ISLAM'S RESPONSE
TO THE QUEST FOR PEACE, ORDERLINESS AND WELL-BEING IN NIGERIA

A FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOUR OF PROF. KAMALDEEN ABDULAZEEZ BALOGUN

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Leadership and Peace Building in Nigerian Perspectives

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Abstract

Peace building has always been considered as a restorative measure put in place between groups of people or nations after an initial experience of conflict. This makes peace building to come after a breakdown of exiting peace and mutual togetherness between organisations or groups. Peace building does not happen by chance or come easily; it takes critical and tactical analysis of issues by those who because of their positions in the society are respected by the populace. Three categories of leaders are known and respected in African communities generally and in Nigeria especially. These are Traditional rulers, political and religious leaders. In this paper, therefore, the roles of the leadership of these three tiers of leaders to peace building in Nigeria are discussed. Using historical and contextual analysis, this work examines what personal qualities and skills that are essential for leaders taking up the task of building to possess and the technicalities involved in the task. The writers emphasise that peace building is not out to completely remove a conflict and bring about perfection of peace, but to manage the situation between/among the conflicting parties so as not to lead to a fresh conflict. It was recommended that in peace building leaders need to be security conscious as they perform the task of peace building because peace terminators are usually out to frustrate their good intentions and are always ready to inflict injuries and cause destruction when their power and personal interests are threatened.

Keywords: Leadership, Nigeria, Peace Building, religious leaders, traditional leaders

Introduction

Leadership is a universal concept and it cuts across every nook and cranny of the society. There is no stratum of the society where quality leadership display is not essential for growth and development, ranging from the family, religious and industrial institutions and the world at large. It has been said that everything rises and falls with leadership. Therefore, where leadership is made deliberate and intentional, it solves lots of problems. However, the role of leadership in peace building is a subject that has not been fully explored. According to the work by African Leadership Centre, academic and policy debates on peace building, especially in Africa in the last two decades have rarely placed the issue of leadership at the core of analysis of peace and stability in Africa. Leadership failures particularly in governance among other factors have always been identified as one of the causes of conflicts in Africa, but leadership is not being equally considered as a good consideration for peace building.

Peace building, which is usually an aftermath of conflict, does not happen by chance or come easily; it takes critical and tactical analysis of issues by those who because of their positions in the society are respected by the populace. Three categories of leaders are known and respected in African communities generally and in Nigeria especially. These are Traditional rulers, political and religious leaders. This paper, therefore, will address the roles of the leadership of these three tiers of leaders to peace building in Nigeria. In addition, the personal qualities and skills expected to be possessed by leaders who will excel at peace building would also be highlighted. Every leadership venture comes at a cost and peace building leadership is not different. This work, therefore, would also consider the costs of peace building leadership that peace building leaders should be aware of in order for them to take necessary precautions and put certain measures in place for the security of their lives and properties.

Conceptual Framework

It is essential to clarify some concepts in order to bring their meaning further home. Such concepts are discussed below.

a. Leadership

Leadership is a very wide concept and as a result, it has no single all-encompassing definition. According to Collins English Dictionary, leadership is generally defined as the ability to inspire or influence others

towards achieving a common goal. Ability to inspire and influence others is critical factor that leaders who will excel in the task of peace building must have. In respect to peace building, the definition of leadership by Casey (1989:2) is pivotal to this work. According to Casey, leadership is expressed as a position or responsibility for guidance, direction, inspiration, and knowledge, as well as insightful management by example for others to follow. Leadership, therefore, can be described as a role or position occupied and maintained by a person or group of persons, which involves guiding, directing and commanding others (in some cases) to achieve a desired goal or vision. In Nigeria specifically, there are different strands of leadership, three among these strands are: Traditional leaders, religious leaders and political leaders. Each of these strands of leadership would be critically discussed in relation to peace building.

