Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria and the Need for Moral and Political Solutions

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Abstract
There is no doubt that the world is agog with differing and varied religious and ethnic militias that are compelling on many fronts, some of them with plausible ideological, political and mostly economic drives. This has drawn a wedge between different segments of the world and has also created tensions, strife, death and ultimate chaos that makes the world a very dicey place to live in. Obviously, as a segment of the world, Nigeria cannot be insulated from these combustible forces that have courage to drive the world to the very edge of the precipice. Violence in all ramifications, mostly from religious and ethnic parameters, has leAft the country tethering on a knife edge that leaves a macabre spectre across the horizon. In such a scenario, development, in all its ramifications, becomes arrested and the very survival of the nation becomes seriously imperiled. From the perspective of the felt need for peace and harmonious existence, this work attempts to prescribe some moral and socio-political solutions in order to control, if not completely eradicate, the ones that are already full-blown; while others could be nip in the bud. This option is two-fold: in the first place, it is offered because every problem must get solutions, and in the second place, it is expected, though novel, but that the moral and socio-political solutions would work where other options had failed to yield the desired result.
Keywords: Ethnicity in Nigeria, Violence in Nigeria, Militias in Nigeria, Corruption, *Boko Haram.*

Introduction
It is estimated that Nigeria is made up of about 250 ethnic groups that could also be called nationalities, though there are varying estimates: for Coleman (1958), there are 248 ethnic groups in Nigeria; Murdock (1975) pegs it at 62; Gandonu (1978) estimates 161; Odetola (1978) puts it at 143; while Otite (1990) reckons 374 ethnic groups. At any rate, each of these groups does not want to cower before anyone or play a second fiddle in a large forte that is the country. They compete with each other for limited resources and political spaces that are few and far between. This is bound to create tension; which is quite normal in every human society, since, according to a British philosopher, C. J. Warnock, the human condition is such that things are always liable to go awry. People will always strive to compete with each other for limited resources and power, which is not helped by limited sympathy, rationality and knowledge (Oguejiofor, 2007:7). The Nigeria situation is itself compounded by ethno-religious undercurrents that have imperiled the very survival of the country as a single entity. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States of America and many others have even predicted that Nigeria will disintegrate by 2015. Thus, some political analysts are contemplating if Nigeria will still remain one and the same by the end of 2015. This extreme speculation is occasioned by the rampant violence carried out by extremists and insurgents in Nigeria.

Similarly, the country is roughly divided between Islam and Christianity; with Islam being practiced mostly in the northern part of the country and Christianity predominant in the south. These two religions have not taken to each other in the best term of relationship, with Islam being obviously the most unaccommodating. These religions, together with different ethnic groups, have raised militias to protect their real and imagined interests. Unfortunately, though also regrettably, these militias are well oiled to the extent that they become parallel security outfits and are even better armed to the teeth than the state security details. What is even baffling to the sane mind is that they operate with near impunity, and for some dubious political expediency, they are being treated with near levity and kid gloves. As a result, they have brought in their wake, tears, internal displacement of citizens who have helplessly become wandering refugees in their homeland.

Death and a general atmosphere of fear have pervaded the whole land. The country is now lumped in one fell swoop, alongside others failing and failed states like Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, etc. This makes the country a precarious place to live and a dangerous place to invent. Bismarck seems to understand the definition of bastardized egoism that characterizes ethnicity in Nigeria when he bluntly declares that "there is no altruism among nations and that modern issues are to be decided not by votes and rhetorics, but by blood and iron" (Durant, 1961:302).

Ethnicity and Religion in the Context of Nigeria
In his path-finding work, Nnoli (1978:5) defines ethnicity as a complex social phenomenon that defines and delineates the interactions among members of different ethnic groups. By ethnic groups, Nnoli means social

formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries which includes but not limited to race, colour, nation, culture, gender, religion and language. But it should be added that in Nigeria relevant communal factors basically included religion and language; these two factors are the most crucial variables.

From Nnoli's point of view, ethnicity entails both the subjective and objective dimensions of ethnic behavior. This means, when it is subjective it becomes attitudinal in form and perceptual in content. And when it is objective, it is behavioural in form and conflictual in context. Consequently, ethnicity exists only within a political society consisting of diverse groups. According to John (2006:198), ethnicity is a concept and attitude characterized by a common consciousness of being one in relation to the other relevant ethnic groups.

