

RECONCILIATION AS A PLATFORM FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AMONG AGGRIEVED PERSONS, ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS

Muhammad Auwal Sulaiman

School of General Studies, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Wuntin Dada, Jos Road,
Bauchi. 08066783171/08088525991 e-mail: abufatima25@yahoo.com

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Binta Muhammad Inuwa

School of General Studies, Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Wuntin Dada, Jos Road,
Bauchi. 08130722517

&

Ibrahim Yusuf

Department of Islamic Studies, Adamawa State College of Education, Hong,
08034721810

Abstract

The Islamic way of life always emphasized a strong sense of brotherhood in such a way that a community should be maintained to ensure that mutual understanding pave way for the peace and harmony, As long as individual or group of individuals failed to recognize and identify their variations, colours, nations and tribes, peaceful co-existence will no longer exist among them, and this will lead to series of violence and conflicts. In this regards Islam is a religion which adores peace rather than violence and love, compromise rather than confrontation. In line with this, the Islamic principle of reconciliation should be given attention to address the gabs caused by lack of mutual understanding. Consequent upon this, this paper reveals that reconciliation, patience (Sabr) and forgiveness will serve as tools for negotiation to reach an equitable settlement and to restore peace and security for their wellbeing. Finally, the paper recommends that, all reconciliations terms must conform with the recommendations made by Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet (SAW).

Keywords: *Reconciliation, Platform, Peaceful, Co-existence, Aggrieved, Ethnic, Religious*

Introduction

The politics occupied the mind of the fellow men which created full confusion, domination, terror, division, and conflicts in Nigeria and the world at large. In fact, it is hardly to pass a day without conflict here and there, if conflict occurred people engage and struggle to come to the terms of reconciliation, hoping to have a peace in their future. The issue of conflict if it is not deal with and addressed, it will influence, alter and change the whole situations of citizens, instead of them to lives in peace and unity, they end up to lives in an unpleasant and disunity situation, violence or war, and this is where religion plays its role to help in putting the parties involved to negotiate and enter into reconciliatory terms to resolve their differences and to achieve in setting peace. People should bear in mind that, Allah made human beings into different sex, nation, tribes, and groups for a purpose (Q30:22). Therefore, it is usual as long as people lives together, they might have their individual or collective interest, opinion to defend, Cohen argued that" there is no society which does not have a conflict" (Cohen in Emmanuel 161). Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human existence" (Zartman in Emmanuel 161) "Whenever people interact there is potential for conflict (Calhoun et al in Emmanuel 161) When these unpleasant attitudes arose, Islam does not leave this disgruntled state of conflict unchecked but pave way for its resolution through reconciliation. The Qur'an emphasized that humans are created by Almighty Allah yet they do differ in their views, ideas and interests, in order to bring them together Almighty Allah has guided them with a revelation that will lead them to resolve their disputes and conflict through dialogue. In

this regard Allah says: "And if you Lord had willed, He verily would have made mankind one nation, yet they cease not differing, (Q11:118) Qur'an prescribes the path to the solution: O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end (Q4: 59). the aim of Islam is to make people recognises each and in general to create non-violence society and to laid down all structures to in such a way that violence should be avoided. This paper recommends that, reconciliation, patience (*Sabr*) and forgiveness will serve as tools for negotiation to reach an equitable settlement and to restore peace and security for their wellbeing.

Islam and Crisis Management

Experts stated that, crisis including earthquake, flood, poverty and unemployment, social and psychological problems, war, and accidents may occur in all aspects of human life and lead to developing of crisis. Most crises except to earthquake and flood are made by human being. For example, Study fund three important point concerning the term crisis, these are Crisis, Crisis developer, and Crisis finder. (Monadi 606).

Crisis means decay, the crisis developers are factors to develop decay. the crisis finders are the ones vaccinated themselves against crisis, those who have previously prepared themselves are crisis finder. In fact, crisis management is in finding crisis not after crisis (Monadi 606).

