

SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE USE OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY TO CHALLENGE DICTATORIAL GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Social Justice: the use of Religious identity to Challenge Governance and Dictatorial Governance in Africa. The paper is a critical analysis of how religious identity has been used and is still being used to challenge governance. It argues that social justice is prerequisite to good governance and again that; religious identity; and violence; have come about largely as a result of frequent leadership change, lack of ideology, policy reversal and weak institutional patterns. Using the method of historical interpretation review of related literature to collect data and employed the theories of primordial, fundamentalism, and instrumentalism the researcher argues for how it affects religion that leads to the challenging of the polity (government). The paper also examines the leadership selection process in Africa and that leadership selection process in Africa takes the imposition pattern mostly and that African leaders frequently come to their position with limited technical know-how of the job. Hence, the decline in moral and godly values/religious resources and discipline caused by bad policies, eroded professional standards, distorted values and ethics and weakened the system of governance. The paper lays emphasis on leadership, governance and religious fundamentalist in some selected African countries. The paper observes that for African countries to overcome the crises of leadership governance in the Continent and fundamentalism in the world, those on whom the burden of leadership will fall in the future must fully comprehend their responsibilities, duties and obligations. They must also be exposed and be prepared to face the challenges of leadership in developing society, since the long term salvation of developing countries depends on the quality of its leaders. The paper concludes that religious identity is not the only factor for waging war against the government and only leadership that has maximum empathy for the people can be relevant to the qualitative movement of African countries.

Keywords: Social Justice, Religious Identity, Governance, Dictatorial Governance!

Introduction

Many developing countries suffer from the increasing levels of social inequality, weak public corporate governance, limited competition, lack of a well-structured public sector, and pervasive corruption during the last few years and the call for the concepts of social justice, good governance and the challenge of dictatorial governance is timely, important and no doubt topical, reflecting the worldwide thrust toward political and economic liberalization. Throughout the whole world, there has been an urgent desire among various people and government for unity, justice or social justice, peace and stability. This is often indicated by various identities through social advocacy as in the Stefano's Foundation faith-based organization in Jos, Nigeria (Casanova, 1994). The unequal earning destroyed the lives of the poor and spread poverty and slums. In developed and developing societies alike the last few years have witnessed the 'return of religion' to public life (Habermas, 2006). This process is normally dated from the Iranian Revolution in 1979, and has been distinguished by the mobilization of religiously-based political identities, virulent anti-secularism and vocal claims for a more generous role for religions in the public sphere where, for the most part, the operative norm since 1945 has been the secular state (Haynes, 2007). Radical political movements in the name of militant Islam have created a global security threat: in Afghanistan and Pakistan, militant Islam threatens to capture the state for a global jihad against the West; in Europe the call by some Muslim groups for Sharia law has led to an anti-Islamic backlash; and in large parts of the Middle East and South East Asia, religious terrorism in the name of Islam has mobilized new political formations and also in Africa, Nigeria is not left out (Klausen, 2005) agrees in perspective with (Roy, 2004).

Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. A call for a focus on leadership, social justice, and dictatorial governance is timely, important and no doubt topical, reflecting the worldwide thrust toward political and economic liberalisation. Throughout the whole world, there has been an urgent desire among various people and government for unity, justice, peace and stability. The resurgence of this desire is not only explicable through their political policies alone; but also it is reflected in the social and economic policies (Obasola, 2002:9) cited in (Afegbua, 2012:141). In fact, most constituted governments in Africa have been undergoing serious and deepening politico economic crisis. These problems generated by political, social and economic instability and the prevalence of ethnic, communal and religious identity crises, which have bedeviled Africa, call our attention to the problems of social injustice,

leadership, governance and dictatorial governance in the Continent. In other words, the staggering wave of violence, insecurity, increasing crime wave, economic recession, coupled with the break in law and order are the attributes to the problem of social injustice, leadership, governance and dictatorial governance in Africa. Therefore, the quest for good leadership is a *sine-qua-non* for governance and sustainable development (2012:141-142)

Fundamentalist Christianity has also been mobilized as never before; the Protestant Reformation, often referred to simply as the Reformation, was a schism from the Roman Catholic Church initiated by Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli and other early Protestant Reformers in the 16th century Europe. The theoretical and empirical evidence presented here encompasses a variety of psychological fields examining cognitive, emotional, relational, social, and economical and personality dimensions of religion. Religion is thus seen as a set of beliefs, emotions, rituals, moral rules, and communal aspects. According to **Amos 5:20-24**: “Is not the day of the LORD darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? 21 I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. 22 Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. 23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. 24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (RSV).

The paper emphasizes that religious identity is one of the major sources of conflict used to mobilize support for or against any government. However, a more pragmatic view is a description opined by Best (2011). Best associated religion with belief, the unseen, life in the hereafter, rituals and practices among others and could be perpetuated by institutions and systems of reproduction. It is perhaps because of this basic principle of religion that Mangvwat as cited in Afolabi, (2015) identify three reasons that causes hostility and used for group mobilization amongst different religions of the world and most especially Christianity-Islam relationship in northern Nigeria.... Thus, every religious belief recognizes itself as the correct (true) religion which implies that other religion represents falsehood. In the process of recruiting converts, they portray others as false and even make uncharitable remarks on the others to the latter's displeasure, every religion has the inherent desire to stamp out others through persuasion, coercion or a combination of both. All these are not limited to a functionalist approach to religion; both a “defensive” and a “prospective” creative conception of religion. The main arguments are that:

- Religion is a specific quest for meaning but is not defined by it;
- Religion is the search for values of the ideal life;
- Religion contributes to the challenges of governance;
- Religion is animated by the aspiration for unity, integration, and harmony as an instrument for coactions;
- Religion provides personal empowerment and social support as well as clues for construction of identity as a community.

