

**RELIGION AS A PANACEA FOR CURBING CORRUPTION,  
CONFLICT AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

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**Abstract**

*Corruption, conflict and insecurity are the canker worms that are eating deep into the fabric of this nation Nigeria. It is a national problem with certain destructive tendencies, hence the need for the enthronement of religion and morality to save the nation from destruction. Religion which teaches morality plays a vital role in the social lives of individuals and society at large. This is because it deals with values, behaviours and attitude exhibited and encouraged by members of the society which enhances good human relations, peaceful co-existence and national development. Therefore religion is essential for curbing corruption, conflict and insecurity in Nigeria, because any country fused with corruption, conflict and insecurity is always accompanied with tension, anxiety and incapacitated in all aspects of national development. The removal of these enemies of man will be a big relief to every one and enhances national development. The method used in this study is historical which enabled the researcher to trace the genesis of corruption, conflict and insecurity in the nation. The work revealed that corruption, conflict and insecurity are the products of moral decadence in the society, because the absence of moral value in the lives of many Nigerians, led to corrupt practices which led to conflict and insecurity in Nigeria. Religious bodies and the government should educate the masses on good human relations in order to shun corruption, conflict and insecurity in the society.*

**KEYWORDS:** Corruption, conflict, insecurity and national development

**Introduction**

The incessant rate of corruption, conflict and insecurity in Nigeria has become a source of concern to Nigerians hence the need for the establishment of religion to save the nation from destruction. For a total stamp out of corruption, conflict and insecurity in our society, morality which is embedded in religion has to be fused into the lives of Nigerians. Conflicts in the nation are not new, because it is ever present in the life of man; it is the

responsibility of the nation and her people to constantly strive to put in place processes towards its resolution. This is because in a situation where conflict cannot be resolved fully, management of the situation becomes imperative and leads to destruction of lives, property and national insecurity. Conflicts are inevitable in any organization because it has many structures that allow two or more units or groups to share functional boundaries in achieving its set objectives. Therefore religious education will enable them to work harmoniously together which will enhance national development because conflict ruptures organizational unity, hinder good human relations and peaceful co-existence.

The unending national security threats in Nigeria have led to the militarization of the polity. This results in a gross erosion of our collective trust for one another as well as great threat on our national cohesion, integration and development. The cost of insecurity is quite high both for individual Nigerians as well as the nation. For the former it stunts personal development and interfere with his or her ability to develop his or her full potentials. The mind and energy of the average Nigerian is consumed with issues of safety and security that he or she has little energy left to contribute to Nigerian's development. The message should be clear to our government. Nigerians need a policy that is stable, peaceful and safe enough from criminal assaults, murder, chaos, tyranny and break down of authority so that the populace can face issues of development with vigor and courage. Corruption is a feature of African social, political and even religious life, with disastrous consequences. As discussed in the previous chapter, it not only impedes economic development but also increases poverty by making a few individuals richer and many poorer. Corruption is illegal everywhere in Africa, but everywhere it is woven deep into the fabric of everyday life. Although Africans know that corruption in all its forms is illegal and undesirable, it seems to have a hold on them everywhere they go. Even mortuary attendants need to be bribed to provide services. A bribe can reduce one's taxes or one's bill for water or electricity. "Even the police, who are supposed to be guardians of the law also receive bribes to obstruct the administration of justice".

According to Adukwu (2002), a morally conscious individual thinks better, acts better and is amendable to the dictates of conscience by living a worthy life in the society and refraining from such behaviour that may be considered a deviation from accepted societal norms and values. The concern for a sound moral status is occasioned by the alarming rate of decline in the moral consciousness among Nigerians. Religion plays a very vital role in the social lives of individuals and the nation at large. This is because it deals with values, behaviour and attitude exhibited and encouraged by members of the society.

