

Organised Violence in Nigeria and the Travails of National Security

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Abstract

The spate of violence and insecurity in Nigeria since the return to democratic rule in 1999 is alarming. Violence of various magnitudes are daily evolving and leading to loss of human and material resources. More perplexing however is the observation that some of these are deliberately planned and targeted at specific locations, individuals, or groups of people. While the nation is still grappling with the Boko Haram issue, despite government's assurance that the group has been decimated, killings purportedly by herdsmen across some states of the federation, added another dimension to the spate of violence and insecurity in the nation. This paper therefore is a careful examination of the security challenges presently facing the nation, especially as it is occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency and the incessant attack by herdsmen in certain parts of the country. It adopted the descriptive approach. Consequently, it describes two organised violence and the insecurity they presently engendered for the country. It then identifies issues as executive mischief making, politicisation of religion, absence of justice and external factors as some of the causes. While affirming that these incidences, if not properly handled portends danger for the individual citizen, and threatens the corporate existence of the nation, it suggested the way forward for peace to reign in the Nigeria.

Keywords: *Organised Violence, Nigeria, Travails, National Security*

Introduction

Well-meaning Nigerians are today highly perplexed by the level of insecurity in the land occasioned by various forms of organised and sophisticated crimes and disorder. This is not strange to Nigeria, because since independence especially after the civil war in 1970, the nation had witnessed vices of various forms and magnitude which have engendered insecurity across the country. However, this seems to have heightened since the inception of the present democratic dispensation. Since the return to democratic rule in May 1999, the nation has witnessed a number of violence associated with militancy, commercial kidnapping, armed robbery, political assassinations, hired killings, arms proliferation, sea-piracy and ethno-religious conflicts. These have resulted in the shedding of innocent blood; wanton destruction of properties and constituted threats to national security and the corporate existence of the nation.

More perplexing however are violence carefully planned and executed, which are referred to in this paper as organised violence. It is perplexing because one cannot actually fathom why certain people will choose to take up arms against their country or against fellow Nigerians in the magnitude that has been witnessed in recent past and that is still being witnessed today.

Prominent among such violence is that orchestrated by the *Boko Haram* group and killings across some part of the nation, purportedly by herdsmen. The *Boko Haram* situation has been with us for close to ten years now, having started in 2009. While the administration of Goodluck Jonathan had a tough time containing the excesses of the group the present administration of Muhammad Buhari announced to the nation in December 2015 that the group has been decimated. However, from all indications the government is still grappling with this issue. Added to the *Boko Haram* scenario are the killings across some states of the federation, purportedly by herdsmen. It is believed that certain situations might for one reason or the other spontaneously result in or gradually degenerate into violence, but these two cannot be said to be so. Invariably, the already bad security situation in the country is being worsened. Consequently, concerted effort is needed on the part of government to deal with these issues, for peace and orderliness to reign in the country.

Organised Violence in Nigeria

This paper discusses two major organised violence of our time in Nigeria. These are the *Boko Haram* terrorist operations and the killings by herdsmen across the nation. The *Boko Haram* debacle is no longer news to Nigerians. Since it erupted in 2009, the group has become a household name, and a phenomenon which no-one prays to encounter. The activities of the group had hitherto constituted serious embarrassment both to the Nigerian masses, the military and the government. It threatens the security, sovereignty and stability of the country, particularly northern Nigeria, by a range of high profile bomb attacks on the military, police, schools, political figures, defenceless villages and towns, markets, and other infrastructures, especially religious houses (Nicoll 2011:1-3). Lives and properties have been lost and havoc is continually being wreaked on the military and innocent citizens.

The former administration of Goodluck Jonathan had a running battle with this group from the beginning of its administration to the end. The failure of not being able to quash the group or minimise its operations throughout its tenure was considered across the country as a major weakness of the administration. While all efforts put into the *Boko Haram* struggle by the Jonathan administration did not avail much, the new Buhari administration having made this issue a strong campaign promise, gave December 31, 2015 as a deadline for the defeat of *Boko Haram*. On 23 December, 2015, Lai Mohammed, the Minister for Information and Culture told a meeting of editorial heads of media houses in Lagos that the Nigerian military has met President Buhari's deadline to defeat *Boko Haram* before 31 December 2015. He said:

Today, I can report that the war against *Boko Haram* is largely won. Today I can report to you that the entire 70 plus kilometres stretch from Maiduguri to Bama and all the way to Bankin which leads to Cameroun and the Central African Republic are in the hands of our gallant troops. They have so degraded the capacity of *Boko Haram* that the terrorists can no longer hold on to any territory just as they can no longer carry out any spectacular attack (Aribisala 2015:17).

