



CHARACTER OF THE STATE AND RELIGION IN A DEMOCRATIC STATE: A CASE ON NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The character of a nation is known by the nation's ability to enact strong laws and to abide by it. On the opposite, when these enacted laws are weak and trampled upon, it signifies the pattern of its strength and growth. Democracies where laws are only seen on paper and not followed may experience retrogression and subsequent collapsed. The character of a state is embedded in laws. Stability, peace and security of the country is significantly determine by the attitudes of the both the leaders and the citizens. The state character and religious manipulations constitute a stumbling block to peace and security in the country. Laws in Nigeria are strong and have the capacity to usher in stability and security. However, enforcement of these laws has been a problem due to the character of the state as institution of governance. There have been many cases of gross violations of these laws based on self-interest. The paper reveals that failure of the countries to achieve set objectives mostly stems from the character of the state and the attitudes of the citizens towards the state and the laws. The paper recommends that the character of the state and the manipulation of religion by both the state and the citizens should be discouraged. This stand is a key to national security and good governance

Introduction

The character of a nation is known by the nation's ability to abide by the Laws of the country. On the opposite, when these laws are weak and trampled upon, it signifies the pattern of its retrogression and subsequent collapsed. The character of a state is embedded in laws. Stability, peace and security of the country is significantly determine by the attitudes of the both the leaders and the citizens For instance, Nigeria as a Political entity is witnessing a deteriorating internal security situation since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Added to these unfortunate events has also been the continuous resistance through militancy. Seemingly, there are also occasional incidences of ethnic and religious violent (Sanda, 2014 in Mugono 2016). Importantly, the provision of these essential imperatives rest upon how well secured a nation is. It is an established fact that only capable states with right character and attitudes both as actors on the corridor of power and individuals as citizens can promote collective mandate. The capability or otherwise of the state apparatuses can be measured on the basis of effectively discharging its duties of delivering security, peace, and prosperity to the citizens(Mohammed,2015).. Apparently, there has been well known crimes ranging from



armed robbery, kidnapping, and terrorism, including official and non-official corruption that reached unprecedented level in the country even though each of the geo-political zones have its uniqueness in security situation. By and large, many scholars have given many reasons for the rising insecurity in the country. From these trends of these breaches that have made the country insecure in recent times.

However, prolonged military rule in the past and poor governance that have been conceived to be responsible for wide gaps and inequalities between the few rich. The scenario has been further precipitated by religious extremism and gross intolerances. These unfolding events created multiple fault lines in path democratic processes in Nigeria (Abdu, 2013). . Series of efforts put in place to restore a state of normalcy yields minimal or decimal results. Part of the search light has been directed towards the proliferation of non- state actors and the character of the state as institution of governance. The bottom line lies with the issues related to provision of adequate security as a fundamental public good what all nations must strive for. The same goes with the social contract philosophy between the state on one hand and the citizens on the other It on this basis that this paper reviews these multidimensional factors that accounts for the character of the state, and religion in Nigeria's democracy (Fugan, 1997).

Clarification of terms and Concepts

State and State character

Intellectual discourse on state and its character could be basically linked to the classical works of Marx and Engels in which state was conceived to be an institutionalized public force which is no longer immediately identical with peoples own organization of themselves as an armed power(Fugan, 1997). In the view of these two scholars, state had not always existed nor was it evident in every society. State was described as some kind of public power which certain men held at certain times for specific purposes. At that stage, there was a social condition in which the state was unknown institution but certain amount of authority was nevertheless delegated to certain members of the society (Machiavelli, 1995), For example a tribe council where People only elected or installed their war-chiefs and other leaders and also had the right to depose them. There were also leaders whose powers were severely limited to specific occasions and periods. Deliberations were held in public, surrounded by the other members of a tribe. The same society or civilization existed in the pre-colonial Igbo communities in Nigeria Oke, 2005). As such, everyone was given fair hearing who asked for. Women could also express their by a speaker of their own choice, However, final decision was taken on unanimous basis. Similar example could be drawn from the German mark communities, an organization of authority to settle all disputes which arouse within the society and also attended to conflict with other tribes.