### **The Concept of Religion**

According to Ubrurhe (2000) religion is the feeling of absolute dependence on a supernatural being, believe to direct the course of nature and human life. Roy (1996) defined religion as man's search for supernatural assistance in achieving a sense of security. Nmah (1998) defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices which is related to sacred things set apart or forbidden, beliefs and practices that unit one single moral community and all those who adhere to them.

### **The Concept of Corruption**

Corruption is a social phenomenon which manifests itself in various human actions such as dishonesty, selfishness, embezzlement, moral degeneration, bribery, instability and covetousness. Corruption is also the abuse of public office for private gain. Della (2003), stated that corruption is to encourage someone with power to behave in a dishonest, illegal or immoral way. Akindele (1995) defined corruption as any form of reciprocal behaviour or transaction where both the power/office holder can respectively initiate the inducement of each other by some rewards, to grant (illegal) preferential treatment or favour against the principles and interest of specific organization (or public) within the society. Obi and Obikezie (2006) defined corruption as a situation whereby government officials and private economic agents allow personal interests to override consideration of public interest.

### **The Concept of Conflict**

The concept of conflict according to Sani (2007), Conflict occurs even in the "best" of human societies. Conflict is mutual image of misunderstanding, hostile utterances, actions and responses that seek to put the interest of the other party in a disadvantaged position. Harman (2010) states that crisis is a situation that threatens the high-priority goals of the decision making unit, restrict the amount of the time available before the situation is transformed and surprises the members of the decision making unit when it occurs. Wallenstern (2011), defines conflict as the manifestation of hostile attitude in the face of conflicting interests can be between individuals, groups or states. It can also be over resources, identity, power, status or values. It has also been generally seen as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce commodity or resources at the same time. Abdumalik (2010) defines conflict as a fact of life which could become a sign of positive change. He also stressed that conflict has to do with the contesting human needs and interest, noting for instance that these conflicts can span a whole spectrum like religious, political, resource control, gender, human rights. In this context, therefore, conflicts refers to the agitation, contentions, struggle, which in most cases adopt violence as instrument of gaining advantage over the opposing party or group.

### **The Concept of Insecurity**

Hornby (2005) defines insecurity as the state of one not being safe or protected; hence, insecurity of life depicts the state of one's life not being safe as a result of some threats or negative factors. According to Beland (2005) insecurity is the state of fear or anxiety or lack of protection or inadequate freedom from danger.

### **Corruption**

Corruption also manifests it self in outright theft, match-fixing, examination fraud, kickbacks, illegal awarding of contracts and the like. In the political sphere, it manifests itself in vote rigging, the purchase and sales of votes and the falsification of election results. In fact, corruption takes so many forms that it is impossible to discuss all of them in this book. We will thus focus primarily on bribery and extortion, investigating their links to traditional culture, their effects on society and what the scriptures have to say about them.

### **The Causes of Corruption**

Corruption has thrived incessantly in Nigeria for several reasons. Osakwe (2002) enumerated some of these reasons as excessive materialism, bureaucratic bottleneck, poor leadership and non-existence of social service. For the purpose of this work, four causes of corruption are discussed, viz: materialism, poverty, poor leadership and poor attitude to work.

**Materialism:** Materialism is an ugly catalyst for the emergence of corruption in Nigeria, which leads to the incessant greed for money, power and glory. Eze (2002) stated that the urge for material acquisition is so alarming that those who have wealth become recognized in the society while the have-not are abandoned to their fate, hence many people resorted to join the bandwagon.

**Poverty:** There is a general notion that poverty is one of the major causes of corruption in Nigeria. It is upheld that a great deal of poverty, exists among Nigerians in almost every life. A handful of Nigerians can boast of three square meals a day and enjoy the basic necessities of life. Sequel to this, every one takes to corruption no matter one's own small capacity as a way of balancing inequalities. Thus, this nefarious act rightly explains the moral degeneration of this nation. On this note Okorodudu (2004) posits that the other category of poor people who also indulge in corrupt practices, do so, not only to acquire the basic needs for economic survival but they too want to break the yoke of poverty and get rich like their counter parts in the society.

