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INDIGENOUS RELIGION, INSECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Religion and security are two vital issues that are very important to the development of every aspect of human life. Africa is a continent that is blessed with tripartite religious traditions with their accompanied benefits. However, it is no longer news that insecurity is gaining grounds in African countries despite the existence of these religions. This has therefore made insecurity of life and property to become the order of the day. While governments in some African states can no longer guarantee the safety of their citizens, the various agencies saddled with the responsibility of providing maximum security for their countries are now at their wits end. This paper therefore reviews insecurity in Nigeria. It also examines the failed attempts of the successive leaders towards peaceful co-existence and suggests expected roles of indigenous religion through which the phenomenon of insecurity can be addressed. It adopts historical and phenomenological approaches to achieve its aim. The study discovered that as relative peace is becoming a mirage and is becoming more elusive in many African states, it is clear that meaningful development cannot be achieved where insecurity exists. The findings are used as leverage to address the evils of incessant xenophobic attacks, robbery and terrorism that are prevalent in African states. Also, the findings are used to inform Nigerians that without peace and security, there cannot be meaningful development. The paper concludes with the recommendation that Nigerians and their leaders should explore the benefits of religion in the country and embrace the spirit of brotherhood, tolerance and unity so that Nigeria can move forward and occupy her enviable position in the comity of nations.

Keywords: **Conflict, violence, insecurity, religion, development.**

Introduction

Prominent among the challenges that are threatening the socio-political and religious sectors of Africa today is insecurity. It is unfortunate that the determination of the African Union (AU); to silent the guns and put an end to 'all wars, civil conflicts, gender-based violence and violent conflicts' in Africa by the year 2020, could not be realised (Allinson,2020). Despite the fact that all member states worked towards achieving the feat, the trend headed to another direction. Far from been better the situation is getting worse daily. For instance, the war and the military take-over in Sudan, the collapse of the state in Somalia, unrest in Rwanda and Burundi, the worsening situation in Ethiopia and current state of the Democratic Republic of Congo are all evidences that violent conflicts and insecurity are gaining ground in Africa

(Achankeng, 2013). Africa at large and Nigeria in particular is presently in chaotic situation as a result of incessant conflicts and violence. People live every day of their lives in fear and uncertainty. Terrorists, hired killers, kidnappers and armed robbers have now taken over. We live in a changing world with multiple and evolving threats to national security, including terrorism, asymmetrical warfare, and social unrest. The news and reports from daily newspapers, radio and television are shocking and scaring. Conflict, in its various forms, is becoming a permanent feature of Nigerian communities. Religious groups are at each other's throats; people are killed and property destroyed under the cloak of religion. Political opponents see themselves as somebody to be dead than been alive while people of different ethnic groups kill one another over little disagreement.

In spite of all these, the political leaders seem to be insensitive to the plight of the entire citizenry. Consequently, peace, the desire of any nation is becoming elusive in Nigeria. For any country to have a meaningful and sustainable development there must be peace and harmonious relationship among the people and groups that make up of that country. Peace therefore is a *sine qua non* of harmonious existence (Onah, 2021). The daily occurrence of crisis and conflict in the nooks and cranny of Nigeria makes one feel that the word 'peace' is a mirage in Nigeria. Without mincing words, one can say categorically that nearly all human being want peace and mutual coexistence in their communities. Though, one may not be sure of the relativity of the term (peace) to them and means of attaining it, yet human beings desire peace (Onah, 2021).

Conflict, Security Challenge and Development in Nigeria

Security, whether of a nation or an individual is a cherished value that is related to the physical safety of individuals, groups or nation state (Nnoli, 2006). It also involves safety of their most cherished values. It therefore implies freedom from all forms of threat, conflict and violence. It is what any government or an individual desires to have. In fact, the beauty of any political entity lies in its ability to provide adequate security for the life and property of its people. Provision of security for life and property in a society enhances both public peace and mutually productive ways of live. In short, where there is safety, development is automatically attested (Abegunde, 2013). However, the growing crises between religious groups, terrorists' attacks from *Boko Haram*,bandit attack and incessant conflicts of different types have exerted a devastating effect on the safety and security of Nigerians. Right from the year 2009, there have been several attacks by these groups which have led to the loss of several lives and left some maimed for life. The inability of government to deter, defeat and respond decisively to security matters of the country is the most challenging priority facing Nigeria today.

