Curbing the Menace of Insecurity in Northern Nigeria: Focus on Hausa Language as a Panacea

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Abstract
The importance, the role and the spread of Hausa language in Northern Nigeria, Southern Niger, Northern Cameroun and Northern Ghana cannot be overemphasised. Also the presence and predominance of Hausa language and its speakers are manifest in many other African countries. No wonder, citing Muhammad et al (2001) in Janiu, et al Hausa language ranks as one of the major world languages. According to Philips (1993: 13) Hausa people have every right to be considered a civilized nation, because, according to him they have their language transformed to writing which they used in teaching their children. Today, Hausa language is undoubtfully and indisputably the lingua franca of the present Northern Nigeria comprising nineteen states except Kwara and Kogi with large size of Yoruba native speakers who are always conscious of their Yoruba origin. Based on the facts above, emphasis would be laid on Hausa language and insecurity in Nigeria considering the fact that a large percentage of the current cases of insecurity such as Boko Haram insurgency, cow rustling, banditary, kidnapping and several other social malaise do often take place in the North East, North West and North central where Hausa is their major language and lingua franca despite the fact that native speakers of at least two hundred other linguistic groups dwell and live together with Hausa native speakers even the Fulani who dominate them socially, culturally and politically speak Hausa language.
Introduction

Without mincing words and, undisputably, there is nothing more precious than peace in the land and peaceful coexistence among the people irrespective of their tribe and religion including their political, socio-cultural and socio-political affiliations because, every citizen throughout the length and breadth of the country sees Nigeria as his or her fatherland. Though there may be instances of conflicts such as ethno-religious crises, e.g. the Tiv/Jukums in Taraba State, Zangon-Kataf in 1998 in Kaduna state, Zakibian in Benue State 2000, the Kaduna clash again in 2001, Yelwan Shandara crisis in 2003, the annulment of June 12 1993 general elections that saw M.K.O. Abiola, a Muslim Yoruba man overwhelmingly winning the elections across all the nooks and crannies of the country, the current and frequent Fulani herders clashes with various other ethnics farmers throughout the country based on socio-economic interests. Naturally in any society, in any togetherness, be it monolingual, bilingual or multilingual there must be quarrels, and misunderstandings of any form, which at times result into violence, and wars. According to Abdul-Basir A. Atuwo (2006:167) citing a Hausa proverb which says: “Kowa ce zo mu zauna, ya ce zo mu yi fada”, which translates as follows: “Accepting to leave together is indirectly an invitation to quarrel with each other”, he concludes that therefore, since quarrel is inevitable, resolution and reconciliations must be involved as solution to them in order to allow peace to reign.

According to Raheem Adebayo Lawal (2013: IV) Nigeria as a nation in the recent times is besieged by myriads of problems of social, economic, educational, political and psychological dimensions. However, the most pointed of the problems are rooted in the maintenance of peace and security. Raheem Adebayo Lawal spoke in 2013 and the problems mentioned continue unabated especially the security situation in the country. Now, what are the causes of this insecurity?

According to Ogungbola, M.A. and Atilade, K.A. (2008) p. 197. in Nigeria, governments at all levels fail
or find it difficult coping with their primary responsibilities of providing basic amenities and services such as free and qualitative education, shelter, health care, good and drinkable water, electricity, good road and network to the rural dwellers, mechanized farming/modern farming tools to the teeming agrarian population. In many occasions, salaries are paid piece-meal, several times late, or even taking months after threat or prolonged strikes even at the higher level of education, i.e. Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education. School calendars are often disrupted and the whole academic year canceled. The unemployment rate has been uncontrollable, inflation is astronomical and has become uncontrollable because the government seems to have no solution to it, may be they don’t care or are short of ideas to tackle the menace. The worse part of the whole scenario is that the authorities seem to listen or care to listen to the yearning of the masses only when general elections to various political posts approach or are around the corner.

Actually, the insecurity has now reached a crescendo or its peak though taking a dangerous dimension with the Fulani herders lording over the farmers of other tribes and ethnic nationalities throughout the nooks and crannies of the country unchecked as if they have the blessing of the power that be. Kidnappers, day-light dare-devil armed robbers, bandits, rapers raping both married and unmarried ladies and young women, cattle rustlers, political, tribal activists calling for secession, political assassinations, acrimonious thuggery etc are daily occurrence while there is no sign of ending these nefarious activities in sight. Also, Boko Haram insurgency has come to stay because the nation armed forces are just trying to subdue them with heavy price (loss of a good number of our gallant and patriotic soldiers).

