features and concept of Islamic panacea. Finally, the paper ends with concluding remarks.

A Survey of Nigeria Security Challenges

A quick survey of the security challenges in Nigeria showcases the followings.

Terrorism

As a nation, the Nigerian security report has never been worse. Terrorists seem to choose their targets at will. For many families, year 2011 will not be so easily forgotten. It was the year terrorism visited homes, streets, offices and places of worship, leaving death and destruction in its wake. Major attacked places include; United Nation building and the police headquarters, both in Abuja. The bombings have continued in the year 2012 with unrelenting intensity as terrorists have become more emboldened with the massacres Saint Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State and multiple blasts in Kano. Terrorist attacks have

become a daily affair in Maiduguri and many other towns in the North-East. Sadly, the Police have borne the brunt of the casualties, with fatalities in their ranks that must number in thousands, and counting. These are indeed difficult times for the country.

Ironically, Nigerians were taken aback when the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria early in the year 2012 was reported to have said, according to the Editorial of the Nations Newspaper (19) and a report by Niyi Odebode (15), that members of the militant *Boko Haram*¹¹, had infiltrated his government, but they are still waiting for him to lush such people out. For many months now, a day hardly passes without the boom of bomb or gun attack.

Militants in the southeastern parts of the country also contribute, in no small measure, to the security challenges facing the country. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) masterminded several bomb attacks in the country including that of October 1st, 2010 when two bombs exploded near the Eagle Square venue of the 50th independence anniversary celebrations, killing many and injuring several others. Adelani Adegbenga and Olalekan Adebayo have both opined that it was the fear of bomb attacks that made the Federal government of Nigeria to cancel the year 2012 Democracy Day ceremony. (10).

Armed Robbery, Kidnapping and other Criminalities

Another security challenge in the country is that of armed robbers which hold up towns to ransom for hours as if in stubborn defiance. During the robbery attack on homes, markets and banks, many innocent people are killed while lots of money carted away. Equally, reports of ritual killings are on the increase. Temitayo Famutimi, in a report, cited the case of a man who after losing chancellorship election became desperate to get rich at all cost and got involved in ritual killing (4).

Kidnappings for ransom and other violent crimes across the country also continue unabated. Kidnappers in a report written by Tunde Odesola abducted a lecturer at the Osun State Polytechnic, Iree in a midnight raid and in the process, injured five students (4-5). Also, a University Vice-Chancellor was kidnapped and later released after the family had paid huge ransom running into millions of Naira. Sexual harassment is another insecurity and social challenge facing the country. The case of the alleged rape of a former corps member by an Osun monarch reported by Folarin Samson is an apt testimony (Folarin).

¹¹ Boko Haram is a controversial religious sect in Nigeria, allegedly called "*Ahlu as-Suna wa al-Jama'at*". They operate in the Northern Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria had since brutally murdered their leader; 'Ali Yusuf, in the year 2009. See: Emmanuel Ogala, Premium Times, posted on 03/05/2012.

Between this wave of crime and the people is a Police Force that seems to have been caught unprepared; a force that is poorly trained, poorly equipped, poorly paid and deeply corrupt.

Of course, things do normally happen without known cause. However, in the case of the insecurity being experienced in the country, it is a combination of many near and remote factors the chief of which is corruption and insincerity on the part of Nigerian leaders. The monster of corruption has become a leviathan, an increasingly unbearable load that aborts every effort to drag the country out of hard conditions. Several legislative probes into the Pension Scheme, Privatization Scheme and Fuel Subsidy Scheme have unearthed trillions of naira in fraud and mismanagement. Corruption is tearing up the fabric of the nation, and plundering resources that should be used for investment in basic infrastructure and the development of human capital as well as tackling security challenges.

Ever worse has been recurrent allegation of corruptions against the legislative arms of government (both chambers; the legislature and the lawmakers) and the Judiciary. A newspaper report on the police pension corruption trial written by Ini Ekott has it that some National Assembly members were accused of taking bribes and that they illegally received N8.9 billion of the pension money (Ini Ekott).

