The Impact of Religion and Ethnicity on Peace Building in Southern Kaduna

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Abstract

This work examines how religion and ethnicity have negative impact on peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna. For a very long time now Southern Kaduna has become an epic center for ethno-religious crisis which has affected peace, stability and national development in the region. Several efforts have been made by Government and organizations to stop these reoccurring ethno-religious conflicts; however, the conflict continues to aggravate because of lack of transparency, perceived interest of the government and lack of political will on the part of the government to resolve this crisis. The objective of this work is to look at the impact of ethnicity and religion on peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna. The study reviewed literature and used two theories: social conflict theory and conflict trap theory but the conflict trap theory was adopted as the major thrust. This study adopted qualitative method. The study found out that religion and ethnicity are used by selfish Politicians to cause violence and to make peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna elusive. The study recommends that in order for the desired stability and peacebuilding to take place in Southern Kaduna, the government should make those who perpetuate violence to face the wrath of the law. The religious and traditional rulers who are stakeholders in that region should be engaged by the government to promote peace, mutual tolerance and respect for religion and ethnicity.

Key words: Impact, Ethnicity, Religion, Peace building, Southern Kaduna.

1.0 Introduction

Since the 1960 independence of Nigeria, conflicts and struggle for power have taken different dimensions among the citizenry across regions, and such has constantly played out through religion, politics, and economic contestation, among others. Specifically, the country's Northwestern region has witnessed

intermittent social challenges resulting in killings, kidnapping and sexual assaults, molestation, night raids, and other atrocities, especially due to ethnic, religious, political, and socio-cultural contestations that have long permeated the fabric of the region. Kaduna State – located in the northwestern region, is predominantly agrarian with a high livestock presence and an active farming and trading population with large and several mineral deposits across the state. Over the past decades, Nigeria's Kaduna State has experienced sharp segregation along religious and ethnic lines precipitated by the outbreaks of violence. An estimated 10 000 to 20 000 people have lost their lives from 1980 to date (Abioro, 2021).

With peaks in violent conflict in the Kasuwan Magani crisis of 1980, the Gure-Kahugu disturbances of 1984, the Kafanchan conflict of 1987, the Zangon Kataf violent conflict of February and May 1992, the Kaduna violence of February 21, 2000, the Gwantu religious crisis of November 2001 and the brutal killings carried out by herdsmen and farmers among others since 2015 (Abioro, 2021). Religion and ethnicity are the Siamese twins affecting peacebuilding and political instability in Southern Kaduna. Because of the politics of identity, exclusion, politics of proximity played through religion and ethnicity, it has affected peace building in Southern Kaduna. Southern.

Definition of Terms

1.1 Ethnicity

According to Zagefka (2016) ethnicity is a collective people that have a shared common name, a shared myth of common descent historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific homeland and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. Berreman (2001) asserted that ethnicity, or ethnic group, are terms for ascribed identity bestowed on groups or categories defined by their distinctive cultural attributes such as language and religion. They are frequently, but not necessarily, ranked within their societies. If ranked, their status is not wholly ascriptive for, while the ethnic group's ranking is ascribed, the defining attributes of its individual members are acquired through shared socialization—learning—and what is learned can be rejected or forgotten.

1.2 Religion

Smith (2017) opined that anyone who wants to understand the world today has got to understand religion. The majority of people in the world affiliate with a religion and many do so fervently. Religious practices have been a part of homo Sapiens life since the beginning of our discernable history. Emile Durkheim presented what is probably the most influential interpretation of religion from a functionalist perspective. Durkheim argued that all societies divide the world into two categories: the sacred and the profane (the non-sacred). Religion id based upon this division. It is a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013).

What, then, is religion? First of all, it is a concept stemming from a particular culture at a particular time. Applying the concept across cultures thus requires adjustments such as abandoning boundaries and perhaps replacing them with family resemblances. While religions defy boundaries, they nonetheless share an assertion that non-human universe somehow is significantly like us (Guthrie, 1996).