**Peaceful Coexistence and Conflict Resolution**

According to Kofi Annan (2000:50) there is a near-universal agreement that prevention is preferable to cure, and that strategies of prevention must address the root causes of conflicts, not simply their violent symptoms. Nigerian problems are enormous, multilateral and need concerted efforts by well-meaning Nigerians, the elites, traditional rulers, religious leaders and the various ethnic nationalities, the artists such as the singers, the poets, the writers and individual community leaders who can lead, talk and convince their followers and every stakeholder. This can effectively be done through language and culture of each community, because language and culture are two inseparable entities. Language and culture are a people’s identity.
What is language? According to Hilary Alilonu and Collin Uba Ekennia (2013: 76-77) “Language is a powerful and veritable instrument that endears its users to one another and creates peaceful and harmonious atmosphere”. When people communicate with one another in their native languages, there is tendency to understand and cherish each another’s views, needs, challenges and aspirations. They submitted that in a multilingual setting, as in the case of Nigeria as a whole, or in most Nigerian cosmopolitan cities, people whose native tongues/languages differ from the dominant ones in those cities gain socio-economic advantages if they communicate in that dominant language. This is exactly the case of Hausa language, a predominant language and the lingua franca of Northern Nigeria, made up of nineteen states with sixteen really making use of the language in their day-to-day activities and in almost all spheres of human endeavours despite the fact that the Northern Nigeria region is made up of over 200 ethnic groups speaking different mutually unintelligible languages.

However, for the sake of clarity, Ogungbola M.A. & Gbadamosi R.O. (2019:50) named the three Hausa language dominated areas out of the six geopolitical zones of the country and their ethnic nationalities.

1. North West - Hausa, Fulani and other minorities
2. North East - Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri, Jukun, Bachama, Mumuye,

The remaining three geopolitical zones, i.e. South East, South South and South-West are the native lands of Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Urhobo, Izon, Edo, Auchi etc. while the South-West virtually 100% made of Yoruba extraction living together with the Egun people who are bilingual in nature with Yoruba as their second language. The Egun are the people of Badagry and environs living in parts of Lagos and Ogun States. Despite this fact, Hausa and Fulani settlers in their thousands live and dwell in the midst of the southerners, practicing their trades in the spirit of one Nigeria.

**Methodology**

The study being theoretical employed the use of secondary sources. Various journal articles, books, newspapers and magazines were perused and supported with the personal experience and observation on the security situation in
Hausa Language as a Unifying Factor in the North

M.A. Ogungbola (2005:54-55) is of the opinion that language can play either a positive or negative role in inter community, inter ethnic relationship. He opined that in any society, it is a unifying factor as any member of a given linguistic community manifests a sense of belonging and oneness through their cultural heritage, their civilization, their unique thinking and reasoning pattern. However, he continued, Language can play a negative role as a stumbling block to communication among various communities if by hatred, neglect, political ideological differences or rivalry and explicit intolerance they fail to learn and appreciate each other’s language, cultural and religious values.

Language and Insecurity: Hausa language was used and can still be used to educate, pacify and make trouble shooters to see reason. During the past intertribal and inter religious conflicts mentioned earlier above in the North, Hausa poets like Dantala Jos and Alhaji Musa Danba’u contributed in no small measure in dousing tensions.

Below is what the aggrieved Dantala Jos said in his oral poetry, cited in Hausa and translated into English by Abdul-Bashir A. Atuwo (2006: 166):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Haba yan Nijeriya} \\
\text{Ni ban gane ba} \\
\text{Ni na yi gabas} \\
\text{Ni na yi yamma} \\
\text{Ni na yi kudu} \\
\text{Ni na yi arewa} \\
\text{Kullum kulum ana ta yaki} \\
\text{Ga yaranmu su sha daga} \\
\text{Su sha kwaya su sha giya} \\
\text{Haba ni ban gane ba} \\
\end{align*}
\]

The translated version is as follows:

Oh! Nigerians  
I am really lost  
I moved to the East  
I moved to the West  
I moved to the South  
I moved to the North  
Every day war, every day war  
Our youth smoke Indian hemp  
They take drugs and alcohol
Oh! I am really lost.

During the turmoil occasioned by the annulment of June 12 general elections when Yoruba and Hausa were at dagger-drawn, resulting in massive fleeing from the North to west and from the West to the North, another popular Hausa poet Alhaji Musa Danba’u came out with the poem below, appealing to all Nigerians to reconcile and resolve their differences.

“Yan Nijeriya ‘yan’ uwa mu yi kokari
Mu zan hada kammu mu kama hanyar gaskiya.

English version:

“Oh! Nigerians let’s work hard
Let’s continue to remain together we are on the track”

The poet, according to Abdul-Bashir A. Atubo, prayed to the Almighty God to shower His blessings on Nigeria.

Gyara min mai sama
Allah kai ke da mu
Ka taimaki Nijeriya
Kandami babbar ƙasa

The English version follows:

Oh! The master of heaven
You are the owner of all creatures
Assist Nigeria
A diverse country in nature

In the following last three poems, Danba’u became a preacher teaching moral using metaphors. He compared Nigerian ethnic diversity with various animals living on land and in the waters including fishes to buttress their spirit of togetherness, understanding and endurance while adapting to their common environment. Adaptation is the law of existence. In the poems, he symbolizes sea creatures with Nigerian situation, drawing attention to different animals and fishes. According to him, some are big, some are small, they differ in nature, shape, origin and habits, even in colour, yet they dwell together and accommodate each other in their own way; though in their animal kingdom where there is no rule of law. If animals can live together, dwell together, what prevents human beings from co-habiting, cooperating and co-exist peacefully?