President Buhari too had declared in his 2015 Christmas message to Nigerians that the Federal government had “technically won the war” against *Boko Haram*. According to him, the sect no longer had the capacity to launch conventional attacks against security forces or population

centres, adding that they had been reduced to fighting with Improvised Explosive Devices IEDs (Suleiman 2016:22).

Many Nigerians therefore taking government at its word breathed a sigh of relief with regards to the *Boko Haram* issue. However, from the date of their purported defeat as announced by the federal government, *Boko Haram* had launched other attacks on the military and defenceless citizens. Not up to one week specifically on 28 December, 2015, and while people were still commenting on these statements (Ogundele 2015:5), the group struck in Borno and Adamawa States killing eighty (80) and injuring ninety (90) (Ebegbulem 2016:3). In March 2017, a newspaper report had it that the army lost thirty-one (31) soldiers to *Boko Haram* in one month (Aluko 2017:42). Prominent among the latest activity of the group is the attack on an oil exploration team from the University of Maiduguri on July 26, 2017, leading to the death of some and the abduction of others (Muhammad 2017:44). Up till the close of the year 2017, reports of *Boko Haram's* attacks were still been rolled out in the press (Haruna, 2017). On February 19, 2018, the group just as they did in Chibok in 2014, besieged the Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State and abducted 110 students of the school (Tyopuusu 2018:56-57). They were later released with the exception of the only Christian girl among them – Leah Sharibu. The cause of her non-release according to report is her resolve not to denounce her faith and convert to Islam.

These had left a cross section of Nigerians in doubt as to the authenticity of the claim. Earlier, other conflicting reports had faulted the claims of the government in this regard, declaring that the war against *Boko Haram* is far from being won. According to a BBC report in the Authority Newspaper of Thursday December 31, 2015, the claim that the battle has been won cannot be regarded as being true. The report states emphatically that the insurgents are yet to be subdued. After a visit to some parts of the conflict-ridden zone of north eastern Nigeria, a reporter among the team who visited the scene arrived at this conclusion. “We can say the residents of Borno are living in fear as a result of the *Boko Haram* terrorists’ activities. However, we can also say that Nigerian Military has done a lot by recovering several towns and villages from the *Boko Haram* terrorists group. But up till now, they have not won the war against *Boko Haram*” (Bello & Zaggi 2015:37).

In the views of Ibelema (2017:46), *Boko Haram* continues to be a menace. According to him, “the reality is that *Boko Haram* has become much like malaria, which though much better controlled, remains a major killer.” The observation of Ibelema here is that though the activities of the group can be said to be under control, yet its operations are still a threat to the security of Nigerians. Collaborating Ibelema’s assertion is a newspaper intelligence report from the United State of America and the United Kingdom. In the report, they alerted their citizens travelling to Nigeria of terrorist groups’ threat to carry out bomb attacks in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, during the Yuletide season of 2017. Consequently, they warned them to avoid visiting any of the states in north-eastern, Nigeria (Akinloye 2017:5). This is the extent to which the group has constituted itself to a nuisance on Nigerians and the international communities, even after its purported defeat.

While the effort of the Buhari administration at curtailing the menace of the group could be said to be commendable, three years into the claims that *Boko Haram* has been defeated, it is obvious

that the battle is still far from going into oblivion, which is the expectations of all Nigerians. Despite the fact that the administration has in the past two years done a lot to pacify the group, its onslaught on the military and other innocent citizens has not totally ceased, rather they have continued to wreak havoc, especially in the north-eastern part of the country. In the last few weeks to the end of 2017, the seriousness of the war was brought to public glare when the federal government received the support of some governors to withdraw the sum of one billion dollars from the excess crude account to fight the war. This has elicited serious responses and reaction from a section of the populace. The question is, why need one billion dollars in 2017 for a fight that has been technically won since 2015?

