

# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS TO PEACEBUILDING IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY; A NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

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## Abstract

This paper investigates Nigerian experience of challenges to peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Also, it exposes the prospects capable of mitigating these challenges to peacebuilding and its enablers. Using the method of exposition, the paper makes a thorough investigation on the dimensions of challenges to peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and by method of hermeneutics, the paper argues and analysis prospects capable of enabling peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Towards addressing the aim, the paper exposes the challenges to peacebuilding as follows: guerrilla wars, inter-tribal/communal war, insurgency of Boko-Haram, herdsman-farmers conflict, inter and intra-religious conflicts, political crisis before, during and after elections, domestic violence, banditry, lawlessness, crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, abuse of the mass media especially facebook; whatsapp; telegram, e.t.c. Unfortunately, this distressed condition threatens national and international security, world socio-political and economic life, dehumanization and lost of cultural values and human lives. In spite of these challenges, the investigation shows that peacebuilding in Nigeria can be possible minding the following prospects: winning peace not winning war, abating challenges of globalization through adequate information and communication technology, contemporary peace operations, dialogue, involvement of traditional and religious institutions in matters of peace and reconciliation, discouraging government actions that fuel crisis, promoting justice and rule of law, e.t.c. The implication of the study is that when the said prospects are sincerely applied, the bites and challenges to peacebuilding would be adequately arrested, hence they can be said to be square pegs in square holes. Therefore, the paper makes a clarion call to invest pricelessly in the prospects as stated in order to mitigate challenges to peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Nigeria, Challenges, Conflicts, Reconciliation.

## **Introduction**

There are considerable challenges to peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Globalization and civilization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century go a long way redefining new dimensions and imposing lots of threat/challenges to peacebuilding. 21<sup>st</sup> century is remarkable for an unprecedented growth in science and technology for a better society. Nevertheless, there is a technological and quantum growth of war and violence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These wars and violence have always been motivated and highly anchored on; “need, greed or creed”. Thus the face of conflicts has transformed from national to transnational aggression thereby demanding extraordinary attention to peacebuilding which must grow in complexity to fit the already bastardized and hydra-headed conflict-stricken societies.

Peacebuilding can be said to mean efforts and factors that promote order, harmonious existence and reconciliation. However, challenges to peacebuilding are situations and factors that break order, harmonious existence and make reconciliation more difficult. These challenges are caused by individuals, loosely organized and unorganized groups, bad governance which snowballs into unmanageable crisis breaching peace and order in the society. On individual basis, the challenges to peacebuilding include; lawlessness, crimes such as robbery, kidnapping, abuse of the social/mass media especially facebook; whatsapp; telegram, e.t.c; leading to cyber fraud. Organized or unorganized groups cause breach of peace in different ways such as guerrilla wars, inter-tribal/communal war, insurgency of Boko-Haram, herdsmen-farmers conflict, inter and intrareligious conflicts, political crisis before, during and after elections, domestic violence, banditry e.t.c. In all, these distressed conditions threaten national and international security, world socio-political and economic life, dehumanization and lost of cultural values.

It was in an opening speech during the colloquium on April 17, 2015 at the University of Cape Town, where researchers and practitioners in the areas of urban planning, crime prevention, security, development, and peacebuilding that Francesco Mancini declared that minding the downturn on peace and conflicts round the globe, there is an urgent call on researchers to focus on violence reduction, conflict prevention and peacebuilding<sup>2</sup>. Thus there is urgent need to pull all efforts: technological and human resources in pursuit of peace and order in the society. It is timely than never when priceless investment is to be made in pursuit of peace and order in the society.

Challenges to peace have become so distressful to the society and mind-boggling that this research is motivated to study the different dimensions of challenges to peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century while drawing necessary prospects towards assuaging these challenges. Thus prospects to peacebuilding in Nigeria ought to focus in winning peace not winning wars, abating challenges of globalization through adequate information and communication technology uses, contemporary peace operations, dialogue, involvement of traditional and religious institutions in matters of peace and reconciliation, discouraging government actions that fuel crisis, promoting justice and rule of law, e.t.c.

### **Exploring Challenges to Peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Studies have shown that there is a steady rise of violent/armed conflicts in Africa and Nigeria particularly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>3</sup>. This has left Nigerian state in constant and heavy expenditure on matters of defense and security. The nation is in a state of instability which to a great extent deepens the bite of poverty, frustrates the Nigerian social spheres and cripples developmental strides. This situation creates high social unrest and in most cases causes the life and properties of citizens. No doubt, factors challenging peacebuilding in Nigeria include the following; political transitions and election related violence; before, during and after elections, communal/inter tribal conflicts and war, Boko Haram insurgency, Herdsmen attack, abuse of the Social/Mass media, government failure in crisis management, lack/unjust implementation of Nigerian law, abuse of office and lawlessness of stakeholders, domestic violence, banditry, e.t.c.

