

CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF MANAGEMENT OF SECURITY ISSUES IN A MULTI ETHNIC COMMUNITY.

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PAPER PRESENTED A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON SECURITY IN A MULTI ETHNIC CITY. NOV.05, 2014

SPONSORED BY KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG

CONFERENCE CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA

A. INTRODUCTION

According to George Carlin, the paradox of our time in history is that we taller buildings but shorter tempers; wider freeways but narrower viewpoints...We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgment;...We have conquered the atom but not our prejudice.

1. There are obvious contradictions involving the trajectories of human development as it relates to the positive and explosive development in scientific knowledge only matched by growing insecurity and escalation of violence. There is increasing tension between communities as a result of growing competition for scarce resources and opportunities. This has limited the ability of nations in performing their constitutional roles of providing a secure and safe environment for citizens.
2. Globalization has also led to an emerging gap between expectations of citizens and the capacity for nations to meet such expectations.
3. There is a global convergence in terms of how people conceive of the good life and well-being and the capacity of nations to approximate these expectations.
4. In addition, media rhetoric and narrative appears to foster a sense of entitlement that fuels the demand for justice and equity, often legitimizing a resort to violent agitation and insurgency.
5. Globalization and the ICTs has led to the universalization and standardization of the ideology and methodology of violence, as well as the democratization of access to tools of violence. The consequence of this on security in developing nations and transition economies and polities which are still grappling with

painful economic restructuring and democratization is beyond imagination. One thing that is clear is that globalization has standardized human expectations for living, safety and security but the realities on ground in transition economies/polities is beyond the rational calibration of the ordinary citizen. This has tended to open room for violent behaviour, xenophobia and rivalry between communities in search for opportunities.

B. THE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT

The Nigerian environment has been characterized in recent times by escalation in kidnapping, violent robberies, interethnic and communal wars, clashes between Fulani Herdsmen and local communities in several states; ethnic clashes in urban markets; Boko Haram terrorism, violent ethnic nationalism among other things.

CULTURAL PLURALISM IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has 250 ethnic groups and over 500 languages. Many have blamed ethnic diversity for the slow pace of development and increasing security challenges. In fact, the problems of corruption, poor leadership and differentiated citizenship have been linked with the absence of national identity. There are three converging position that emerge from the discourse on the effect of pluralism on national integration in Nigeria. Taking pluralism in the narrow sense of ethnicity as it is applied in the discourse; there are those who avow that ethnic diversity underlies the problem of Nigeria-state function. A second group emphasizes the role of leadership (Olukoju 2013) while a third avers that competition for resources by the elite is to be blamed (Abubakar 2003). Part of the leadership crisis is given an intellectual outlook in terms of the quality of and character of the educated elite and their failure to generate the ideology for nationalism (Ayandele 1974).

The idea is espoused in the literature that ethnic and national identities are opposed, the one limiting the other, being both territorially organised (Ifidon 2003: 171). As a result, it impedes consensus building and provides the framework for separatist politics. Odugbemi (2001:678) recognizes “the absence of elite consensus on power sharing and cohabitation” as underlying the revival of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria. According to Ifidon (2003a:23), the narratives and discourses on the Nigerian state project shows two opposing mentalities. “One is aspiration and the other is exasperation”. The latter being by far the dominant mind-set, often assumes a depressing and apocalyptic tenor. The mentality of aspiration is historically generalized in pre-independence activism.

Crawford Young (1979) affirms that cultural pluralism is a modern phenomenon, which has been, catalysed by urbanization, communications, and education and with it the spread of literacy and the growth of the middle class. Whereas, urbanization created multilingual urban centres and thereby necessary conditions for bilingualism,

communication via print and electronic media facilitated the articulation of the ideology of cultural pluralism and ethnic identity. Education and literacy facilitate the emergence of cultural entrepreneurs and ideologues thereby enhancing their capacity to solidarize and negotiate relevance in the larger political entity. The kind of identity that emerges from particular pluralistic society is a function of historical forces and the prevailing milieu. There is clear evidence that “economic deterioration exacerbates ethnic tensions as reduced resources feed ethnic competition over their distribution.”

In addition, the political environment and history play critical roles. Centralization of polity creates the need for representative allocation of opportunities. The idea of quota system, zoning and federal character in Nigeria is symptomatic of this situation. Another problem is the tendency to create an inefficient, over bloated bureaucracy, promote mediocrity. This undermines the state whose primary focus is to balance representation at all levels notwithstanding competence and capacity.

SEGREGATIVE STRUCTURES

Apart from the above, the following are symptomatic of segregation in Nigeria’s communities.