While the nation is still grappling with the *Boko Haram* issue, despite government's assurance that the group has been decimated, fresh killings across the nation attributed to herdsmen, added another dimension to the spate of violence and insecurity in the nation. Though herdsmen attack has been reported across communities all over the federation in recent times, the shape it has taken since the beginning of the year is highly catastrophic. From the first day of January 2018, there have been orchestrated attacks on communities, especially in Benue, Plateau, Taraba, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Zamfara, Kogi, and Kwara States, which had led to unnecessary destruction of human and material resource.

Report has it that the attack in Benue State on January 1, 2018 resulted in the death of 73 persons. Oshisada (2018) and the carnage had continued ever since (Isenyo 2018:8). It has also turned some people to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), living in camps, in their own places of birth across the country. According to Samuel Ortom, Governor of Benue State, "residents of 16 out of 23 local governments in the state, have been displaced (Ejembi 2018:10). Since January 2018 till the end of June 2018, newspapers have always had something to say about these attacks and killings. They are reported to be going on unabated and with increased intensity.

In the midst of this chaos, there have been accusations and counter accusations by government and its agencies. Observably however, concerted effort has not so far been made by the federal government to nip this challenge in the bud as security agencies have been accused of complicity in the handling of the attacks (Odebode et al 2018:11). As a result of the perceived laxity of the security agencies in handling the situation, there have been calls in certain quarters for the removal of the Inspector General of Police and heads of other security agencies (Odebode 2018:1&3). Yet a former Chief of Army Staff and Minister for Defence, General Theophilus Danjuma (rtd) had asked Nigerians to take their destiny in their hands and defend themselves in case of any attack. According to him, if Nigerians are depending on the Armed Forces to defend them, they will all die one by one. This is because by his observation, the Armed Forces is guiding the movements of the killers and covering them (Alechenu et al 2018:2). Granted this is a call to anarchy which must be discouraged, but that reveals the magnitude of insecurity as it obtains in present day Nigeria.

Observable Causes of Violence in Nigeria

There is no denying the fact that there is abundance of literature on causes of religious violence or terrorism in Nigeria. Omotoso (2003:15-31) discusses four of them which are the lack of recognition of one another; campaigns of hatred and blackmail; the lack of genuine desire to understand each other's belief and culture; and extremism. Sampson (2013:56) identified eight.

These are religious intolerance, fundamentalism and extremism; obstructive and disruptive modes of worship; disparaging preaching and stereotyping; proselytising; government patronage, religious preferentialism and marginalisation; sensationalism in media reportage; the use of religious symbols; and state management of religious violence. Causes of religious violence though diverse have at one time or the other either singularly or collectively been responsible for the spate of religious violence across the nation, especially in the northern part. However, there are other observable causes, especially as it has to do with *Boko Haram* and the recent killings attributed to attacks by herdsmen.

Executive Mischief Making

The first is executive mischief-making. Most of the problems confronting our nation are surmountable; however, they have always defied solutions because of the mischievous manner by which national issues are handled, especially by national executives. We seem to have developed a culture of playing “dirty politics” with issues of national significance that simple issues are made complex and knotty, hence finding solutions to them becomes more of an illusion. Mischief making could be observed in the manner in which the two issues under discussion have been handled. It was introduced into the *Boko Haram* struggle right from the beginning. At the time, many interest groups, especially from the north tended to justify the actions of the group on many grounds. Often they portray the group as patriots fighting for a just cause and the security agents as villains trying to suppress them. They described them as a “peaceful” set of congregants who were only provoked by the death (purported extra-judicial killing) of their founder in police custody in 2009. There are others who have justified their actions on the premise of poverty. These reiterate that the *Boko Haram* is fighting against inequalities in the sharing of national wealth, which to them occasioned poverty among the down-trodden in the Nigerian society, especially in the north. Granted this is so. Must they resort to terrorism? Is there no other avenue by which they could make their grievances known?

However, the Punch editorial column of August 10, 2011 observed that far from being peaceful, the *Boko Haram* is a violent, extremist group that propagates a hate-filled message and violence against those who do not subscribe to its narrow worldview. They are even known to have being at variance with some other Muslim organizations. A reliable source has it that there have been police reports of the violent activities of this group, even before the death of Yusuf in 2009 (Punch Editorial 2011:18).

