

SECURITY CRISIS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY LIKE NIGERIA: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

A multicultural society is a society characterized by different ethnic, religious and social cultural groups that intermingle freely within the framework of one society. Nigeria is a good example of a multicultural society. In recent time Nigeria is faced with a lot of security crisis, which is largely blamed on her multicultural nature. We therefore question: what is the correlation between multicultural society and insecurity? Does it imply that multiculturalism breeds insecurity and that there must be security crisis in every multicultural society? Observable facts have shown that not all multicultural societies are faced with security crisis. Why it is that security crises in Nigeria are interpreted along ethno-religio-cultural lines? Why is Nigerian multiculturalism seen as the springboard of her insecurity? What role does ethno-religious consciousness play in stimulating or reducing security crisis? In this paper we contend that ethno-religious leaning in security discourse denies such discourse all forms of objectivity, and instead of addressing the challenge it escalates it. We adopted socio-psychological approach to ascertain the bases of security crisis in Nigeria. We finally conclude that

there is no relationship between multiculturalism and security crisis, rather poverty, illiteracy, and corruption are the major causes of security crisis in Nigeria. We finally propose that addressing the problems of poverty, illiteracy and corruption will significantly eliminate security crisis in Nigeria.

Keywords: Multicultural Society, Security Crisis, Intercultural philosophy, Cultural Identity,

Introduction

The need for this research was triggered by series of interviews I have watched on national televisions in Nigeria on her security situation. I was bordered by how people address security concern using ethno-religious lenses. Coincidentally my colleague Dr. Joseph Opoewei was also thinking along the same line. It was after series of discussions that we decided to formally research on this monster whose sole aim is to destroy the unity of Nigeria. We observed a particular pattern in Nigeria's security situation. Almost all the major security crises in Nigeria are either ethno based or religious based. The Boko Haram insurgents in the North Eastern part of Nigeria is ethno-religion based. The bandits menace in the North Western part is ethnic based. The marauding herdsman militias in almost every part of Nigeria accused of ethnic cleansing and land grabbing is ethnic based. Nnamdi Kanu's IPOB secessionist movement in the South Eastern part is ethnic based. Niger Delta militants in the South South part of Nigeria is economic oriented and ethnic based. Finally, Sunday Igboho's agitation for the freedom of Odudua people of the South Western Nigeria is ethnic based. Each of these groups enjoy certain legitimacy or approval within their operational base, and that has made it more difficult to address the danger they pose. The popular aphorism which states that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' clearly plays out in Nigeria security crisis.

The dynamic nature of this security situation in Nigeria points to her multicultural state. The multicultural question is anchored on the fact

that each section of Nigerian society has its peculiar security challenge. To a very large extent, major actors in these security crises enjoy some form of either ethnic or religious protection. A good example of such protection is the case of Governor Bala Mohammed of Bauchi state Nigeria, who in one of his interviews granted to Channels Television defended Fulani herdsmen who move about with AK 47. After receiving series of criticism from Nigerians considering that he is a Fulani man, he went back to the same station Sunrise Daily Morning Show to argue that he used AK47 as a figure of speech.¹

Philosophy as the science of all sciences is never afraid of asking questions and also attempting to proffer solutions to myriads of issues faced by humanity on daily basis. A lot has happened in Nigeria in recent years especially in the area of security, and so many interpretations have been given to these happenings. Ethno-religious coloration has greatly influence how people interpret and perceive security situation in Nigeria. Ethno-religious leaning has also prejudiced how things are interpreted in Nigeria. People tend to defend or criticize any of these groups based on their religious or ethnic leaning. In almost every discourse on Nigeria's security situation, most peoples' default positions are easily known once their religious inclination and ethnic origin are known. This questions the objectivity of Nigerian security situation debate. Having established this fact, it is on this note that we will like to deploy philosophy and social psychology in addressing security challenge in Nigeria.