For every argument, positive (examples optimism, self-control, peace of mind, self-esteem, pro-social concerns) as well as negative (examples fundamentalism, obsession, fixation on the maternal world, conservatism, out-group prejudice), consequences of religion for personal and social well-being are depicted. Special attention is paid to relations between religion and governance: regulation of the equilibrium between absorption by, and rejection of, governance; government-religious differences versus governance invariants in psychological aspects of religion. Finally, new challenges for the psychological understanding of religion (and modern spirituality), due to the combination of factors such as individualization, and globalization, are examined (Afolabi, 2015).

Conceptual Frame Work

The Concept of Social Justice

The concept of social justice means the practice whereby people make sure that there is no oppression or discrimination against anyone in the society on the grounds of tribe, nationality, age, race, gender, religious beliefs- example is the case of Leah a Dapchi school girl kidnapped by Boko Haram among the 110 school girls in Yobe state Nigeria on the 14th May, 2018 and till date 14, May 2020 in their custody, political associations or party affiliations, clicks, or socioeconomic status/backgrounds that is as in high economic standard or low economic standard and etc. Ayo (2019) opined that social justice is a social concept that assigns rights and duties to individuals in the institutions of society, and which enables this people to receive their basic benefits and burdens of cooperation. The relevant institutions often include taxation, social insurance, public health, public school, public services, labour law and regulation of markets, to ensure fair distribution of wealth, and equal opportunity. Another conceptualization is given by Ayantayo (as cited in Pokol, 2019:444-447) who defined social justice as “giving every person what is due to them, which connotes liberty, freedom, equality and fair play. It also means that we must defend innocence and promote social justice and truth among humankind”.

A recurring theme in the reactions, reflections and comments of all people about the vicious cycles of violence that have bedeviled Nigeria over the years, whether by culprits or victims, is the issue of justice or the more inclusive social justice. The biggest challenge about social justice is that different groups or identities and individuals in a conflict, claim it as the justification for their own actions. This is further complicated by the fact that each group sees justice from its own religious, political, socioeconomic and ideological perspective, with the strong tendency to despise and wave aside the other side's understanding of justice as illegitimate. Justice to a radical Muslim is quite different from justice to a fundamental Christian because each believes that his or her religious perspective is the only legitimate place to stand and talk acceptably about justice or as absolute truth (Ango, 2018:8-9).

The Concept Religion/Faith

According to Best, (2011) religion may be defined as an institutional framework within which some specific theological doctrines and practices are advocated and pursued, usually among a community of like-minded believers. Again, he opines that religion is a system of language and practices that organizes the world in terms of what is deemed Holy.

Hammond (1988) noted that religion is a derivation of the social circumstances that create the enabling environment for involuntary acceptance of a way of life, especially as a consequence of group membership. For, instance, people are made to manifest their sense of unity and belonging as a result of group membership through participation in rituals, ceremonies, beliefs system or orientation and behavior towards symbols and objects perceived to be sacred and treated with sense of awe and wonder.

Concept of religion according to AMOS 4:20-24 is seen as man's way of reaching God while true religion is one in which we combine together the rituals and ceremonial aspects of our faith with its moral requirements or godly values! In (Deepak, 2002:2) also said "religion is the belief in someone else's experience. Spirituality is having your own experience".

The Concept of Religious Identity

Religious identity refers specifically to religious group membership regardless of religious activity or participation. Religion is the individual and social experience

of the sacred that is manifestation in the mythologies, ritual, ethos and integrated in a collective or organisation (Don, 1999).

A person's religious identity is the name of the religion that they identify themselves with. In today's society, people want to know, what religion are you? Generally they expect a one answer with the name of the religion that expresses their religious identity. A person might say they are a Buddhist, or a Christian, or a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Hindu. These are examples of religious identity (Rosemary Nguamo & Others, 2016:5).

As a group within the context of this paper, the writer conceptualize religious identity as a specific type of identity formation with a sense of group membership to a religion and the importance of this group membership as it pertains to one's self concept.

The Concept of Governance

Canadian International Development Agency 2013 (CIDA) uses the term good governance in its policy on Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance, and defines the concept as follows: by good governance we mean the manner in which power is exercised by government in the management of a country's social and economic resources. "Good" governance is the exercise of power by various levels of government that is effective, honest, equitable, transparent and accountable.

The World Bank uses the following definition: "By governance we mean the manner in which power is exercised... in the management of a country's social and economic resources". Pokol (2016) defined governance as "governing or directing the affairs of a group of people which could be a family, a village, a city, a country, or groups of countries. It is the activity of rendering stewardship of human and material resources within a given place and time". Governing is an exercise of constructive power by exercising leadership through persuading & influencing people towards realizing their goals (Ruwa, 2001:27) as in Pokol 194. Power in this case means diffused power which is found everywhere instead of the analogue idea of concentrated power in an individual leader. People who engage in governing are people who are entrusted with responsibilities of ensuring the well-being of those under them. The governing mandate is a divine one as recorded in Genesis 1:26-27 (Pokol: 194). To govern is to direct the public affairs of a country. Governance is the activity or manner of governing by a structure of governance which is the government. A Government is a group of

people governing a state or country. In all constituted communities, public affairs have to be directed, controlled, influenced and managed. Thus governing is the right or power to govern. Governing implies authority. Authority refers to the right by virtue of office and position to command obedience. Authority is necessary for the unity of the state. Its role is to ensure as far as possible the common good of the society (Ruwa, 2001:26).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its 1997 policy paper, defined governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences “. This definition was endorsed by the Secretary General’s inter-agency sub-task force to promote integrated responses to United Nations conferences and summits.