A crisis is an extreme situation of conflict, which has reached a turning point, where

critical decisions have to be taken or else the conflict escalates to a point of extreme violence. Sometimes, a crisis is a degenerated state of conflict, where threats to human security, intense violence characterized by fighting, death, injury, large scale displacement of populations, etc, occur. Once a crisis occurs, it is the responsibility of the government of a state to de-escalate the situation and bring a cession to violence. This may be done through various means, including the use of the coercive state apparatus, where necessary (Shedrack 110). On the other hand, Islam concerning reconciliation of two or more hostile people or groups, That, Muslims should resort to the means of dialogue with the other in order to reconcile any quarrels and hostilities for the sake of establishing a better society in which people from different faiths or no faith may live together in peace.

Conflict

Conflict is defined by David (20) as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. While, armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. The worst forms of armed conflict include mass murder and genocide against unarmed civilians Incompatible here means anything that brought misunderstanding between the two groups, it could be political, social or economic interests. Aja (12) sees conflict as a continuing reality of social existence, conflict involves two or more parties that have or perceived incompatibility in either interests and values, to him conflict involves two or more parties that have perceive incompatibility in either interest and values, or in strategy of achieving the ends desire, so conflict itself goes with the human emotion,

the higher the emotion, the high the tendency of evolving conflict intensity, consequently (Aja 12) said: conflict occurs even in the best of human societies. Conflict index include mutual misunderstanding, hostile utterance, action and responses that seek to put the interest of the party in a disadvantaged position. Today, human attitude itself caused conflicts, thus failure to tell the true nature of events, or facts, a gap in communication within the family, institution and community levels create confusion thereby, causes conflict.

Conflict is a divine means of testing and growing the human being Allah says that when the conflict comes, Allah asks for *sabr* from people, and He is constantly watching how people behave in times of trial and tribulations. Therefore, it should always be remembered that God uses this conflict as a means of testingjh people. It becomes obvious here that when one realizes that conflict is a test from his/her Creator, then he or she will do the best to handle the situation with care by taking the right steps to address the issues.`

Brief Overview of Ethic and Religious conflict

Religious identity and ethnicity are closely associated. Simply put, religion is the relationship between man and God as concerned with the problem of human destiny, life and death. In the Nigerian context however, when religion is mentioned all minds readily go to Islam and Christianity. Islam and Christianity are considered as universal religions thus providing important defining elements of pluralism and hence more useful in the discourse on religious conflict. Incidentally, these two religion are catalysts for violence in Nigeria today. As a form of identity, religion is amenable to a wide range

of discursive centres. For instance both conservative and revolutionary strands can be found within one particular religion as is well exemplified by both Islam and Christianity. (Ghani 9)

Ghani (9) observed that, the indigene/settler can be seen as formal 'national' citizenship and 'local' citizenship and the associated patterns of exclusion. Intrinsically linked to this is the pattern of exclusion. Those who see themselves as 'natives' or 'indigenes' exclude those considered to be 'strangers' or 'settlers' from enjoying certain rights and benefits which they are entitled to enjoy as citizens after fulfilling the civic duties such as payment of taxes.

Furthermore, their relationship – between members of one ethno-religious group or another or generally among ethnic groups in a multi – cultural polity such as Nigeria, is characterized by a lack of cordiality, heightened mutual suspicion and leads to a tendency towards bloody clashes. These bloody clashes have over time claimed tens of thousands of lives and unquantifiable amount of money. (Ghani 10)

According to Kukah (132) the ethnic/religious tool is ultimately used for group assertion where, ethnic groups for instance, angle for their perceived share of wealth, security, participation, equity and justice in national life. Such group or ethnic assertions, in a plural society like Nigeria, often degenerate into sectarian struggles and conflicts which urban civil violence is a typical example (Kukah 36).

