



Religious Approach to Peace and Conflict Resolution In A Pluralistic Society

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Abstract

This paper discusses religious approach in peace and conflict resolution in a pluralistic society. Conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in every society. Religion is a belief system and ideology as practiced in every society. Peace on the hand does not mean absence of conflict but presence of equality and equity. Religion has an influence over peace and conflict situations, which can be for and/or against. The scope of this paper looks at religion from the palliative perspective towards achieving peaceful society and resolving conflicts, especially in a pluralistic society like Nigeria. In any society, peace is necessary for the smooth running of its spheres of activities, which can be political, economic, cultural, social etc. The paper adopts Structural Conflict Theory as a framework to analyse the role of religion in peace and conflict resolution in a pluralistic society. Methodologically, the qualitative method of data collection and analysis is adopted. The paper adopts historical and descriptive research design. The paper argues that conflict is more dominant in a pluralistic society and religion is a more effective approach to bringing and promoting peace co-existence, and resolve conflicts. Conclusively, the paper believes that peace does not mean absence of conflict but presence equality and equity in a society.

Keywords: Religion, Peace, Conflict and Pluralistic Society.

Introduction



Pluralistic society is a society with heterogeneous ethnic, political, cultural, economic and religious diversities. Pluralistic societies are susceptible to conflict. Lack of strong political culture and bad governance characterized by corruption are the major causes of conflict in any pluralistic society. Nwamarah (n.d., p. 3), explains that, “It has to be noted however that religion being a two edged sword can be as destructive as it is constructive if not properly handled especially in a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation as Nigeria”. Nigeria, for example is a multi-ethnic (pluralist) nation and therefore a strikingly plural society. Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani, Ibo, Ijaw, Tiv, Idoma, Nupe, Urobo, Birom, Ibibio, Efik, Anang, Ebira, Ekiti and a lot more, are the various ethnic groups that make up Nigeria (Ajayi&Owumi, 2013). Each of these groups has its language and within each language are also dialects. Religious wise, there are also many religious beliefs and ideologies and practices by each ethnic group. According to Aghemelo&Osumah (2009, p. 2), “Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious nation-state with over four hundred ethnic nationalities associated with many religious congregations”.

In Nigeria, there are three major religious beliefs- Christianity, Islam and tradition beliefs, which cut across all the ethnic groups. Christianity is predominate in the Southern part of the country while Islam is predominate in the Northern Nigeria. Traditional beliefs cut across Nigeria. “Nigeria, a heterogeneous state comprised of several pluralities: principally ethnic and religious. Although the country is a federation, it is yet to find an enduring formula for peaceful coexistence of her more than 280 ethnic groups and different religious communities” (John, 2009, p. 3).

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed its share of conflicts, including a 1967–70 civil war when the southeast tried to secede as Biafra. The numerous coups and attempted coups have often had a regional/ethno-religious flavour. Since the return to civilian rule in 1999, the so-called Fourth Republic—insurgencies have flared up in the south-south (Niger Delta) and in the northeast (especially Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states) has Boko Haram terrorist group, postelection violence was serious in Kaduna in 2011, and in the Middle Belt, herders-farmers violence continues (John, 2015). The south-eastern states of Abia, Imo,



Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi are not left out of violent conflicts. Kidnapping and Fulani Herdsmen-farmers violent clashes have become regular occurrences in almost every state of the federation. The southwestern region is not completely insulated from the conflicts. Lagos especially, along Ikorodu area is currently experiencing violent killing of people as a result of *Bardoo* cult activities. To Marc (n.d., p.1) “religion has a dual legacy in human history regarding peace and violence. Conflict resolution theory must examine more systematically the decision-making of religious actors and leaders in order for strategies of peacemaking to be effective in the relevant contexts”.