Ethnicity, according to Chogugudza (2011:1), is a shared cultural identity involving similar practices, initiations, beliefs and linguistic features passed over from one generation to another. He further notes that in Africa today, and indeed elsewhere in the developing world, issues of ethnicity and identity continue to be of great importance in politics and other aspects of life. It is because of the profundity of the phenomenon of ethnicity that Umezinwa declares that any sincere discussion on Nigerian politics must take into cognizance the question of ethnicity (Oguejiofor, 2004:218). At the peak of nationalism in Nigeria, ethnic difference were downplayed as all efforts were geared towards an ideology that extolled national unity in diversity against foreign oppressors – the colonialists. However, it was not long after the exit of the colonial governments and the attainment of independence before ethnic differences began to build up and subsequently brought the nascent attempt at democratic government to their knees. Thus, it took Nigeria only six years from the exit of the colonial government before ethnic differences plunged the country into a bloody civil war. (John and Darty, 2012:330). Atofarati (2011:1) is of the view that ethnocentrism had been engendering conflicts and causing political instability in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, ethnic groups have become centrifugal forces that threaten the existence of the nation-state. Apart from triggering off internal strife among the ethnic groups in the state at the least provocation, the subtle hand of ethnocentrism often makes it to look rational, wise and sensible when one aspires to put ethnic interests first in the distribution of benefits of social cooperation. A clear instance is when an ethic group throws its support behind a public office seeker merely because he or she is their kiths and kins. In such an instance, ethnic group solidarity and interest engulf a larger collective interest; then it is not surprising when we witness all sorts of practices aimed at manipulating the political process and institutions merely for ethnic interests (John and Darty, 2012:33).

But ethnicity itself is not a negative concept as such, because it is not immoral that one is born into a certain ethnic group, with a common history, language and ancestry. It is not immoral for one to have or share feelings of oneness and belongingness with others. Where the problem lies is when such ethnic loyalties are used against those that do not belong to the same ethnic group. This is where ethnicity poses a threat to nation building and political development – when a people are unable to transcend the narrow confines of ethnicity and embrace the other person without any form of ethnic discrimination. In the words of Barack Obama (2011: 6), "we all have many identities of tribe and ethnicity; of religion and nationality. But defining oneself in opposition to someone who belongs to a different tribe, or who worships a different prophet, has no place in the 21st-centuary".

Nigeria's diversity should be a source of strength, not a cause for division. Nigeria is yet to make much headway in the task of nation building and fruitful political development. Ethnic differences frequently lead to instability and conflicts which are disruptive to any meaningful political development. It is an unassailable fact that as humans, we all share some similarities and differences. This is why in spite of the fact that we all share in the same humanity, we also have differences in race, colour, nationality, gender, religion, education, sexual orientation, social class and status, political affiliation and ethnicity to mention but a few. Just as our similarities have a way of pulling those who share in them together, giving them a feeling of belonging, affection, safety and security; our differences too, when left unchecked, have a way of inciting feelings of distrust, hatred, insecurity and suspicion against those that do not belong to or have the same qualities we possess. It is in this sense that human differences have the propensity to degenerate into deep and enduring conflicts that are inimical to and disruptive of the process of human development. Such an explanation as this, can be given as the failure of political development in Nigeria whose political development has been mired by internecine conflicts and struggle for power, political domination, marginalization and in some worse cases, genocidal wars.

Nigeria is multi-ethnic owing to the circumstance of her formation. In the task of development and nation building, the goodwill of all those involved must be solicited. This is why national unity is necessary for political stability and development in Nigeria with over two hundred and fifty of her ethnic groups. But the question is: does the mere fact of ethnicity not always make us tend towards ethnocentrism which is the propensity for one to

put his or her ethnic group first before others? Or why do we have to zone public offices and sacrifice merit on the altar of ethnocentrism and mediocrity? Other questions are: why do the electorates always vote along ethnic lines rather than by the public ideology, pedigree and overall credibility of the office seeker? Why do some Nigerian politicians not hesitate to play the ethnic card as a means of gaining political advantage even at the risk of fanning the embers of division, suspicion and distrust all of which are hindrances to political development? These questions and more, readily come to mind when we consider the impact of ethnicity on Nigerian political development.

