

Religious Actors and Implementation of 2002 Kaduna Peace Declaration

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Abstract: Implementation of 2002 Kaduna peace declaration is central to establishing sustainable peace. Thus, activities of religious actors were fundamental to rebuilding of good communities' relationship and development of constructive relations among conflicting groups in Kaduna State, Nigeria. This study, therefore, examined the role of religious actors in the implementation 2002 of Kaduna peace declaration through the use of qualitative research techniques to unveil the findings. Overwhelmingly, the study found out that religious organisations and actors promote community peace, and conversations with those in different religions. In this vein, faith-based organisations and actors have largely and successfully contributed to the existing peace in Kaduna state.

Keywords: Kaduna peace declaration, religious actors, good communities.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion, peace and conflict had been a contentious subject attracting a wide array of arguments and contrasting opinions which are often grounded in popular belief and not empirical fact. While a lot of analysis may focus on the negative role of religion, it is also important to acknowledge the potential positive role of religion in peacebuilding for interfaith dialogue and other religiously motivated movements. According to Huntington, religion is central, perhaps the central force in

the modern world that motivates and mobilise people [1]. For this reason, Marty sees religion as the one that focuses on critical concern, builds community, appeals to myth and symbol through rites and ceremonies and demands certain behaviour from its adherents [2]. Religion has always remained a considerable factor of Nigeria's public sphere, in spite of the belief in some quarters that religion is redundant in the modern age [3].

In addition, religious communities have moral assets, which address the realities of violence, and social assets by mobilising public action and great reach at all levels of the society [4]. In real sense of this, the teaching and practices of world major religions Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion, Buddhism, and Judaism; show spiritual and moral formations that support peace, social justice, reconciliation and harmony within and between humanity and divinity. Hence, all religions developed laws and ideas that give civilization with their cultural commitments to peace related values [5]. These include openness to and love of strangers, suppression of unbridled ego and acquisition, human rights, unilateral gestures of forgiveness and humility, inter-personal

repentance and acceptance of responsibility to reconciliation and social justice.

Meanwhile, Kaduna state had over the years seen conflicts for which several peacebuilding activities have followed them [8]. In this vein, Ayantayo [9] revealed that religion in Africa is noticeable in its culture and thereby making conflicts to arise from / out of two different religious persons in the same religious space when one person is holding the truth and the other holding wrong belief. Conversely, the history of religion in Kaduna state, Nigeria, is largely based on ethnic tradition and religious affiliations, which often bring about conflicts. As a result, there has been a long history of hostility as well as unease and mutual suspicion between the non-Muslim ethnic groups and Hausa-Fulani Muslim in Kaduna state. Riots by Maitatsine followers broke out in Maiduguri in late October 1982 and spread to Kaduna where vigilantes [6] killed thirty-nine sect members. Furthermore, the polarisation that followed Nigeria's membership of Organisation for Islamic Countries (OIC) in 1986 appeared to have opened a new phase of ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna state [7].

Similarly, the Kafanchan disturbances in 1987 started as a theological disagreement between the Christian and Muslim students of the Kafanchan Teachers College. Likewise, another serious riot took place in 1992 in the Zangon-Kataf local government area of Kaduna state as a result of relocation of Zango weekly market from the Hausa dominated town to a new site in the outskirts of town [8]. Also included is a Christian-Shi-a Muslim conflict in 1997. Subsequently, in the year 2000, Kaduna state was hit by another destructive Muslim-Christian violence as a result of Zamfara state's establishment of Sharia law [8]. Additionally, in November 2002, protests to hosting of Miss World beauty contest in Nigeria spiraled out of control and people were killed as Muslim and Christian groups fought one another for three days in the northern city of Kaduna [9]. Likewise, 2011 post-election rioting that swept eleven northern states and the power realignment that took place at both the federal and state level after the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua (a Muslim from the North) on May 5, 2010, that led to the ascension to the presidency of Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan (a Christian from the minority ethnic group in the oil-producing Niger-Delta region) created another round of conflicts. This was not unconnected to Christian deputy governor in Kaduna state that became the governor of the state [10].

It is against this background that this study will unveil the roles of religious actors in the implementation of 2002 Kaduna peace declaration.