Brief Concept of Religious Identity

Religious identity has often been used to mobilize one side against the other, as has happened in Iraq, Sudan, and elsewhere. Religious identity is also used to fight dictatorial regime so as to insure good governance. Examples include: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria Crises which is ongoing by Islamic State (Isis and Isil). In times of dictatorial governance people often responded in defense of their identities or in defend of their faith. But to describe many such conflicts as rooted in religious differences or to imply that ideological or doctrinal differences are the principal causes of conflict is to seriously over simplify and misrepresent a complex situation.

Theoretical Perspectives

Here the writer asks whether religion is a cause of conflict and what role religion can play in generation of conflict. The four broad categories have been singled out to guide our understanding and how religious identity is engaged in challenging governance; these are; primordialism, instrumentalism; fundamentalism and structural conflict theory.

Primordialism Religious Theory

They views religious strife as the climates of strain in relationships as a result of cultural, identity and historical differences. Ancient hatreds create diverging interest and it is possible for conflict to take place over or between two

civilizations. Perhaps out of the desire to be politically correct some have wished away the primordial issues that laid the foundation for the use of religion to create conflict in Africa. According to Turaki (2012), it is not possible for Africa to have a proper grasp of the nature of religious and communal clashes, frictions, riots, conflicts and violence without understanding our primordial, religious, cultural and colonial past; what we were before the arrival of Christian mission, Islam and colonial masters, and what we became during and after the Christian mission, Islamic, colonial and post- colonial eras.

Instrumentalism Theory of Religious Conflict

Instrumentalist argue that although religion may aggravate conflict once it has occurred and been caused by other factors, religion is hardly a cause of conflict, let alone violent conflict. They believe that the polarization of religion and religious identities and the radicalization of religious communities become a possibility when there is a situation of economic and political decline (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2000). The instrumentalisation of religion has been made possible by many factors, among them, the failure of development, (structural conflict), and failed modernization that have created vacuums which are conveniently filled by religion.

Fundamentalism/Fanaticism Theory

This perspective has it that religious conflicts are work of fundamentalists and fanatics and persons who are religiously overzealous and misguided and who follows extreme and often potentially confrontational interpretations and forms of religious teaching. The follower ship and sponsors are also considered fundamentalists who confront each other because they are intolerant of other faiths and cannot accommodate other beliefs in a religious plural society (Gwamna, 2007).

Structural Conflict Theory

The structural conflict theory has two main sub-orientations; one is the radical structural theory represented by the Marxist dialectical school with exponents like Marx and Engels, V.I Lemn and others. Two is the liberal structuralism represented by Ross (1993), Sear borough (1998) and the famous work John Galtung (1990) on structural violence. It is also sometime similar transformative theory which addresses the reactions of individuals groups, cultures, institutions and societies to change. It further sees incompatible interest based on

competition for resources, which in most cases are assumed to be source, as being responsible for social conflicts (Collier, 2000). Marxist theorists based on the conception of historical materialism present conflict as most tied to economic structures and social institutions.

The Ethnic-Religious Nexus (Religious, Political, Economic, Social and Conflict Relationship)

According to Jonathan (2000), religious belief systems are essential aspects of the identities of those who follow them. Accordingly any attack, real or perceived, on one's religious framework is not an attack on the religion; it is also an attack on a vital element of one's identity. Given this, it is not surprising that this can cause a defensive reaction that is often violent. Wentz describes this phenomenon metaphorically as defending the 'walls of religion'. Lewis makes this argument with respect to Islam and Christianity noting that these religions' claims to exclusive truths are a major source of conflict (Jonathan, 2000:7-8).

Again, Gurr in Jonathan said one way to understand the ethnic conflict process is described as basic model posits that discrimination or even differences in status between groups, causes deprived minority groups to form grievances. Gurr specifically deals with grievances over social, political, autonomy, and economic issues. These grievances cause the minority to mobilize for conflict. These mobilized groups finally engage in conflict. This is the core of Gurr's model. He also accounts for the influence of the group's cohesion, size, and geographic concentration, regime factors like democracy, democratisation, state power, and economic development, international contagion and diffusion, international support for both the state and the minority group, and repression. Although Gurr does not deal with religion directly, by analogy religious discrimination should lead to religious grievances which, in turn, should lead to mobilisation followed by conflict (Jonathan, 2000:9).

Economic perspective on the causes of civil war and based on empirical patterns globally over the period 1965-98. During this period, the risk of civil war has been systematically related to a few economic conditions, such as dependence upon primary commodity exports and low national income. Conversely, and astonishingly, objective measures of social grievance, such as inequality, a lack of democracy as in political, and ethnic and religious divisions, have had little systematic effect on risk (Collier, 2006:1).

Collier again, opines that economists would argue that it is not really necessary to distinguish between the three variants of the predation theory. It does not really matter whether rebels are motivated by greed, by a lust of power, or by grievance, as long as what causes conflict is the feasibility of the predation. Indeed, economist tends to set little credence on the explanations which people give for their behavior, preferring to work by 'revealed preference': people gradually reveal their true motivation by the pattern of their behavior even if they choose to disguise the painful truth from themselves. Rebel leaders may much of the time come to believe their own propaganda, but if their words are decried by their behavior, then their words have little explanatory power (2006:3-4).