Actions taken by the Nigerian government to check Security Challenges

The Government, having realized that no meaningful progress and development can be made when a country is faced with serious security challenges which threatens its very corporate existence as a country as being currently experienced in Nigeria, has made some efforts to confront the menace. It will be unfair to accuse the government of inaction, but its efforts have not stemmed the tide of insecurity in the country. We hereunder discuss some of such efforts.

Special budget for security

In its attempt to battle insecurity in the country, the Federal Government had in the 2012 budget voted lion's share of N921.9bn.for security alone. This budget allocation according to experts is more than the combined allocations to some ten ministries. The government has also beefed up surveillance across the country. In early 2012, it declared State of Emergency in 15 local governments it considered hotbeds of terrorism. (Niyi Odebode 15, Daily Trust 29). All over the country, military personnel and police are seen everywhere trying to contain the massive internal security situation.

Reformation of Police

In most decent countries, the police station is where people flee for refuge; in Nigeria, however, it is where people avoid at all cost; a place Nigerians have described satirically as business centers where extortion is commonplace under the direct gaze of police officers.

However, in its bid to improve security lapses in the country, the Federal Government of Nigeria has approved reformation of the police, which include the introduction of a new camouflage uniform, professional training and workshops. The new uniform was recently modeled by the acting Inspector General of Police, Muhammad Abubakar. While explaining the advantage of the new police camouflage, Alfred Obiora Uzokwe reported that the IGP said, it will among others, be operationally durable and highly customized with security features to forestall impersonation. He added that the uniform will be environmentally friendly and is part of the government transformation agenda to carve a new image for the police. (Alfred). Aside the new camouflage, Adelani Adepegba reported the inauguration of 40 light armored vehicles by the Inspector General of Police for highway patrol. The IGP said the vehicle was meant to invigorate the Police Highway Patrol Units and facilitate crime control, enhance speedy response to distress calls on the highways and boost the capacity of the police to maintain round the clock presence on the roads. (The Punch Aug 30, 2012).

While appreciating the various efforts of the Government given above and many others unmentioned in tackling security challenges in the country, the present situation in the country evidences that all the efforts made by the government have really not met with the desired results. That is because in spite all the human and capital efforts, insecurity have continued unabated. The insecurity situation has become so uncontrollable that the former National Security Adviser to the President, Andrew Azazi according to Misbahu Bashir had to raise concern over the level of insecurity in the country. (30, Editorial/Opinion, The Nation 19). One major reason while all these efforts by the Government are not yielding the desired results, in our view, is lack of will on the part of the leadership, the followership and the law enforcement agencies. It is one thing to promulgate good laws and formulate good policies, the will power to make better laws and policies work is another. T.O Dada has elucidated on this when he writes inter alia:

A society gets the type of law it deserves through its government or peoples. What is paramount, however, is that such laws should reflect or manifest the basic ethos of the people who are going to be bound by its routine application. This requires full involvement of the generality of the populace not only to be aware of the law, but also to be fully involved in its evolution. The important question that had always arisen however is, whether the system of making laws or constitutions through elected representatives or the Constituent Assembly is a most effective way of making the people participate in law making. In the final analysis however, it is the **spirit** rather than the **letters** of the laws that makes a legal system work effectively. (11).

The above submission shows that another reason while the government's efforts are not yielding the desired results is because of the Government failure, one to demonstrate good leadership example, two to appeal to it citizenry's conscience, re-orientate them in terms of moral standard and God consciousness; and tame them to develop the right spirit of the laws of the land and government policies. The situation has shown clearly that only force cannot do it.

It is also clear that, the problem with the Nigerian police is not the uniform, rather the low morale. (Alfred). It must be emphasized that there is more to a great police force than just a uniform. Hence, the issue of replacing police uniform as a first step in a police transformation agenda could be seen as a gross case of misguided priority. The government is advised to apply the economics' rule of "*scale of preference*" and do the needful first.

The greatest problem in the police force, in our opinion, is the issue of poor morale. However, low morale is the direct result of poor condition of service. The Acting Inspector General of Police (AIG) himself proved this claim right when he said in his address to his senior officers: "They lead a deeply corrupt force that has lost the confidence of the public; a force in desperate need of change". (Nwachukwu).

