

Interplay of Religion and Governance

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Abstract

The interplay of religion and governance cannot be undermined. The importance and effects of religion is relevant to governance generally and the effect on the nation is obvious, which is evident in the nations especially in contemporary times. This write-up is a compilation of careful thought and elastic scholastic analysis on the place of religion to evaluate nation today and the future. It is often lamented that if Nations live by the ethics and doctrine of the main religions, societal challenges would have been solved. Nations of the are supposed features where governance manifest skill or play the roles that supposed to fight or work against insecurity. These features include promising geographical territorial boundary; groups of people in territorial landmark of political structure that empowers or mandate a class in position of authority with agreed system of governance regulated and controlled with conventional document that contains right, privileges and freedom of members that are legally bidden. This article will empower, help and facilitate a broader view of the nature, and place of religion in future transformation and development of a nation. The ideas presented, if utilized, will better the understanding among the multiplicity of ethnic groups, curb the tension of insecurity. Hence religion will be restored to become good instruments in the hand of the agents of governance to foster national development and sustenance consider worth of peace and tranquility. It is therefore a concern that attracts a prominent place in the lives of citizenry. The method of research used for the work is the Historical survey.

Key words: - Interplay, Religion and Governance

INTRODUCTION

The relationship of religion and national security in matters that relates to development is the concern of this paper the roles play cannot be undermine. The major and oldest function of leadership and/or government is to ensure stability and cohesiveness within the polity by employing all available agencies, religion inclusive, to maintain social control, peaceful co-existence and to regulate the ambitions of individual stock holders. Durkheim, Emile, a sociologist (1858-1917) acknowledged a strong relationship between religion and society (nation). He was convinced that there is something real in religion and that man is not deceiving himself in practicing religion. In spite of difficulties to find an acceptable explanation for meaning and origin of religion, he said society is the reality of religion. In identifying the reality underlying religion.¹ Deji Ayegboyin in like mind identify evil in African leadership in reducing or eradicating teaching on leadership integrity. He emphasised that leadership integrity should reflect in all aspect of human life: political, economic, educational, legal and security agencies etc.²

Various approaches to the study of religion include philosophical, psychological; this has to do with human psyche and human development to explain religions system Phenomenological; investigate unchangeable and specific description of a style of living is used to explain religions system Historical; deals with events and development over years is narrated for a religions system. Theological has to do with what is true or belief to be the knowledge of God explains religious system and sociological. The sociological approach is concerned with the network of relationships that bind people in cohesive groups called society, which in the modern language and broader perspective can be regarded (nation).

¹ Durkheim, Emile. (1915), *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

² Deji, Ayegboyin. (2009), *An Address Delivered in the Occasion of the 11th Graduation Service BCT Lagos* on Saturday, June 13th

Religion is an agent of social order that will engender national security, it is applied to crucial issues such as. how religion contributes to social integration and what function religion serves in the social complex of which it is part. Sociology of religion therefore studies organization, institution, social stratification, hierarchies of power, all enterprise put on ground to ensure societal/ national security holistically.

Religion and National Development

This will of course prompt us to see religious ethics of other religions of the world visa-vis the relationship with the nation and/or national security. Sikhism in it ethics says “positive demands of the devotees include loyalty, gratitude, conquest of lust, anger, greed, covetousness, pride; protection of the poor and weak, sharing with the needy, equality, fidelity to the truth.”³

Buddhism based its doctrine on dissociation from suffering; Hinduism emphasized “law of Karma” that is a moral law that every action leads to certain result “good or bad”. Whatever you do will determine what happens to you. Confucianism is China’s religion with the mental ideal ethics that is expressed in a sentence from great learning. This describes the goal of life to be the discovery of “The way of cultivating the self, managing one’s household, governing the nation and establishing world peace.”⁴ Taoism a sister religion of China emphatically says “the virtuous man is responsible to government to encourage betterment of ways.” In Japanese culture, Shintosm is unique among the religions that have contributed that has made political theory and promoted national stability. The adherents are unusual for its active

³ Parrinder, E. Geoffrey. (1974) *The World’s: Living Religions*. London: Pan Books London.

⁴ Lion Handbook(1982), *The world’s Religion* Hertz, Lion publishing.

tolerance for other religions and especially respect to superiors.⁵

Other religions outside Asian religions/ oriental world is Judaism. The call of Abraham was bedrock on security of the people of God, from him as a leader was the nation state of Israel began through his generation Judaism emanated. God the creator of heaven and earth has ever being interested in the affairs of nation and by extension national security of which religion plays prominent part. God established Garden of Eden and puts Adam and Eve in it to govern, dominate and flourish to ensure security. He will therefore not spare anything/ person or compromise any standard to ensure national security. Let consider few cases of experience of the aged nations especially Israel.