We will consider the concept of multicultural society and how the multicultural nature of Nigeria has constituted a crisis to the Nigerian society. We will logically consider how cultural plurality (multiculturalism) can fuel security challenges in Nigeria. This will help establish if there is any connection between societal composition and insecurity in the society. We contend that ethno-religious leaning has helped fan the flame of insecurity in Nigeria. Finally, we observed other factors other than multiculturalism as being responsible for security

¹. Bala Mohammed "AK 47 is a Figure of Speech" Channels Television Sunrise Daily Morning Show February 19, 2021

crisis in Nigeria.

Multiculturalism

Before we delve into the idea or concept of multiculturalism, let us consider the idea of a multicultural society. The 'multi' in multicultural connotes plurality, many, more than one culture within a given society or the existence of cultures within a society. In this era or age of globalization, it is important to note that the world is already multicultural. The world is seen as one global village that interrelate and depend on each other. It is difficult to currently find a human society that is autochthonous in every sense of the word. There has been the process of cultural integration, assimilation, acculturation, and so on in our world today. Multiculturalism one may argue has implications for even globalization as various groups have never allowed their cultural identities to be submerged within the emerging presupposed global culture. People still maintain and protect their unique culture which in most cases have generated conflicts with other cultures. In some cases, some people try to impose their culture on others. For Sohrabi the meaning or what constitutes multiculturalism has different types of interpretations and definitions.² These definitions and interpretations are based on diversity in communities, societies, and nations all over the world. In other words, the definition of multiculturalism has multicultural undertone. Factors like; skin color, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, previous mistakes and experiences, political perspective tend to shape the definition of the concept.

In the view of Sohrabi, “multiculturalism is considered as awareness, understanding and realization of living in interdependent and global society which necessitates us to understand other peoples of other cultures and comprehend their religious and political systems in order to be effective members of our society”.³ One can deduce from Sohrabi's definition, what we consider as the goal of multiculturalism; creating

². A. Sohrabi, “Multicultural Society” *Extensive Journal of Applied Sciences* 6 No. 1 (2018): 33

³. Sohrabi, “Multicultural Society” 33

awareness on the existence of other cultures and the realization of how we are interdependent. We can relate this conception of multiculturalism with Stanley Fish's theory of personhood. For Fish, the human person is a bearer of rights (the right to believe, the right to speak, and the right to choose).⁴ He argued that not much is attached to the content of these rights when one is exercising them; rather the basic is that one has right to these rights. The concept of multiculturalism as defined by Sohrabi can be related with Fish's theory of personhood in the sense that, it is the understanding of the existence of the other person/s (culture, religion) that helps in ensuring that the rights of the other person is also preserved. So, while multiculturalism in this context is focused on bringing to bear the reality of the existence of the other, this theory of personhood is telling us the proper way to relate with the other person in a multicultural setting. From his theory of personhood, Fish developed his logic of 'reciprocal rights'. He posits that if what makes one what one is, is one's capacity for speech, belief, and choice and not what one believes, say or choose, invariably, in the same vein one is obligated as a mark of reciprocity to respect the beliefs, utterances and choices of others because they are incidental to their essence. It goes further to point to us our obligations to each other.

Multiculturalism sets people free from narrow communities and guarantees their personal autonomy, equality and common citizenship and provides collectively shared way of life.⁵ It is this narrow community mindedness that triggers conflict in a multicultural society. Ideally, multiculturalism should be a source of great creative opportunities, just as the Igbo people will say 'igwe-bu-ike' loosely translated to be 'there is strength in variety of people'. Suffice to argue that if there is strength in variety of people, then there is much more strength in the variety of people from different ethnic, religious and cultural background. This is occasioned by the fact that each of these culturally mixed people will

⁴ Stanley Fish, "What's Sauce for One Goose: The Logic of Academic Freedom". In *Academic Freedom and the Inclusive University*, edited by E. K. Sharon and Pavlich, D. (Canada: University of British Columbia Press 2000), 7