**Poor Attitude to Work:** Moral decadence in the Nigeria society has led to poor attitude to work by Nigerian citizens. Most of the workers in public service are highly unpatriotic. They come late to office and handle their duties with levity. Akunyili (2013) remarked that many people who have been privileged to get jobs are not willing to work. The situation is so bad that some persons who ordinarily would have loved to establish small scale industries and provide employment for the jobless youths are discouraged due to poor attitude to work.

**Poor Leadership:** Another agonizing issue of Nigeria that has given rise to corruption is the problem of ineffective leadership. The dilemma of greed for powers, fame and glory has made some leaders to wreck havoc on the people and the society. In fact, the act of corruption is rampant with the educated and the rich who capitalize on their position to create fear and insecurity among the less privileged people thereby exposing them to all kinds of temptations leading to corruption and other vices. Thus, Omorogbe (1993) laments that injustice in any society results when "the equals are treated unequally and the unequal are treated equally". Achebe in Eze (2002) accentuated this by stating that, the trouble with Nigerians is solely failure of leadership. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian character. The Nigeria problem is unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to their responsibility or to the challenge of personal example which are hallmarks of true leadership.

## **Conflict**

Conflict is an inevitable part of process of social life. It is a continually continuing reality of social existence. Necessarily, conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceive incompatibility in either interests or values or in strategy of achieving the ends desired. For sure conflict is a strain in a relationship that goes with emotion. The higher the emotion, the high the tendency of evolving conflict intensity. According to Sani Shehu, conflict occurs even in the best of human societies. Conflict index includes mutual image of misunderstanding, hostile utterances, actions and responses that seek to put the interest(s) of the other party in a disadvantaged position.

### **The Causes of Conflict**

The Causes of conflict according to Adjaino and Asah (2006) are:

**Misunderstanding:** Misunderstanding is one of the commonest causes of conflict. Misunderstanding arises when the speaker uses words that do not mean exactly what he wants to say. It may also happen when the hearer fails to understand exactly what is spoken to him. The result is that the speaker does not get the response he expects from his hearers.

**Wrong Notion:** These are erroneous negative ideas one has against another person. The immediate result is doubt and distrust of whatever the person does or says, thus reading other meaning and intention to it. Whenever it happens, there is always a sectional conflict. This is what has been happening in Nigeria since independence in 1960. The north and the south have always been suspecting each other, while the Ibos and the Yorubas do same to each other.

**Greed:** According to Adjaino and Asah (2006), greed is the urge to have everything. It is a strong acquisitive spirit to have more and more. There is no end to the desire to have, such a person inevitably encroaches on the rights of others in their economic activities. For example, he could dispossess people of their properties. This results in a conflict. The conflict could be violent and bloody and spread to the whole nation.

**Dishonesty:** Dishonesty is not being true to an agreement, the practice of cheating, deceiving and intentionally misleading. When the person who suffers from the dishonest acts discovers it, he has cause not only to be suspicious of the dishonest person but also to hate him. The eventual result is conflict and break of relationship.

### **Insecurity**

Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. This has made national security threat to be a major issue for the government and has prompted huge allocation of the national budget to security. In order to ameliorate the incidence of crime, the Federal government has embarked on criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011. Installation of computer-based close circuit television cameras

(CCTU) in some parts of the country, enhancement of surveillance as well as investigation of criminal related offences, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Azazi, 2011). Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high. In addition, Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global peace Index (GPI, 2012), signifying a worsened state of insecurity in the country.

## **The Causes of Insecurity**

### **Boko Haram Crisis**

Nwagboso (2012) stated that, one of the major security challenges in Nigeria which has adversely affected the Nigerian economy is the activities of Boko Haram group. The term 'Boko Haram' is derived from Hausa word 'Boko' meaning 'Animist', and the Arabic word Haram means 'sin' or 'forbidden' (Olughode, 2010). The Boko Haram is a controversial Nigerian Militant Islamist group that seeks the imposition of Sharia law in the northern states of Nigeria. The group opposes not only western education, but western culture and modern science.