There was social insecurity in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1 ff) and the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone of Fire from heaven vs. 24. The Israelites cried to the Lord in Goshen in Egypt because there was social insecurity through their oppressor “Now therefore, behold the cry of the children of Israel was come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptian oppressed them” (Exodus 13:1 ff) after ten terrible plagues to break down king pharaoh, he on hesitation consequently perished with his people in the Red sea.

When famine was eminent in Egypt, which could lead to socio-economic insecurity, God revealed to King pharaoh and through Joseph it was averted (Genesis 41:1ff). The siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:24 ff). Infertility and barrenness of Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22). Famines in Jerusalem in the New Testament era, to mention but few are attestations that God of all nations is ever interested in the national security of course, the theocratic system of government during these periods

⁵ ⁵Danny, McCain. (1996). *Notes on New Testament Introduction*. African Textbooks (ACTs).

mentioned above facilitated quick intervention of God in time of national insecurity in whatever form.

These linger on till the inter-Testamental period, that is the period before the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. The Roman Empire who ruled and reigned the then world for over three hundred years had to her credit that she was able to maintain peace, national security and stability for such a long period because she recognised Judaism and Christianity as the state religion and was determined to maintain and retain religious integrity. The period which was usually refer to as “Pax Romana” experienced the influence of religion (Christianity) in attaining its success, there was tolerance for religious freedom which include “*Religio licita*” – Legal religions; these religions were recognized and even protected by the Roman government. Judaism was a religiolcita and since Christianity was viewed as a subdivision of Judaism in the early days, it received the protection of government.⁶

Islam, one of the semitic religions that emerged after Christianity, is faith taught by prophet Mahammed (570-632). The word Islam means peace and submission and is usually taken to mean peace through submission to Allah (God). Islam is not an exception to the tenets of peaceful co-existence, harmonious living, and respect to those in authority and power and national security. This religion is consolidated on this religious ethics, and moral value, so great that it could establish a system of government that is unique. The stability and security in Islam were acknowledged and recognised by the British colonial government during the scramble and partition of African after the Berlin Conference of 1884-85. The British arrival at the Northern protectorate saw the security already attained through the emirate Islamic system

⁶ Trimingham, A. *History of Islam in West Africa*. Glasgow :University Publications.

of government, could not introduce another system of government.⁷

VIRTUES OF AN EFFECTIVE RELIGIOUS LEADER

1. Good Quick Decision Taken- When all the acts are in swift and clear decision is the mark of the true leaders. Once a spiritual leader is sure of the will of God, he will go into immediate action, regardless of the consequences.
2. Servant leadership lifestyle. He must be ready to serve people (1 Peter 5:2)
3. He Must be faithful and conscious of leadership integrity (Luke 16:10-11; 2 Timothy 1:13, Colossians 2:7)
4. He must be a leader that empowers to meet people/ teamwork. Equip others, listen and relate with followers and live an exemplary life (1 Peter 5:3, Romans 2:21-24).⁸

These religious virtues however collaborate with the view of the political scientist who classifies religious group under protective pressure group. However, the responsibility of divine and spiritual image making and keeping cannot be overlooked. They can be concerned with defending the right privileges and interest of their members but not at the detriment of national security.⁹

Suffice therefore to note that all religious groups have common religious ethics that engender national security. These include:

1. Moral uprightness

⁷ Grady, Dick. and Glenn, R. Kendall. (1992) "Seven Keys to Effective Leadership."

⁸ Boer, Harry R. (2006), *A Brief History of Islam*, Ibadan: Daystar Press.

⁹ Ibid.

2. Respect for lives and properties
3. Respect for the ruling class and submission to authority
4. Respect for other peoples right and freedom
5. Religious tolerance
6. Sense of patriotism and loyalty to the community (nation)
7. Fear of God.¹⁰

DEFICIENCIES OF RELIGION ON GOVERNANCE

Many reasons have been advanced as deficiencies of religious impacts on national development, among these are the following.