Islamic Values as Panacea to Moral Degeneration

Islam is believed to be a complete way of life and that there is no problem facing any individual or society that Islam has no solution for. Also, the sincere and complete application of the tenets of Islam in the life of any individual or society ensures the attainment of peace and security. That was why Prophet Muhammad (saw) told the Hercules; the greatness of Rome: *Aslim Taslim* (i.e Accept Islam and attain peace). (Al-Bukhāriy 1/7, no. 7, Muslim 5/163, no. 4707). It should be noted that worldwide, the most peaceful and most secured countries are those where Islam and the principles of *Ash-Sharī'ah* are being applied. It is in the light of this submission that we shall discuss in this section the Islamic panacea to tackle security challenges in Nigeria.

Justice: Islam, recognizing the fact that security will be elusive in a society where there is injustice, lays great emphasis on justice and fair play. It enjoins those in authority to deal justly with every individual and every section of the State. Islam frowns against discrimination and not giving a person their right on account of being a minority. So long they are citizens of a place. Islam stipulates that whatever rights and privileges those who belong to the majority tribes enjoy must equally be enjoyed by the minority. The implication of this is that no section should be marginalized or treated as second class citizen. In this regard, Al-Qurān in Chapter 5 verse 8 admonishes thus: "and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice". One major security challenge identified in this study is that of the militants in the South-south. Even if they, in our judgment, have adopted the wrong approach, the fact remains that they are people who, before recent past, felt marginalized and neglected. The fact that, with the Amnesty program and creation of a Ministry of the Niger Delta, bombing and vandalisation of Government properties reduced drastically shows that if they had not in the first instance being marginalized, they probably would not have taken to harms. It is instructive therefore, for any nation that wishes to stem the tide of insecurity to know that peace and security will remain elusive as long as there is injustice. Allah has categorically stated in verse 82 of Chapter 6 that peace and security will not be attainable with faith alone but in conjunction with justice.

It is quite indisputable that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Therefore, all efforts must be made to subdue injustice anywhere and establish justice everywhere. To show His abhorrence of injustice, Allah, according to a prophetic hadīth in Muslim (8: 16, no. 6737) declares that He has made injustice forbidden unto Himself, and that He has equally forbidden it among people.

Welfare: Closely related to the above point is the issue of welfare. A nation that fails to pay serious attention to the welfare of its citizenry or only pays lip service to it cannot enjoy peace and security. That is because some people, in order to make ends meet, will take to criminal acts and devilry such as robbery, hired killing, kidnapping etc. and become a security threat to the society. If only those in authority in Nigeria would take to the teachings of Islam, the nation would be better for it. Islam, in order that the human society might attain peace and security, enjoins those in authority to provide for the overall well-being of the individuals within the society. This welfare lies in complete justice, mercy and provision of at least, basic amenities such as housing, good roads, potable water, healthcare delivery, light and education etc. Both Imam Ghazāli and Ibn Taimiyyah (144, 159), have submitted that promoting the welfare of the people which lies in safeguarding their faith, their life, their intellect, their posterity and their property are the objectives of *Ash-Sharī'ah*; and that therefore whatever ensures the safeguard of these five serves public interest and is desirable. The reigns of Umar I and Umar II as documented by Ibn 'Abdul Barr (3/167, 186) are vivid

examples in the Islamic history of how Muslim leaders exemplified the teachings of Islam regarding welfare. Everyone in the Muslim community during the caliphate of Umar II was comfortable such that $Zak\bar{a}t$ (alms) was collected and there was no one single needy to receive it.