1.3 Peacebuilding

Waldman (2009) posited that peacebuilding refers to the efforts and interventions aimed at overcoming the root causes of conflict. Peacebuilding is used when it comes to post-conflict reconstruction, namely the long-term process, that is, reconciliation, building social relationships and institutions. In broader conception, it means a gradual change in altitude with regard to conflict, prevention (Anyanwu, 2017).

Waldman (2009) asserted that peacebuilding refers to activities that go beyond crisis intervention or conflict management, such as long-term development that focuses on developing social, governmental and non-governmental (including religious) mechanism that favor non-violent, constructive means of resolving differences. The main aim of peacebuilding is that it focuses more on building a positive peace grounded in just societal relationship. In the case of Southern Kaduna, it is to foster peace and political stability in the region.

2.0 Cycle of Ethno-Religious Violence in Kaduna State

2.1 The Kasuwan Magani crisis of 1980

This violent conflict was caused by land acquisition and the dominance of the Hausa Muslim settlers over the native Christian Kadara and Gbagyi ethnic groups. For instance, the village head was Hausa; the Sarkin Kasuwa (Leader of the market) was also Hausa, who treated the natives with disdain. This created a tense relationship between the Hausa Muslims on one hand and the Kadara and Gbagyi population on the other. The immediate cause of the violent conflict was the attempt by the natives to reclaim the land, which the Hausa Fulani Muslim forcefully took from them. According to sources, the reclaiming of the land was necessary due to increase in population of the natives and the need to engage in commercial agriculture in order to supply enough food stuff to the growing demand from Kaduna metropolis (Barkindo, 2016).

The immediate cause of the violent conflict was that - in the process of reclaiming his land – the Christian, Hassan Apalaka, was killed by the Hausa on 11 January 1980 at Kujama. This caused the Kadara and Gbagyi to make ready for battle. In a matter of hours, Kasuwan Magani was engulfed in flames as the native Christian population and the Hausa Muslims fought each other, causing much death and destruction. In the conflict that ensued, religious identity was the key factor for targeting attacks (Barkindo, 2016).

2.1.2 The Gure-Kahugu disturbances of 1984

There was an existing feud between the Christian-dominated Gure ethnic group and Muslim Kahugu over land. As a result, a demarcation was fixed, but the Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji Nuhu Yahay, led Zaria emirate officials to move the demarcation pillars on two occasions onto what the Gure considered to be their heartland. This act was interpreted by the Gure to mean that the emirate council was against them, ostensibly because they had embraced Christian missionaries (Barkindo, 2016).

On 5 June 1984 violent conflict broke out at a drinking place. Aloto Pari, a Kahugu man, purportedly made anti-Gure remarks to Gombe Galadima. This was in addition to snatching Galadima's calabash of Burukutu (local beer). Aloto was knocked down. This ordinary event degenerated into violent conflict that claimed

many lives. From available details, it can be seen that the conflict was generally religious. First, this is evident in the dominant role played by the far-away Islamic Zaria emirate in the activities of neighboring ethnic group that embraced Islam. Secondly, it is no coincidence that the Zaria emirate identified with the ethnic group that embraced Islam instead of the one that embraced Christianity. This was done to promote the identity of the Muslim Umma over non-Muslim groups (Barkindo, 2016).

2.1.3 The College of Education Crisis of 1987

The Kafanchan disturbances of March 1987 started as a theological disagreement between Christians and Muslim students of the Kafanchan Teachers College, Kafanchan, in Jema'a Emirate of southern Zaria (Ibrahim 1989 in Suberu, 1999). These disagreements rapidly degenerated into a fracas which spilled into Kafanchan town and ignited age-old tensions between the politically dominant Muslim Hausa-Fulani settlers located in the town center on the one hand, and the numerically larger and predominantly Christian and non- Hausa-Fulani natives inhibiting the town's suburbs, on the other. The indigenes of Kafanchan resented the Hausa rulership because it deprived them of their wealth and power, virtually making them strangers in their own land (Sunday New Nigerian, 15 March 1987:1).