1. Religious intolerance: - This is a menace that is leaches out through emotion, hatred, and bitterness for the tenet of other religious groups which can definitely lead to tension. This will often manifest in anger. "The influence of anger is just like that of someone who is under the influence of alcohol or hard drug. A person under the influence of anger cannot rationalize, comprehend, or make good decision. This is because anger distorts logical reasoning, and it makes the victim becomes emotionally blind. When he is unable to think right, he no longer behaves normally and that is absolutely his fault."¹¹ Unfortunately, this can as well manifest within the same religious groups that is, Moslem to Moslem; Christian to Christian; This has silently destroyed and terminated lives of so many people. The new religions (Christianity and Islam) have re-orientated the people and destroyed traditional pre-colonial non-capitalist economic system; dismantling of the pattern and structure of indigenous socio-economic life; it has

¹⁰ Rick, Warren. (1994), *The power to Change your Life*. Payam: Soom House Publisher.

¹¹ Ibid.

generated a culture of dependency and the creation of a class of natives that are exploitative and ethno-religious conscious.

2. Religious fanaticism: - Adherent zealously protect, defend and/or promote the interest of their group. They assume the responsibility of protecting their faith, Warren W. Wiersbe in trying to explain characteristic of a fanatic says “They had to examine every teacher and teaching that appeared in the land. They scorn other religious groups and attempt to legally trap them.” Fanatism can trigger aggression capable of destroying lives and properties.¹²
3. Socio-Economic frustration: - This is a wide range factor that is real with the developing world, Nigeria inclusive. It has to do with poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, broken homes/bad parenting, failure, negative influence, myopic world view etc. These factors are capable of resulting to frustration and psychologically it can result to aggression. The victim of any of this upheaval. A proverb says “empty mind is the workshop of the devil” an idle hand can be engaged by miscreants who are always out manipulating others for their selfish purpose. Except the society/ nation is healed of these devastating diseases, religious upheaval will continue to prevail. The elites use religious sentiments to spur this class of people to crisis because they know and are very calculative on Marx observation that religion is the opium of the masses where man once again losses himself.
4. Misleading from religious Leaders: - Religious Leaders incite their followers directly or indirectly against other religious groups. This is common when they teach or hold public talks. There is really one test for leaders, do they have the character and integrity to do the right thing, for the right reason, at the right time. Some religious leaders for selfish reasons engineer pandemonium so that they can

¹² Ibid.

take advantage. Some are so careless about the sensitivity of their leadership role and irrationally act or react to issues; the result is better being imagined on insecurity that ensues.

5. Religious camouflage/ hypocrisy: - Religion is often used as a disguise, cover-up sentiments to commit atrocities. The original intention of those who sponsor religious crisis could be political, economic, tribal, insubordination or egocentrism, hatred, envy against the government and/or some individuals in the society. Some political leaders have been accused of supplying arms and giving financial assistance to aid their members during religious crisis. Such leaders condemn religious crisis in public, but secretly engineer and fuel it. The misery and ambiguity in the appearance of some turbulent religious groups pose a serious challenge. After Maitasine religious riots (1980) in Nigeria when Moslem sect fought, maimed, and tirelessly killed innocent fellow men from another religious sect prematurely in the name of religion, Boko Haram conflict reminded Nigerians of such maiming and killing in 2009 to date. These two occurrences are so fanatical and ignominious to the extent of threatening the survival of Nigeria as a nation, talk less of democracy. The effect is so devastating on Christians even though some eminent Moslems dissociates with Boko Haram for example Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu, Niger State Governor; the Sultan of Sokoto, Sa'adu Abubakar; coalition of Muslim clerics in Nigeria; the Islamic circle of North America, the Supreme Council of Canada, the Moslem council of Britain, the organization of Islamic co-operation and the council of American Islamic Relations have all condemned the group.

MENACES OF RELIGIOUS DEFICIENCIES ON A NATION

The menace of religious crises has affected the social-cultural, economic, and psychological perception of the citizens. The followings can be identified.