Communal conflict/war is a major threat to peace in Nigeria. Conflict here can be said to mean a social situation in which a minimum of two actors or parties strive to acquire at the same moment an available set of scarce resources<sup>4</sup>. Most times these communal clashes are motivated by the struggle for land, personal, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural interests among the participant groups<sup>5</sup>. These groups are said to have incompatible ends, in which the ability of one actor to gain his ends depends to an important degree on the choice or decisions that the other party makes, hence leading to war<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, the government which ought to be a strategic player in conflict management in some cases become incapable of a comprehensive and laudable peacebuilding and conflict resolution plans when government agencies take to human abuse, brutality, arbitrary killings, sexual violence, e.t.c.

Furthermore, insurgency is a great factor challenging peacebuilding in Nigeria. Here insurgency is the state of insurrection, rebellion or sedition to a constituted authority or government<sup>7</sup>. Also, it can be said to mean violence organized by individual or group to fight or oppose the implementation of law or government<sup>8</sup> leading to crime and inhuman treatment or violation of human rights<sup>9</sup>. The most unbearable and notorious insurgency group in Nigeria is the Boko-Haram sect or the Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati WalJihad. This is a terrorist group who oppose government, western education and civilization<sup>10</sup>. It began like a small Sunni Islamic sect supporting a firm clarification and execution of Islamic law for Nigerians. The name Boko-Haram is derived from Hausa language which means "western language is sinful"<sup>11</sup>. This sect started their activities since 2002 but was not popular until 2009. Unfortunately, they have grown to full terrorists group in Nigeria engaging in genocide, bombing, sexual assault, lawlessness, kidnapping, robbery, e.t.c. Their activities have to a great extent divided the nation than never causing breach of peace, law and order in Nigeria.

In the same vain, globalization, information and communication technology pose a lot of challenges to peacebuilding. A critical instance of the danger of information mismanagement is the current Covid 19 pandemic which has grown from pandemic to infordemic. Infordemic here speaks of the mismanagement of information and the havoc of such mismanagement which creates fears and panic in the people. Also, it creates economic and financial misappropriation in the guise of fighting Covid 19 by the government agencies. The fake news and hate speech especially in the mass and social media are not left out here as they go a long way creating divisive tendencies amongst people of different tribes, communities, e.t.c. Similarly, the home videos have taken to violent films which indirectly expose children to violent behaviours in imitation of the films they watch.

### **Prospects to Peace Building in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Nigerian Expercience.**

- **Wining Wars and Wining Peace towards Sustainable Peace Building Capacity**

It has been noted earlier that Communal conflict/war is a major threat to peace in Nigeria as motivated by the struggle for land, personal, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural interests among the participant groups<sup>12</sup>. This situation has left the country in a state of constant attacks and reprisal attacks of guerilla war in different communities thereby

making life very miserable for the affected communities. Thus people in these war-torn zones are highly dehumanized by the war situation such that lives and properties worth billions of naira are lost. The people are economically bastardized, developmentally tepid and socially moribund.

The most disheartening experience in these wars is that they begin very easily and never ends. Each group continues to feel hurt and seeks the slightest opportunity for reprisal attacks. People who have lost their loved ones never give up as they seek ways to suit their hurt which comes by no means than reprisal attacks; and suits better when they take revenge of numbers much more than the harm themselves received. In one of the warring communities, an interview with a young man of about twenty five years shows that he can never rest until he has killed at least ten persons to revenge the death of his father in a communal war. The most part of it is that this young man was a supposed serious minded Christian but his Christianity has no effect in him in war situations.

It is doleful to note that the commonest belief is that by heavier reprisal attacks, the other party will be highly suppressed to accept peace and surrender. The primitive society believed that once a community is conquered the people surrendered. It is interesting to note that this situation was true of the primitive society when land acquisition and territorial expansion was mainly by conquest. Noteworthy is that this situation worked in the primitive society because there were lots of virgin and uninhabited lands for occupation which are no longer available in the modern time. However, it is of highest importance to note that the modern society does not permit such situation of conquest as a reason to relinquish their land/habitat; hence there will be no end to such wars. Even when territories are momentarily conquered, they inhabitants can only move out to re-strategize themselves for a more aggressive reprisal attacks so as to reclaim their territory.<sup>13</sup>

It is very unfortunate to note that the government (s) which ought to be a strategic player in conflict management are almost incapable of achieving peace in warring communities. This is because in most cases the government officials sponsor such wars in their attempt to gain political relevance amongst their people. Secondly, the government agencies rather than peace and conflict resolution, take to human abuse, brutality, arbitrary killings, sexual violence, e.t.c. The government and her agencies can only provide momentary calmness which can at best be described as winning a war but not winning peace.