Muazam (146) observes that in modern Nigeria ethnicity and religion remain the two most potent identities for socio-political realignment and bases of competition on

resource control and allocation. In contrast to Muazam's view, Ghani (17) quoted Solomon Leith who identifies four cultural causes for ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. Viz: Geographical and demographic characteristics, which has to do with the colonial legacy of forging over 200 ethnic groups together into one state and initially into three regions. The economic resources; that are unequal distribution of natural resources among regions and the problem of how to manage the inequalities for the benefits of all have created incessant political tension. The third factor is religion, which has been a decisive factor for over half a century now, with mutual fear, mainly between Muslims and Christians in the North and South. The fourth factor being the military; where authoritarian military government adopted a kind of "divide and rule" approach to keep themselves in power and sometimes to flame ethnic tensions to draw attention away from themselves.

Reconciliation Methods

Reconciliation is a process in which two people or two groups of people become friendly again after they have quarreled or have not been in contact with each other. According to this definition reconciliation is a reuniting and harmonizing of two hostile people or groups by calling them to come together within the context of understanding and respect in order to foster mutual understanding, stimulate communication, correct stereotypes, work on specific problems of mutual concern, explore similarities and differences, and facilitate means of witness and cooperation between them. (Aydin 1). On the other hand, the reconciliatory methods are available at individual, family, group, community, and international level. This unit intends to introduce these methods. The

peaceful methods exist in two broad categories. The first is the proactive category, which entails methods that aim to prevent the occurrence of conflict in the first instance. Examples include undocumented community-based trust and confidence building measures, communication, good governance, inter party collaboration, etc. The second category is reactive, dealing with responses to situations that have already turned conflictive, or are potentially so. These include third party interventions like mediation, conciliation, arbitration and litigation (Shedrack 93).

Resolution is a community priority that involves elders, local leaders and family members who put pressure on the parties and guarantee the implementation of the agreement; the process is guided by established norms that include honor restoration, face saving, avoiding shame, saving dignity; relationships are key and their restoration is paramount; the third party keeps litigants separate while being their only channel of communication and reconciles them only when an agreement has been successfully negotiated (Abu-Nimer n.p).

Miller (8) sees resolution as a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems. As such any of the approaches to be applied should be acceptable by the parties involved and it should be best and relevant to the parties involved. In his own view Shedrack said: "Conflict resolution as a sense of finality, where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense" (94)

Clarion Call to Create Non-Violence Societies

Muslims are taught by their to live this life, and walk upon this earth humbly and harmlessly at all times, whatever the circumstances may be. The Qur'an states:

And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on earth modestly, and when the ignorant people address them (with bad words) they simply reply by Salam (to avoid evil and those who spend the night in worship of their creator, prostrating and standing (Q25:64-65).

The word ignorance means calling Muslims with ill-manners and ill-treatment, they are called upon to wish for peace. Truly, peace is the Muslim's watchword, in whatever the circumstances.

Muslims are commanded in several verses of the Qur'an to follow the footsteps of the Prophet (SAW) in everything they do. One of such verses says:

Indeed, there is an excellent example in the messenger of Allah to follow for everyone who hopes for meeting with Allah and the Hereafter and remembers Allah much (i.e. if the messenger is participating in the battle, why should you shun it?) (Q: 33:21)

The Prophet (SAW) as a model taught his followers non-violence by example. In fact, it was this mission to restore peace to the strife-torn people of his time. His exalted lifestyle should, therefore, be a model for Muslims to follow.

During his first thirteen years of prophethood at Makkah, he restrained his followers from all acts of violence. Consequently, they ended up being expelled from their hometown, Makkah, it was only when the enemies insisted on pursuing them even to their new home, that he had to permit them to fight back in self-defiance. (Okenwa 110)

The concept of Conflict Resolution is smoothly working when the society create non violent group, anything that may lead to violence should be avoided or eliminated (Cletus 302). According to Abdul Aziz (1) Muslim approaches to conflict resolution is to empower family, groups and community members to participate in matters of common concern, strong emphasis is placed on linkages between personal and group identity.