God-consciousness: In addition to the above enunciation, Islam lays great emphasis on creating God-consciousness in people's minds. God-consciousness (Taqwallah) breeds the fear of God and righteousness. One who is God-conscious and righteous will, both in public and in private, act rightly even in the absence of law enforcement agents. Such a person will not do anything that could undermine the peace and security of other individuals and the nation at large. This is another secret of countries like Saudi Arabia and the Vatican City where peace and security reign supreme. In such countries, children are given the right and proper upbringing. They are trained in the path of God and brought up to be God-conscious. To stem the tide of insecurity in Nigeria, attention should be shifted from the materialistic tendency that is one bane of the nation to the emphasis on religion and morality. The apparent failure of both human and capital efforts denotes that the problem with Nigerians is moral and integrity disease which could only be cured true divine intervention. Allah in Al-Qurān says: "Truly, it is not the eyes that are blind, but the hearts which are in their breasts". [Al-Hajj 22: 46]. The word "heart" in Arabic imports both the seat of intelligence faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions. Those who constitute themselves to security threats may have their physical eyes and ears, but their hearts are blind and deaf. If their breasts were active, they would not engage in devilry. Diseases, according to Ibn Al-Qayyim (1/6, 111) could be divided into two; physical and spiritual. The latter, whose effects could kill, disturb and destabilize the system of both individual and public, is more dangerous than the formal, whose effects are mostly on an individual. In the case of Nigeria, the disease is spiritual; there is therefore the serious need for spiritual rebirth and reformation which must go beyond mere cosmetic and artificial rebranding. The rebirth must be all embracing; cutting across all strata of the entire citizenry-the leaders and the led.

Implementation of Capital Punishment: Another Islamic panacea is implementation of Capital Punishment called *Hadd* (pl. $Hud\bar{u}d$) in *Ash-Sharī'ah*. Certain capital punishments are stipulated for some categories of heinous crimes in *Ash-Sharī'ah* chiefly to serve as a deterrent for potential criminals. Though, seriously criticized especially by Human Rights activists, the truth which cannot be controvert is that Islamic countries such as Saudi-Arabia has been able to reduce crime and insecurity to the barest minimum largely as a result of the implementation of capital punishment. The punishment stipulated by *Ash*-

Sharī'ah for criminals when considered in good faith, Jimoh (157) argues, are not only retributive but are also of deterrent and reformative value. They are also meant to restore the confidence of the victim in the ability of the state to defend and protect his rights. Alaro (24) has submitted that through the implementation of *Hadd*, Islam is able to realize the fundamental objectives of *Ash-Sharī'ah* which include protection and preservation of life (*Hifzu An-Nafs*), intellect, progeny and property and that each and every one of these objectives has its own suitable capital punishment (*Hadd*). It should, however, be noted that *had* punishment is introduced and applied only after the Government has adequately provided for the basic needs of its citizenry. Nigeria can benefit from them.

Campaign through Admonition and Guidance Counseling (Da'wah): Most Nigerians are religious. Those who perpetrate criminal acts thereby constituting security threat to the society are either mosque or church goers. The truth also is that religious scholars, both **Muslims** and Christians closer are to the people. Effective preaching of God's Words which in Islamic parlance is known as *da'wah* could also be used to tackle the menace of insecurity in the country. Apart from the emphasis on the worship of God, campaigns through admonition and guidance counseling could also be mounted to address social problems such as murder, hire-killing, robbery, kidnapping etc. Through such effort, criminals might turn a new leaf and eschew criminal acts.

One instance among others, cited by Imam Ahmad (2/256, no. 22265), when the Prophet employed admonition and guidance counseling as a means of reformation was when a young man came to him seeking permission to commit *zina*. The companions there present were astonished and condemned the young man. The Prophet, instead, drew him close to himself and asked the following questions: "How would you feel if you see someone fornicating with your sister?" The man replied that he would abhor it. The Prophet then went further: "What, if it is with your wife, or your mother or your daughter?" For each, the man showed his abhorrence. The Prophet then remarked: "Do you not know that when you commit *zina*, the woman involved is either a sister, a daughter, a wife or a mother of someone and; why would you do to others what you would not like them to do to you". The young man became sober and thereupon, the Prophet prayed for him that Allah should make *zina* hateful in his sight.

Conclusion

The primary responsibility of any responsible government is to ensure the security of lives and properties of its citizenry. At present, Nigeria is in a critical state of insecurity manifested in killings, bombings and wanton destruction of lives and properties. In a critical

situation such as this, it does not matter whether the root cause is political, religious, ethnic or ideological; what matters most is that all arms should be on deck.

This study has postulated that since the most peaceful and secured countries in the world today are those that lay emphasis on religious ethos such as justice, welfare, God-consciousness and campaigns through religious admonitions; for Nigeria to tackle its security problems, it is instructive that recourse should be made to the Islamic panacea discussed in this study.

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