Identities have historically been significant in the Nigerian political process, under colonial rule as well as in the post-colonial dispensation. Under colonialism, administrative exigencies warranted "the invention of traditions", and the nurturing and exacerbation of an "us" *versus* "them" syndrome: Muslim *versus* Christian; Northerner *versus* Southerner; Hausa-Fulani *versus* Yoruba *versus* Igbo, and so on. Religious, regional and ethnic differences were given prominence in conceiving and implementing social, educational and economic development policies and projects under the indirect system of colonial administration favoured by the British. Thus, the differential impact of colonialism set the context of the regional educational, economic and political imbalances which later became significant in the mobilization or manipulation of identity consciousness in order to effectively divide and rule, as well as in the politics of decolonisation and in the arena of competitive politics in the post-colonial era (Jega, 2000:15-16).

Some Selected Case Studies

The Arab Spring: (Dictatorial Governance)

According Sarihan (2012) the emergence of reformers is the first phase of revolution within authoritarian regimes (Huntington 1991:127). According to Huntington (1991) in the democratization process, the reformers could be group leaders, party leaders, or potential leaders (Huntington 1991:127). Again, during this initial phase of democratic revolution, democratic defenders demand a change from autocrat, tyrannical, and sometimes cruel regimes to democratic, transparent, and human rights-based regimes. The movement triggers, encourages, and induces people who live under the rigid systems to speak out loudly against their government's edicts, such as restraint of speech and protest.

This emergence of reformers paves the way for future uprisings against autocracy (Sarihan, 2012:127-129). The Islamist parties, excluded from the political sphere for much of the last decade, is now coming to the forefront of Arab politics. Therefore, closely related to what is happening today 2014-2020 the events of 2011 that is the electoral victories of Ennahda in Tunisia and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt suggest that the future of Arabs politics will be dominated by decision-makers with faith-based political agendas. But the part that religion should play in the new political orders of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and how its involvement might be shaped in law and practices, remains the subject of controversy and debate. The role of religion in Arab politics will be determined by the people of the region. Religious identity (parties) and movements cannot be excluded from political process. But the success of faith-based movements at the polls can exacerbate social tensions. Recent electoral results seem to indicate that strict secularism will not be an option for the new Arab States in the near future. It is yet to be seen which formula of faith-based politics emerging democracies will adopt, on the spectrum between Iranian-style theocracy and Turkish religion inflected secularism.

The line between religion and ethnicity, culture and tradition is not always clear. It is important, however, to distinguish between religious identity, such as Islam and Christianity, and faith-based political ideologies, such as Islamism and fundamentalist Christianity. Whereas religion is the matter of personal identity, ideologies serve a political agenda. This policy brief will explore the role of religion and faith-based ideology in Arab transitions. Long before the 'Arab Spring', religion was recognized as a major force in Arab politics. The electoral results of 2011 confirm that (relatively) free elections in the Arab world show strong public support for political Islam, as already seen in Algeria in 1990, Egypt in 2005 and the Palestinian territories in 2006. In 2011, new Islamist parties emerged and previously established ones consolidated their positions. In Tunisia, Ennahda won the greatest number of Parliamentary seats. In Egypt, the Muslim Brothers and several Salafist parties together accounted for two thirds of the Legislative Assembly. In Jordan and Morocco, Islamist political actors are gaining in importance. The victory of Morocco's Justice and Development Party (JDP) in the country's 2011 elections led to the appointment of the country's first Islamist prime minister (2015: 12-22).

The fact that it has a Muslim majority does not mean the Arab world must automatically embrace Islamist rule or reject other religions or faith-based organizations and secularism. Islamists are benefiting from their former

exclusion and/or persecution by ousted leaders. The search for strong alternatives to the old regime has encouraged people to support faith-based parties. Islamist movements' history of opposition to and persecution by the recently toppled authoritarian regimes has given them credibility and legitimacy, which they used effectively during their electoral campaigns. Meanwhile, liberal and secular parties may have lost ground for not opposing the former leaders strongly enough (Elizabeth Iskander Monier and Annette Ranko in [http://www.research gate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)<2595...> 10:20-48 searches March, 2020).

For decades, leaders from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) controlled the religious sphere in their countries, either by influencing religious leaders, as in the case of al-Azhar in Egypt and the Muftis in Saudi Arabia and Syria, or by direct interference, as in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, as well as in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and Libya. But efforts to eradicate religious-based political parties and the instrumentalisation of religion did not diminish religion's popular appeal. In the public imagination, religion became trademark of movements that challenge authoritarian rulers, who persecuted them out of fear. This religious group's defiant stance brought them popularity that was further argued by their charity and social work. Islamists presented their charity activities as filling the gaps left by government's neglect. For them, this was evidence that religious movements were best able to provide relief for social and economic ills, as expressed in the Brotherhood slogan 'Al-Islam Houa al-Hall', 'Islam is the solution'. So, when Arab Spring began to sweep through the region, Islamist parties could make a case that they were the only credible alternatives to authoritarian power. This image, combined with access to foreign funds mostly from Qatar and Saudi Arabia, gave the Islamists an advantage in the ensuing elections. The current momentum does not necessarily mean that religious precepts are set to dominate the Arab world.

In Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, tensions between secular and Islamist actors still exist. Many secularists and liberals doubt the Islamists' democratic commitment, while Islamist parties continue to try to reassure their domestic opponents and the international community of their democratic credentials. As stated above in 2011, in Tunisia, Ennahda insists on a fundamental role for religious rules in the country, even as secular parties reject this direction. But parliamentary debates on the future Tunisian Constitution must begin before concrete issues are decided. In Egypt, too, efforts to draft a new framework for governance are under way. The Muslim Brothers control the Parliamentary committees for external affairs (diplomacy, defence and energy) and Salafis are at the head of the

committees' economy, education and religious affairs. This suggests that Egypt will most likely evolve towards more conservative rules and an islamisation of social life.

In Libya, the National Transitional Council (NTC) has insisted from the outset on the importance of Sharia for the country, which may give some indication of the influence Islamists are likely to have on Libya's future. Drafting a new constitution gives new deputies the chance to determine the degree to which religion will affect their country's future political, legal and social system. New provisions will have to comply with international law as well as taking into account the rules of Islam. This should allow a break with former authoritarian laws while ensuring, as far as democratically possible, compliance with Islamic values. Achieving this balance will be a very tough challenge. Even under previous nominally secular regimes, some social issues were based on the rules of Islam, for example, inheritance, polygamy, family code and minority rights, with particular implications for women's rights. In the current debates, the most contentious issues include the right to sell and drink alcoholic beverages, women's wearing of veil, suspension of activities during prayers, religious instruction and respecting freedom of belief.

Western partners typically view a strict separation between state and religion as a necessary prerequisite for a democratic political system. But this vision is not viable in the MENA context, where religion cannot at the moment be excluded from public sphere. The divide between faith-based and secular political actors in the Middle East is an illusion. Progressive and nominally secular parties do not isolate themselves from religious beliefs. Any attempt to definitively exclude religion from public a political life would be met with harsh public criticism. Neither is secularism necessarily desirable for the region, since religion can serve as a powerful force for national cohesion, for example, in providing common ground between Conservatives and liberals. This is due in part to the fact that, in Islamic belief, affiliation to the Islamic community (Umma) transcends any ties to a nation-state (2015: 130-145 and Konrad: 2012).

South Sudan (Governance)

The decade long civil war in Southern Sudan of 1983-2005 that was predation by armed groups during the second civil war (1983-2005) initiated a process of dominant class formation, and demonstrates how, through various strategies of resources capture and kinship networks, commanders from the Sudan People's

Liberation Army (SPLA) and other factions formed a new aristocracy- a “dominant class” that thinks itself as “the best” Clemence (2014).

ON 15 DECEMBER 2013 THE GRAVEST POLITICAL CRISIS in the short history of the Republic of South Sudan erupted. Following a series of disagreements within the highest echelons of the ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement, thirteen political figures were imprisoned, accused by President Salva Kiir of attempting a coup under the leadership of estranged Vice-President Ricek Machar Clemence 2014:192. Again, the movement is often described as a religious conflict between Muslim and Christian, with the north being predominantly Muslim and the south predominately Christian or animist. There is some truth to the characterization, particularly after 1989, when an Islamic fundamental government came to power in Khartoum with an agent to Islamize all of Sudan but the difference between north and south go well beyond religion and rarely are the disagreement religious or theological in character. Northerners speak Arabic and want Arabic to be Sudan’s national language. Southerners generally speak Arabic only as a second or third language, if at all, and prefer English as the lingua franca (Best: 2011).

Northerners are more likely to identify with the Arab world, whereas southerners tend to identify themselves as Africans. Thus, racial identity is fundamental to the division between north and south. The religious division between Christian and Muslim happens to overlap with these racial, ethnic and geographical divisions, but the conflicts divide has been confined to or even dominated by religion (Smock:2008).

Egypt and Syria (Governance)

According to Sarihan (2012) the Egypt, reformist began on January 25, 2011, in Tahrir Square. Protesters sought to overthrow the autocratic regime that had ruled since 1952. Most insurgents drew their motivation from the country’s history of corrupt and autocrat leadership; limited social, political, and economic rights; and their desire for greater economic inequality. Fawaz Gerges (2011) as in Sarihan further explained that the protesters were “...calling for open societies, for freedom, for transparent elections, for their voices to be heard...” (Scott Peterson, 2011).The Egyptian revolution carries a challenging transition phase, starting out with problems such as low foreign direct investments (FDI), a high budget deficit, a high debt rate, a high unemployment rate, a high poverty rate, and a low standard of living. The temporary supply shortages that followed

the upheaval, coupled with rising international prices of food and fuel have adding to the pressure on the domestic price level since early 2011.

The Egyptian citizens had taken part in smaller protest before January 25, 2011, but they were not as effective as the most recent uprising. In the early 2000s, a group of people, spearheaded by the Kifaya (enough) group criticized the Mubarak government for its neutral and silent position on the second Israeli intifada in Palestine. (Kefaya: Asking the Right Question," Baheyya, 30 April 2005) the Egyptian people had criticized the country's rulers for their soft and open policies with Israel since the 1979 Camp David agreement. In the early 2000s, ten thousand people, mostly students, protested the continued Israeli violence toward Palestinian civilians at Cairo University (Samer, 2004). The Egyptian government has played a major role in creating and maintaining a religiously intolerant environment in Egypt that is hostile to non-Muslim and any Muslim who deviates from government endorsed religious norms and traditions. This intolerant environment that stifles independent thinking and religious liberty is the natural breeding ground for Islamist extremists.