When the terrorism assault was observed in Nigeria for the first time, one would have expected our leaders, elder statesmen and the entire populace to unite, speak against it with one voice and take bold steps to combat the menace. But regrettably, some privileged and highly-placed individuals and groups continually adopted positions that seem to undermine the resolve of the state and the security agencies to deal with the menace. Elsewhere, whenever terrorist outrages occur, the elite on all sides of the political divide unite, sinking all differences to preserve the state. That explains the bipartisan consensus in the United States’ war on terror after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; the unity of the political class and the nation after terrorists attacked trains and buses in Britain in 2003; and the galvanization of the entire people of Norway after a lone terrorist bombed and shot 77 people to death in July 2011(Editorial 18). However, from the Nigerian context, close to ten years now, we are still struggling with the issue, simply because we always fail to face the reality of our situations.

The same attitude is being observed in the handling of the herdsmen's killings. Rather than take concrete actions to arrest the ugly situation, government functionaries had engaged in blame game. The Minister of Defence, Mansur Dan-Ali has blamed the carnage on the Anti-Open Grazing Law of the Benue State Government and the blockade of traditional grazing routes, while the Inspector General of Police was reported as saying that the only condition for him to agree to the enforcement of the Anti-Open Grazing Law is for the Benue State Government to build ranches for the herdsmen (Odebode et al 2018:3). However, the question now been asked is that if the cause is the Anti-Open Grazing Law of Benue State, what then is responsible for the same type of killings in those state that has not made such laws? The silence, lukewarm attitude of President Muhammad Buhari to the entire scenario and his reported comment to the Benue leaders who visited him on the issue are rather bewildering (Editorial 2018:13). Consequently, this has fuelled suspicion in certain quarters that the herdsmen are executing a premeditated agenda which has the backing of the president.

Politicisation of Religion

Politicisation of religion is yet another reason why religious terrorism might remain with us for some time to come. In Nigeria, religion has often been instrumentalised for political and other established interest; hence religiously motivated political struggles provided the foundation for religious terrorism to develop to the detriment of peace and social harmony. Numerous mechanisms are being used by the privileged class to express their exclusion in decision making process of the state, with religious incitement as the most handy. Invariably, political actors have turned the religious terrain into battle ground for contesting perceived marginalization and to gain political recognition and support from their communities. They use religion to incite the common people to violence only for their personal selfish gains. These privileged classes who incite the masses for religious violence hardly partake in the actual hostilities, but the ignorant masses have often been utilised under religious banner to destroy, kill and maim. It is in this regard that Alana (1993:207) citing MAMSER states that 'today, religion (in Nigeria) has become one of the important weapons which selfish leaders use to manipulate and divide the people. Their misuse of religion has led to ugly riots and loss of lives and property.'

Absence of Justice

Absence of justice is another reason why violence had continued to be our lot in Nigeria. Often people commit heinous crimes and get away with it. Observably however, in a situation where offenders get away with crimes, they are not only encouraged to repeat such, but others are even emboldened to do worse things. According to Ayuk et al (2012:616-623), one major cause of religious violence in Nigeria is lack of the political will to prosecute and punish offenders or perpetrators. It is disheartening to observe that religious fanaticism seem to have become a culture in the northern part of the country, where particularly, Islamic fanatics are treated as sacred cows. They commit acts of violence with utter impunity with no one to hold responsible. However, he reiterates that punishment is a deterrent to crime, and as long as government refuse to prosecute and adequately punish those involved in religious carnage, the problem will persist. This should be the normal process to discourage crime; but in the Nigerian situations people commit heinous crimes with impunity and go scot free.

External Forces

Yet foreign hands are being fingered in some of our religious upheavals. Albert (2005:392-393) considering the international dimensions of social conflicts in Nigeria since the 1980s observes that some external forces usually take advantage of the loosed security system of the country to sneak in and foment violence. He found out that Marwa, the brain behind the 1980 Maitatsine riot in Kano was from Marwa village in Cameroun. He was said to have been deported to Cameroun in 1962 before sneaking back into the country in 1966. To substantiate this, Albert found out that about 185 of the followers of Marwa who were arrested and detained at Kano Central prison and the Goron Dutse prison in 1980 were non-Nigerians-162 of them from Niger Republic, 16 from Chad Republic, 4 from Cameroun Republic, 2 from Mali Republic and 1 from Burkina Faso. Even today there are speculations that the *Boko Haram* group has a large population of foreigners. This is buttressed by the arrest in Lagos on Thursday 21 March, 2013 of a Chadian and some others believed to be members of the *Boko Haram* terrorist group (Utebor & Akinkuotu 2013:2).