Sunday (2015, p. 2) explains pluralism as:

The existence of diverse cultures within the same society breeds conflict. It is the harmonious and enriching co-existence within one political community of people of divergent, at times incompatible views, establishing and promoting their common good. It arises from the fact that while people differ from each other in many aspects, they interact with each other and have a unity as members of the same political community. It is this sense of shared identity involved in the interaction of peoples who are ethnically, politically and religiously diversified that makes for the pluralist society.

The current rate of hate speeches from every part of the country is basically due religious and ethnic orientations and sentiments, and is heightening the level of religious and tribal conflict, which does not promote peaceful co-existence among Nigerians. It has also explained further, the pluralistic nature of country. Worthy of note are the hate speeches from the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) through its Radio Biafra and lately, from the Youth arm of Arewa Peoples Congress (APC). From the Niger Delta region, the Avengers and other militant groups are not left out. The outcome of all this is lack of national consciousness and integration. More importantly, they do not promote nationhood. In view of this fact, Sunday (2015, p. 24) explains that “National integration is used here to describe a process of ensuring that the component parts (tribes and peoples) of a nation are brought together to achieve a higher sense of belonging, mutual understanding and nationalism”. Richard (1999, p. 45) shares this same view thus: “The loyalties of Nigerian to linguistic, religion and ethnic groups to prevalent,



and so demonstrably salient to political life, which make such sentiments the main focus of their analysis”. Every ethnic group pays higher loyalty and respect to its group than the country.

In line with the argument of this paper, Nigerian is better described as a nation-state than a nation. Though, pluralism is noticeable both in a nation-state and nation over the world, it is the pattern of pluralism that differentiates one nation from another. Although America’s culture is becoming more uniform, its society remains a diverse mix of ethnic, racial, and religious groups. This also makes the USA a pluralistic nation-state like Nigeria. But what has placed the USA above Nigeria is that the USA’s political, social and economic ideologies are based on true democratic principles. Structurally, the USA is practicing true federalism while Nigeria is practicing lopsided federalism. This is because plural tendencies are the determining factors in our interactions and relationship as a people.

Pluralism also refers to the acceptance of many groups in society or many schools of thought in an intellectual or cultural discipline. The United States and Nigeria are pluralistic societies, meaning are composed of many nationalities, races, religions, and creeds. In the case of the USA, some of the people who immigrated to America embraced the opportunity to leave old cultures behind and to remake themselves unencumbered by past traditions and loyalties. But in Nigeria, our old cultural, religious and ethnic identities are still with us and they have directly or indirectly affected what we do as a people within the political, economic and other social relations.

Theoretical Framework

Generally, conflict theory seeks to scientifically explain the general forms of conflict in society: how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings. The central concerns of conflict theory are the unequal distribution of scarce resources and power. What these resources are might be different for each theorist, but conflict theorists usually work with three systems of stratification: class, status, and power (Lewis, Ralf & Randall 213). Social conflict theories according to Ikejiani-Clark (2009, p. 38) sees “society as existing in continuous struggle or friction between different groups”. Jary&Jary (2000) as cited in Ikejiani-Clark (2009) explain conflict theories as theories that emerged as a result of incompatible and unreconciled relationship, which exists and regulate the social structure and the nature of the society. Giving



credence to this fact, Cohen (37) observes that “the goals of any theory is to explain something which has occurred with a view of to dealing with problems which arose or may arise as a result”. In line with the above, Shedrack(2006, p. 41) adds that theories of social conflict “provide framework for the understanding of conflict, especially the causes of conflict, the conditions under which conflicts occur, and sometimes the conditions for their resolution”. Conflict theory is a theory that claims society is in a state of perpetual conflict due to competition for limited resources. It holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than consensus and conformity. Theory, when applied correctly, is a practice of intellectual humility. According to Brady (2016, p. 12), “a theory is an attempt to explain and understand the world as it is experienced by human beings in our limited earthly capacities”.

