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SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE AS A PANACEA FOR MAINTAINING PEACE AND SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper looked into the security situation in Nigeria and blamed the present state of security in Nigeria on our attitude towards national issues. It was observed that one of the things that will help us as a nation to overcome our security related challenges is attitudinal change towards national issues. The paper sees scientific attitudes of honesty, objectivity, open-mindedness, creativity, logical thinking and suspended judgement as personality traits that can help in character modification.

Introduction

Thirty six students were killed in Mubi, Adamawa State by unknown gun men, this was the news headline in some of the news paper (The Nation, Guardian, Vanguard, Punch, Leadership and Daily Trust News Paper of 5th October 2012. This type of news has become Common in Nigeria in recent times. If it is not unknown gunmen attacking a police station it is bomb blast in churches or prisoners set free by unknown gunmen (Guardian, Punch 21 August, 2012 Tuesday). The problem has so bedevilled the nation that there is insecurity in the air. Many people do not know what to do, some have simply resigned to fate. In some areas one can only count himself or herself lucky to be alive every day he or she goes to bed and wakes up in the morning. As if these problems are not enough, the nation has to battle with the problem of flood which according to Punch newspaper (1st October, 2012) has claimed 146 lives with thousands of people rendered homeless and acres of farm lands destroyed. Nigeria now has not only insecurity to lives and property to battle with but food insecurity as well.

Is Nigeria at war? The answer to this question is no, for war involves two enemies but can one say there is peace? No, given the meaning of peace which according to Webster's new encyclopaedia dictionary is a state of tranquillity or quiet, a freedom from civil disturbances or a state of security or order within a community provide for by law or custom. Nigeria is thus neither at peace nor at war. It is very bad to be caught in between that is why the Holy Bible in

Revelation 3:15 says because you are neither cold nor hot I will spew you out of my mouth. This verse explains clearly that the situation we find ourselves in is not a pleasant one at all. It has not always been like this in Nigeria.

Before the Nigerian civil war (between 1967 and 1970) and immediately after the war, Nigerians were living in peace. One had the opportunity of living in any part of the country without molestation or discrimination. Workers were transferred from one place to the other and they went without much ado. Integrity and hard work were acknowledged and encouraged. According to Eso (2009) our failings are products of national mind set and acceptance of less than stellar performance. In addition Chukwu and Duguryil (2010) observed that Nigerians started celebrating those who have 'made it' (the money bags) at the expense of integrity and hard work. This problem gave birth to militancy, armed robbery, prostitution and other related vices. These are obvious indices of insecurity in Nigeria. These problems did not come overnight therefore it will also take a period of time to get them solved. There should be a deliberate and conscious effort towards changing the attitude of Nigerians. This paper therefore looks at the development of scientific attitude as a means of changing the attitude of Nigerians and hence brings about peace and security in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Security Situation

Security, according to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, is the state in which lives and properties in a given community are free from problems, threats, or challenges. Unfortunately, Nigeria has faced persistent crises for more than a decade, with various causes differing in nature and location.

Causes and Cases of Insecurity in Nigeria

Niger Delta Crises

Idialu (2011) identified several security crises in the Niger Delta region, including:

- The conflict between the Ogoni and the oil infrastructure (1992-1995), which led to the deaths of over 2,000 civilians and the arrest and execution of nine Ogoni activists.
- The crises slowed down oil extraction and escalated military repression in the region.
- The 1997 Ijaw-Itsekiri conflict and the Warri crises of 1998-1999.
- The 2003-2004 withdrawal of oil companies from Ijaw territory due to increased hostilities.

Additionally, over a hundred militant groups with sophisticated weapons emerged in Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states, adopting names such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Ice-lander, Green-landers, KKK, and Vultures. These groups claimed to be fighting for their rights due to government neglect.

Religious Crises

Religious crises have also plagued Nigeria, leading to numerous reprisals. Micheale (2011) documented 27 major religious crises from 1980 to 2005, including:

- The Kaduna mayhem following the introduction of Sharia law (February 2000).
- The religious riot in Kano (September 16, 2001).
- The lawlessness in Zaki Biam, which led to military intervention and the loss of many lives.

Ethnic Crises

Nigeria has also suffered from ethnic conflicts, such as:

- The Tiv versus Jukun conflicts.
- The Tiv versus Fulani clashes.

Boko Haram Insurgency

One of the most disturbing security threats is the Boko Haram insurgency, which has claimed thousands of lives and destroyed numerous properties, including churches, police stations, banks, and schools. The nature of Boko Haram's operations remains complex, raising questions about whether it is a religious, ethnic, militant, or political problem. Despite various government efforts, no significant progress has been made in stopping the sect's activities.

Environmental and Food Security Threats

Beyond human-made security threats, Nigeria faces natural disasters such as floods, which have claimed thousands of lives, livestock, and hectares of farmland. Despite warnings from national and international agencies, little action was taken to mitigate the effects. This highlights a larger problem: the attitude of Nigerians and their leaders towards crucial national issues.

Attitude and National Security

Hornby (2000) defines attitude as a way of feeling, thinking, or behaving. According to Chukwu (2010), attitude influences how individuals respond to situations. Unfortunately, Nigerians tend to exhibit negative attitudes towards national issues, often appearing indifferent or complacent.

Chukwu and Duguryil (2011) argue that Nigerians are aware of the bankruptcy in national values and attitudes, which has led to numerous social ills. Poor attitudes toward governance and public resources contribute to problems such as:

- The failure to execute national projects effectively.
- Neglect of public infrastructure (e.g., roads, schools, hospitals).
- Nonchalance towards corruption, dishonesty, and integrity.

This mindset has fueled social vices such as armed robbery and kidnapping, where criminals hold victims captive for ransom, often ordering families not to involve the police for fear of execution. Despite some police interventions, fear prevents many from speaking out.

The Need for a Scientific Attitude

To overcome these challenges, Nigerians must embrace a scientific attitude, which includes:

1. **Curiosity** – A desire to understand and solve national issues.
2. **Rationality** – Making informed, logical decisions rather than following tribal or religious biases.
3. **Open-mindedness & Suspended Judgment** – Analyzing situations critically before making decisions.
4. **Honesty & Integrity** – Rejecting corruption and embracing transparency in all dealings.
5. **Humility** – Accepting responsibility and striving for genuine progress.

Conclusion

In our quest for national peace and security, the place of attitude particularly scientific attitude must not be neglected. It is in this light that the authors of this paper are advocating for the internalization of this important but neglected personality traits by Nigerians.

Recommendations

To achieve national peace and security, Nigerians must prioritize attitudinal change, particularly embracing scientific attitudes. The following recommendations should be considered:

1. There should be a national reorientation of our value system, where integrity and hard work are rewarded.
2. Good behavior should be encouraged, and bad behavior should be publicly punished.
3. Scientific personality traits should be included in the school curriculum at all levels, extending beyond science subjects to all fields of study.

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