In Nigeria, religion is a very sensitive issue just as ethnicity, which also in turn defines a number of other issues such as appointments, siting of projects, voting pattern in elections, etc. Like ethnicity, religion is responsible for various violence that account for the destruction of lives and property in Nigeria. Thus, some religious and political leaders have consciously manipulated religion to suit their whims and caprices. It is a truism that Nigeria has witnessed the rise of intra- and inter-religious conflicts in an unprecedented dimension. It is a well-established fact that at the centre of any religious conflict in Nigeria (whether intra- or inter-religious) is Islam. Islamic devotees are violently and un-relentlessly fighting themselves for supremacy and for other mundane reasons best known to them. These Islamic extremists are senselessly fighting and maiming the adherents of other religions in an indiscriminate manner.

Various reasons are advanced as the causes for religious violence in Nigeria. For Iwe (2002:16-30) and Agi (1998:6-11), factors responsible for religious violence include psychological disequilibrium, senile mind-set, religious arrogance, blind fanaticism, ineffective leadership, material poverty, reprehensible life-style and wanton desires for positions in government, unhealthy rivalries and the inability to tolerate opposing views. However, our opinion is that religious violence in Nigeria is basically a product of infantile political leadership. Our leaders from the time of independence till now are lacking in political courage to defend the Constitution of Nigeria that has unambiguously prescribed for a secular status for the Nigerian-state. If leaders in Nigeria are serious about defending the Constitution, religion will never be an instrument of releasing frightening violence upon the masses. Therefore, our position is that effort by all and sundry must be channeled in defending the Nigerian Constitution to the letter.

Violence in Nigeria and Matters Arising

If there is anything that makes Nigeria known to the outside world, apart from the occasional exploits of the country's football teams and the perennial issue of corruption, it is the issue of violence. Nigeria now ranks alongside such failed and violence-prone states like Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc on the scale of violence. In Nigeria, it is either the now dreaded Islamic group, Boko Haram, is embarking on a killing spree of innocent school children in their sleep, or the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is blowing up some oil pipelines in the Niger Delta creeks, or still, Movement for the Actualization of the Supreme State of Biafra (MASSOB) is calling for the secession of the Eastern part of the country. They country makes international news headlines for all the wrong reasons of violence.

To date, almost every ethnic group has her own militias to protect her ethnic interests, whatever that maybe. Thus, the Yoruba have the O'odua People Congress (OCP); the Hausa, the Arewa People Congress (APC); there is also the lgbo People Congress (IPC). Aside from these, there are also some overtly war mongering ethnic militia groups like the disbanded Bakassi Boys, to mention the very few of the dreaded bunch. This ethnic jingoism is not helped by admixture of some religious militia groups. Though there is no outstanding Christian militias group in the country, the Muslims have imported violent brands of their faith from some terrorist-incensed countries into the country. During the coming to prominence of the Talibans in the early 2000s, some Nigerian Muslims labeled themselves as the Talibans and started unleashing mayhem on the hapless populace.

The history of the country is replete with religious violence, especially in the northern fringe of the country. It should be noted that the history of ethnic and religious militias in the country did not start after the colonial experience. There were also skirmishes in the pre-colonial era based on the activities of the parochial militias. For instance, as noted by Osaghae and Suberu (15), as far back as the mid 19th-century, the non-Muslim southern part of Kaduna was raided, enslaved and eventually forcefully incorporated into the emirate structure by the Hausa-Fulani Muslim militias.

Even in the old Oyo Empire, there were militia groups that waged constant internecine wars, which informed the migration of the Oyo-Modakeke into Ife in order to be safe from the raids of the various militias that terrorized the empire. There were also some Islamic jihadist groups in the 18th-century that terrorized the northern and

some western parts of the country in order to propagate Islam, the most prominent being the one that coordinated by Othman Dan Folio.

The coming of the British into the scene in Nigeria made various ethnic groups to galvanise the ethnic militias in order to be relevant in the scheme of things. The ethnic groups viewed each other with distrust and formed groups to drive home their parochial demands. For instance, as noted by Nnoli (1978:235), there was a riot in Jos in 1945, between the Igbo and Hausa migrants over residential and trading opportunities in the city. There was the Maitatsene Islamic group in the early 80s which caused incalculable havoc in parts of Kano and Maidugri. Others were soon to follows: like the Jimeta religious conflict (1984), religious crisis in Kafanchan in 1982; and the riot between Christian and Muslim students in Othman Dan Folio University, Sokoto in 1982. These religiously informed conflicts also erupted in the south western part of the country, which is the only part of the southern half of the country that Islam also has a sizeable followership. There was the Cross versus the crescent conflict in the University of Ibadan, beteen 1981-1985, as well as the violent clash between the Christian and some Muslims during a Christian Easter procession in IIorin in 1986.