To Lewis; Ralf & Randall (2006),

Conflict theorists commonly see power as the central feature of society, rather than thinking of society as held together by collective agreement concerning a cohesive set of cultural standards, as functionalists do. Where power is located and who uses it and who doesn't, are thus fundamental to conflict theory. In this way of thinking about things, power isn't necessarily bad: it is a primary factor that guides society and social relations. Conflict theory is a theory that explains the general conflict in society scientifically, which also seeks to explain how conflict starts and varies, and the effects it brings(p. 213).

On the importance of theories of conflict, Marc (n.d., p. 1) believes that:

There are two essential benefits to exploring a relationship between religion and conflict resolution theory. First, there is a vast reservoir of information in sacred texts on peacemaking and on pro-social and anti-social values that affect conflict. The replicability of past methods of conflict resolution or of deterring violence should be a critical concern. Second, religion plays the central role in the inner life and social behaviour of millions of human beings, many of whom are currently actively engaged in struggle. With this understanding there might be more productive interaction between religious communities and conflict resolution strategies.

There are many theories to explain social conflicts by different schools of thought. The theories are Structural Conflict Theory, Biological Theory, Physiological Theory, Economic Theory, Psycho-Cultural Conflict Theory, Human Needs Theory, Systems Theory, Frustration-



Aggression Theory and Relational Theory. This paper adopts the Structural Conflict Theory. Structural Conflict Theory has two schools of thought, which are first: the Marxist radical structural theory based on the Marxist dialectical school with advocates are Karl Marx and Fredrick Engles, V.I Lenin. The second school of thought on Structural Conflict Theory is the liberal structuralism with its advocates as Ross Marc, Scarborough and Johan Galtung.

Structural Conflict Theory

The structural basis of conflict is a theory that explains conflict as product of the tension that arises when groups must compete for scarce recourses. The structural theory of conflict is a snapshot that describes the condition of a society. The structural basis of conflict is a theory that explains conflict as product of the tension that arises when groups must compete for scarce recourses. On first glance, this theory is seem self-evident. The theorists of structural conflict build their theories on their observations of societies. The theorists see conflict, observe that conflict occurs among groups, and that groups have structures which define them. The common theme for these theorists is that the structure of society results in conflict. Structural conflict theory is divided into two main orientations. First, the radical theory prominently propounded by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engel, and V.I. Lenin. Second, the liberal conflict theory represented by Ross Marc, Scarborough, and Johan Galtung. All these philosophers fall under Marxism.

The central argument of structural conflict theory is that conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. Shedrack (2006, p. 41) explains further that structural conflict theory “looks at social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, inequity etc., as sources of conflict”. From the Marxist point of view, conflicts occur due to the fact that the society is in exploitative condition and nature is unjust to human societies, which is dominated by the exploitative class of bourgeoisie against the exploited class comprising of the proletariat. The exploitative class can be found in economic, political and even in religious settings of every society. There is always a clash of interests between these two classes due to the inequality in social relations, which are propelled by the antagonism of material accumulation.

According to Marx (1967),



In all stratified societies there are two major social groups: a ruling class and a ruled class. The ruling class derives its power from its ownership and control of the forces of production. The ruling class exploits and oppresses the ruled class. As a result there is a basic conflict of interest between the two classes. Class theory rests on the premise that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles (p. 17).

The various institutions of society such as the religious, legal and political systems are instruments of ruling class domination and serve to further its interests (Shivaji, 2014, p. 12). According to this view, ever since human society emerged from its primitive and relatively undifferentiated state it has remained fundamentally divided between classes who clash in the pursuit of class interests (Coser, n.d., p. 1). Sheriff (2015) in discussing Marxist stand on structural conflict believes that

There is a constant struggle between the two, but he that has the financial muscle controls both the state and the poor, and that is the structure of society. Thus, the Marxist stand is that the state is itself a product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms (Lenin as cited in Sheriff, 2015, p. 8). The state is therefore structured to be in a perpetual state of conflict. In this way of thinking about things, power isn't necessarily bad: it is a primary factor that guides society and social relations (pp. 9-10).