Travails of National Security

According to Enahoro (2004), the primary task of Nigeria's national defence policy is to ensure the nation's survival and security. National security involves a condition, in which citizens of a country enjoy a free, peaceful, and safe environment, and have access to resources which will enable them to enjoy the basic necessities of life. Thus, the security of a state directly translates to its ability to protect its citizens, as well as national assets, from both internal and external threats. It also allows the entire citizenry in carrying out their legitimate businesses without any undue hindrance. A nation's security may be undermined by either external or internal conflicts or violence resulting from social, political, religious, and economic misunderstandings within it.

Aliyu (2009:12) in his own view states that national security, as a more specific concept, implies the absence of threat to life, property, and socio-economic well-being of a nation and its people. Citing Imobighe, he described it as freedom from danger, or from threats to a nation's ability to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests, and enhance the well-being of its people. Accordingly, it embraces not only the establishment of protective measures to safeguard persons, property and information from every form of danger, but also to guarantee the peace and tranquillity as well as the welfare of its citizens.

Going by the above explanation, to say that national security in the present-day Nigeria is in travail is to state the obvious. For decades, religious conflicts that have threatened public safety and security have been experienced in Nigeria. These crises are eloquent manifestations of threats to national security as they tend to hinder peace and security of the nation. They are also injurious and prejudicial to individual and corporate interests of the citizenry and the sovereignty of the nation. However, the spate of insecurity has been heightened by the terrorist dimension introduced into religious violence by the *Boko Haram* group and the recent killings across some states of the federation, purportedly by herdsmen.

Ironically, the government itself is not sure of its own security. Adahi (2011:31) observes that as a result of insecurity which pervades the Nigerian environment, public functions had over the years been held amidst tight security. He also noted that the Nigerian government has failed to secure itself not to talk of securing the "common man" as enshrined in Section 14 (2c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is because even security personnel and

installations have over the years been devastated through attacks by violent gangs and that with utter impunity. Ordinarily the security agents are meant to instill confidence in the civilian populace that they are safe in the event of an attack by hoodlums, but when those meant to protect them seem not to be able to protect their own domain, it shows the degree of insecurity has reached an abominable stage and help to confirm the assertion in certain quarters that the *Boko Haram* uprising is not only a security issue, but has also exposed the weakness of governance in the country (Afenso 2012:15).

Violence is detrimental to well-being. It portends danger for the Nigerian economic, social, educational, religious and political life. Collectively, violence in whatever form is maliciously devastating and outrageous as it has grave consequences on the victims and perpetrators, as well as the entire society. It often resulted in the reckless destruction of lives and properties; disrupts the socio-economic life of the people; hinders national development and integration; discourages foreign investments; causes enmity and hatred; creates political distrust; produce widows, widowers and orphans; cuts off family members and relations; causes poverty and sufferings to those that lost their properties, investments, homes among other things in the process; creates poor human right record and bad national image; and impacts negatively on national economies through increase in military and security spending. It poses a great threat to international security.

For instance, the Middle Belt has often been referred to as the food basket of Nigeria. Invariably therefore, the present devastations occasioned by killings across the zone has serious implications for job and food security in the nation. Jobwise, it has deprived many of the farmers in the zone of their legitimate source of livelihood, while their inability to farm as many of them are scattered in IDP camps across the zone portend great dangers for food security in the nation.

Simultaneously, organized violence has at one time or the other threatened the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme. Earlier in 2011, some youth coppers died in the ensuing violence which engulfed the north as a result of the general election. Today, posting to the north from the south is usually at the displeasure of parents who feared that the same fate which befell those of 2011 may befall their children. Resisting posting to the north has become prominent prayer-points in many of our prayers houses. As a reaction to a bomb attack in Kano on March 18, 2013, the Kano State Coordinator of the NYSC reported that 900 out of the 2,400 youth corpers posted to the state redeployed to other states. The coordinator disclosed that the corpers sought to be redeployed to other states where they felt they would be safer (News Admin: "*Boko Haram: Youth Corpers Redeploy from Kano En Masse!*", 2013).

The same scenario is playing out today as a reaction to herdsmen killings across the middle belt zones. Report has it that some corps members who were earlier posted to that zone before the unfortunate incidents had appealed for re-deployment to safer places, while incoming one are tactically avoiding those states that are identified to be under the siege of herdsmen (Aborisade et al. 2018:2). In other words, this issue is not only threatening security, but also has serious negative implications for national unity.