With the return of the country to pseudo-civilian rule in 1999, following the hiatus the locust years of military dictatorship and their civilian conspirators, ethno-religious conflicts, fuelled by differing militias groups, did not abate. If anything, they seem to have exacerbated; the issue was compounded by the politicians who used both the ethnic and religious militias to feather their political nest. Some northern governors imposed Sharia law in their states, beginning with the philandering and pedophilic then governor of impoverished Zamfara State, Ahmed Yerima. This fuelled ethnic and religious tensions in the north and had ripple effects in the south, whose sons and daughters, resident in those hotbeds of Islamic misadventurism, were slaughtered like goats in their thousands. In a place like Kaduna, with its mixed population of both Christians and Muslims, a grossly stupid, brainless and insensible governor, Makarfi, tried to impose the ill-conceived Sharia in the State. This led to riots that left score dead like flies and properties worth millions of any currency destroyed, especially those that belonged to the southerners, irrespective of the fact that whether they were Christians or Muslims.

Currently, the Islamic group, Boko Haram, is holding the north eastern flank of the country hostage with near impunity and being unfortunately supported and funded by well placed individuals who want to use them to achieve some political leverage. For these sponsors of this rag tag band of Islamic miscreants, their flaccid logic is that, if Goodluck Jonathan could drive on the back of the Niger Delta militias to ascend the presidency, why not use Boko Haram as a bargaining chip, since the country understands only language of violence? With the basket case scenario that the emergence of ethnic and religious militias in the country has resulted, many scholars have shared and offered their opinions as to why this trend had cropped up in the country.

According to Salawu, the emergence of this militia is multi-causal: "a major cause of what we now see as ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry"(2010: 348). These factors including ignorance have given rise to various militias who vie to outwit each other in scrambling for the resources in the country. Citing Ikejiani Clark, Salawu (2010:349) further argues that the country itself is fundamentally built on mistrust, intolerance and violence. According to him, there has always been the insertion of ethno-religious discrimination and incompatibility in the structures of the Nigerian-state since the colonial period. As far back as 1931, the then Governor-General, Donald Cameroun, did not encourage intermingling between the two main religions in the country and advised Christian missionaries to stay from the Muslim dominated parts of the country in order not to court some troubles. This means that the country is structured in such a wise that conflict is in-built into its very being. Anyone seeking for employment in any Federal institution will always be asked about his or her tribe and religion.

For Douglas and Ola (2003), there is even something positive about the ethnic militias in the country. They see them as civil society organizations that fight in concert with other progressive forces for the liberation of all oppressed people. Therefore, for them, the ethnic militancy "is a contribution to democracy and diversity" (2003:47). At any rate, while others have even supported the rise of ethnic militias as a counter to the violence and injustices that define the Nigerian-state, it is very difficult to see any scholar of note who would voice his support for religious militias, aside from some Islamic irredentists who are on the payroll of some Islamic fundamentalist groups in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Yemen and other hot spots of international sponsors of terrorism.

Aftermaths of the Militias

These militia groups have brought untold suffering and death in their hundreds of thousands, economic stagnation, political quagmire and arrested development to the Nigerian-state and her citizens. During the height of the militancy in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian economy, which is heavily dependent on oil, literally walked on all fours and came to a virtual standstill. The militants destroyed many oil facilities and forced major oil companies to declare *de majeure* with their contracting partners. The activities of these various militias have created a situation where some Nigerians have become refugees in their own land. The constant violence of some misguided Islamists in the northern part of the country has driven many southerners from the north, with many abandoning their properties and many years of investments and running for their lives. This has once again put a lie to the fact that all Nigerians can reside wherever they choose to in the country: unless one is suicidal in nature before he decides to live in the mist of unconscionable religious butchers who are all too eager to kill and maim. The activities of these ethnic and religious jingoists prove also that the country is only a marriage of convenience, "the mistake of 1914".

The north, especially the north-east, now ranks as the least developed part of the world and lags behind in many indices of human development, no thanks to the activities of the Boko Haram, which some of them even support as their own. The cumulative effects of the activities of these various militias have been keenly felt in all sectors of the country's life. Many would-be-foreign investors are driven away, thus frittering away our means of foreign exchange earnings and national development. Such effects are really biting in areas where the activities of some of these hoodlums are most pronounced, especially in the northern parts of the country.