Historically, state finally appeared the Athenians, in Romans, and the Germany. Thus, state was not a super imposed phenomenon but the realization of reason or the idea. State is therefore an ideal prototype or model and a product of social development. Moreover, when



private property and the means of production processes emerged, the character of the state experienced a tremendous change and a form of setback. Subsequently, the crystallization of classes, class conflict, private property and inequalities in wealth gave rise to social stratification and class cleavages, thus, undermining the solidarity of the society as a whole. The state then, becomes the admission that turned into irreconcilable antagonism. Classes with conflicting economic interests went into warfare. Broadly, incorporation of Capitalist economy precipitates and promotes changes in state character thereby culminating into differentiation in social structures and institutions of societies. Thus, the character of the state breeds leaders' lead dictatorial tendencies still under the umbrella of democracy. The unique manipulative capacities produced leaders who lose touch with human passions and sentimental love for others not because they are superhuman but because they lose their own humanity in the practical effort to dehumanize others (Nwanko, 1979).

The character of the state failed to realize that democratic idea is about consensus building with give and take as soul of business. The agenda on democracy has been conceived to be means to an end

In addition is the perpetual agenda of transformation in socio-cultural and economic spheres. On a similar note, the Capitalist state has been embedding with inherent contradiction in the desire for relatively strong states and universal demand for democratization process. Core democratic agenda creates room for political opportunities for ethnic and religious mobilization. Majority votes determine leadership processes, the fear of the minority interests or groups always feel insecure. Complex institutions in modern times account for suspicion of purpose and actions. These views excavate the basis and the character of the state in recent times, especially in Nigeria. In this piece of work, state has been refers as the Executive Committee of the Bourgeois

Religion

Religion has been and is still very much with us. It is with us at every moment of life. In our inner most being and with regard to the great or minor events of our life. Discourse in religion has been on daily newspapers, through the radio, and television, Social Media and even in our conversations. It is with of us inevitably, whatever may be our individual abound attitudes, it requires multi-attitudinal, spiritual and managerial mechanisms that will determine the proceeds occurring from it. The more positive we are in handling issues and affairs of religion, the better and safer we become as a nation or community. Whereas, when issues related to religion is negatively pursued, the more vulnerable and risky we are exposed, the undesirable consequences arising from radicalized religious beliefs could be linked to improper handling of religious affairs either as individuals, groups and in the processes of governance (Nnwanko, A(1979),. By and large, religion requires apologetics to establish the fact of its existence. Ones comment may be sacrilegious to other faiths. At times, it is pretty difficult if not impossible to make apology on religious issues and affairs when that individual is deeply involved. Therefore, it becomes a concomitant of almost every sphere of



human activity from time immemorial. These gestures inform the basis of violent extremism across the globe. It is on this basis or platform that religions and religious affairs cannot ignorantly or unsafely be ignored or neglected, religious issues encountered serious setbacks across societies and civilizations. This backdrop thereby creates a scenario which everybody is either interested or stakeholder in religious affairs (Ireogbu, ,2002).

Nigerian State and Religion

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates in clear terms as” we the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Having firmly and Solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God dedicated to the promotion of Inter- Africa solidarity, World peace international cooperation and understanding”, And to provide for a Constitution for the purpose of good governance and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of Freedom, Equality, and Justice. Also in General Provisions that the Constitution is Supreme and its provisions are binding Force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Any other Law is Inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution, this Constitution shall prevail and that other Law shall to the extent of the inconsistency be void (Nigerian Constitution. 2011 as amended)

Nigeria, there have been gross violations of the Constitutional provision from different quarters. Political elites in Nigeria have always sought to reap advantages from the multidimensional identities (Usman, 1997 Ige, 1997)..