Therefore, it becomes a fallacy to draw the conclusion that winning war is correlational to winning peace. The answer was possibly yes in the primitive society but emphatically no in the modern society. It is then timely enough to re-exam the motivations to war since the fate of land acquisition and territorial expansion can no longer be possible by war. Hence winning peace comes by dialogue and surrendering arms since the use of arms can never achieve peace in the modern society. This is then a clarion call to the government and her officials to reevaluate their actions and motivations leading to wars or activities in times of war. This is also a clarion call on communities at war to understand that they have not won peace just because there is a momentary win to war. This is because there is never an end to war in the modern society quite unlike the primitive society when a win in war leads to total conquest and surrendering of the vanquished. Therefore, there is need for a single purpose of achieving and winning peace not winning war.

- **Abating Challenges of Globalization in Peace building by True Information and Communication Management.**

Globalization is interested in national and international industrialization and scaling of goods and services to the global spheres. This concept has become more popular in our time minding the influence of information technology and communication. It is interesting that globalization has made the whole world a global village; breaking the barriers of distance, race and nationhood. Nevertheless, globalization poses some threats to peacebuilding as caused by mismanagement of information and communication technology. The mass media has become a veritable tool of circulating false and dehumanizing information that are padded with divisive materials, hate speeches, assaults, lawlessness, sabotage, treason, e.t.c.

Unfortunate is that these materials in most cases are unverifiable but they go a long way creating opportunity for the total collapse of peace, law and order in the society. There are lots of instances that different people went for war just because they heard the drums of war beaten by their ‘supposed’ enemies in the social media. Some other instances abound when different communities have vacated their habitats just because they hear in the social media that some

Fulani herdsmen were planning to attack them. These instances can be said to be a false use of information and communication technology. Uncountable number of people have been defrauded through the social media; whatsapp, facebook, twitter, instagram, e.t.c. There are lots of instances when children take to violence and sexual abuses because of the lessons they get from home videos.

A True information and communication management implies a meaningful engagement of information and communication systems for the good of the society as an institution and to the individuals of the state. In spite of the abuses, information and communication technology serves a great deal in cyber security management both nationally and internationally. Cyber security is interested in the control of cyber fraud/crime which not only defrauds people of their properties but in some cases leading to lost of lives as kidnapers and hired assassins have permeated the cyber space. Hence a true use of social and mass media should be concerned with developing strategies towards communicating peace and discouraging violence amongst the youth. This can be better achieved through censorship of home videos and promotion of 'peace-games' across cultures and religions in Nigeria, discouraging Kidnapping and excessively violent videos, expanding the surface of dialogue in home videos, creating apps that communicate peace and encourage sharing and brotherly love, controlling what goes out in facebook, whataspp, e.t.c

Humanity cannot shy away from Information and Communication Technology (ICT) because in the words of Cameron J., "almost all domains of people's lives are dependent on ICT"<sup>14</sup>. Thus the movement towards complete ICT dependence shows that the society will collapse with great speed when there is massive failure in ICT management. In the words of Whitehouse D., "the whole society and civilization ...could quickly be destroyed and rendered inoperable.." when there is a failure in ICT<sup>15</sup>. This is because in the contemporary society especially in the developed countries of the world, critical infrastructures based on ICT can be conceived as being fundamental to the capacity to live in peace and prosperity so much so that the collapse of ICT either by misuse or physical collapse will certainly have dire consequences to peace and order in the society<sup>16</sup>.

- **Contemporary Peace Operations**

Here refers to the contemporary models, methods, issues, strategies, and the attending challenges in matters of peace building. It is challenging building peace in the contemporary world which is highly characterized by sites of genocide, aggressive civil war, terrorism of different sorts, dictatorship in governance, e.t.c.<sup>17</sup> It is unfortunate that most contemporary peace operations strategies end up in what Daniel Philpott and Gerard Powers refer to “liberal peace” or as earlier referred in this work as momentary calmness. This form of peace is a grave yard peace that stresses only cease fire, and short run peace operations by international organizations and local political elites. Little wonder Daniel Philpott & co argued that this form of peace is not enough in the contemporary world.

Hence contemporary peacebuilding must of high necessity require holistic approach that would suit the hearts of participants in war/crisis situations. This involves exploring and applying contemporary innovative models towards sustainable peacebuilding. The United Nations is one of the contemporary peace operative institutions that is near-global. In the United Nations Counter Terrorism Policy, she emphasized that the greatest models to peacebuilding in the contemporary time include; good governance, coordination of international prosecution of criminals with local efforts to resolve civil war, arrest matters of terrorism, e.t.c. It is obvious that in the contemporary time, our country Nigeria needs to explore these avenues towards controlling the multiple crises in Nigeria especially as it concerns insurgency and terrorism championed by Boko-Haram and Herdsmen respectively.