The fiercest phase of the Kafanchan crisis was played out in such areas as Kaduna city, Katsina and Funtua, where Muslim mobs attacked Christians and southern Nigeria migrant communities and their properties mainly; Churches and hotels in retaliation for the alleged killing of Muslims and burning of Mosques in Kafanchan town (Suberu, 1999).

2.1.4 The 1992 Zango Kataf Market Conflict.

Another violent conflict erupted five years later in Zango Kataf, which is also a town in the Southern Kaduna part of Kaduna State, approximately 100 kilometers from Kaduna. As the name indicates, Zango was originally a resting post for Hausa traders when it was known as Zango Fatake (Yohanna, 2007). The settlement emerged around the 15th century with the arrival of Hausa and Kanuri traders who were granted land by the Atyap (Kataf) where they settled (Yohanna, 2007). Zango itself is predominantly Muslim populated but is surrounded by

about 50 Atyap villages. This segregation between the Hausa Muslim in Zango and Christian ethnic group in Kataf remained in place even as the town grew.

With the creation of Zango Kataf local government in 1990, the new chairman, Juri Babang Ayok, an Atyap man proceeded with plans for the relocation of the market. The Muslim community argued that the move was ill advised because the new site was not developed and was at that time being used as the Muslim Salah Eid prayer ground. The Hausa community challenged this decision in the court where they secured an injunction against the relocation. The violent conflict actually crippled socio-economic activities in the region. The attack precipitated a retaliatory act by the Hausa who uprooted crops from Atyap farmlands, an act that prompted a new wave of attack against Muslims by the Atyap youths.

2.1.5. Contesting the Traditional Space: The 1999 Kafanchan Conflicts

There was another contest in the traditional space. The native authority system of administration during the colonial period ensured that Emirs and Chiefs were given pride of place in the Nigerian State. Even though these institutions were stripped of their constitutional roles after the independence, they remained important and continued to provide link between the state and the traditional space. This also resulted in increasing demands for their own traditional institutions by ethnic groups that did not have their own Chiefs or Emirs (Liman, 2015).

In 1999, the Kaduna State created chiefdoms in the southern Kaduna. Chiefdoms are the equivalent of Emirates in non-Muslim areas and Southern Kaduna ethnic groups such as the Atyap had demanded for their own chiefdoms that would separate them from the control of the Zaria emirate. The Southern Kaduna demanded for the removal of the district heads of Zango Kataf and Lere and the creation of their own separate chiefdoms (James, 2007). The demand by the ethnic groups of Kafanchan was significant because there was already a Muslim emirate in the town that a chiefdom would challenge. The indigenous ethnic groups pressed their demands with the death of Emir of Jama'a in 1998 when the process of selecting a new Emir resulted in a confrontation between the two groups. The indigenous ethnic group noted their exclusion form the process and demanded

the inclusion of all ethnic groups. This also sparked ethno-religious crisis in the region.

2.2 The Impact of Religion and Ethnicity on Peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna

Osuma & Okor, (2009) noted that religion and ethnicity have promoted conflict and then noted that the challenge of managing Nigeria's ethnic plurality has not been an easy task. The ethnic problem has posed a number of threats to the legitimacy of the national government and its ability to offer leadership appropriate to the demand of nation building. The mobilization of ancient sentiment and solidarity seeking to gain or retain relevance has fueled anxiety, suspicion, fear of domination and outright conflict.