Structural theory is remarkably strong on the immediate and underlying factors that lead to conflict. It presents a large number of such factors that make the emergence and escalation of internal conflict possible (Brown, 1996 cited in Shedrack, 2006). Structural conflict theory is classified into two- the Radical and the liberal schools of thought.

Radical Structural Conflict Theory

The radical structural conflict theorists are Karl Marx, Fredrick Engels, V.I. Lenin, MaoTse Tung etc. In the writing of Marx in his dialectical school, conflict is as a result of the social relations of production under capitalism, which generates two major and distinct classes in the society based on access to and control of means of production. Marx believes that, capital does not just generate these classes but more critically polarizes society ultimately into two classes- the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletariat is made of the labourers (i.e. the



owners of labour- workers) and the bourgeoisie who are owners of means of production. And conflict under this capitalist condition can be resolved according to Marx, by the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat through revolution. Writing on the capital, Marx provides in his submission that the history of all hitherto known or existing societies is the history of class or social conflict.

Radical perspectives have historical roots dating back to the works of Marx. Yet until the 1960's, aside from a few sporadic appearances, the conflict and radical perspectives have not received wide acceptance within sociological discourse in the U.S., though it has been a long established tradition in European sociology. Both conflict and radical perspectives focus on inequality, conflict and power and their relation to the law and criminal justice system. They both question power and privilege. The radical perspective is a form of conflict theory, but one where the primary conflict has an economic base (Reiman, 2013).

All conflicts in the word of Guerin,

Can be analyzed as conflicts over resources. Conflict can occur because resources are perceived to be allocated unevenly; there may be scarce resources for a given group; there might be a number of resources that interfere with each other when all are pursued; and there might be a careful allocation of resources with respect to some groups but this has unwanted side-effects for the resources of another group (2013, p. 2).

Conflict may also connote hostility or physical confrontation (Jeong, 2000, p. 19). When goal incompatibility or perception/value differences reach a crescendo, a manifestation of actual hostility or clashes is possible. In general literature, conflict is interchangeably used with other terms. This is where it becomes pertinent to mention words or terms that represent synonyms of conflict. These include contrast, disharmony, discord, struggle, contest, strife, antagonism, controversy, clash, rivalry, contest, contention, brawl, fisticuff, fight, battle, feud, combat and war (Sheriff, 2015). Radical structural conflict sees Confrontation central to conflict, which in most cases lead to violent conflict. In line with this fact, Oberschall(2017) argues that violent conflict is characterized by the tactics and strategic actions the adversaries use for reaching a favorable outcome. A pivotal variable of confrontation is violence because it is likely to change the issues, players, strategies and other parameters of the conflict. An election campaign, a



funeral procession, a march celebrating a historic event, and other collective actions are not in themselves violent. But, when political tensions and social divisions are acute, the probability of violence at these events is increased, and can lead to polarization and further violence.

Liberal Structural Conflict Theory

In this second school of thought on structural conflict, philosophers like Scarborough, Johan Galtung and Ross Mark are its advocates. Johan Galtung propounded theory of negative and positive peace to explain how structural conflicts can occur in society. Shedrack(2014, p.42) explains that the emphasis of liberal school of thought is how the competing interests of groups in a social formation tie conflict directly into social, economic, and political organization of society as well as the nature and strength of social network within and between formations.

Galtung (1973, p. 28) explains that “society is seen as a structure and the essential characteristics are the nature of the interaction relation and the interaction structure, not the nature of the individuals and sets of individuals”. Ross (1993) notes that in situations where economic and political discrimination and weak kinship ties are the defining characteristics in a society conflict is inevitable. Resource is a major cause of conflict between individuals and groups within political system and between nations. Scarborough (2006) says that in a situation where existing structures are in favour of one group while putting the others at a disadvantages. Where culture are seen as exclusive; where holders of certain powers or privileges are unwilling to acknowledge the rights of others to be different; or where people find it difficult to identify with the political and economic ideas of the chances are that conflict will emerge and escalate if nothing is done to curb such anomalies. Thus, exploitation that the social class relations is usually predicated in the view of Galtung (1973, p. 49), “on the assumption that he who is on top of the structure, in its center, will also command the resources”. In other words, it is predicated on the assumption that structural power is highly correlated with resource power; relational power with difference power to express the same in terms with a slightly different connotation.