Identity Mobilisation in Kaduna state, Nigeria

Identity is in a dialectical relationship with society which has its formation connected to social processes, determined by the social structure and maintained, modified or even reshaped by social relations [11]. While identities are influenced by social processes, relations and structure, identity can in turn influence them as well. Thus, identity is important in understanding how individuals and groups construct their value systems, since the latter often motivate their actions. Hetherington [13] also defines identity within personal and social contexts, though he added more specificity to the issues which form identity. He contends that identity is more than about self-reflection, understanding and the development of a life-project based on the idea of a calling. Thus, it is fundamentally about issues of belonging, expression, performance, identification and communication with others.

By virtue of the complex web of politically salient identities, history of chronic and seemingly intractable conflicts and instability, Nigeria can be rightly described as one of the most deeply divided states in Africa [13]. However, identity or its transformations can either be positive or dysfunctional. With regards to the resurgence of negative forms of

identity politics, Kofi Annan Secretary General of the United Nations Organisation had stated in his 1997 Annual Report that:

This particularistic and exclusionary form of identity politics has intensified in recent years within and among nations; it is responsible for some of the most egregious violations of international humanitarian law and, in several instances, of elementary standards of humanity... Negative forms of identity politics are a potent and potentially explosive force. Great care must be taken to recognise, confront and restrain them lest they destroy the potential for peace and progress that the new era holds in store [14].

Hence, identity mobilisation can also be positive. In addition to this, Osaghae [13] has drawn attention to the positive mobilisation of identity to complement the activities of the state. Sequence to this, recent literature on religious identity has also emphasised the positive role of religion in peacebuilding [15]. Commenting on this trend, Kofi Annan in his 2002 report on the prevention of armed conflict affirmed:

Religious organisations can play a role in preventing armed conflict because of the moral authority that they carry in many communities. Religious groups and leaders possess a culturally-based comparative advantage in conflict prevention and can help to “emphasise the common humanity of all parties and mobilise non-violent alternative ways of expressing dissent prior to the outbreak of conflict [16].

The issue of actor's identity in conflict management and prevention remains the central focus for many researches by scholars working on conflict in Nigeria [13, 17]. There is a relationship between “in-groups” who are variously shaped by religion and “out-groups” who are also defined by similar orientations. However as ethno/religious walls became fluid, individuals from different ethnic background were either being variously “won”, co-opted, and manipulated by religious actors into their religious folds [13].

Meanwhile, religious identities in Nigeria did not only become a strong and deciding factor in inter-ethnic group relations, it was also a strong determinant of social identification as most people were organised around their respective religions. Most actions, policies and appointments of government at every level were seen through the lens of religion. The lens also extended to dress, food, and the balance of religious propagation

in educational institutions, allocation of airtime on radio and television, a fair balance between Muslims and Christians public holidays, and the religious composition of the armed forces [18]. Thus, the translocation of violence as it spiral or spills across geographical zones in Kaduna state could be related to the contagious effects of how religion was organised and mobilised.

Similarly, Ibrahim [6] was of the view that ethno-religious conflicts in Kaduna state and Nigeria in general are linked to citizenship within the context of identity, which is rooted in the politics of inclusion or exclusion. These are tied to claims and counter-claims over identity as a basis for determining who is excluded or included from decision making as well as access to opportunities under the 'we' versus 'them' cliché [19]. In this sense, durable peace in which the mutual coexistence of all religious and ethnic groups can only be achieved when democracy is deepened [20]. The ethnic and religious minority groups that feels treated as second class citizens by the three major ethnic groups (Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo) are forced to adopt both constitutional and extra-constitutional means to challenge the hegemony of these three groups. In the same vein, Francis argued that:

contested identities (along ethnic and religious fault-lines), have dominated the literature on the analysis of conflict and have come to represent the stereotypical images of Africa. Identity constitutes, but is not limited to, the following; race, ethnicity, religion, language, nationalism and cultural/common heritage. Political ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and virulent nationalism have led to the emergence of assertive identity politics with the capacity to mobilize public support for its cause as well as the capacity to instigate violent conflicts as witnessed in Nigeria since the inception of the fourth republic from May 1999 to April 2007 [21]

The challenge for most minority groups in Kaduna state is that they are permanent minorities and the majority groups; a permanent majority, which has serious implications for inter-ethnic and religious relations among the diverse ethnic and religious identities in Nigeria. In this sense, the values of cooperation, consensus and compromise would be undermined and this has posed an enormous challenge for the task of nation building in view of the fact that they are all forced to co-exist in an environment of mutual mis-trust, apathy and suspicion[22]. However, the incentive for ethnic and religious groups to approach the courts in cases of disputes is dependent on

the remedies available, in terms of access to courts, the cost of judicial actions, and delay in getting court judgments and individuals' confidence in the judiciary as an impartial arbiter.