The activities of the Boko Haram group constitute serious security challenges in the contemporary Nigerian State. The activities of members of this group have raised critical questions among investors on the safety of their investments in Nigeria. This ranges from killing of innocent Nigerians, raping of women, to bombing of major cities and police stations in the northern part of Nigeria, particularly, Borno, Kano, Bauchi, Niger, Yobe, Adamawa, Abuja, among others. On 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, Chibok was attacked government properties were destroyed and the only girls' secondary school was attacked. 16 people were killed or missing and 234 female students kidnapped. The Boko Haram militants said they would treat them as slaves as part of the "war booty". On 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, two bombs exploded at a crowded bus station in Abuja, Nigeria, killing at least 90 people and injuring more than 200.

On 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2014 – A car bomb exploded killing at least 19 people and injured at least 60 in the same area of Abuja. On 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 – Boko Haram attacked the twin towns of Gamboru and Ngala in Borno State, Nigeria. They started shooting in a busy market place, set houses on fire and gunned down anyone who tried to flee. The people that died during the episode were 336. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 2014 – Kano Suicide car bomb killed five people. On 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2014 – 28 Civilians were killed, 97 kidnapped, men and boys, were attacked in villages of Borno State and many homes were touched in the raid. As a result, the criminal and unwholesome acts of the Boko Haram group has not only made Borno, Abuja, Kano, Jos, Gombe, among others, cities of fear but also made Nigeria unsafe for investors and tourists.

### **Socio-Economic Condition**

According to Nwosu (2009), one of the factors that promote violent crimes in Nigeria is the socio-economic order that sustains widespread poverty and unemployment of youths in Nigeria. Moreover he stressed that the environment that creates a tiny minority in obscene

wealth and the larger majority wallowing in abject poverty and degradation cannot but be a breeding ground for ill-feelings, and suicidal instincts. Adding that, a socio-economic system that creates a great wide gulf between the have and the have-nots cannot but become a nurturing ground for evil acts as evident in Nigeria today. Ekpeyong (n.d) stated that socio-economic order that promotes materialism as the prime value of the society no doubt fosters upsurge of crime as is the case with Nigeria. Against this backdrop nation that operates socio-economic order that fosters wealth accumulation by the political class at the expense of equity, productivity, justice, fair play and respect for human rights of the citizens as well as rule of law must sooner or later become a brigandine of violent conflict and instability.

### **Government Poor Attitude to Crime Control**

According to Ajah (2009) government poor attitude to crime control is another reason while violent crimes have remained on the increase in Nigeria, noting that Nigeria has not been blessed with good leaders who are committed to fighting crime by ensuring that full weight of the law are employed on law offenders. He stressed that our government no longer pays attention to the primary functions of providing security, neither do they listen to the plight of the poor masses. Commenting on government poor attitude to crime prevention and control, Umeagbalasi (2011) posits that it is unfortunate that in some cases when real perpetrators are arrested, they are hurriedly released at the instance of "orders from above". Amaefule (2010) opined that one of the factors responsible for the growth of violent crimes like kidnapping in Nigeria is due to the failure or poor attitude of the government to address the problem when it was evolving, noting that when the government failed to tackle the challenges that it faced, the crime grew into larger proportions. What this translates is that the government in most cases lacks the will to deal decisively with insecurity challenges in the nation, because of their overt and covert interest. As a result justice is not only delayed but in most cases denied as criminals go about having a field day in the business of crime.