The liberal structural conflict theory believes in “order and freedom” in a society. It argues that individuals, people have freedom to seek to achieve particular objectives and to satisfy their needs for comfort and honour and this characterized by mutual hostility and mutual



dependence. Both hostility and dependence are based on the nature of human ends and on the scarcity of means to satisfy them. The first source of hostility, given the scarcity of material resources, is the desire for comfort. Liberalism in this context is defined as order and freedom as the main problems of the society. This is because, the two fundamental problems of society are order and freedom, which are the consequences of the conditions of mutual antagonism and need, and of the desire that underlie those conditions.

Literature Review

Throughout the long era of human history, religion has been a major contributor to war, bloodshed, hatred, and intolerance. Yet religion has also developed laws and ideas that have provided civilizations with a cultural commitment to critical peace-related values (Marc, n.d., p. 1). The far northern states of Nigeria are overwhelmingly Muslims, and the southeast and south-south are just as clearly Christians. The religiously mixed states of the north central and southwest are also politically mixed. Overall, Nigeria is by far the largest country in the world with religious identities evenly divided between Muslims (90 million) and Christians (90 million) (John, 2015, p. 2).

The pluralistic nature of Nigeria has not brought about much required stability. “There is no doubt, that there have been repeated communal, ethnic, religious and debilitating intra-governmental conflicts since the transition to democracy in 1999” (Ajayi&Owumi, 2013, p. 933).Diamond (1987 cited in Rotimi, 1999, p. 4) is of the view that “Ethnic conflicts have long been recognized as one of the more fundamental threats to institutional stability, political order and state cohesion in the multi-ethnic societies”.

Ker (2003) cited in Sunday (2015, p. 239) is of the view that:

National integration or unity in a pluralistic society like Nigeria has been a problematic issue since the attainment of independence in 1960. However, one of the chief features of the Nigerian society is its pluralistic appeal. This has made the task of building a united nation out of the heterogeneous ethnic and religious groups, one of the greatest challenges facing the country.

At this point, it may be useful to step back from the recent violence and review broader patterns of religious affiliations and conflict across the country. Nigeria is not only the largest half Muslim, half Christian country by far but also ranked as the most religious in the world. With between three hundred and four hundred ethno-linguistic groups, it is as well one of the most complex, though three ethnic identities make up two-thirds of the population: Hausa-Fulani at 30 percent, Yoruba at 20 percent, and Igbo at 17 percent. In general, Hausa-Fulani tends to be Muslims. Yorubas are split evenly between Muslims and Christians. Igbos are predominantly Christians. Hence, ethnic and religious identities may be conjoined, which also tends to reinforce regional zones: the north, predominantly Muslims; the southwest, a mixture of Yoruba Muslims and Christians; and the southeast, predominantly Christian Igbos what is the source?

Table 1. Language and Religious Characteristics of Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria

| S/N. | Name of Zones | Geo-Political | Main Language | Religious | |
|------|---------------|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | | | | Muslim | Christian |
| 1 | South-West | Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti | Yoruba with several dialects | Minority | Majority |
| 2 | South-East | Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra | Igbo with several dialects | Minority | Majority |
| 3 | South-South | Akwaibom, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers | Edo, Izon, Igbo with several dialects | Minority | Majority |
| 4 | North-Central | Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Plateau | Hausa, Yoruba with several dialects | Almost Equally | Almost Equally |
| 5 | North-East | Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe | Hausa, Fulfulde with several dialects | Majority | Minority |
| 6 | North-West | Kaduna, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Jigawa, Kebbi, Katisna | Hausa | Majority | Minority |

Source: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 2001(Okunola, 2007).