The Way Forward

The first step is to stop the present carnage going on across the nation by taking adequate measures to arrest and address the awful situation through some form of conflict resolution

strategy. Ayuk et al suggested two methods of conflict resolution, one is the reactive and the other is the proactive method. The reactive method deals with responses to situation that have already turned violent, conflictive, or are potentially so. These include third party interventions like mediation, brokerage, conciliation, arbitration, panel of inquiries, litigation and punishment where necessary and granting of amnesty where possible, as it was done in the case of the Niger Delta crisis. The proactive method is aimed at the prevention of the occurrence of violence in the first place, or the re-occurrence of it as the case may be (Ayuk 621). Both of these methods are appropriate to the Nigerian situation. However, this paper suggests what could be done both in the short and long run in order to forestall violence in the country.

In the Short Run

The use of dialogue in conflict resolution is not at all misplaced. Dialogue remains a potent mechanism for conflict resolution, because of its many advantages. Gwamna (2010:167-182) identifies many benefits of dialogue among which are the promotion of peace; learning to respect the views, opinions and fears of others; aims at building bridges (of understanding) with other people; enables adherents of religions to learn about the religion of others; encourages frank talk; and discourages hypocrisy in both discussions and real life. Ellinor (1996) sees it as a foundational communication process leading directly to personal and organizational transformation and assisting in creating environments of high trust and openness, with reflective and generative capacities. In the words of Isichei & Bolaji (2009:6) the concept of dialogue has found expression in all facets of human endeavours and social institutions, including religion. Within this realm, it has become a faddish term, and is sometimes, like charity, used to cover a multitude of sins. According to them, Aquinas rightly observes that dialogue is demanded because of the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society and the maturity man has reached in this day and age.

With these enormous potentials of dialogue, it is only reasonable to be in support of it with respect to the Nigerian situation. In the contemporary world, it has become a veritable instrument for the resolution of many intractable conflicts, and has reportedly been used in the *Boko Haram* issue. One would agree with Wilson Churchill who said “to jaw-jaw is better than to war-war”. In this context, the herdsmen and the farmers in the middle belt can be brought together so as to discuss way out of the present carnage.

In the Long Run

Religion is an important component of the social factors that affect international security. Religion can both prevent and provoke various forms of conflict as religious factors are related to ethnic group identity, territory, politics, language, and economics. Religious factors are therefore an essential element for effective conflict management as well as an important component in security analysis. Religion has both positive and negative functions depending on how it is practiced or applied to issues of national significance.

In the Nigerian context, there is a need for a re-definition of religion, to the understanding of all adherents. It is glaring that many practitioners of religion, leaders and followers alike are deficient in the understanding of their religion. First, some of the leaders themselves need to acquire sound knowledge of the tenets of their religion. The issue in Nigeria with matters of religion in some quarters is like the proverbial bible passage of the blind leading the blind. The

blind leading the blind will always end up in the ditch and that is our situation in Nigeria. Many of the leaders of religion are not vast in the knowledge of the religion which they profess to teach and so they often mislead their members and this usually have its toll on the nation in the form of violent religious conflict. Omotoso observes that many adherents have a myopic understanding of the true teaching of the very religion they claim to be defending. Speaking further he states that if Muhammed Marwa (Maitatsine) had been well informed in Islamic teachings, he would have realized that at no time did the Prophet or his companion attacked anybody who has declared himself as Muslim. He would have realized also that gentle persuasion is more effective in making people observe the true teaching of religion than force, as is enjoin by the Qur'an: "Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching: and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious...(Omotoso 2003:16).

In the light of this revelation, it is believed that if all religious adherents will take time to sincerely study and have a sound understanding of their religion, religious violence will be curtailed in the nation, if not totally eradicated. Also, the high level victimisation and marginalisation of people of other faiths which is reportedly rampant in certain part of the country should be eradicated to give room for peace and security in the nation. For as long we refuse to recognize, respect and defend the equal rights of individuals of different faiths and beliefs, religious hatred and violence will not abate.

With regards to herdsmen attack, the ranching option has been suggested as the lasting solution to the crisis. Initially, the federal government was not favourably disposed to this option. Along the line, first it muted the idea of establishing grazing reserves, and later cattle colonies across the nation. These were viewed with suspicion in certain quarters and therefore resisted. Presently, the government had initiated a National Livestock Transformation Plan, by which it proposed to establish ranches in sixteen states of the federation, during the first phase. Seventy billion naira will be expended on the first phase, while the entire programme which will span a period of ten years will cost a total 179 billion naira (Onyekakeyah 2018:17).