1. Military intervention: - It is a good reason for the military to take over government. The case of the Nigeria civil war of 1966-1970 is still fresh. Religious conflicts, among other factors, in the northern region of Nigeria where thousands of Igbos and Easterners were killed in 1966-1967 contributed to the declaration of the defunct Republic of Biafra according to former Biafra leader, late Ikembo Odumegwu Ojukwu during an interview with U.S. Africa The Newspaper. This was the aftermath of constant coup d'état that set the country on the keg of gun powder. The failure of the civilian's regime in ensuring national security in the face of loose control on religious activities was part of the reasons for the military intervention. After the civil war that ushered in the military regime of General Yakubu Gwon, (1966-1975). So many other military juntas have ruled the countries putting the state of the nation in a position of mess. Mohammed Murtala (1975-1976)/ Olusegun Obasanjo (1976-1979), who handed over to a democratically elected government under President Shehu Shagari. He was again overthrown by Buhari/Idiagbon regime (1983-1985); Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (1985-1993); he handed over to caricatured civilian interim regime of Cheif Shonekan after the fracas that ensued the annulment of June 12,1993 election. This interim government was again overthrown by the military palace coup of late Sanni Abubakar became the President (1998-1999); he handed over to the nascent Democratic dispensation. During the military regime "Nigeria's image was badly obscured, tarnished, distorted and spoiled worldwide".
2. Psychological break down of the Citizenry: - The common man/woman are in majority under the phobia of survival. Future seems bleak and uncertain. Many are falling victim of circumstance rather than seeing themselves as victors. Fatalist "the group of people who are careless with life battle and probably may not acknowledge the reality of a

battle to fight. The belief in fate and feeling that you cannot control events or stop them from happening.” Also, pessimist group “always expect bad things to happen. They easily accept failure because they have weak will power.”¹³ These two groups are on the increase, and it is evident in their actions and reaction to issues. Some will always say there is no hope for there country; others will say their nation will be spilt, some are preparing for war, and many are seriously aggressive and frustrated. Religious groups and leaders are exploiting this situation to preach, teach and/ or propagate consolation in God alone. That is why we have proliferation of churches, increase in the number of clergy, aggressive religious gatherings and fellowship, call for prayers, rituals and sacrifices which deeps into other social vices like kidnapping, corruption, assassination, ritual killings. The syndrome now is increasing height of religiosity and digging deep of moral decadence.

3. Conflict is generated by the quest to protect one’s identity usually overwhelm and inflamed by the protection of one’s interest group especially religion. Events which threaten to remove the feeling of safety that are tied to different forms of identity usually lead to defensive reactions aimed at avoiding spiritual and / or physical exposures. This identity syndrome engenders polarization, unhealthy rivalry, and/ or what I call a salient social evil that silently kills national security.
4. Political stability threatened- The government attention will be disrupted when insecurity is prevalent; policies that are supposed to bring progress shall be jettison while more attention will be on national security. As this affect the democratic system, the populace / citizens shall see it has a weak system that has little positive effect on progress. The absence of peace will hamper progress. Political

¹³ Ibid.

system will seriously overheat with religious conflicts. The situation will deteriorate to the point of religious group trying to control the government; hence, Muslim or Christian President, minister, governor, legislator etc.

CONCLUSION

Life after death is very much important in every religious group, let all adherent leaders and followers acknowledge the fact that we are stewards who will give account to our makers. Let us also know that the good and positive legacies we inherited is not supposed to be destroyed for posterity. Theodore Roosevelt says “do not persist in folly. It is not a badge of character to continue down the wrong road” and Thomas Fuller advised that you and I should “waste no more time arguing what good man should be. Be one”. Let us listen to the counsel of the wise for a better tomorrow as we practice our religion. Security is the first duty of a government to her people. Peace is needed in order to facilitate development and growth. If there is no peace there will not be national development. If there is no peace, insecurity will prevail, and any positive development is not certain. These are truth that all religions stakeholders pursue, on this the bedrock of national development is built. Therefore, let us learn from history, as nations we should draw from the wealth of her historical past to move ahead.

Recommendations

1. The clergies and true believers are expected to foretell and forth tell on matters that are precarious to national security.
2. Teaching and inculcating moral values of the old-time religion in the adherent's is imperative.
3. Praying and consistently interceding for the leaders and followers that is, the rulers and the ruled are equally important.

4. Religious institutions /groups should Vanguard peace and tranquility in other words, be trouble shooters instead of troublemakers.
5. Religious leaders should discipline themselves and be good role' models exhibiting every positive leadership virtue.
6. Religious institutions should foster truth, justice, righteousness, and peace. This is the passion of God for all nations.
7. Sensitize adherents to be security conscious preventing every external influence that can threaten the security of their Nation.
8. The attitudes of the religious leaders and the adherents should engender hope and positive solutions on the political, socio-economic challenges.
9. Religious institutions and their agents should embrace disarmament instead of mounting armaments.
10. Religion needs to work together with the government/state for the progress and unity of the nation.
11. Tell their members who are in government to fear God and arise to their responsibilities in providing better standard of living to the people.
12. Awake to discipline their erring members in government instead of celebrating them.

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