### **Collaboration with Criminals**

Amaefule (2010) asserts that another major factor that promotes insecurity in Nigeria is the activities of collaborators. The situation where some members of national security agencies like the Nigeria Police collaborate with kidnapers and armed robbers with whom they share their ransom, cannot but foster insecurity in the country. It is most worrisome to hear the police advice some victims of kidnap to cooperate with kidnapers by paying the demanded sum instead of helping victims to get kidnapers arrested and handed over to relevant authorities for adequate punishment. In his contribution, Adesina (2009) posits that the increasing atrocious crime called kidnapping in Nigeria has once again brought to fore the allegation of complicity of some members of police force with criminals to aid and abate violent crimes.

### **Weak Security System**

Achumba (2013) posited that weak security system results from inadequate equipment for the security arm of government, both in weaponry and training. This is in addition to poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel assigned to

deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment in handling the situations in a way to prevent them from occurring. And even when these exist some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people, rather than the nation. Thus, instead of being national watch dogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from harm by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government efforts, by supporting and fueling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law.

#### **Loss of Socio-cultural and Communal value System**

Clifford (2009) states that the traditional value system of the Nigerian society like most African societies is characterized by such endearing features as collectivism, loyalty to authority and community, truthfulness, honesty, hard work, tolerance, love for others, mutual harmony, peaceful coexistence and identification of individuals with one another. Other distinctive features of Nigerian traditional society are abhorrence for theft. Stealing was considered extremely disgraceful and lives were also highly valued. All of these values which made society secured and safe have all gradually been thrown away and lost. New values have taken over their place over the years, with the so called 'modernity and civilization'. All our endearing values and morals have been traded off for western values.

#### **Porous Borders**

Achumba (2013) asserted that, one major factor which has enhanced insecurity in Nigeria is the porous frontiers of the country, where individual movements are largely unchecked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms (Hazen and Horner, 2007). Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa (Edeko, 2011). Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwanted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as Republic of Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin. These migrants which are mostly young men are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country.

#### **Unemployment/Poverty**

As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. Nwagboso (2012) argued that the failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in the country.

#### **The Effects of Corruption, Conflict and Insecurity**

Corruption, conflict and insecurity are brothers, because more often than not, they go together, whenever corruption strives, the social conflict and security of that society is endangered and shaken to its foundation as is right now happening in Nigeria. the effects of these vices are as follows:



- I. Obiegbu (2006) stated that corruption; conflict and insecurity threaten the solidarity and progress of any nation. Therefore, any form of these vices will definitely have great consequences on the Nigerian populace because lives are lost, properties destroyed and manpower wasted.
- ii. Umoru (2013) opined that the effect of corruption, conflict and insecurity in our country hinder the growth and international relations. A typical example of this was seen with the Arsenal football club who wanted to come down to Nigeria for a play. These people after hearing of the incessant bombing, kidnapping and insurgency refused to come. In line with this, some of our citizenry in Diaspora who would have loved to come and develop the Nation refused to come due to the security peril.
- iii. Corruption, conflict and insecurity of lives could lead to political instability which may likely prevent foreign investors in the economy of the nation. This weakens the already strained unity of the federation. It also brings distrust and disharmony between one another.
- iv. Corruption, conflict and insecurity could also lead to high mortality rate which causes under development for the Nation and the result of this is greatly seen among the youths and children as they are still being nurtured and this could either affect them positively or negatively.
- v. Corruption, conflict and insecurity have been yielding a negative result on the lives of Nigerians. It goes along way in hindering the peaceful co-existence that has united us as a country, bring about awesome and dwindling of the nation's economy and public image Oriahi, (2013).
- vi. Matters of corruption, conflict and insecurity are topical issues in today's Nigeria. Life has always been threatened in our country. It is open to all kinds of danger according to Eme (2011) the effects of vices are outlined below:

Social dislocation and population displacement heightens citizenship question and encourages hostility between "indigenes" and "settlers", dishumanization of women, children and the men especially in areas where hunger, poverty rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war in the nation. As a result of governance deficit, security agencies inefficiency and corruption, there is atmosphere of political insecurity and instability including declining confidence in political leadership and apprehension about the system.