According to Gardener (1990), leadership is a process of persuasion or example by which an individual induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers. Peace building leadership among others engages more of persuasion than any other form of leadership methods because of the nature of the problem it is out to solve. Peace building leadership needs to be intentional and deliberate. Because peace building is conflict induced, the goal of peace building, therefore, is to manage the situation rather than going all out to put an end to the conflict altogether. In most cases, completely putting an end to the conflict is usually an impracticable task. However, leaders involved in peace building can achieve whole lots of success in the process, which in turn put an end to the conflict and makes the society a more productive one.

b. **Peace Building**

Peace building has always been considered as a restorative measure put in place between groups of people or nations after an initial experience of conflict. That is, peace building follows a breakdown of exiting peace and mutual togetherness between organizations or groups. It appears like what Youseff Mahmood (2019) described as negative peace. Negative peace is peace that follows the end of war. And going by the circumstance that brought about the concept of peace building, it is indeed a form of "negative peace" (United Nations Charter). In the writers' view however, negative peace, being a product of intervention

carried out among warring parties is always a case where the relationship between the conflicting parties is being managed; it is usually difficult for peace to be completely restored among them.

Peace building is usually used alongside peacemaking and peacekeeping. They are actually measures put in place to bring about peace between warring parties are not totally the same. The following could be inferred from the issue of peace building:

i. Peace building does not involve the use of force to bring about peace between warring parties.

ii. Peace building is developed to achieve mainly social objectives.

iii. Peace building involves the use of civilians in the peace restoration unlike Peace keeping that involves the use of armed-forces.

Lukuta (2014) explores the different elements of the UN's peace building strategy since the 1992 Brahimi Report, and argues that effective peace building depends on a strong role for the locals. From her work, it can equally be said that:

I. While peacemaking is a non-restrictive list of peaceful, diplomatic, and judicial means of resolving disputes, Peacekeeping is situated before peace enforcement and before the sanctions regime, but Peace building is more than a process that has a broad post-conflict agenda and more than an instrumentalist method to secure peace.

ii. Peace building includes "support for the fight against corruption, the implementation of humanitarian demining programmes and an emphasis on HIV/AIDS, education and control, and the action against infectious diseases."

iii. An important part of peace building includes reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, and strengthening the rule of law through training, restructuring local police, and through judicial and penal reform.

iv. Peace building includes improving respect for human rights through monitoring, education, and investigation of past and existing abuses, and providing technical assistance for democratic development like electoral assistance and support for free media for example.

v. Peace building is a quasi-solidarity right that empowers popular action.

Lukuta concludes that peacemaking is represented through activities such as mediation, conciliation, and judicial settlement. From the article recorded in the UN article and the work of Lukuta, the writers are of the opinion that, peacekeeping could be described as the use of "war" to put an end to war, peacemaking the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods to put an end to conflict, and peace building involves the use of the influence of the respected people in the society to quell conflict. By implication, civilians who have influence over their people such as traditional, political and religious leaders, in the view of the writers are, therefore, the best hands as far as peace building is concerned in the society.

Peace building leadership, however, in the view of Johnson (2018) is not about solving problems – whether within a team, organization or society, but about navigating the polarities or contradictions that such a context and undertaking inherently pose. Polarity, as described by Johnson, is "managing the unsolvable problems". It is necessary, therefore, for leaders who are in peace building process to identify these "unsolvable problems" so as to be explicit in what they want and the methodologies that are being employed.

Leadership Levels in Nigeria in Relation to Peace-Building

Leadership exists in various levels and each of these levels has roles to play in peace-building. In Nigeria, at least three levels of leadership exist namely political, religious and traditional leadership. Lederach (1997) agrees with this position when he provided a model of how the various levels of leadership could be examined, ranging from leadership from top to that at the grassroots. According to Lederach, the top, which he identified as level 1, is occupied by the elites, politicians, religious leaders, and the military who engage in highly negotiations at the state level. At level 2, Lederach locates intellectuals, ethnic leadership, regional leadership or local religious leaders, and leaders of recognised non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Grassroots leadership such as indigenous community leaders, of one sort or another who tend to be engaged in the struggle for bringing more resources to their local population resides in level 3. Going with the

leadership models of Lederach, one can conclude that political, religious, and traditional leadership are spread across the entire fabrics of the society.

By implication, when leadership is maximized in Nigeria, it could make peace-building possible regardless of the situation that brought about conflict and where it took place. Burns (1978) had earlier posited that leadership is a response to conflict. He argued that conflict gives depth to perspectives to leadership. Though not all leadership begins as a response to conflict, but all leadership is set to either prevent a problem or solve one, the reason leadership should be deliberate and intentional.