The economies of states like Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe and Bornu have literally come to a halt. There is virtually no social life in those states as any gathering would be a prime target for the agents of death and destruction. The activities of the insurgents or militants have brought fear and other forms of psychological trauma in the lives of innocent citizens and make the country a pariah and a laughing stock among the comity of civilized nations. Education of the young is also threatened, especially when these terrorist groups, as demonstrated by Boko Haram, have started targeting schools to kidnap children, as recently happened in Chibok, Bornu State. The sad tale is endless.

Towards Moral and Political Solutions

There is no human problem that does not have a solution, even though it may take time before the solution comes or is found. The various governments in Nigeria had attempted to solve the lingering problems of ethnic and religious militancy in the country in various ways, though one would argue that those who tried to solve the problems were equally the ones who created them in the first place. In other words, there was no sincerity on their part in solving the problem. Most of those militant groups, especially during the so called democratic dispensations, which we all know, started as political thugs to some politicians during electioneering campaigns to intimidate their real and perceived opponents. Like the proverbial Frankenstein, they have become totally uncontrollable by their initial sponsors, since they have discovered the awesome powers of the rule of fist and guns. After all, the father of modern Communist China, Chairman Mao, once defined power as that which flows from the barrel of a gun. They have taken many lives and profit from them heavily. And in the perception of John (2009:338), there is a danger in cloning a monster because it always turns around to attack the creator; or, in the audacity of Nietzsche, "every created God in turn creates a devil for himself" (Morgan, 1965:164). As a result of this scenario, those who created violence in Nigeria lack what it takes in the present to solve it.

In the case of the Niger Delta militants, former President Obasanjo opted to adopt carrot and stick approach that is, engaging in dialogue to assuage their perceived grievances that informed their armed rebellion and sabotage against the state, and, at the same time using military might to rein them in. This approach was largely unsuccessful, as, to start with, there was no iota of sincerity on the part of government to engage in genuine dialogue as they were not prepared to honour whatever agreement they might have entered into with the militants. Militarily, it was equally unsuccessful as the militants gave the Nigerian military a run for their money. Just like the Boko Haram, the militants were better armed to the teeth than the Nigerian army; they even got some of the weapons from some highly placed individuals in the army who are necks deep in the bunkering business and from abroad. Violence begets violence and it backfired seriously on the Nigerian economy that she wholly depends on oil from the Niger Delta region.

The Musa Yara'dua's administration saw the harm that the military approach was doing to the Nigerian economy, that he had to apply some moral and political solutions by granting amnesty to the militants who were ready to lay down their arms, put them on payroll; he sent some of them to schools abroad for skill acquisition and created a ministry for Niger Delta Affairs in order to look into the genuine grievances of the people. This

approach worked to a very appreciable extent, as it reduced the rate of militancy in the region and brought more money to government coffers. Albeit, this created a dangerous precedence, as it sign-posted to other ethnic militias that the only way to attract the attention of government was through carrying arms against the state. Politicians in other regions of the country, especially the north, encouraged their youths to also embark on armed insurrection in order to achieve some political aims. They readily found a large army of unemployed youth (*almajiris*) and used religion as a rallying point, which has now backfired and is consuming the entire north. While it could be argued that most of the problems that engender ethnic and religious militancy are largely political and economic in nature, but solving a religious crisis that refuses to align with reason can be an uphill task.

The present government of Goodluck Jonathan tried the dialogue option with Boko Haram and it did not work. Their very demands will compromise the very Constitution of the land. They want to make the northern part of the country an Islamic state, like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, etc with men wearing long beards like goats and women covering themselves like masquerades, when the very Constitution of the land acknowledges the country as a secular state. How do you engage in a dialogue with such a grotesque group, whose very religion does not allow an 'infidel' to rule over them? It would amount to a wild goose chase! Realistically, it is very possible to rein in the ethnic militias by convoking a Sovereign National Conference, were all the ethnic nationalities will meet and air out their views, and should even decide whether they want to remain in the Nigerian federation. Those who want to opt out should be allowed to, like the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine that voted massively on Sunday 16th March, 2014 to join the Russian Federation, in spite of the protestation from the rest of Ukraine and the west.