More so during electioneering periods, and this has resulted in conflicts and instability. This politicization of religious identities during contests for political office often lacks any sustaining unifying ideology (Oke, 2005). Politics in Nigeria are fashioned on the appeasement of religious motives. In the quest to assume power and state resources, the elites constantly modify patterns of political domination. In this perpetually changing pattern of domination, fears and anxieties are bred that motivate an upsurge in struggle and intolerance (Abdu, 2011). Religious conflict entails different ethnic groups that belong to different religions (Mangut, .Egbefo, 2010). It is essential to advert that both religious and ethnic causal agents have always acted together in the majority of social conflicts in Nigeria. At different levels and times in the past, the Nigerian people have complained of religious discrimination. Most ask for religious rights within their state. Another cause of the conflicts has been the state’s use of religion and ethnicity in political discourse or action. Therefore, it is clear that accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression and domination are the major causes that fuel religious conflicts (Usman, 1997).

Nigerian State and Democratic Processes

Nigeria, like many other countries in the world, lacks a consensus on how necessary changes and reforms are effected. This is caused by the fact that different religious and ethnic groups have varying benefits in which case some groups will have their interests met while others will not. This means that tension occur when individuals who feel that they are deprived



attempt to increase their stake of power or wealth or to alter the central beliefs, values, norms and philosophies (Abdu 2011, Patti, 2015). In Nigeria therefore, there appears to exist a contentious interaction of politics, ethnicity and religions, which has resulted in an increased sense of belonging and militancy. It is important to note that the general outcome of this is the intensification of numerous ethno-religious struggles in Nigeria. And this intensification can be seen as the main source of ongoing discrimination, subordination and domination in this country (Danbazzau, 1997).

In Nigeria, electoral laws are grossly violated with impunity, especially by the actors on corridor of power. The attitudes of the citizens perceived laws as mere legal formalities. Democratic processes and procedures are abused and neglected. Campaign rallies are characterized by violence and militancy (Taylor, (2010). Election results are not taken serious. Election tribunals are preoccupied by compromise. Selection of leaders to run for political offices is not anchored on core national values. The character of the state and people's attitudes are not guided by national interest (Mangut, ,2010). These tendencies are violations of the laws which provides avenue for good governance. It is believed that promotion of national integration and to foster good economic progress can only attain via thoughtful and pronounced policies. This has in turn led to the rise of communal, ethnic and religious conflicts (Chinye, 1997).

It can be postulated that the creation of Nigeria as a country was an outcome of many conflicts and compromises (Mohammed, 2015).. Scholars have attributed the causes of these conflicts to various factors like struggle for land resources, traditional authority, competition for economic and political spaces, clash of values and way of lives, religion and ethnicity and religious manipulations (Baminsaye, O. A. Awofoso, D. (2011).

For example, before the Murtala Mohammed was assassinated, he had set up a committees to draft constitutional measures are drawn from all nooks and crimes of Nigeria. The membership was also drawn from traditional rulers It was during the exercise in the 1978 constitutional assessment that some Muslim suggested that a Federal Shari 'a Court of Appeal should be established. Most of the Christians who were at the assembly were asked to recall the proposal. The arrangement by then was that, the Shari 'a cannot in anyway affects non-Muslim life and life of a Muslim cannot be complete without the adherence to Shari 'a. Similarly, with the assumption of office, by Ibrahim Babangida, he reviewed the constitutional committee by the then Murtala Mohammed. The intention was to review or adoption in the third republic. The committee completed the assignment and in 1989 a constitution assembly was inaugurated and started on the 11th May, 1987, in Abuja. It came to review the issue of establishing the issue of establishing a Federal Shari 'a court of Appeal that generated controversy in 1978. When the issue was brought up again for discussion, Christian members again refused to compromise and the Muslim member stood to their guns (Usman, 1997). This ranging controversy was further faced by unguided utterances of



religious leader to the extent that contravened provisions dealing with education, health, economy and the machinery of government, Therefore, within few days, the exercise of Shari ‘a Law was completed and handed over .For the attention of the participants; little or no further reaction was taken. These issues formed the basis of Muslim-Christian polarization in Nigeria(Usman,1987).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Since the creation, human societies have characterized by conflicts and contradictions that necessitated for growth of the state as desirable venture for peace. Seemingly, democratic processes like multi-parties, political debate and elections have been engendering political controversies. Hence, it provides avenue for congenial atmosphere for ethno-religious mobilization. The same scenario is found in indigence and citizenship instead of promoting and agitating for overall peace and stability

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