⁵ Bhikhu Parekh, "Introduction: Special Issue on British National Identity in a European Context". *New Community* 21, no.2 (1995): 147

serve as a missing and connecting link to the other. The multicultural varieties will enhance our understanding of our own culture and help us appreciate the contribution of other peoples' culture. Anne Phillip posits “multiculturalism as a policy agenda designed to redress the unequal treatment of cultural groups and the 'culture-racism' to which members of minority cultural group are exposed”.⁶ Our challenge is that multiculturalism which ought to serve as a source of strength to a country like Nigeria has become a major source of its undoing. Hence, we shall question, is multiculturalism the bane of Nigeria security crisis?

Multiculturalism as the bane of Nigeria Security Crisis

Nigeria is a multicultural society. This is based on the fact that there exist in Nigeria numerous ethnic nationalities, with different cultural and religious beliefs and these cultural and religious beliefs are at times conflicting with each other. Our question is: is multiculturalism truly the bane of security crisis in Nigeria? Or should we say that multiculturalism is rather a victim of security crisis in Nigeria. We will like to argue that the dissimilarities of interests inherent in multiculturalism already connotes conflict. Even in some advanced countries of the world, multiculturalism was seen as a serious source of worries. At some point in United Kingdom every public issue becomes a focus of ethno-national conflict.⁷ This challenge cannot be said to have been fully eliminated in United Kingdom and some other advanced countries of the world. Key issues of these conflicts in United Kingdom were housing, job discrimination and political gerrymandering.⁸ Oladjehou and Yekini argued that the phenomenon of multiculturalism is at the origin of the construction of social housing in United Kingdom.⁹

⁶. Anne Phillips *Multiculturalism without Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3

⁷. Barnabe B. Oladjehou and Ibrahim Yekini “Multiculturalism and Socio-Cultural Conflicts in United Kingdom: A Critical Analysis” *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)* 5, no.12 (2018): 130

⁸. Oladjehou and Yekini, “Multiculturalism and Socio-Cultural Conflicts in United Kingdom”, 130

⁹. Oladjehou and Yekini, “Multiculturalism and Socio-Cultural Conflicts in United Kingdom”, 132

There is a link between multiculturalism and social conflict which probably can degenerate to security concern or security crisis. Rajmund Smolarczyk writing on issue of personal security in Poland in relation to multiculturalism posits that “people are so afraid of otherness that they forget about the greatest values and humanity. It seems to people that someone other than them may disturb their order and affect their security”.¹⁰ We have been able to establish that multiculturalism is a source of conflict and can also be seen as a source of security threat. The case of Deborah Samuel a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto that was killed publicly in a most gruesome manner by her fellow students for alleged blasphemy brings to mind the obvious security concern associated with multiculturalism.¹¹

As the world continues to evolve, focus has been on how to make cultural diversities complementary rather than competitive. In advanced countries of the world, conflicts as a result of multiculturalism has greatly reduced. The focus of multiculturalism has been to redress unequal treatment of cultural groups and to ensure proper accommodation of each cultural group without trampling on the rights of any group within a multicultural setting. Why do multiculturalism tend to redress unequal treatment, and also argues for the accommodation of various cultural groups? This question, when probed further points to us the imminent danger associated with inequality within a multicultural society. It is obvious that unequal treatment of cultural groups within a multicultural society has the tendency of creating crisis in such a society. From a socio-psychological perspective, differences in perceived interests, values, and needs are perhaps the most basic elements in the motivation behind social conflict.¹² The implication is that it is natural for conflict to ensue once there is inequitable social and economic relation.