Religious freedom in Egypt precisely, the thereof turns on the interrelationship of some forces in Egypt: the regime, the religious establishment, Islamists, and society at large. Each entity has its own internal considerations and goals that help to diminish religious freedom, but the dynamic relationship between them creates the ongoing cycle of intolerance. Given the nature of this dynamic, any attempt to deal with religious freedom issues in Egypt must start at the state level. Egypt's population is predominantly Sunni Muslim. The government does not acknowledge the existence of non-Sunni Muslim groups, which are deemed deviant versions of Islam. Once the Egyptian nationalist project collapsed and was replaced by other identities-Arab nationalism and Islamism-it was only a matter of time before the dynamics between religious groups turned sour and the state became suspicious of religious minorities and deviations. (Khalidi, 2011)

In 2003, an anti-war movement appeared to organize people against Mubarak to criticize his quiet and ineffective policy regarding the United States' intervention in, or invasion of, Iraq (Hamalawy, 2007). This public protest was the first against Mubarak since his reign began. After the election of the People's Assembly of Egypt, Egyptian oppositions, such as Kifaya, the April 6th group, and the Muslim Brotherhood, protested the election results and called the parliament illegitimate, because Mubarak prevented opposing sides to participate in the elections. Religious freedom in Egypt-or, more precisely, the lack thereof-turns on the

interrelationship of four forces: the regime, the religious establishment, Islamists, and society at large. Each entity must be accorded its distinct understanding, but the give and take between the four entities is what creates the challenge for religious freedom in Egypt (Cook, 2011).

Awhile Egypt's rulers have fought the Islamists and challenge religious establishment on various issues they have not held a secular viewpoint or attempted to limit the role that religion plays in Egypt. They focused on taking control of religion, which they viewed as a dangerous weapon in the hands of their enemies. Egypt's three modern rulers have pursued this policy with varying degrees of success using methods ranging from the stick to the carrot. Nasser and the presidents that followed him were driven by a fear of the Islamist challengers to the regime. Under President Anwar El Sadat and then President Hosni Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood and the violent Islamic groups have been viewed as the main threats to the regime, both practically on the group and in terms of legitimacy. To combat this challenge the regime aimed at mobilizing Islam for its own benefits. Under Nasser, the religious establishment was encouraged to emphasize the socialist nature of Islam. After Sadat gave up on socialism, the religious establishment was directed to emphasize how this peace with Israel was Islamic. Sadat even took the absurd step of calling himself the "pious president" the regime's policies naturally overflowed into the constitutional framework and laws. Article 2 of the Egyptian constitution proclaims: "Islam is the Religion of the State. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)". In theory and practice, Articles 40 and 46 contradict Article 2. Article 40 declares: "All citizens are equal before the law. They have equal public rights and duties without discrimination due to sex, ethnic, political association or affiliation, language, religion or creed." Article 46 proclaims: "The State shall guarantee the freedom of belief and the freedom of practicing religious rights" (Korand, 2012).

Syria (Governance)

The summary of Syria dictatorial governance; uprisings against Bashar al-Assad's dictatorial regime in Syria started in Mid-March of 2011, following the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, and the protests continue. (Syria-Protests 2011," New York Times, 15 November, 2011) Prior to the March protests, Syria had three important uprisings against the Baath regime. The first insurrection occurred 1999, when Hafez al-Assad decided to transfer his authority to his son Bashar al-Assad, because of his health problems. Hafez's other son, Rifaat, and

his supporters protested the decision in Latakia, Syria. While protesters claimed hundreds of people died at the hands of government forces, official records stated that only two people were killed after the clashes between Rifaat's supporters and state forces (Sarihan, 2012:72).

The second important protest against the Baath Party took place in Damascus during the spring of 2000, and it is called 'Damascus Spring'. When Bashar al-Assad came to power, Syrian intellectuals began to protest the Baath regime's dictatorial management in salons and forums. To appease the people, Assad released 600 hundred political prisoners. Assad's concordance with protestors did not last long; and in 2001, he closed the forums, then killed and imprisoned many protesters from Damascus Springs (2012:72).

The third important protest in Syria came in the form of the 2004 Kurdish Al-Qamishli riots. Syrian Kurds in the northeastern city of al-Qamishli turned a small skirmish that started during a soccer game into a much broader, political conflict between the Kurds and the Syrian government. The conflict resulted in approximately 100 deaths (2012:72).

Boko-Haram: (Governance) the Nigerian Experience

According to Andrew (2012) United States Institute of Peace said Boko Haram's origins lie in a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago. In 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as Boko Haram) declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. Boko Haram, which means "Western education is forbidden", was founded in 2002 but started the movement in 2001 by an Islamist cleric named Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in response to Nigeria's democratic transition, nationalism and Western influence. The group's official name is not Boko Haram but Jama'atu Ahlis Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". Members are known to reference the Islamic verse that states, "Anyone who is not governed by what "Allah" has revealed is among the transgressors". Osama Bin Laden invested \$3million in northern Nigeria, where Muslims are majority, to promote his brand of Salafist Islamism. Bin Laden also endorsed an Islamist revolution in order to topple the Nigerian government and establish a sharia-based state (Jacob, 2018).

According to Lengmang, Yusuf had an estimated 280,000 followers and his armed supporters were referred to as the Nigerian Taliban and dozens trained in

Afghanistan. Yusuf was killed on 30 July 2009 by Nigerian forces in the city of Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria and replaced by its current leader, Abubakar Shekau. In November 2013, the U.S. State Deputy designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, as well as a splinter group named Ansaru. The U.S. government said Boko Haram has links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb and is responsible for killing thousands of people (Best, 2011:11).