Islamic conflict resolution is an effort to affirm a restorative conception of peace and justice, encompassing notions of compensations for losses, attentiveness to issues of “face to face” or social esteem, reconciliation for the sake of the whole and forgiveness (Addul Aziz 2). On Conflict Resolution in Islamic perspectives Amr (147) in a chapter titled “Principles of Islamic Conflict Intervention” suggested three principles that must guide Islamic Conflict Resolution. Thus:

- a. Restoring to Islam its image of justice, freedom and equality.
- b. Engaging the community in the intervention and resolution processes.
- c. Adjusting Intervention Techniques according to the conflict situation and stages.

This paper viewed that, the Muslim states through their and communities *should* co-opt all the principles and activities which involves preaching, Public enlightenment, and other techniques of resolving conflicts amicably as stated above.

Reconciliation During the Prophet's (SAW) Time

The practice of *Ṣulḥ* and *Tahkim* were introduced in accordance with the teachings of Islam and recognised as a mechanism of resolving disputes. Islam enjoins its followers to do all they can do, to avert the occurrence of disputes and whenever disagreement occurs, they should not allow it to turn into violence that will lead to the disunity of the *Umma*. They can only do so through reconciliation and negotiation, therefore, Islam has an effective mechanism and procedure for reconciliation in virtually all human spares, be it social, economic and political which may be related to family cases, commercial disputes, criminal disputes, political and land boundary disputes (Wali 3).

The practice of *Reconciliation* indeed, can be historically rooted in the pre-Islamic period where the Arabs made it as an instrument of dispute resolution (Ahmad 12). The *Tahkim* emerged as a cheap mechanism employed among tribes to put an end to their conflicts in this case an arbitrator and his decision is binding on the parties. Arbitration however, was not a job and this made it dependent on people themselves who were free to decide whether to adhere to it or not in the case of dispute.

When Islam gained a central role in the frame work of government, many practices related to pre-Islamic arbitration were incorporated to form part of the Islamic law. *Sulh* was maintained as a mechanism for conflict resolution, the Prophet (S.A.W) recognised and practiced arbitration. He appointed arbitrators and accepted their

decision. He acted as an arbitrator. In several occasions to resolve disputes arising between individuals and tribes, he acted as an arbitrator in the dispute between several Arab tribes regarding which of them will have the honour of lifting and placing the black stone after rebuilding the Ka'aba (Ibrahim 32).

The leading case where *Reconciliation* applied by the companions of the prophet (S.A.W) was the famous political case between the caliph Aliyu bin Abi Talib (The fourth rightly guided Caliph) and Mu'awiya bin Abu Sufyan (The Governor of Sham), that is the present (Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan). The two parties agreed to stop war and settle their disputes through Reconciliation, the two arbitrators were appointed to decide who would be the caliph. The two representatives in the arbitration drafted an arbitration agreement specifying the dispute. The procedure, duration of the arbitration, place of arbitration and the applicable law were fixed in the arbitration document (Ibrahim 33). The researcher observed that the current practices of *Zauren Sulh* is a welcome development that can be rooted to the time of the Prophet and his companions. The current practice of *Sulh* contained all the guidelines, procedures, time and venues of sitting.

Ibn Farhun in Aseel (12) identified certain types of disputation and cases that Reconciliation should be the best alternative than courts trial, namely:

1. When the parties have a kinship with one another.
2. They are people of virtues and good standing in society.
3. There is risk of increase hostility between them.
4. The nature of the case is such that it is difficult for the judge to decide.

The researcher has the same opinion with the scholar above and suggested that if cases is rooted in one of the above circumstances, Reconciliation is the best alternative or best mechanism, even if the case is in court and the *Qadi* believes that a settlement or compromise would yield a just outcome, he will advise sometimes or even forcefully to persuade the parties before him to come to an agreement and settle their disputes amicably (Hyder 9).