Francis-Vincent, Hermans and Sterkens (2014) address the different causes of conflicts which found to be: Socio-economic causes of religious conflicts; Political causes of religious conflicts; Ethnic-cultural causes of religious conflicts and Religious causes of interreligious conflicts. With the causes of conflicts identified, a deliberate response from the three levels of leadership already highlighted would not only quell the conflict but would also help in peace-building regardless of what the cause of conflict is. Nevertheless, for meaningful and successful peace-building task, the political, religious and traditional leadership are expected to synergize in building peace in the society.

a. Political Leadership and Peace-Building

Political leadership involves a democratic capacity building, the type that brings different communities together in a participatory process with leadership. Political leadership connects with different ethnic groups and addresses issues of marginalization, which is one of the causes of ethnic clashes among the locals. Political leadership addresses the issues of marginalization in order to help in resolve control. In Nigeria, there are so many conflicts that arise as a result of ethnic differences, many which are age long and has no hope of being resolved completely, but could be well managed through quality political leadership.

Although politics can escalate antagonism, grievances and conflicts, but when properly managed, it could also help to build peace. According to Carothers (2016) politics, through political parties can play important role in commencing an end to conflict, mediating bargaining

over the nature of political settlement and shaping the post-conflict state. Additionally, a well-coordinated political leadership can give political expressions to grievances that may otherwise be expressed through violence and to also articulate the interests of citizens during both peace negotiations and transition processes.

Unfortunately, in practice, especially in Nigeria, political leadership because of the corrupt practices of many who are involved has not been able to do much of peace-building. In practice, in some contexts, it has actively undermined peace. More broadly as Carothers points out, in such contexts, "the fragmented nature of society, low levels of trust and weak associational life undermine citizens' ability to come together through political parties to express common interests". Politics in conflict-affected areas tend to be characterised by deep polarizations and the way political leadership relate to this is critical in terms of shaping prospects for peace (Castillego, 2016). Political leadership, therefore, needs to be devoid of selfish interests, corrupt practices and build trust in the hearts of the citizens in order to be able to excel in peace building which would be constantly needed.

b. **Religious Leadership and Peace-Building**

Nigerians are highly religious and have great respect for their religious leaders. Although recent reactions by Nigerians in carrying out violence against their fellow Nigerians in response to the xenophobic attracts in Nigerians in South Africa would make one wonder if Nigerians are religious in anyway. Considering the kinds of violence being masterminded in Nigeria by so called religionists, one can argue that though Nigerians are religious, but many do not live according to the tenets these religions preach. Three major religions are known in Nigeria – Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions and none of these religions support violence, but on the contrary, love, mercy, mutual respect and many other values are being emphasized in these religions (Ayantayo, 2017). However, many of the adherents of these religions identify with the various religions, but do not practice the teachings, hence; violence and other atrocities are not abating. In spite of these attitudes by adherents of Christianity, Islam and Traditional religions, religious leaders still have enormous influence over their subjects. In fact, their influence is so much that one could say that violence is being carried out by Nigerians either by the silence of these religious leaders over the matter or their support in a way for it.

In some cases, both reasons could be responsible, but more often than not, the emphases of many religious leaders in the current Nigeria are not really on character building that helps in building peace, rather many religious leaders emphasize materialism and as a result the adherents are becoming more materialistic at the expense of possessing and displaying quality character. Other leaders (political and traditional) also share in this particular anomaly. Given their spiritual leaderships and influence over their communities and the larger society, religious leaders have lots of roles to play in discouraging violence among Nigerians and in developing peace-building capacities that would bring tranquility to the society.