Boko Haram Main Objective

The immediate objective of Boko Haram is to establish strict sharia law in northern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim. Although there are nineteen (19) states in Northern Nigeria but (12) twelve northern states have implemented sharia governance, Boko Haram believes it is too lenient and violates Islam.

Islamist ideology holds that Muslims are required to wage jihad until all territory once under Muslim rule is returned. Boko Haram regards itself as the successor to Usman Dan Fodio who founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which ruled parts of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon from 1804 until it was formally abolished by the British in 1904. In this vein, Bin Laden also said:

“There are only three choices in Islam: either willing submission (conversion); or payment of the jizya, through physical though not spiritual submission to the authority of Islam; or the sword-for it is not right to let him live. The matter is summed up for every person alive: either submit, or live under the suzerainty of Islam, or die” (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/11/boko-haram-s-bin-laden-connection.HTML>). .

Boko Haram has specifically identified the U.S. and other Western countries as eventual targets.

Major Attacks

Boko Haram follows a doctrine of unrestrained warfare, making no distinction between non-combatants and combatants; civilians and soldiers; females and males, or even Muslims and non-Muslims. Boko Haram has killed over 2,000 people since 2009. The leadership of Boko Haram believes disarmament is un-Islamic and opposed to negotiated solutions. Spokesperson Abu Qaqa said in January 2012. “We will consider negotiation only when we have brought the government to their knees... we will only put aside our arms-but we will not lay

them down. You don't put down your arms in Islam, you only put them aside". Likewise, Shekau said in his 2014 video taking credit for the abduction of 300 Nigerian schoolgirls (<http://www.BBC.com/news/world-africa-22538888>).

Some major attacks carried out by Boko Haram include (2017 to 2020)

1. 26th June, 2017 Borno State multiple suicide bomb attacks in Maiduguri killed at least 9 people and 13 others injured (Duke, 2017:8-14).
2. 17th January, 2018 a male and female suicide bomber attacked a market in Maiduguri, killed 12 people, at least 45 injured.
3. 21st February, 2018 Boko Haram seized 110 school girls from schools in Dapchi Yobe State, Nigeria.
4. 26th April, 2018 Boko Haram bombers killed at least 4 civilians in Maiduguri but left 2 officers wounded and several others injured.
5. 12th September, 2019 (GMT+3) 4 dead among 6 hostages taken by Boko Haram
6. 14th December, 2019 (GMT+3) 22, 000 Nigerians missing which most are children since Boko Haram crisis began: Red Cross (aljazeera.com by 3:00pm).
7. 18th, 21st, 23rd January, 2020 the killing of a University of Maiduguri student and indigene of Plateau State; killing of an abducted CAN chairman of Michika LGA Adamawa state Rev Lawan Andimi and 2 other Pastors and 2 other students from the same State by Boko Haram through a video that went viral through TVC news 2.24pm 13/5/2020.
8. 4th March, 2020 (GMT+3) 6 killed in attack on Nigeria military base by Boko Haram in Damboa.
9. 24th March, 2020 (GMT+3) at least 50 Nigerian Soldiers killed in Boko Haram ambush.
10. 5th May, 2020 (GMT+3) Nigeria has killed 134 members of the Boko Haram and Islamic state of West Africa Province (ISWAP) armed groups.

General Assessment of Leadership, Governance and Dictatorial Governance in Selected African States

The writer summarized the work of Afegbua and Adejuwon (2012) to have some background understanding of leadership, governance and dictatorial governance

crises in Africa. Therefore, the paper briefly examines the said concepts in selected African countries as follows:

Nigeria: Nigeria, is the “Giant of Africa “, the country became independent in 1960. Then out of 48 years of independence, the country has been under the control of tyrannical and autocratic military dictators for about thirty years. The dictators employed all sorts of intimidation, aggressive, threatening and elimination methods to remain and withhold the political power (examples are General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida and Sani Abacha). Under the new dispensation, the country seems to be experiencing nascent democracy though leadership into public and political office still follows imposition pattern with dictatorial principles like threatening freedom of speech to “hate speech” (Afegbua and Adejuwon, 2012:152).

Ghana: The political situation in Ghana is similar to that of Nigeria, for instance, since the country’s independence in 1957; Kwame Nkrumah ruled the country until 1969 when his government was toppled. Since then military ruled the country for almost twenty years (1979), Jerry Rawlings ruled the country from 1981 and changed the President after 12 years in power through a series of less-than-legitimate election before he handed over to John Kufor in 2001. With this predation and dictatorial governance often breed conflicts from people of the lower economic class (2012:152).

Zaire: In Zaire, formerly Congo-Kinshasa is a country in Africa that never experience stable democratic governance as a result of despotic and tyrant leader. In 1960 Mobutu Sese Sekou terminated the government of Patrick Lumumba in a bloody and gruesome manner. Mobutu a self acclaimed life President of Zaire is one of the African leaders that overstayed their glorious day in office until he was chased out of the country. Again, the present administration in Zaire is not ready to accommodate and give room for popularly elected leader (2012:152).

Malawi: Malawi is a small country in Africa where Kamuzu Banda became the head of state in 1966, and proclaimed himself as “Life President” for the country and life Chairman for his party. The human right records of the regime were so bad that Amnesty International (human rights group) alerted the whole world on the frightening repression melted to opposition in the country (2012:152).