Here is what he says:

Kifi da kada da kwado dorina
Halittarsu daban-daban amma in mun tuna
Duk gidansu yana ruwa

English version:
Fish, crocodile, frog and hippopotamus they look different in creature. But they are all found in water.

The poet now interprete this animation into the Nigerian context:
Ina Yarbawa, Nufawa, Ina jama’ar Igbo
Harda ku jama’ar Tibi
Duk kuzo mu taru gaba daya mu koma’ yan’ uwa

English version:
Where are Yorubas, Nupes and Igbos including the Tivs. Let’s all come together and unite to be one.

All these sermons are for peace, love for one another, harmony togetherness, cooperation and peaceful coexistence as animals and fishes do in the waters. He asks Nigerians if non humans can live in harmony what more of we human beings with sound minds and thinking faculty.

Alhaji Danba’u now preaches destiny and unflinching trust and faith in God.
Kun gani Nijeriya mai yawan fadin kasa
Al’adummu daban-daban
Addinammu daban-daban
Allah mai kaddarowa a kowne al’amar
Shi yakkaddaro munka zauni wiri daya
Kuma kasarmu tana daya

English version:
You see Nigeria with diverse land with different religions and cultures.
It is Allah who predestined everything. He made us to live together. And our country is one.

Finally, the Hausa poet warns Nigerian to be mindful and careful with enemies of the country who really don’t want the unity, peace and progress of the country, he also warned their Nigerian collaborators.
Karku yarda dyan baranda da yan Zambar ciki
Masu son su hada mu sannan su koma tsallake
In ta rikice su bukata ta biya
Don’t allow enemies of progress and saboteurs who want to incite conflicts and run away once the trouble starts they have achieved their goal.

Jamiu, A.I., Ogungbola, M.A. and Bala, M.J. (2008: p.229) submitted that while language is a means of communication and an instrument of penetrating and conquering the world, religion is a key to discipline, godliness and individual relationship with the creator of the universe, the Almighty God. Hausa language has both qualities being the lingua franca in the North despite the multitude of other languages spoken by their native speakers and also adherents of the Islamic faith, which a vast majority of Hausas are known for. The duo of language and religion have also been used by European colonial masters and Arab traders not only in Nigeria but also in West Africa and in many other parts of the world. For example the French used their language to assimilate the people in their former African Asia and Caribbean colonies – Christian Religion was also introduced. England did the same with her divide and rule policy. Arab traders followed suite in the Hausa dominated Northern Nigeria where about 25000 Arabic Quranic schools were established and attended by about 250,000 pupils were established. Philips (1993:225) As a result of the predominant of Hausa language in Nigeria and elsewhere in West African sub-region cum Tchad and Cameroun, it is a language of broadcast in Radio Nigeria, in Northern states, in some countries in Africa, such as Radio Cairo in the Middle East, Radio Tehrans (in Iran), Voice of America (VOA), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Radio Beijing (China). According to Bergery 1934 and Abraham (1962) Hausa language has two among the best dictionaries of any African language. In fact, it has been established that Hausa language is the most spread language in the country. With all these laudable attributes of Hausa language and the commendable efforts of Hausa poets such as Dantala Jos and Alhaji Musa Danba’u the language is in the best position to be used to create awareness, educate, advise and preach to the people to be law abiding, peaceful, patriotic, patience and co-exist with other tribes in making Nigeria a better nation.

Apart from the works of Hausa poets, the mass media is also very important in the promotion of peace, understanding, progress, security and development using Hausa language.

For example, according to Ambi, H.M. (2013: 198-199) a programme of the BBC Ra ayi Riga, kowa da irin tasa, discusses current issues whereby listeners can give their own contributions towards issues discussed. He also cited similar programme: Tsaka mai wuya, sai bango ya tsage and Addini a Amurka from
VOA, as well as *ji ka karu* (listen and be enriched) from *Deutsche welle* do all contribute to the enhancement of peace, security and development of a nation. For a government policies and programme to succeed, the mass media must be involved either in print (newspaper and magazines) or in the radio or television or both because the mass media are the most accurate and easiest ways of giving information, awareness and instructions to the masses. They are often used in enlightening the people in both rural and urban areas. Hausa language seems to be the only African language that has the potential to reach out to the people and explicitly inform them of events, government policies and programmes apart from some colonial masters languages such as English and French. To buttress this point, Bamgbose (1970) identified over 400 languages spoken in Nigeria and concluded that in spite of this large number, virtually it is only Hausa language that is being used in International radio stations cited above. It is only in recent times that we here of B.B.C Yoruba.

**Conclusion**

It is a known fact that majority of the insurgents Boko Haram, the kidnappers, the bandits, the herders and cattle rustlers in Northern Nigeria are Hausa language speakers either natives or non-natives, simply because all these sad events are happening in the North East, North West and Middle Best. Though the armed forces, the police and other security agents should be commended and applauded, yet, the role and importance of the mass media i.e. the television, the radio, newspapers, magazines etc cannot be overemphasized. Likewise, artists, poets, singers, traditional rulers, religious leaders, community elders and leaders, school authorities, etc have a role to play, using Hausa language as a medium of communication for instruction, enlightenment, information and mediation.

**References**