Religion, Peace and Conflict Resolution



Tyagi (2012, p. 1) argues that: “We can’t ignore the fact that religion, next to family, is the second oldest institution. It governs the social as well as personal behaviour of man by providing guidelines, laws and principles relating to his interaction with his fellow man”. Research findings reveal that for many centuries, religion has been involved in both inter-communal and international conflicts. Though religion is implicated in many conflicts, it has played a significant part in peace-building as well as resolving conflicts in different societies (Bakaki, n.d.). Olusegun & Akin (1992, pp. 172-173) point out the “The growth of religion in the country’s social life is not altogether a bad development, and could, if properly managed, make for greater social harmony, integration and unity. Christianity and Islam preach accommodation, tolerance, cohabitation and peaceful co-existence”.

According to the work of Muhammad and James (1999), one of the tenets of Islam is nonviolent and peace building values. The Quran and Hadith stipulate all humans are God’s creation, have sacred lives and thus are all equal (7:11), moreover; all Muslims are to respect and preserve human life (5:32). Smock (2006, p. 39) also shares the idea that “Islam equally calls for the quest for peace, which is a state of physical, mental, spiritual, and social harmony (5:64). Islam and Christianity share cultural roots, including a common commitment to peace”. Husain Syed Sajjad (1979, p. 133) in his own contributions quoted the Quran (2:285):

We do not distinguish between one prophet and another. Peace-oriented teachings of Islam and Christianity include the Law of Moses in the Bible; Exodus 20:13; ‘thou shall not kill’, and the focal point of Jesus preaching; ‘love’ (Mt.5:44); ‘love your enemies’, and as recorded and buttressed by Paul, the Apostle in (1 Cor.13:13): ‘love is supreme’.

At the national level, “the influence of the Northern Traditional Rulers Council (NTRC) at the regional level, the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) at the institutional level, the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) have in various ways contributed to the realization of the laudable goals of peace building and national development” (John, 2009, p. 13). Laying credence to this view Ikejiani-Clark (2009, p. 317), advises the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), NIREC to “set in motion



the process of reconciling conflicting groups through its committee on reconciliation to preach, teach and dialogue towards peace, reconciliation and healing”. This is because Olusegun& Akin (1992, p. 169) believe that: “Religion, when properly managed, could serve as an integrative factor for achieving unity, cohesion and national integration especially in a pluralistic nation as Nigeria”.

Ikejiani-Clark (2009, pp. 313-314), writing further in the same vein asserts thus:

It is generally accepted that religion makes a significant contribution to the well-being of society. It is a unifying factor in the society. In Nigeria, the three major religions, Islam, Christianity and African Traditional religion, have made contributions to the life of the nation. The contributions have been made despite the aberrations seen in the practice of one religion or another that have led to the understanding of religion as a relying and unifying factor.

The three tenets that are commonly embedded in every religion that make it a viable approach to peace and conflict in any society are Love, Faith and Fear of God. Islam, Christianity and African Traditional religion all preach the same. In support of this fact, Tyagi (2012, p. 3) believes that:

In the present age, three things are missing from people’s lives (i) Love (ii) Faith and (iii) Fear. If a person loses these three things, he/she becomes fearless or violent too. Love for humanity and God, keeps a person humble and happy. Faith in God that everything will be alright keeps a person going on. And fear of God, keeps one down-to-earth and kind. Religion is one of the strongest institutions that help a person believe in these three things simultaneously as they are important to control human behaviour. Religion is not only a promoter of peace but it has also worked in the field of conflict prevention and resolution for ages.

Religion has a lot to do with the culture of people and the society they belong to. This is on the fact religion talks both about the lives and belief systems, and how people relate. The culture of every society has existed millions of years before the emergency of any religion and therefore, cannot be clearly separated from Islam and Christianity and even traditional religion of any society. To this effect, Macharia (n.d.) explains that “culture and religion are closely related.