Zambia: In Zambia, President Kenneth Kaunda ruled for 27 years, from 1977-1991 when his ambition to become life president was cut short. Before President Frederick Chiluba was popularly elected in the general election (2012:152)!

Kenya: In Kenya, after the death of President Jomo Kenyatta in 1977, Daniel Arap Moi became their leader and ruled for years, he ruled autocratically and reject any reform that can pave way for democracy and good governance in the country (2012:152).

Central African Republic: In Central African Republic, Emperor Jean Bedel Bokassa toppled the regime of President David Dacko in 1966, since then he refused democracy to operate in the country. The government of the country was nothing but family compound. He was sentenced to death and later reversed to life imprisonment as a result of world leaders and international organizations plea (2012:152).

Liberia: This country was founded in 1847 by Americans for freed slaves. The country was described as the oldest in democracy in Africa until when Samuel Doe killed Tolbert who have been in government since 1951 with President Tubman in a bloody coup. Samuel Doe ruled for ten years and turned Liberia to a personal courtyard, until 1990 when he was brutally murdered by Prince Yormie Johnson version of rebel. Then rebel version of Charles Taylor ruled the country in a tyrannical and despotic manner, until recently when peace returned to Liberia, and the country became the first country in Africa to produce female President in a general election {What a great challenge to us in Nigeria} (2012:153). The foregoing is a pointer to the fact that Africa, most countries are still been ruled by the tyrants, as a result of this, development is very far from the Continent, but nevertheless this can be argued. This menace has dogged almost all African countries since independence that the whole continent is riddled with despots. Most of the leaders have decided to remain in power, not willing to handover leadership and aim to retain number one seat of their countries. Most of these despotic leaders have intentionally render democracy useless in their countries simply because they want to remain in power.

Recommendations

This study has highlighted a number of ethnic and religious used of identity through observing leadership and governance challenges in Africa. It is sad to observe that Africa's leadership selection process takes the imposition pattern directly or indirectly. Worrying too is the fact that the Africa's political

formation is along tribal groupings and ethnic aggregations thus visionary leaders are dropped while mediocres are often selected or imposed on the masses leading to protest that breed conflicts. In view of the above, therefore, the following suggestions are proffered to help to ameliorate the seemingly endemic leadership and governance challenges in the Continent so as to achieve a measure of credibility and purposeful governance.

The immediate responsibility of leadership and governance in Africa is to restore hope and distorted values. To pull our people out of the pit in which they have found themselves. Indeed, to rescue the people from the ravages of military and dictatorial democratic governance or dictatorship and from the ruling clique (Afegbua and Adejuwon, 2012: 153-154).

The search for leadership and governance in Africa is a search for social justice, which automatically, eliminates social injustice as did establish in the beginning. The principle of justice is to give each person or group what is his or her due and to demand the contribution of each on the basis of equal consideration. This is because knowing or finding the truth is integral to the attainment of justice.

It is recommended that Africans should learn to deal sincerely and honestly with one another and in upholding the godly values so that the question of mistrust and suspicion amongst the various religious and ethnic identities in the Continent would be wiped away or manage. It is only then that any qualified African can be elected into leadership and governance positions without mistrust, suspicion, acrimony or reference to his or her ethnic or religious background.

Africa needs leadership and governance which has the “mental magnitude” to decode the conflict and ideological commitment to uplifting the material and cultural aspirations of the broad spectrum of the people. The challenges for Africa and its leadership endowed with the godly values such as courage, determination, tolerant, honesty, forgiveness and etc and the creation and promoting the process of endowing political institutions with necessary legitimacy which is their ultimate safeguard against violent overthrow (Kamuntu, 1993:109) as in Afegbua and Adejuwon 2012.

The crucial elements or values in the good governance being called for in Africa are accountability, transparency, predictability, human rights etc. African can develop the common values or morals necessary for the governance of Africans societies which in essence must be rooted in the spirit of cooperation, tolerant

and adherence to constitutional rules and procedures (Obasanjo, 1993:100) in Afegbua and Adejuwon 2012. The long term salvation of African therefore, depends on the quality of its future leadership. In this context, apart from improved quality of education intensifying building of values so as to secure able future leadership, the present leader of Africa have a special responsibility to develop a new generation of leaders, tested in our era(Afegbua and Adejuwon, 2012:154).

Conclusion

All of these cases demonstrate that while religion is an important factor in conflict, often marking identity differences, motivating conflict, and justifying violence, religion is not usually the sole or primary cause of conflict. The reality is that religion becomes intertwined with a range of causal factor-economic, political, and social that defines and propels and sustains conflict. Certainly, religious disagreements must be addressed alongside these economic, political, and social sources to build lasting reconciliation. Fortunately, many of the avenues to ameliorate religious violence lie within the religious realm itself.

In the words of Kuka the writer quotes:

“A catapult and a stone in my hands can only frighten a little bird. But in the hands of David, it killed Goliath. It depends on whose hands it is in.

A tennis racquet in my hands might hit a ball across a net. But, a tennis racquet in the hands of Serena Williams is worth millions of dollars. It depends on whose hands it is in.

A soccer ball before me is nothing more than an inflated leader. But, in the feet of Ronaldo or Messi, it is worth millions of dollars. It depends on whose feet it is before.

A certificate from the University of Jos is perhaps just a piece of paper. But with it, Yakubu Dogara is now the Speaker of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It depends on whose hands it is in (Kuka, 2018:14).

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