The present day Nigeria is characterised by hatred, hostility and violence and everyone is becoming a "living dead" because of the fear of what could happen at any point in time. To this end, religious leaders need to be intentional in addressing such issues because when they speak out, their voices are heard and their messages have the power to multiply (United Nations article). One observable trait among religious leaders in Nigeria is keeping mute on very sensitive issues and those who speak more to the government and less to the citizenry. Speaking to the political administrators is good and commendable, but religious leaders need to speak also to the populace beginning from their local assemblies. The reason for this is simply because the problems confronting Nigeria and Nigerians in recent times are not purely leadership, followership too are culprits. Nigerians need to be constantly reminded of the need for peace in the society and religious leaders can use the trust that have been wielded on them to make change happen along this line.

c. Traditional Leadership and Peace-Building

Traditional leadership is the closest to the people at the grassroots. People in rural communities acknowledge the important roles played by community leaders in conflict resolution and peace building. Traditional leaders are regarded as the custodians of traditional law, customs and practices, which the locals have so much respect for. As a result, traditional leaders, because of their position in the society and the cultural and traditional rites that bring them to power are sometimes feared by their subjects. Thus, the traditional leaders receive the bulk of the case that relates to violence and anti-social behaviour. But considering the volumes of violence and atrocities being perpetrated right under the watches of these leaders, one would wonder if they really have the power to prevent and adequately respond to violence.

Igbokwe (1998) highlights three key factors why that make most Africans, especially Nigerians to continue to look to traditional and informal justice forum to resolve conflict, which in turn has made traditional leadership a very important aspect of the society that not even political leadership can jettison. One of the three reasons Igbokwe highlighted in his work is the fact that vast majority of Africans live in rural villages where access to the formal state justice is extremely limited. Besides, most Africans still have strong believe in their customs and traditional practices, so while professing faith in either Christianity or Islam, they still have strong belief in their customary and traditional practices – a situation that has fuelled pluralism and syncretic practices. Despite these realities, violence at the grassroots is still prevalent in Nigeria, a situation that needs to put traditional leaders on their feet in responding to these very critical situations and to foster peace in the society.

Musingaffi (2015) observes that many community development projects have suffered stagnation or complete failures due to conflict resulting mostly from internal disputes within the rural communities and the inability of traditional leaders to manage such disputes is a reason for under development and poverty. To prevent conflict and interfere in warring parties within the community, therefore, the traditional leaders needs to be up and doing and be effective in their leadership.

Qualities of Leaders that Aid Peace-Building

Nigerian leaders whether political, religious or traditional need to possess certain qualities in order to excel in peace building. The reason for this is that it is not the seat leaders occupy that only matters, the kind of personality of the individual on the seat is equally important. Generally, leadership responsibilities expect from leaders to demonstrate certain qualities that are fundamental to their callings as leaders. However, peace building leadership because of the task it is out to handle, demands certain qualities from the leader which cannot be compromised. Two of these qualities are: Integrity and Education regardless of the political or religious affiliations.

Leaders who will build peace in the society must be people of integrity. One destructive menace Nigeria is battling with currently is that of corruption. Corruption has eaten deep into every fabric of the society and it takes the virtue of integrity to confront the vice. Although strong measures are being taken against corrupt practices, but this has not in any way reduced the spread of this societal cankerworm. In current Nigeria, a

group of people may be willing to buy whoever over with money and other financial gains because of their selfish interests. And because peace building calls for holistic evaluation of issues and good sense of judgments, which cannot thrive in corruption, peace-building leaders, therefore, need to be extraordinary in the display of integrity. Integrity as Adelabu (2014: 120) opines, encompasses truthfulness, credibility, and sincerity. When people identify one as an individual with integrity, they would be ready to listen to whatsoever the individual has to say, because they are sure he will not be bias in his judgment. People of integrity are those that "walk the talk" (Palanski and Yammarino, 2007:171-184). Leaders who "walk the talk" can as well "talk the walk" and the people will oblige and follow.

Education is another very important virtue peace-building leaders should possess. Education helps in critical and correct evaluation and analysis of issues. A leader who will excel in peace building needs to be competent, and competence comes with sound education. By education, the writers do not mean a possession of many certificates, but the ability to be intellectually sound in understanding diverse perspectives to issues. Some leaders are as fundamental and extremists as their followers are, especially in matters that have to do with politics and religion among other things. Fundamentalism and extremism, more often than not, are products of ignorance and illiteracy. Education in most cases makes people to appreciate other peoples' views and orientations to life - perspectives that are very necessary to a successful peace-building process. Leaders, therefore, need to take education serious themselves and emphasize same to their subjects.