1. Segregated Urban settlement patterns
2. Segregated trades and specializations. Certain professions are dominated and protected by particular ethnic groups. The apprenticeship process is cultural and therefore protected against outsiders as well as the credit system that drives the businesses.
3. Opportunities of leadership in trades are similarly owned by controlling ethnic groups.
4. Problem of differentiated citizenship limits the feeling of acceptance and promotes disintegration. The differentiation of citizenship along the indigene-settler bifurcation exerts a lot of pressure on nationalism and notional identity while reinforcing ethnicity and fuelling suspicion. This is because, since access and participation all levels is based on ethnicity, the value of civic citizenship is compromised. You are, first and foremost, a member of your ethnic group and become a Nigerian because you are either Yoruba, Igbo or Hausa. You cannot be both a Yoruba and a Nigerian. This creates a severe challenge to integration and security.
5. Religion plays a crucial role in segregation. Places of worship are largely representative of ethnicities and leadership positions are distributed on the basis of alignment with the predominating ethnic group.
6. Similarly, the schools are increasingly segregated along religious lines. The collapse of the public school system has meant that the segregated private school system is playing a more critical role as most of the emerging elites are products of this system. This paints a gloomy picture for the future.

C. APPROACH TO SECURITY MANAGHEMENT

The above shows clearly that there are structural, systemic and political issues involved. Some are clearly long term and others can be engaged immediately. Obviously, there is a need for new modes of thinking, new conceptual frameworks for integrating historical, synchronic and multidimensional dynamics of security in emerging democracies and transition economies. Certain issues appear readily obvious. In the interim;

- i. we need to find ways to democratize participation in the discourse and narratives of security.
- ii. We must develop a framework for integrating indigenous knowledge and practices into the security architecture in a non-emblematic, non-patronizing way.
- iii. More important is the need to develop viable local indicators and predictors of security in addition to developing the capacity to document and interpret palpable evidence and prognostics.

The idea is to find an opportunity to explore relevant local information and knowledge resources that may serve as indicators in the security barometer. Before we can do this however, we need to incorporate certain information parameters into the population census. These are information relating to (a) settlement patterns, (b) language use patterns, (c) intermarriages, (d) trade participation and specialization, (e) membership distribution in associations, (f) growth and prevalence of ethnic associations, (g) diversity in trade groups, cooperative associations, neighbourhood associations, social clubs, etc.

The above will enable one predict trends and understand the levels of integration at any point in time. More integration will lead to better security and development. Less integration will predict the opposite. Governments can put policies in place to encourage integration without necessarily disrupting the rights of individuals. Urban planning and distribution of lands and housing can benefit from this as much as deliberate efforts to improve diversity in trades. We cannot discuss specific details here.

D. A NEED FOR SECURITY LITERACY

The concept of security literacy is explored in the environment of the increasing need for awareness. This is taken outside the ambit of formal structures to the more subtle informal opportunities provided in the local common space and experience for community education and shared responsibility. This should be conceptualised in terms of traditional narratives with relevance to security and blended with a methodology deployed in negotiating and bargaining for security equilibrium. This should also involve the establishing of parameters and procedures for engagement, negotiation and lawful conduct in a way that speaks to the culture and worldview of the people.

E. HOW THEN SHOULD WE ENGAGE THE MANAGEMENT OF SECURITY IN A MULTI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY?

SHORT TERM AND LONG TERM

- I. Democratic and representative participation. All significant demographic cultural groups should be part of the security advisory and information dissemination network. Participation should not be determined by politics and should be based on leadership of various groups.
- II. Political representation in the local government; creating a non-geographical constituency for political representation by settlers.
- III. Neighbourhood registers of residents
- IV. Multi-ethnic events such as arts festivals and carnivals to showcase diversity
- V. Awards ceremonies, honours and recognitions that highlight contributions of diverse ethnic groups and personalities to local economy and social wellbeing of communities
- VI. Facilitating culturally-branded businesses such as restaurants for awareness of value of diversity
- VII. Branding ethnic neighbourhoods for tourism, preserving historical sites and contributions of diverse groups to the growth of the community.
- VIII. Facilitating the democratization of trade groups and incentivizing the opening up of apprenticeship
- IX. Recognizing and giving equal treatment to spouses of indigenes to encourage integration.

CONCLUSION

Security management in any multi-ethnic community should be based on a clear understanding of the prevailing socio-political currents and a clear analysis of the level of integration. The diverse groups should be integrated into the formal and informal security architecture by drawing on the legitimate leadership and incentivizing participation of cultural entrepreneurs in the security agenda. There are predictors of integration in the intermarriage rates and language use patterns, diversity in the school system, trade practices and political participation. It therefore means that a good research unit for security related research and good data collection and management is required for discovering trends, predicting conflicts and managing crisis. We need to develop a framework for harnessing crowd wisdom and adopting a holistic approach to managing security on a long and short term basis. What is clear is that the current emergency model and patronizing as well as publicity driven approach are not effective on a long and short term basis. They are opinion driven, are often effective on a one-time basis and lack a structure for harnessing institutional memory and wisdom of the crowd.