From the villages to the cities, Nigerians lament bitterly about the insecurity of lives and properties in their country. There is no place that is left untouched. Even some Nigerians that are abroad are now afraid of coming home. It is no longer news that British and American governments routinely warn their citizens about where not to go in the country (*The Nation*, 2012). Nigerians have been going through horrible experiences since the *Boko Haram*'s terrorism that has led to the deaths of thousands of innocent Nigerians. There is hardly a day that is free of shooting. Among the bitter experiences of Nigerians are the several bombing of places of worship, market places, Police Stations, INEC offices, and many other audacious

attacks that give the impression that Nigeria is in a state of anarchy (*The Nation*, 2012). Security is a very serious and sensitive issue that must not be politicized.

It is to be noted here that despite this terrible situation the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is still assuring the citizens that the country is "safe and secure", and that the security challenges of this country are under control (*The Nation*, 2012). With the present situation, people could no longer sleep with their two eyes closed, they could no longer walk freely or travel in the night. Houses and banks are no longer safe from the incessant robbery attacks. Schools and even roads are equally not safe from the attack of kidnappers. The burning issue of abduction of over 200 school girls who are yet to be fully release by the *Boko Haram* since April, 2014 is still lingering on. Nigerians are only sure of the present minute; nobody can say categorically what would happen in the next minute.

As if these challenges were not enough, on the 10th of December, 2012, it was widely reported in nearly all the Nigerian dailies that the octogenarian mother of the former Federal Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, was kidnapped and bundled into a waiting vehicle by gun men numbering about ten on that fateful Sunday afternoon (*The Nation*, 2012). Now, if the mother of a minister in Nigeria is not safe; what would happen to common man on the street. Coupled with the crime of kidnapping are the various cases of rape. This in real sense is the crime of forcing a woman to have sex with the man whom she has no intention and desire to have sex with. Rapists in our society had portrayed a sense of dehumanization, degradation and human abuse. As reported in the *CitizenNewspaper*(2012) of Johannesburg:

> Rape is so rampant that it overtakes away other health risk posed to this country's women and, increasingly, to its children as well… The rape of children has doubled in recent times… these acts are committed seemingly in perpetuation of the myth that an HIV/AIDS carrier who rapes a virgin will be cured (P.4).

This act has also led to the harassment of women and girls in the society. Victims of human traffickers narrated their ordeal of rape, horror and brutality during an encounter at a forum on Modern Slavery. They shared their experiences as unsuspected female victims of human trafficking that had been given the lure of a better life in Europe. Instead, according to Miss. Isoke Aikpintayi, "they beat us and brought in some men to rape us, cut us with blade and made us to suffer" (*The Nation*, 2012). This account is one of the revelations made at a two-day workshop organized by the women's Optimum Development Foundation (WODEF) held in Ibadan, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Even the Nigerian former Senate President David Mark, while taking stock of the un abating security challenges facing the nation, lamented and called for soul searching among Nigerians in a bid to get permanent solution to the crisis. He noted that the situation had degenerated to an intolerable level that exposes everybody to danger.(*NigerianTribune*, 2013). This is the precarious situation that Nigerians have found themselves in. It beats the imagination of any person to accept the fact that the security outfits in Nigeria are unable to put an appropriate response to security challenges in this country.

Conflicts and Violence in Nigeria

Conflict, from all indications, means 'contradictions arising from difference in interests, ideas, ideologies, orientations and tendencies' (Apenda&Adega, 2010).It expresses itself in numerous and in various degrees over every range of human endeavour. Conflict therefore manifests in all activities in which men contend against one another for fair sharing. Violence on the other hand is the 'use of force against persons or objects' (Apenda&Adega, 2010). Although violence could be verbal, nevertheless, most violent acts in Nigeria are physical in nature and have led to the loss of both life and property of many Nigerians. In acknowledging the different forms of violent conflicts in Nigeria, the paper groups them under the following headings: Religious conflicts, political conflicts, ethnic conflicts, farmers-pastoralists conflicts and students' riots.