They are about the way a particular people or different peoples live, bring up their young, what they believe in, and how they relate to their neighbours. While culture is about traditions and history of the people, religion is more about of faith”.“The positive gains of religion can contribute to economic growth and development through the encouragement of industry and productivity. Tenets of both Christianity and Islam have implication for good governance and political stability through the exhortation of equity, fairness and understanding as core political values” (Olusegun& Akin, 1992, p. 173).

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) and Inter-Religious Mediation Groups in Nigeria

1. The Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs,
2. The Christian Association of Nigeria,
3. Jamaâ'atuNasril Islam
4. The Conflict Management Stakeholders Network,
5. Christian Solidarity Worldwide in Middle-Belt states of Benue, Plateau, Taraba, and Nasarawa
6. The Nigeria Inter Religious Council 2009
7. The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)
8. The Interfaith Mediation Centre of Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (IMCMCDF) based in Kaduna
9. International Peace League (IPL) based in University of Jos
10. Berlin Declaration on Inter-religious Dialogue 2007
11. Centre for Religious Dialogue
12. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)
13. International Congress of Cultures in West Africa

Conclusionand recommendations

Pluralism is been explained as the existence of multi-ethnic groups, multi-cultural orientations, multi-religious organization in a society. Religion is a belief system and ideology as practiced in every society. It can be both constructive and destructive to peace and conflict in pluralistic society like Nigeria. Though religion has destructive tendencies, it is most approach to peace and conflict resolution in a pluralistic society. This is predicated on the fact that religion has a wider reach to the greater population of the members of every society as everyone in way or the other believes and belongs to one type of religion. Peace on the hand does not mean



absence of conflict but presence equality and equity in a society. No society can exist without conflict as it is a vital ingredient of the society when applied constructively. Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion have been identified as the three major religions. Structural conflict theory explains that the conflicts occur due to the fact that the society is in exploitative condition, and nature is unjust to human societies, which is dominated by the exploitative class of bourgeoisie against the exploited class comprising the proletariat.

All religious leaders should preach tolerance in order to promote peaceful co-existence and unity in Nigeria. Muslim and Christian preachers need to demonstrate better understanding and sympathy for each other. They must uphold the sacred nature of the human conscience and accord individuals the freedom to search for truth of their choice. The Nigerian government in conjunction with the major inter-religious faith based organisations should work to prevent conflicts, mediate and promote tolerance and understanding among warring parties, support healing and reconciliation, and work together in a holistic way to address the root causes of religious conflict in the country (Mashood, 2014, p. 148). For good understanding of each other's religion by the citizenry the Federal Government should make religious education compulsory at the primary and secondary level of our educational system. Such curriculum should seek to inculcate religious tolerance and to discourage religious indoctrination. The Federal Government should constitute a regulatory body which would be saddled with the responsibility to monitor and maintain peace. The body should discourage religious rivalry or groups from exhibiting destructive tendencies. Politicians in Nigeria should learn to stop to use religion as a "language of power". Its role should be on fulfilling social needs that directly affect the well-being of the citizenry.

The hate speeches that have characterized the current Buhari-Osibanjo led federal government should be looked into and some serious done about them. The growing trends and patterns of the hate speeches have heightened our pluralistic identities and open rooms for conflict, and is capable of hindering positive peace. To this effect, all ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria should understand that the current state of things cannot do us any good. It is therefore recommended in this paper that all religious and ethnic leaders should begin to talk to their



adherents. The paper also observed the current federal system is defective and is not working. The country needs an urgent restructuring to have a true physical federalism where the 36 states will enjoy autonomy. Let each state develop according to its capacity based on the resources available to it. This will promote healthy competitive economic activities. The system of the three tiers of government- federal, states and local government sharing from the so-called federation account should be stopped. This has made the current federal system a “piling bottle” federation (my apology to Senator Ike Ekweremadu).

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