¹⁰. Rajmund Smolarczyk, “Multiculturalism and Personal Safety in the Place of Residence According to the inhabitants of Leborg District Poland” *Security Dimensions* 35 (2021): 141 Doi10.5604101.3001.0014.8244

¹¹. Achike Chude, “The Killing of Deborah Samuel” *The Guardian* 23rd May 2022

¹². Ho-won Jeong, *Understanding Conflict and Conflict Analysis* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2008), 10

When Francis Fukuyama argued that the struggle for recognition which is innate in man is the springboard of all known ideological revolutions in the history of humanity;¹³ he was pointing to the fact that human society will continue to face crisis until every known group within the society is satisfied. There is this tendency in humanity to aggressively resist every form of marginalization. For Fukuyama, “those who remain dissatisfied will always have the potential to restart history.”¹⁴

The multi-ethnic nature of Nigeria rather than becoming a source of strength to the nation has constituted a source of security challenge. Many years ago, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu one of the principal actors in the Nigeria Biafra war argued that the source of Nigeria's problem is rooted in Nigeria's fear of unity. For him, the lack of the will to transform our primordial instincts, has to a very large extent prevented the creation of a modern polity.¹⁵ We can further interpret this position to imply that the persistent existence of primordial instincts and ethnic leaning in Nigeria has hindered the emergence of Nigeria as a modern political entity. This has created nations within the nation Nigeria, and the peoples' loyalty and allegiance are basically to their ethnic nationalities. Why are people so attached to their ethnic group or religious group that they refuse to get into 'sincere' involvement with the larger society? This question is best understood within social psychological theories or models. Social psychological theories and models are majorly adopted to identify and understand factors that influence human social behavior. They provide a framework for predicting behavior, describing the mechanisms underlying behavior and identifying the causal determinants of behavior.¹⁶

¹³. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), xx

¹⁴. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* 334

¹⁵. Chukwuemeka O. Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1989), 1

¹⁶. Sarah McLachlan, et al “Social Psychological Theories and Models.” In *The Psychology of Strength and Conditioning* edited by David Tod and David Lavellee (Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 86

Man (humanity) by nature is always attracted to that which benefits him or her and avoids that which diminishes him or her. This we can deduce from social psychological theory. Benefits and harm tend to influence human behavior. Before amalgamation of 1914 in Nigeria, these nations were already in existence. They have provided a sort of protection for their people. When we consider this situation (having nations within a nation and people pledging their allegiance to their ethnic nationalities) in the light of conflict analysis; one will agree with Ho-won Jeong that “prelude to conflict is accompanied by the translation of latent conditions, such as discontent stemming from social injustice and growing inequity, into social mobilization which demands changes in the status quo.”¹⁷ This also explains why the situation is escalating more in under developed or developing world, while there is drastic reduction of such in the developed world. Once there is social injustice or inequity in a multicultural setting, there is always this conception that the other is responsible and ethnic nationalities becomes the stemming ground. Hence, when serious issues of national importance are considered, rather than seek objective solution, such issues are considered by the people through their tribal lens. A good example is the case of Nigeria's current security crisis which is our main focus. This tends to create more disunity and mutual suspicions rather than the much-anticipated unity. In the view of Ojukwu, the problem with Nigeria as a political unit is that of unity. He posits thus;

Unity in a political unit is a state of affairs where the entire polity is completely reconciled with itself: a state of affairs where fear, reasonable or unreasonable is diminished or reduced to manageable proportions, a state of affairs where the entire society maintains confidence in the institutions that bind, a state of affairs where man can confidently seek and find his due place in society.¹⁸

For him, unity does not mean uniformity. It does not mean that differences cease to exist. Rather, it means that differences are

^{17.} Jeong, *Understanding Conflict and Conflict Analysis* 34

^{18.} Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved*, 19

recognized and accommodated to the satisfaction of all concerned.¹⁹ This is the basis of intercultural philosophy which is what we are advancing as a solution to Nigeria security crisis. There is a popular aphorism which states that conflict is an integral part of human social existence. One may connect this to Harold Lasswell's (1936) definition of politics as who gets what, when and how. Once there is social relation, the question of who gets what, when and how arises. It is in addressing who gets what, when and how that conflict emerges. We can draw from Lasswell's position and Ojukwu's view some references on why security crisis has continued to persist in Nigeria if we connect their views to the problem of social injustice and inequity.