The just concluded National Conference that was inaugurated on Monday, 17th March, 2014, by President Jonathan is far from the ideal, as it is contrived to achieve some preconceived political aims and will likely end up like the Obasanjo's own that was contrived to achieve his third term agenda, and it crumbled like a bad cookie that it actually was. As part of the political solution, in addition to convoking a genuine national conference, the grievances of the various groups and interests of the country should be expeditiously addressed. This is due to the fact that some of these militias were given rise to as a result of marginalization, neglect and corruption as earlier highlighted. Any attempt to paper the genuine cracks, will amount to postponing the evil day. Those who are aggrieved against the state should be encouraged to air their views, and when they do that, they should be promptly addressed in other to show that it pays to be reasonable and peaceful. Those who control the common wealth should eschew corruption and sectionalism in order to carry the whole nation along.

For a moral solution to the imbroglio, there is need to engage respected, good and sincere religious leaders in the crusade to enlighten the minds of the adherents of their faiths to see the futility of violence as a leeway to conflict resolution. Moral instructions should be made a compulsory part of the curriculum and not left as a subject of choice as it is currently done. While it is also true that some of the members of these militia groups operate beyond the confines of any religion, there is need also to involve the various community leaders in molding the minds of the youth towards patriotism, values of human lives and the need to see dialogue as a veritable tool for negotiation rather than violence. This presupposes that the elders, in whatever capacity they find themselves, must live above board in other to set good examples for the younger ones. Parents must be handy in bringing their children up according to the standards and practices of decency.

Recommendations

To recapitulate what we have been saying before now, as Salawu noted earlier, the root cause of the emergence of ethnic and religious militias in the country are traceable to marginalization, injustices, oppressions and their handmaidens. There is need, therefore, to tackle the problems from the roots, otherwise any other palliative measures will only be postponing the day of terrible reckoning. For Immanuel Kant, as cited by Stumpf (316), nothing could be possibly conceived in this world or out of it without qualification, except the good will. The good will is the best of morality; the need to treat each other as one would like to be treated. That is the gnosis that drives morality and makes a given society what it should be: a place where individuals within it realize their potentials and live as they should.

This good will is lacking in our body polity – the politicians are in the game for what they can get from the system and not to advance the common good. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, we don't even know what our common good is. Is it to live under a theocracy, with Sharia the ultimate legal framework? Is it to reduce the rate of poverty in the land through good governance and job creation? Because we have basically failed to have consensus as to what we want as a nation, the politicians are having a field day preying on the citizens' supposed common patrimony. The whole thing boils down to ignorance. A large section of the Nigerian populace is

illiterate, or barely literate. Ignorance here is not limited to those who have not acquired the rudiments of western education; even the most educated are still ignorant of the demands of statehood: many cannot think beyond their tribal and religious cocoons. There is need for us to revalue our value system, cultivate the spirit of patriotism and see the large picture of our collective existence, rather than being entombed and ensconced in our ethnic and religious comfort zones. This will make whoever has access to power to use it for the common good and see the whole country as his primary constituency. In this way, there will be no need to marginalize any section of the country that would warrant militancy as a response.

Also, there is need to embark on education and include it as the number one priority in the country. Most of those who are recruited as ethnic and religious militants are quite incapable of reasoning and seeing that they are just pawns in the chessboards of some disgruntled politicians because they lack the basic rational skills that a good education affords one with. The issue of good governance cannot be over emphasized, we should hold our politicians responsible and demand the very best from them and not settle for half measures. While it is true that the country is a secular state, government should monitor the activities of some religious leaders who seek to use their religions to preach violence against the state and those who are not members of their sects, as it is done in the western world. Religious extremists should not be condoned and pampered, no matter how highly placed. Those who sponsor ethnic and religious militias should be exposed and visited with the full might of the state legal system and not to be tolerated for mere political expediency. Finally, since an idle man is a devil's workshop, government should create jobs for the teeming youths who are unemployed and are ready to do anything to survive, including joining militancy whose aims they barely understand.

Conclusion

While violence is inevitable in human society, obviously, no one likes the effects of violence. The many ethnic and religious militias that dot the country arose out of some societal paradoxes that are inherent in the Nigerian society, where values that should make for harmonious existence are jettisoned in the scheme of things, and parochial interest are promoted over those of the state. There is then need for moral re-awakening in our collective national consciousness to value what is good and treat every citizen, irrespective of his or her gender, tribe and religion, as a citizen of this one country. Political patronages should be expended to all and not cornered to some few individuals. There should be a decisive inculcation of patriotism among the citizenry right from the tender age. Accordingly, mediocre criteria of federal character and quota systems should be thrown overboard, and citizens should be accommodated where they are best suited not based on where they come from or what God, god or goddess they worship; just that and nothing else.

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