Reconciliation as a Platform for Peaceful Co-Existence

Human beings by nature will always argue and at times fall out. However, what distinguishes people is the ability to forgive and to reconcile and maintain their relationships. This reconciliation is encouraged and commended in Islam. Although, the Qur'ān, Sunnah as well as works of predecessors illustrated the role of *Ṣulḥ* in Peace building, the researcher viewed it as far back the setting of *Hajar al-Aswad* (Black Stone) during the reconstruction of *Ka'bah*. Were the four leaders of the *Quraish* were in dispute over the issue of who were the best amongst them to put *Hajar al-Aswad* in its right place. The oldest among the chiefs Abu Omaiya bin Mugherah Al-Makhzumi

made a proposal which was accepted by all. He said: "Let him, who enters the Sanctuary first of all, decide on the point." It was then by Allâh's Will that the Messenger of Allâh (Peace be upon him) should be the first to enter the Mosque. Instead of placing the stone himself, the Prophet (S.A.W.) asked each tribe to select one leader to represent them. He spread a sheet and put the stone on it. Then he instructed the four leaders to hold each end of the sheet and together they raised the stone to the right place. This effort of the Prophet (S.A.W.) in this instance, Averted a serious conflict. (Al-Mubarakphuri 65) and the peace restored among the affected communities.

The leading injunction too in Qur'ân concerning the community's collective responsibility of reconciling disputes for unity and progressive is:

If two groups of believers happen to fight, then, make peace between them (by eliminating the cause of fight). However, if one group continues to wrong the other unfairly, then (all of) you fight against this group till it complies with command of Allah. Then if it complies, so make reconciliation between them justly (i.e. simply stopping fight is not enough. Make them meet each other and advise them to avoid any future dispute). And judge with justice (let not any personal feelings influence your judgment). Indeed, Allah loves those who are just. (Q49:9).

The above verse advises the well-wishers and peacemakers of the society to step in and mediate between the two parties and attempt reconciliation before the situation escalates out of control and blood is shed. Community will reach stages of development only if there is room for forgiveness and reconciliation in the cause of interaction. But the room for reconciliation should not be an excuse for the aggressors

who had tried to gain the upper hand through force and oppression. Islam's primary objectives of nurturing and developing society, is to remove every tendency for injustice and transgression from the minds of individuals in the society. Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an, "Indeed all believers are brothers, so reconcile between them (49:10)".

Reconciliation is imperative if the Muslims wish to unite and stay united (Faisal 1) for the progress and development (Faisal 1). Moreover, in his article, "The Significance of Reconciliation" highlighted many instances where the Messenger of Allah was oppressed, yet he forgave and overlooked the past contentions. No day is more famous for showing this than when he was granted victory over the Polytheists of Makkah. To put this into perspective, these Polytheists of *Makkah* were the very same who has persecuted him, they had killed his family and close friends, they had ridiculed him, exiled him, they had exhausted every effort in trying to make his life as difficult as possible, yet he forgave them. By seeing his lofty moral character, the staunch enemies of Islam became some of the most prominent Muslims history has ever recorded (Faisal 1).

Recommendations

1. That the Qur'an and Sunnah should be use as a guide for reconciling crises in Muslims state
2. That the states practicing Sharia law should recognised Reconciliation as an

amicable dispute and conflict resolution in their Sharia courts and outside courts proceedings.

3. Other Sharia states should co-opted the process of Reconciliation and provide a white paper as formally done in the case of Katsina, Kano and Bauchi state government; this will instantly get the support of people.
4. The committee recommended that Government should set up a forum for continuous consultation and dialogue in order to promote accommodation, mutual respect and right of citizens as well as allay fears
5. The establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission which will provide an avenue to reinforce the peace process in Nigerian conflict and crisis states is recommendation.

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