Religious Actors and 2002 Peace Declaration in Kaduna state

Signing of the peace agreement was one of the landmarks in the inter-religious peacebuilding in Kaduna state to denouncing communal violence and endorsed sanctions against those that create trouble. The leaders pledged to " work with all section of the community for a lasting and just peace and condemned all forms of violence; sought to " create an atmosphere where present and future generations will co-exist with mutual respect and trust of one another " , and announced the establishment of a " permanent joint committee to make the recommendations of this declaration and encourage dialogue between the two faiths." This declaration is binding on all people in the State from 22nd August 2002. It was also agreed that any individual or group found breaching the peace must be punished in accordance to the due process of the law. The Peace Declaration was agreed and signed by eleven Christian leaders including Archbishop Achigili and eleven Muslim leaders, Imams and Sheikhs and by the then Governor of Kaduna state, His

Meanwhile Chris [23] believed that in spite of challenges of peacebuilding activities, the Nigerian state has to a large extent, managed ethnic and religious pluralism in order to establish sustainable peace. These have been done by engaging in activities such as: in the design and report of population census, questions of religious or ethnic identity were downplayed; the promotion of inter-faith cooperation through the setting up of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), which consists of clerics from both Christian and Muslim leaders III; the establishment of the Federal Character Commission (FCC) in the Nigerian constitution, so as to ensure inclusivity of all the state of the federation in appointments, admission and promotion among others; and the application of the principle of the North –South power sharing arrangement.

In the same vein, a more permanent body that has gained a degree of national and international prominence is the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), in Kaduna. It was founded by James Wuye, a Pentecostal Pastor, and Muhammad Ashafa, an Imam, who once led opposing community militias but reconciled and now work together for peace with the aims to re-establishing relationships damaged by violence, minimizing the likelihood of reoccurrence and organising projects that involve both Christians and Muslims, such as cultural events and workshops[24]. To ensure widespread impact, Wuye and Ashafa set up committees and

advisory councils made up of religious and community leaders to monitor peace-building efforts and provide feedback, using a hotline to report religious violence nationwide. At least two people (1 Muslim and 1 Christian) from each of the Nigeria's 36 states are trained in conflict resolution (with more staff in conflict-prone states) and stay in close communication with the Centre's headquarters in Kaduna state. Their work on peacebuilding has also spread beyond Nigeria to Northern Ghana, Burundi and Kenya. Their Centre is sustained through support from international donor and religious organizations, and local and regional governments in Nigeria[25]. Various religious leaders and other peace actors have been trained and had been equipped with basic skills on non-violence communication skills so as to check preachers that have tendencies towards provocative utterances during their sermons and public lectures. In a remarkable and recordable achievement, the Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna was largely responsible for organising the Kaduna Interfaith Peace Commission which signed the Kaduna peace agreement of eleven Muslims and eleven Christian's leaders in August 2002. The document of the Kaduna Peace Agreement was based on the format of the Alexandria Declaration of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Holy Land of Israel and Palestine.

In the document:

In the name of God, who is Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate, we who have gathered as Muslim and Christian religious leaders from Kaduna State pray for peace in our state and declare our commitment to ending the violence and bloodshed, which has marred our recent history. According to our faiths, killing innocent lives in the names of God is a desecration of His Holy Name, and defames religions in the World. The violence that has occurred in Kaduna State is an evil that must be opposed by all people of good faith. We seek to live together as neighbours, respecting the integrity of each other's historical and religious heritage. We call upon all to oppose incitement, hatred and the misrepresentation of one another (Alexandria Declaration of Religious Leaders for Peace in the Holy Land of Israel and Palestine).

Consequently, Interfaith Mediation Centre, Kaduna has a sponsored media outreach that is used to popularise the Kaduna state peace declaration which was facilitated by the centre. Radio jingles (public service announcements) and call-in programs are been sponsored by the centre. These have helped to continue the momentum created by the Peace

Declaration. They have produced a weekly series on local television, quoting passages of the Koran and the Bible showing common ground between Islam and Christianity.