Religious Conflicts

There are different levels and forms of religious conflict in Nigeria. These include; intra and inter-religious conflicts. Intra religious conflict often exists within a particular sect or denomination. Examples of these are *maitatsine* riots of 1980 in Kano and skirmishes between the *Izala* and the *Tijjanyya* in Gombe in 1987 (Larkin, 2009). With the emergence of the era of religious conflict in Nigeria in 1980 when *maitatsine* sect launched a violent attack on people of Kano, there have been several similar upheavals in some parts of the country (Adamolekun, 2003). Inter religious conflicts are ones that occur between two or more different religious groups or traditions.

Among the religious conflicts that fall under this category are: the Bulumkutu riot of October 1982 in Maiduguri, the various Kaduna riots of 1987, 1988 and the year 2000. As if these were not enough, there was Kaduna riot of 22nd November, 2002 where about 200 people were reportedly killed and properties worth millions of naira were also destroyed. This crisis was said to have been caused by what the people termed "blasphemous publication"(*Nigerian Tribune,* 2002*)*. Also, on the same day there was a protest against 'Miss World Beauty Contest' scheduled to hold on December 7th, 2002 in Abuja.(*The Hope*,2002). The current crisis that Nigerians are battling with is the one of *Boko haram*, an Islamic sect that has been launching its attack on the people of Bauchi, Jos, Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. During these attacks, property worth millions of naira was destroyed, churches were razed down and many Nigerians lost their lives. Moreover, the ongoing southern Kaduna crisis is a manifestation of the alarming rate at which crises are moving in the country.

Coming down to the southern part of the country, there were conflicts that erupted because of religious symbols. For instance, there was a religious conflict in May 1986 at the Chapel of Resurrection, university of Ibadan when the statue of the "Rising Christ" was set ablaze by an unknown group of people. Besides, in Imo state, the *Ikenga* symbol which signifies an upright man struggling through the vicissitudes of life in Igbo land was destroyed by a group of religious fanatics who described the symbol as an object of Idol worship (Adamolekun, 2003). These and many others are the bitter experiences of religious conflicts in Nigeria.

Political Conflicts

Another form of conflict that is rampant in Nigeria is political conflict. It occurs in nearly every state of the federation. This type of conflict often emerged from two or more political opponents. The incidence that happened in the early 80s between the Unity Party of Nigeria

and the National Party of Nigeria in the old Oyo State is a good example. Many lives were wasted, houses razed down and property destroyed. Other states such as: Ogun, Osun, and Ondo have the same story to tell. Other similar conflicts have to do with creation, location and relocation of local government secretariats.

Ethnic Conflicts

Coming next is the ethnic conflicts. These are mainly on land dispute and chieftaincy title. Examples of these are Ife/Modakeke crisis in Osun State, Owo crisis in Ondo state, Warri, Port Harcourt and several clashes in the south among the Ijaw, Itsekiri, Ibibio, Efik, and other tribes in oil producing states (Adamolekun, 2003).

Farmers-Herdsmen Conflicts

Nigerians have witnessed many clashes between farmers and nomadic cattle rearers in the past and they are still witnessing it today. Due to these clashes, many lives have been lost. This type of conflict is common in the northern part of the country, but in recent times, the southerners are also witnessing it. This type of conflict often ensues when the herdsmen drive their cattle to graze on the farmer's field, thereby destroying their farms and their crops. A typical example of this is the clash between the workers of Chief Olu Falae and Fulani herdsmen on the farm in Ondo State. This clash led to the death of one of the security officers of the farm (Dayo, 2020).