Who gets what, when and how unarguably still remains the springboard of politics. In Nigeria situation, ethnic politics is still at its apogee. In the place of what could be seen as political objectivity, ethnic interest is first considered by Nigerians. Hence, political actors prefer to be politically correct than being objective in their approach to security questions. There are myriads of examples on this. Gov. Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State justification of Fulani herdsmen moving around with AK 47 remains a good example. The same is applicable to every other ethnic group in Nigeria. The IPOB in the South East, Niger Delta Militants in South South, and Odudua Peoples' agitation in the South West. Even in the case of Boko Haram, anytime the military decides to deal decisively with them, voices are heard that northern youths are being killed by Nigerian military.

This has been the dilemma of handling security crisis in a multicultural society like Nigeria. Obi and Ezeogu, pointed on the dilemma of security agents in the discharge of their duties. For them, an agent of the state whose primary responsibility is to protect the state, in accordance with the dictates of the law, in recent times is faced with the challenge of protecting the state and be law abiding even when the both conflict.²⁰

^{19.} Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved*, 19-20

^{20.} Chidiebere Obi and Uchenna Ezeogu "An Appraisal of Interrogational Torture in Liberal Democracy" *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* 2, no.6 (2016): 37

People tend to shield bad elements in their mix all in the name of ethnic allegiance. This has continued to fuel security crisis and has made it a near impossible challenge to handle.

In a multicultural society like Nigeria that have not transcended ethnic or religious leaning, security crisis is usually a delicate issue. It is on this note that we argue for intercultural philosophical approach.

Addressing Security Crisis through Intercultural Philosophy

It is our position that security crisis in a multicultural society can be addressed through intercultural philosophy. By implication, the current security crisis in Nigeria can be conveniently addressed using intercultural philosophy. Intercultural philosophy is anchored on the principle of inclusivity, tolerance, mutual respect among others. What then is intercultural philosophy? For Ozolins, just as there are many philosophical opinions as there are philosopher, in the same manner there are many views on intercultural philosophy as there are intercultural philosophers.²¹ There is no univocal view or conception of intercultural philosophy. Scholars have approached the concept in so many ways, our effort here is to establish out context of usage, and how such approach can address the problem of security crisis in Nigeria. In Ozolins' view, intercultural philosophy is philosophical discussion which does not suppress individual cultural perspectives. It creates room for cultural dialogue. For him, the aim of intercultural philosophy is to avoid suppression, but in actuality, the practice of intercultural philosophy in a wider arena, will result in the suppression of individual cultural perspectives.²² We want to posit that suppression or marginalization has been at the base of every known crisis. The feeling of being alienated has pushed many to take up arms. This view is in line with the position of conflict theory. One good example is the case of Niger Delta Militants in Nigeria.

^{21.} John Ozolins, "What in the World is Intercultural Philosophy? A Reflection" in *What is Intercultural Philosophy?* William Sweet (Ed.) *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change* Series I Culture and Values volume 44 (2014) 26

^{22.} Sweet (Ed.) *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change*, 26

Ozolins' idea of intercultural philosophy, when considered holistically is defective as it has the tendency of undermining the main essence of intercultural philosophy. The essence of intercultural philosophy lies in accommodating every opinion, with none lording it over others. Nelson E. S. posits that an adequate intercultural philosophy must justify three dimensions: the recognition of differences on one hand, the mediation and transformation of the differences and finally the diagnostic critique of existing condition.²³

Similarly, R. A. Mall asserts that doing philosophy (intercultural philosophy) means reflecting not only on our experience in relation to ourselves but also on how we relate to others and to the world at large. Hence, for him, an intercultural philosophical orientation pleads for unity without uniformity. It is not a matter of unity in diversity but unity in the face of diversity.²⁴ Scholars' views on the concept of intercultural philosophy are unending and cannot be exhausted in a single research paper. We shall consider our idea or perspective of intercultural philosophy and how such perspective can address the problem of security crisis in Nigeria.