There is a mass mobilization of the entire populace towards tolerance behavior by religious actors. Thus, the communities in Kaduna state have constantly been encouraged to play a major role in keeping the groups together and in avoiding outright failure of sustainable peace. This appears to be consistent with the interview response from a religious leader:

I have engaged in a public relations campaign to achieve peace. I periodically hold joint lectures for Islamic clerics on how faith promotes peace, which are aired on the radio and TV. During these discussions, I invite the audience to call in with questions. We are now engaged beyond just talking. We are working to manage the crisis through information, education, and friendship.

Also, supporting the above interview is a newspaper report [29] in which Governor Mukhtar Ramalan Yero of Kaduna state urged leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) in the state to preach peace and love among people of the state:

I'm here to plead with you, Kaduna state is ours, it belongs to all those who is living there. We have a duty to ourselves, which is tolerance. The division in terms of religion or ethnicity does not mean we should harm each other, but we should understand ourselves and live peacefully [30].

Likewise a religious leader commented on this in an interview:

We invite grassroots religious leaders and seek the active consultation with those involved in the conflict. And we use religion to make them remorseful of their previous violent conduct.

Furthermore, a religious leader commented on how they were trying to find ways to sustain peace by re-building lives and houses of worship:

After the Shari'a riots, we were doing workshops for youth, women, tribal and religious leaders for reconciliation and trauma counseling. We are also working on the reconstruction of mosques and churches, using the youth from the affected areas that played a role in their destruction.

A Pastor also commented

“We want to break the cord of hatred for Muslims and Christians in this state and in Nigeria at large and we believe that little by little, we will overcome the threat to peace and peaceful coexistence.

Moreso, a staff in one of the faith based organizations observed:

Our organisation has an expansive social network, which includes contacts that cut across religion, gender, age, and ethnicity. We have our ears to the ground, and we are engaged with both religious and traditional leaders. When trying to get the radical youth to the table, we know who we should approach to apply the appropriate social pressure. We also have an early warning and early response mechanism that consists of a very diverse network.

However, there are challenges which often occurs as constraint

A religious leader observed

There are misrepresentations of teaching by religious groups, thereby misquoting the holy book to achieve their selfish aims. Some religious leaders do not want to be regulated. They believed in their own ideology with no consideration for others.

In addition, the programme officer in one of the organisation, observed that:

Our major problems working in Kaduna state lies in the misrepresentation of religious teaching by religious leaders that believed that our organisation is ‘Chris-Islam’. A popular adage signifying combination of Islam and Christianity. This misconception has been the bane of our problem in Kaduna state. Funding of our programme is also a major challenge.

This was supported by the interview from a religious leader:

Another major challenge is that many Christian leaders, the so called Evangelicals, they do not adhere to this mantra of loving your neighbor, and as a result they dislike my commitment to tolerance. They look at Christian-Muslim relations from a political point of view: I do not believe that I am here to convert, but rather to be a witness, and they dislike this perspective.

Funding has been the major challenge of faith based organizations in Kaduna state. This is also supported by the statement from an interview from religious leader:

It is often difficult to raise financial support locally. I am also wary and scared of external funding, because I fear those who will provide funding and consequently try to dictate what I will be teaching.

Other respondents observed

We are sometimes affected with funding challenges to start a programme and also to continue execution of programmes. Further to this, we need encouragement which for long has not been on our side from the members of public.

Supporting this is a staff in a faith based organisation, who observed

Sustainability is always a challenge. It is very difficult to secure long term funding. The government is slowly beginning to assist our programs, but at the same time we are also afraid of government politicization. We fear that if we operate too closely with the government, we will lose both our independence and neutrality. Unfortunately, the tensions on the ground are replicated in the political sphere.

CONCLUSION

Recognizing that faith and religious institutions have often played important roles in conflict resolution, this study proceeds from the assumption that religions also represent considerable potential for peacebuilding. Overwhelmingly, the study has shown that religious organisations and actors promote community peace, and conversations with those in different religions. In this vein, faith-based organisations and actors have largely and successfully contributed to the existing peace in Kaduna state. The social capital theory thus supported the finding by postulating that the features of social organisation such as the norms and networks enable people to act collectively for the purpose of mass mobilisation [31]. A possible explanation for the correlation between heterogeneity challenges about Kaduna state and the development of social capital is that people have more trust and feel more comfortable interacting with people that are similar in terms of religion, race and ethnicity [32,33]. Government should therefore endeavour to partner with faith-based organisations and actors to

evolve strategies that would entrench appropriate communication for peacebuilding activities.

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