Students' Riots

Students' unrest is another major conflict in Nigeria. It can be as a result of disagreement between the students and the management of their institutions or between them and their host community. It can also be between rival cult groups within or outside their schools. The effects of this type of conflict are enormous. They include; loss of lives and properties, closure of the institutions concerned and the disruption of academic calendar. To curb or at least minimize the menace of violent conflict in Nigeria, all hands must be on deck. Also, if truly we want to overcome the menace in the country, the causes; both remote and immediate, must be first identified. Now what are the causes of conflict and violence in Nigeria?

Causes of Conflict / Violence in Nigeria

Various factors have been discovered to be behind the incessant conflicts and security risk in Nigeria. Prominent among the causes of conflict in this country is unemployment and it has become one of the major challenges facing Nigeria today. It is now a global problem as both developed and developing countries are facing the same problem. Because people are not gainfully employed, they take to criminality that leads to insecurity of life and property in the country. There are some people today who are university graduates but could not get employment opportunity. They are roaming about in the streets doing nothing. Since an idle mind is a devil's workshop, they occupy themselves with the crime of all kinds.

Coupled with unemployment is poverty. This is a serious phenomenon as it goes hand in hand with violence, bribery and corruption. Though, poverty from the African perspective is a social condition that was intolerable and rejected as a way of life (Olupona, 2009), yet the larger percentage of Nigerian citizens are wallowing in abject poverty. Even those that are working are not different as they could not get their salary from their employers. Bouvier, (1985) in his observation, pointed to the social reality of our time. He said inter alia that, 'today

the poor are no longer individuals, but entire nations that become increasingly poor'(Bouvier, 1985). It is unfortunate to hear that, despite the fact that Nigeria is the third biggest economy in Africa, Nigeria is 'ranked 160 out of 177 countries on the scale of the Human Development Index (HDI)' (Poverty in Nigeria,). Poverty therefore leads many Nigerians to engage in criminal activities that makes them to be threats to various communities and nations at large.

The third one is religious fanaticism. The term, according to Hornby, is a "violent, unreasoning enthusiasm"(Hornby,1984). By this it simply mean religious claims to absoluteness. It implies that one's own religion is the best that gives assurance of salvation to man. This is the exact position of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria today. *Boko Haram* has been associated with segregate ideology and violence to humanity because of its philosophy of "hate and discrimination" against other cultures that are basically non-Islamic (Nwanaju, 2012). Religious fanaticism in Nigeria has reached a dangerous dimension as *Boko Haram*- an Islamic sect, is bent on the total annihilation of other groups in the country (David, 2012). The sect is not ready to tolerate others who do not think and feel the way they do. They believe, though wrongly, that "those who do not share their mode of worship or the doctrine of their religion were better dead than alive' (Mala, 1985).

There is also the issue of political factor. This has to do with the inordinate ambition of politicians in the country. Politics in Nigeria is taking a new shape. The average politician sees politics as a shortcut to instant wealth. Thus, they pursue it with a 'do-or-die' approach. Their major aim is to amass wealth as much as they can and save up much money to fight future elections so that they can continue to be the choice of their constituencies for political posts (Adesina, 2005). It is on record that religion is fast becoming one of the ready weapons that are often manipulated by self-seeking leaders (Adiele, 1993). With this situation, it would not be out of place to argue according to Nwanaju, that the motive of the *Boko Haram* is not really a spiritual uplift of Muslims but a craze for political leadership and domination over the people (Nwanaju, 2012). From what has been discussed above, one can see that some of the religious crises that had been experienced in Nigeria were more of political than religious. It is therefore necessary for the masses that are being used to know that those who claim to be championing their course are not without hidden motives (Adiele, 1993).

Moreover, unguarded and reckless utterances often fuel the flame of riots that usually lead to the insecurity of life and property. For the fact that Nigeria is made up of people of diverse religious backgrounds, one may not be surprised that it is a pluralist religious state. In a pluralist religious state like Nigeria, one expects that a preacher would preach the idea of the religion and leave his audience to compare with those of other religions and make their choice. However, because of the inbuilt weaknesses in a pluralist religious state, manipulators tend to cash on the sensitive nature of religion to create confusion (Adiele, 1993). Some preachers even dabble into the doctrine of other religions, distort facts and misrepresent its teaching in order to impress the audience. Many conflicts that could have been averted were experienced as a result of reckless publications and unguarded utterances. In recent time, some religious and political groups have gone to the extent of having their own newspapers and magazines through which they publish their provocative articles (Sheriki, 1993).