Additionally, Reychler and Stellamans (2004) highlight certain skills and personal character leaders who are into peace building should possess. According to them, the skills necessary for peace building leadership includes relational skills, mediation skills, practical skills, elicited skills and they also need to be flexible. Also, peace-builders need to be courageous, humble, possess sense of humor and also need to be able to cope with stress and other situations. Peace building is an enormous task because it is to quell conflict and restore peace among warring parties; hence leaders who will carry out this task need to be exceptional in both character and conduct.

Cost of Leadership in Peace-Building

Peace building, undoubtedly, is a herculean but noble task. Because of its capability of promoting peace and mutual cohabitation in

the society, it enhances growth and brings great development in the society where it is allowed to thrive. Unfortunately, not everyone wants peace-building processes to succeed. Certain elements in the society because of their spurious activities and selfish interests usually cause havocs so as to frustrate both peace-builders goodly intentions and the process of peace-building itself. The individuals who are against peace-building process are who Stedman (2019:178) referred to as "spoilers". Admittedly, peace building is a risky adventure and by signing a peace agreement or agreeing to be involved in the process of peace building, peace-building leaders put themselves at risk from adversaries who may exploit a sentiment, from disgruntled followers who see peace as a betrayal of key values, and from excluded parties who seek either to alter the process or destroy it.

Since peace building is the process that is aimed at restoring peace between or among warring parties, individuals who aim at altering or destroy the process could be referred to as "Peace terminators." The biggest source of risk in the process of peace building, therefore, comes from these peace terminators – individuals who believe that emerging peace threatens their power, world view, and interests and who are ready to go all the way to use violence to undermine attempts to achieve a good result in peace building. As a result of this unfortunate reality, not all peace-building processes usually yield the desired result, some lead to losses of both lives and properties, which in most cases worsen the conflict that was attempted to be quelled.

In Nigeria as it is in many other countries, peace building comes with its own risks too. Recently in the news, Reverend Father David Tanko of the Roman Catholic Church, Nigeria was lynched while on his way to peace meeting between Tiv and Jukun in Benue State, not for any offence he committed, but for his intention as a clergy and by implication, an agent of peace, to have a peace building meeting among the warring parties. Though it was earlier said that religious leaders have certain level of influence and are respected by the people, but it will suffice to say that some people hate clergy men and would use any means to inflict pains and injuries on them. This was the case with the Reverend Father. Burning the respected clergy alive did not only hinder the process of peace building, it also brought the life of the pastor to a brutal and untimely end. Also in June 2019, about seven priests were beheaded after a peace meeting on their way to Taraba. These and many other similar cases are some of the costs of peace building leadership that peace-builders who are leaders need to know.

With these realities, it therefore becomes imperative for every leader who would want to venture into peace building to be security conscious, proactive and also take necessary cautions so as not to become victim of these violent acts. Although reprisal attacks appear to be carried out against religious leaders, especially of the Christian faith in contemporary Nigeria, it cannot be ruled out that peace terminators are ready to attack anyone who will stand in their way to do otherwise be it political, religious or traditional leader. It suffices then to say that peace building processes should go alongside security consciousness and necessary securities measures should also be put in place. Although there may not be a hundred percent success in aborting the plans of peace terminators especially in Nigeria, but necessary security measures and apparatus can foil their attempts to carry out their heinous activities.

Conclusion

Leaders, by their callings and positions are expected to engage in activities that will foster peace in the society so as to bring about growth and development. Peace building, therefore, is one of the ways leaders can use their personality influence and that of their offices to bring about mutual cohabitation in the community where they reside. This work had critically examined the three levels of leadership in Nigeria and how they can be maximized for a successful peace-building process. Political, religious and traditional leadership, which have been highlighted in this paper are spread across every aspect of the society – whether in the rural or the urban centres. By implication, no matter the cause or nature of conflict, peace building is necessary. Leaders at all levels in Nigeria are expected to play their part in making the society better through peace building. To make this happen, leaders should be people of integrity and well educated.

Leaders who will engage in any form of peace building also need to know that there are certain risks that come along with the task and should always be ready for the negative reactions from different quarters. Peace terminators are usually all out to frustrate any peace building meeting because of their selfish interests and unwillingness to make the society better. It is therefore necessary that peace building leaders be security conscious as they carry out the tasks of peace building.

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