### **The Role of Religion in Curbing Corruption, Conflict and Insecurity**

- I. Religion promotes societal development by inculcating essential values which

humanity in general consider as important to the enhancement of order, peace, progress, happiness, protection of the weak and the invalid, social cohesion and solidarity.

- ii. According to Ubrurhe (2000), Religion helps to curb corruption, conflict and insecurity because it patterns man's behaviour in agreement with the societal norms and values which promotes societal stability.
- iii. Religion binds people together through sanctions which include scolding, criticism, ostracism, excommunication and final judgement of God and its attendant consequences. As a result of these, people are forced to fulfill societal obligations in accordance with accepted norms and values.
- iv. Adogbo (2000), states that Religion inculcates justice, truth, equity, fidelity sanctity of life into its adherents which helps to fight against corruption, conflict and insecurity in the society and promote national development.

### **Conclusion**

Nigeria as a nation has suffered and is still suffering economic woes as a result of corruption, conflict and insecurity. Corruption deters development. As a result of corruption, most of our infrastructural development has suffered neglect due to wrong awards of contracts, over billing or substandard jobs. Investors are scared away because of the hostile environment brought about by unabated corruption.

Corruption too, which has eaten deep into the educational sector had generated a large number of unemployed youths who had taken to all sorts of crimes. The same generation of youths who have poor background in education and have no place where they can be gainfully employed, make themselves readily available for recruitment to the local militia, either to fight on the side of religion or ethnicity. Therefore, for Nigeria to be developed, Nigerians will understand and appreciate the efficacy and importance of religion in the society since religion plays a very critical role in social lives of the people by inculcating morals, self discipline, respect and sensitivity to others with reference to those whose faiths and beliefs are different from theirs. A morally conscientious man will not be involved in these variables. Thus, for Nigeria to be developed, she must say no to corruption, as corruption accelerates conflicts and insecurity which are inimical to national development.

### **Recommendations**

The cost of curbing corruption, conflict and insecurity are quite high both for individuals as well as the nation. They disrupt personal development and interfere with his or her ability to develop his or her full potentials which as well hinders national development. The mind and energy of the average Nigerian is consumed with issues of corruption, conflict, safety and security that he or she has little energy left to contribute to Nigerian's development. Nigerians need a country that is stable, peaceful and safe enough from

criminal assaults, murder, chaos, tyranny and breakdown of authority so that the populace can face issue of development with vigour and courage. To achieve it or attain such height, the under listed recommendations are suggested.

- The religious bodies and government should liase together in the inculcation of good moral into the populace in order to enhance security and eradicate corruption and conflict in the society.
- Government should lay more emphasis on the teaching of religious education at all levels of education to inculcate good moral into the youths to reduce corruption, conflict and insecurity in the society and enhances national development.
- Religious bodies and the government should educate the masses on good human relations in order to shun corruption, conflict and insecurity in the society.
- Governments at all levels should ensure that rising poverty indices be reversed and a realistic social security programme be pursued and systematically implemented to ensure that the populace meet their basic needs.
- There should be a re-organization of the security agencies that will take them through a new reorientation via re-training of security agents. People should be more security conscious, share information with the police and other security agencies. The populace should not leave security matters to security personnel only. All should be involved in security information and data gathering. Moreover, efforts should be put in crime prevention than control
- Furthermore, the government should increase the size of Nigeria's security agencies, empower and motivate them very well and strengthen neighbourhood watch. Government should equally fix social infrastructures - roads, street lights, schools and skill acquisition centers.
- Apart from the above, there is no gain saying that lack of youth empowerment /programmes contribute immensely to social insecurity in the nation. The government should create programmes that would empower our youths technically. This will enable them to be self-reliant and avert their minds from criminal tendencies.
- The removal of these threats and enemies of man should be the number one programme of the government and religious bodies in Nigeria.
- Finally, the practice of the rule of law, constitutionalism, avoidance of undue retrenchment of workers, payment of salary and allowances as at when due.

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