Furthermore, electoral manipulation is another source of hybrid violence that often leads to insecurity of life and property. Cases abound throughout the country where electoral results

were falsified and manipulated by electoral officials. For instance, the recent gubernatorial elections in the various parts of the country were alleged of been characterized by series of manipulation and other electoral malpractices. In his lamentation, the Vicar General of Catholic archdiocese of Jos, Reverend Father Cletus, condemned the political class for making the road towards hitch-free and successful elections hazardous. He was therefore disappointed that the phenomena of personal antagonism, thuggry, intolerance, character and physical assassination still feature in the country (*Nigerian Tribune,* 2006). Other similar agents of violence and insecurity are creation, location and relocation of local government secretariats. Many lives have been wasted and properties worth millions of naira had been destroyed as a result of disagreement over the location and relocation of local government secretariat. The creation of Ife East Local Government in the state of Osun in 1999 witnessed a real state of insecurity of life and property. The sanctity and respect for human life was thrown overboard. It then became the survival of the fittest.

Last but not the least is the grievances as a result of perceived marginalization. When certain group of people or community felt that they were being marginalized, either by government or by another tribe or group of people, there is possibility that conflict will come up. For instance, there have been constant violent conflicts in the Niger Delta area in Nigeria because the Ogoni people in that area felt that they were being marginalized and that they were not given fair sharing of the country's main source of wealth which are petroleum and gas. It is unfortunate that their agitation was met with the deployment of military and state security officials who not only quelled the violent reactions, but also inflicted physical pains on them (Okeke, 2012).

Towards Peaceful Conflict Management

One of the responsibilities of government in any given society is to provide good governance that will exercise power in the management of a country's economy, social, political and even crisis. However, when it seems that government cannot single handedly handle the case of various conflicts in this country and when the security operatives are unable to respond to insecurity in the country; but telling the public to find an alternative means of protecting themselves because they could not guaranteed the security of life and property (Omoni, 2020), then, there is the need to resort to other dimensions that will be of help. Among these dimensions is borrowing a leaf from the African traditional means of handling conflict situation. In fact, peace-making is a major task of indigenous religious functionaries. It is on this ground that Rweyemamu (1989) says:

> In African Traditional Religion, the peace-maker represents divine power on the one hand and social harmony on the other. In his person he expresses the divine origin of peace, a peace that is associated with the virtues of loyalty, honesty and trust in God (p.38).

However, in the observations of some writers, religion plays ambivalent role as some conflicts that seems to have other causes apart from religion still have religious undertone (Uchechukwu & P. U. Chidinma, 2015). Numerous examples of this include: the *boko haram* insurgence, Maitatsine crisis and many others in Nigeria. In the submission of Wole Soyinka, 'Religion is a social variable that should be left to private practice. It has no space in politics, development and unity'(Soyinka, 2009).

Nevertheless, these claims notwithstanding, the roles that religion, especially the indigenous one, can play in curbing insecurity in Nigeria outweighed the ambivalent ones. First among the various ways through which indigenous religion can tackle the challenge of insecurity is tolerance. Whether religious, ethnic or political groups, we need to tolerate one another. Tolerance as used in this context refers to ability of religious man, politician or man from different ethnic group to give allowance for the opinions, beliefs and practices of other people (Ayantayo,2002). The real reason for African ecumenism is simply the capacity of African Religion to tolerate and accommodate alternative religious cultures. With reference to the indigenous religion, it is apparent that Nigeria has been witnessing only Muslim/Christian conflicts since independence which gives an impression that indigenous worshippers are not part of Nigerian population(Alana,1993).In fact they are, it is only they are the most tolerant of the three religious groups in the country. In the observation of Dime (1993):

> One of the greatest virtues of Africa religion (Afrel) is its religious tolerance. There is hardly any religion in the world that teaches religious tolerance as does African religion. It teaches it not so much by precept as by practice that is, by example (p.146).