While the proposal is commendable, people have queried the over involvement of the federal government in what they considered private businesses of the herders. They therefore cautioned government to let reasoning, honesty and maturity prevails in the execution of the project. First, they queried the rationale behind government expending 179 billion naira on the establishment of ranches, when other gestures were not extended to other group of farmers like fish farming or piggery. This according to them will amount to expending public fund on private businesses. Ohunabunwa (2018:9) suggested that if the government wants to support cattle ranching as it is supporting crop agriculture, then it should direct the herders to the banks including the Bank of Agriculture and Bank of Industry. In other words, what Ohunabunwa is suggesting here is that rather than the government involving itself in the building of ranches, it should give out support to the herders in the form of loan to do so. According to him, doing it otherwise will amount to using public funds for private gain and this may not go down well with a section of the populace.

Others expressed reservation as to the manner of land acquisition. They wondered why it has become the responsibility of government to acquire land from their bona fide owners, erect ranches on them and give same to the herders. In their own view, this will amount to robbing "Peter to pay Paul" and this may create more problem than the one it is trying to solve. It might

create more communal clashes, because one whose land is forcefully taken from him and given to a total stranger to the environment for his private business will not take it lightly. For instance, it will not be advisable to acquire a farmland in southwest, build a ranch on it and give it to a Fulani herder to rear his cow. Consequently, the government has been advised to remove its hand from land acquisition and let the herders privately negotiate and procure land within their host communities. In the light of all these, while the decision on ranching is commendable, it will be advisable for the federal government to tread with caution and handle this matter with a high degree of patriotism. It should allow itself to be guided by national consciousness rather than ethnic sentiments.

Next, there have been agitations across the strata of Nigerian society of the need to strengthen state security apparatus. In this regard, some people have suggested the need for the establishment of state police as it obtained in the country before the advent of military rule. This according to them will enable state governors to have their own state security apparatus at their disposal. They reasoned that a situation where the governor who is referred to as the chief security officer of his state has no security apparatus at his disposal, but has to continually appeal to the federal government for help in case of emergency, is not good enough.

Prominent among the advocates are the Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, Governors Aminu Tambuwal and Samuel Ortom of Sokoto and Benue States respectively. According to Osinbajo, "state police remains the surest way of tackling the current security challenges like herdsmen and farmers' clashes in parts of the country. He said that it was no longer practicable to police a country as big as Nigeria from Abuja." Speaking in the same vein, Governor Tambuwal explains that the incessant killings in the country had justified the calls for state police, adding that governors must have a measure of control of the security apparatus in their respective states" (Adetayo & Aluko 2018:2).

Similarly, overwhelmed by the recurring slaughter of residents of Benue State, Samuel Ortom declared that allowing states to have police force of their own is the only lasting solution to the killings. According to a newspaper report, he lamented the inability of the federal government to secure the people and declared that, "he would have come in defence of the people if he had a state police (Iyorkase & Lasisi 2018:4). This paper agrees with these assertions. It reiterates that having state security apparatus at their disposal will enable governors respond quickly to emergency in their states. It is also this that will make them qualified to be referred to as the chief security officers of their states. Lastly, there is the need to ensure that justice is done in all cases, so as to discourage perpetration of crimes in all its ramifications.

Conclusion

Violence has been the lot of Nigeria for a considerable length of time. Observably, while some violence had only erupted spontaneously owing to certain circumstances, there are others which were deliberately planned and executed. This paper discusses two of such organised violence in the country, which are the *Boko Haram* debacle and the issue of herdsmen killings presently going on across the middle belt zones of Nigeria. The nation has been struggling with the *Boko Haram* issue since 2009 and the alleged negligence of the past administration to deal with the insecurity occasioned by the operation of the group was part of the reason why a part of the citizenry clamour for a change of leadership in the nation. However, over three years into the

present administration, despite assurance from government that the *Boko Haram* group has been decimated, there are indications that the battle is yet to be completely won. Added to the insecurity engendered by the group is the mass killing across the middle belt zones of the nation, purportedly by herdsmen. This paper discussed the two issues as it is plaguing the nation today. It highlights its enormity, identifies observably causes and made suggestion at to the way forward for the country.

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