Abati (2020) on ethno-religious conflict in Southern Kaduna opined that having explained extensively ethno-religious conflict in Southern Kaduna, we must also know that even though the Southern Kaduna is mostly dominated by Christians who are indigenes, there are also Muslims and other tribes there notably: Hausa-Fulani. The Southern Kaduna ethno-religious conflict is an unending search for peace. The crisis of Southern Kaduna is actually rooted in historical rivalry between the Southern Kaduna people who are the indigenes and the Hausa-Fulani. In a related study carried out by Uroko (2018) noted that the conflicts in Southern Kaduna are mainly between Muslims and Christians over identity, supremacy over land, religion, social and political exclusion, etc. These have claimed so many lives, many rendered homeless. The work suggested the ~Abraham – Lot approach as a template for conflict resolution. He said that lack of conflict mediations and lack of honesty among the various religions have escalated religious and ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This paper used two theories namely; the social conflict theory and conflict trap theory to explain the impacts of religion, ethnicity on peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna.

2.3.1 Social Conflict Theory

Social conflict theory is a Marxist-based social theory which argues that individuals and groups (Social classes) within society interact on the basis of conflict rather than consensus. More powerful groups will tend to use their power in order to retain power and exploit groups with less power. Social class and inequality emerged because the social structure is based on conflict and contradictions. The social conflict theory's relevance can be seen in the context of its applicability to the proportionate distribution that affects the activities of citizen of Kaduna in which the parties are of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of others. Social conflict theory presents a useful base for policy influence that has played out in the region (Abioro,2021).

2.3.2 Conflict Trap Theory

In this paper, conflict trap theory shall be adopted as the framework of analysis. The exponents of this theory are Paul Collier, V.L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Ankle Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol and Nicholas Sambanis. To them, conflict trap denotes that once a conflict has erupted, it tends to develop a momentum of its own. Peace seemingly becomes elusive and hard to restore. Even when peace is restored it often does not endure. The exponents of conflict trap ascribed the lengthy pattern of a typical conflict to a number of interlocking factors. Conflicts in multiethnic societies are enduring possibly on account of their ready vulnerability to the rallying, massaging and mobilization of ethnic sentiments for both the warring groups and the government. In addition, in a plural society, particularly where the population has significant grievances, conflict usually becomes an effective political strategy for pursuit of their interests and goals. Also, even if the custodians of power and authority in the society are willing to concede to the demands of the groups, they are usually neither trusted nor believed to have credible means of committing the warring factions to agreement (Uhunmwuangho & Epelle, 2021).

The two theories were used to analyze the effects of ethnicity, religion on peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna, the conflict trap theory will be adopted because it best explains the impact of ethno-religious crisis on peacebuilding in Southern Kaduna. The conflict trap theory offers deep insights to the interlocking

factors that sustain conflict. It presupposes that once conflict has occurred it lengthens and becomes challenging to restore peace on account of a number of factors such as ethnic pluralism, proliferation of arms, existence of income disparities, existence of expansive republic of hoodlums and the activities of criminal entrepreneurs.

3.0 Conclusion

Religion and ethnicity are two tools used by the elites for a long time to divide the people for their own selfish aim and have made peacebuilding very difficult project to achieve. The crisis in the Southern Kaduna region has ethnic and religious coloration. The people have lived together in suspicion and relate with each other through the prism of religion and ethnicity. For peacebuilding to take place in the Southern Kaduna, the government must be transparent and put in policies that will curb religious extremism.

4.0 Recommendations

1. This work recommends that in order for peace, stability and peace building to return to Southern Kaduna, the government should make those who perpetuate violence to face the wrath of the law. When those who perpetuate this violent conflict in Southern Kaduna are treated with kid-gloves, it will encourage other to join and continue with this violence.
2. The work also recommends that for the desired peace building to take place in Southern Kaduna, the religious and traditional rulers who are stakeholders and are closer to the grassroot should be engaged by the government to promote peace, mutual tolerance, respect for religion and ethnicity.

3. The study recommends that religious leaders should be cautioned not to spread hate in places of worship but encourage their followers to respect other religions and maintain peace.

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