If adherents of both Islam and Christianity can emulate indigenous worshippers in the area of tolerance, then the issue of religious conflicts will soon become a forgetting issue. In the past, before the emergence of modern religions, Nigeria accommodates innumerable number of religious sects and cults such as: *Ekpo*, *Ala*, *Ifa* etc, yet there was mutual understanding.

The second way of getting out of conflict situation is through dialogue. This is exchange of opinions between people with opposing interest or points of view. Dialogue can be based on religion, culture, politics or ethnic group. One of the major characteristics of dialogue is that it encourages those involved to respect all that is good in the others and also to respect other's sincerity in the matters where they cannot agree. This has been the position of indigenous religion from the time immemorial, and it affords her the opportunity to ascertain peaceful co-existence and tolerance with other religions in Nigeria. In recognition of this, the Vatican council II (1962-1965) as cited by Mala(1985), issued a declaration pleading with all to;

> Forget the past and urges a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding for the benefit of all men and to let them, together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral value (p.15).

Dialogue therefore does not bury the conviction of people involved but openly avow them. However, lack of it often leads to conflict and war. This makes it to be popular among other means of getting conflict under control (Ogunleye, 2017).

Furthermore, establishment of committee of community leaders will be of great help in conflict management. This committee will include: Traditional rulers, chief priest, chiefs and clan heads. It is this committee that will teach the youth of any given community the moral and human value as enshrined in the religion and African culture. In traditional African society, peace is not an abstract poetic concept, but rather a practical concept. In indigenous religion of Africa, peace is conceived in relation to order, harmony and equilibrium. Thus, society is believed to be divinely established and the obligation to maintain them is religious.

The effort of traditional rulers in conflict resolution and crisis management which show them as leaders worthy of emulation was described by Malami (1989), when he said:

> Over the years whether under the British colonial rule, civilian rule after independence, or even under military rule, with the strongest weapon of coercion at its disposal, traditional rulers have been called upon and used to stabilize crisis situations (p.4).

Besides,this committee possesses the power to subject unrepentant criminals and other evil perpetrators to trial by ordeal until they will renown their criminal acts. They will also invoke curses on the would-be criminals in the community. It is therefore believed that, if this committee is established, peace, which is the goal of all moral conducts, shall be attained.

Moreover, the Press through which both religious and political people publicize their activities must be objective in discharging their duties so as not to cause confusion (Ayantayo, 2002). Before any announcement could be made on the air, it should be carefully edited since in some cases, what we see and hear often determine the way we act and react. The programs that will depict peace and African culture as embedded in indigenous religion should be encouraged and promoted. This must be manifested in their information dissemination.

Also, government at all levels should not be bias towards one religion at the expense of others. Any attempt by government to pitch its tent with a particular religion will run contrary to the provision of the 1999 constitution which states that "the government of the federation or a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion (Okoduwa, 2000). This clearly shows that Nigeria is a secular state that does not have an official religion. Besides, what happened in 1986 must not be allowed to repeat itself. In 1986, the then administration set up the National Advisory Council on Religious Affairs with membership from two of the three major religions in Nigeria namely: Islam and Christianity. It is unfortunate that the third, indigenous religion, was not represented in that all important council. It is a pity that the intolerance of the two invited religions emasculated the council and rendered it ineffective. The magnanimity of indigenous religion would have perhaps saved the council if it were represented (Dime, 1993).

Also, there must be an enabling environment for job opportunity in the country. The youth must put their hands on something useful. The *Alamajiri* (unemployed youth) in the northern parts of the country must have a rethink over their actions and they should not allow themselves to be used by selfish politicians to fuel crises. From the view point of African Traditional Setting, "an idle hand is the devil's workshop." Thus there is no room for loiterers or idlers in the Nigerian community in antiquity. It is believed that when people are gainfully employed, the menace of religious, political or ethnic conflict that often lead to insecurity of life and property will be reduced to the barest minimum.