Our idea of intercultural philosophy is drawn from Asouzu's idea of complementarity. Asouzu's idea of complementarity is tied to his concept of 'Ibanyidanda' philosophy. For him, complementarity is the English language equivalent of 'Ibanyidanda' philosophy. However, to understand Asouzu's idea of complementarity, one must first of all have a glimpse of the metaphysical variant of 'Ibanyidanda' principles. First is the principle of integration (harmonious complementation). This principle states that everything that exists serves a missing link of reality. Just like Martin Buber in his 'I' and 'thou' relationship, Asouzu argues that our fulfilment or completeness lies heavily on the existence of others. In

²³. E. S. Nelson, "Intercultural Philosophy and intercultural Hermeneutics: A Response to Defoort, Wenning, and Marchal" *Philosophy East and West* 70, no. 1 (2020): 42

²⁴. Ram A. Mall "Intercultural Philosophy: A conceptual Clarification" *Confluence: Journal of World Philosophies* Vol. 1 (2014): <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iupjournals/index.php/confluence/article/view/514>

other words, to exist or be, is to exist or be with others. The second principle; the principle of progressive transformation. This principle claims that all human actions are geared towards the joy of being. So, any action that abhors the very joy of being ought to be prohibited or should be discouraged.²⁵ A major cause of security crisis in Nigeria is associated with 'we' 'them' mentality. People from a particular ethnic nationality killing people from other ethnic nationality. A proper understanding of the interconnectedness of realities will bring about a change in orientation. The rivalry among ethnic groups which usually result to unresolvable security situation will be substituted for complementary relationship.

Conclusion

We will like to assert that there is a connection between multiculturalism and security crisis. No multicultural society has ever existed without some forms of social conflicts. While these conflicts have continued to drastically diminish in countries where there is to a large extent the existence of social justice (even distribution of economic resource, and inclusivity), it has continued to degenerate in countries where it does not seem to exist. This points to us that multiculturalism is not necessarily the root cause of this crisis. These conflicts do degenerate to security crisis when they are not properly handled. Value differences, power disparities, misperception, miscommunication, economic and material resources are at the root of social conflicts. Security crisis in Nigeria cannot be blamed on our multicultural nature, rather multiculturalism has been perversely misinterpreted and this perverse interpretation is used as a tool by beneficiaries of these crisis. We rather want to argue that there is a link between poverty, illiteracy, corruption and insecurity in Nigeria. Again, this position is deduced when we consider other multicultural societies like Nigeria that are faced with the same challenge. The multicultural nature of the country was capitalized on, as a result of these inadequacies.

We will prefer to argue in line with Brainard, L., Chollet, D. and LaFleur,

^{25.} Asouzu, I. I. "Ibunyanidanda and the Philosophy of Essence" 50th Inaugural Lecture University of Calabar (Calabar: University of Calabar Press, 2011), 44-45

V. view that, “Extreme poverty exhausts governing institutions, depletes resources, weakens leaders, and crushes hope – fueling a volatile mix of desperation and instability”.²⁶ They went further to argue that poor fragile states can explode into violence or implode into collapse. For us, if the problem of poverty is addressed, illiteracy reasonably reduced and corruption seriously curtailed the security challenge in Nigeria will be reduced drastically. It is when the state institutions have failed in addressing or living up to their responsibility (ensuring that there is social justice) that individual members of the society have decided to find succor in their respective tribes. Again, those who are architects of this irresponsibility have also weaponized tribal sentiment in order to achieve their desired goal. A case study is what happened during February 25th and March 18th 2023 general elections in Nigeria. Finally, we will like to assert from a philosophical vantage point, that security crisis in Nigeria, though superficially may be seen as having link with Nigerian multicultural nature, the remote and immediate causes go beyond multiculturalism.

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