The second to the last is the inclusion of indigenous security operatives in the security strategy of the country. These security operatives are traditional vigilante groups that see to the safety of their respective ethnic groups. Members of these groups derive their strength from the traditional religion of their localities. Prominent among these groups is *Oodua* People's Congress (OPC) and *Amotekun* which were innaugurated in the Yoruba south western region of Nigeria due to what was perceived as the failure of the Nigerian police to combat crime

(Ogunleye, 2021). They serve as security guards and try to protect the territorial integrity of their ethnic group. In the eastern part of Nigeria, "The *Bakassi* Boys" is known as the popular indigenous vigilante group. Like OPC in Yoruba land, the group tends towards total eradication of security threat in the region (*This Day*, 2005). Likewise, we have '*Egbesu* Boys' and some others with the same vision and mission.

Although, these indigenous operatives may not be adequately equipped nevertheless, it does not invalidate the original purpose of their formation; which is to see to the safety and security of their ethnic groups. Since there is room for improvement,adequate tools shall be provided as time goes on. Other African countries such as: Cote d'ivoire, Sierra-Leone, Kenya, and so on have tried it and found it effective. In the 1990s, when a crime wave overtook Cote d'ivore and the Ivorian police failed to control the situation, it was a "*Benkadi* Movement" that took up the role of people's protector. Members of this movement were *Dozo*-hunters, skilled in ritual sacrifice. It was this movement that connected the spiritual and the mundane together to allay the fear of insecurity in their country (Hellweg, 2011). Also in Sierra-Leone, it was *Poro* and *Bundu* societies that regulated social behaviour and mediated the crises of daily life for average Sierra-Leoneans (Lynda, 2012).As for the people of Kenya, the role of Mau-Mau during their trying period cannot be quickly forgotten.

Last but not the least is the invocation of deities against crimes and criminals. This is the indigenous way of meted out punishment upon criminals. It is a tested and confirmed method of addressing the unabated security challenges in many Yoruba community. God (the Supreme Being) is believed to be the chief security officer who arrests and punishes societal, religious and moral offenders. Even an ardent criminal who escapes human arrest cannot escape the arrest of God. To bring his judgment closer to people, God delegated some powers to deites who act as his deputies on the earth (Ogunleye, 2017).The judgment of these gods (such as ogun, oya, sango, etc) are royal as there is no miscarriage of judgment. This approach was first experienced in Ijare community of Ondo State, where Fulani herdsmen, in spite of several warning from open grazing on their farmland, turned deaf hear to the warning and even went ahead to intrude into the shrine of an ancient deity where they were forbidden to go. This sacrilege therefore prompted invocation of gods of the land which eventually led to the death of several cows as a result of the thunder strike (Oluwole,2021).Also, similar incidence occurred in Ondo town of the same state where about eight cows were struck to death (Wahab, 2021).

Conclusion

Although, Nigerians have been facing series of challenges ranging from economic to political yet that of insecurity, as a result of incessant violent conflicts, is the one that is threatening the existence of the country. Various operative measures that we put in place to suppress this security threat proved abortive. Having discovered that the government alone could no longer guarantee the safety of its citizens and that the various security agents are at their wit ends; this paper therefore presented alternative means of handling security matters in this country. The involvement of traditional rulers (as the chief priest and security officers of their communities), religio-cultural organizations (OPC, *Bakassi* Boys, *Egbesu* Boys etc.), invocation of God-gods against criminals and would-be criminals and other traditional means of maintaining law and order will usher in the wind of change to security matters in Nigeria. Some African countries such as Cote d'ivoire, Kenya and Sierra-Leone have done it and it

worked for them perfectly well. It is therefore recommended in this paper that Nigerians should borrow leaf from other African countries and adopt this indigenous approach in tackling their security challenges. It is believed that if this approach is adopted there will be peace and harmonious relationship in the country and the government itself will be able to deliver good governance.

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