In the same vein, there is a clarion call to all peace institutes to engage in meaningful research towards better models of achieving peace and shunning violence in the contemporary society. This research would focus more on better models of reconciliation, dialogue, public information management, peace management policies, arm control and disarmament laws, government participation in violence, e.t.c. In his “Turning from Hatred to Community Friendship: Forgiveness Education as a Resource for Strategic Peacebuilding in Postaccord Belfast”, Robert Enright emphasized that contemporary peace operation ought to be anchored on forgiveness education rather than revenge<sup>18</sup> because “an eye to an eye makes the whole world blind”. It behoves contemporary peace operatives to develop strategies to make these models workable so as to discourage the incessant wars and terrorism in the society.



- **Dialogue as Necessary Technique in Peace and Conflict Resolution.**

Dialogue refers to the conversation between two or more interest parties. In this context, it refers to the coming together of warring participants for conversation towards the restoration of peace. This is not just about having discussions or conversations, conferences or debate but more about creating opportunity for people to come together to reveal their assumptions, perception and judgments. This is purposeful to create a forum and with appropriate communication skills mitigates hatred, repairs lost relationships, develops friendship, e.t.c. For Feller, dialogue is a specific, efficacious method for conflict management and peacebuilding.<sup>19</sup> This is achievable through dialogue because dialogue is an investment in co-existence, sharing, creativity and flexibility, e.t.c. Little wonder UNESCO booklet on “Intercultural Competences” addresses dialogue as a tool in peacebuilding and so vital for better understanding and handling diversity<sup>20</sup>.

It is obvious that the right authority to peacebuilding is dialogue. Political positions can influence momentary peace but dialogue offers lasting peace and heals wounds of war, violence and hatred. Thus dialogue is a successful key that anchors all aspects of peacebuilding; reconciliation, resolution and construction. Understanding the other can facilitate reconciliation of traumas, it can contribute to resolving conflicts in a non-violent manner and be vital in the construction of equity and harmony. If relationship is required in peacebuilding, dialogue opens greater space for better relationship, offering opportunity for sharing, listening, understanding, appreciation of differences, e.t.c.

- **Traditional/Religious Institutions and Peacebuilding.**

The traditional and religious institutions were the custodians of peace, order and harmonious existence in the primitive African society and in Nigeria. Thus were many principles guiding conflict resolution in the traditional societies. The traditional society had great confidence on the traditional institutions especially the local tribunals responsible for conflict resolution. These include elders, chiefs, priests, priestesses, secret cult etc. They (disputants) must be ready to submit themselves to the constituted authorities both individual and community conflicts<sup>21</sup>. In traditional African societies, the law enforcement agents, traditional police and courts were responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws of the land. Disputants reposed much confidence so much so that they often took their cases to elders, chiefs, priests, priestesses, secret

cult etc depending on the nature of the case for mediation. Conflicts are resolved with dispatch in local language, using familiar standard of behavior, local justice definitions and punishment meted accordingly.

It is obvious that different societies have ways of conflict and peace management that are anchored on the traditional practices and religious inclinations. In matters of peace and conflict resolution, the traditional institutions have methods to ensure self confidence, self reliance, positive change and stability<sup>22</sup>. Also, the traditional/religious institutions have mechanism of dispute settlement and conflict resolution to remove the root-causes of conflict; reconcile the conflicting parties. The traditional conflict resolution method is interested in gaining friendship and repairing relationship than just stopping quarrels or war; hence ensures that everybody involved in the resolved conflict is happy and be at peace with each other again. In the traditional society, this service is a spiritual duty to promote good governance, law and order.

It is of high necessity that the government recognizes and empowers local structures to be able to prevent, mitigate and mediate conflict situations in order to aid peacebuilding. Peace building in Nigeria must be viewed from a community-based perspective and not from the sole purview of the state. A community based perspective must recognize the roles of the traditional and religious institutions towards peace and conflict resolution. A good place to start is charging and empowering traditional/religious institutions with the responsibility of maintaining peace in their areas of authority. Also, it is very important that the political/government stakeholders should avoid taking undue advantage of crisis situation to massage and grease their political muscles to the detriment of the poor masses. Hence we conclude that traditional conflict resolution techniques offer great prospects for peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationships in post-conflict periods. Also, it curtails the spread of violence and its enablers than the modern method of litigation, settlements in law courts and momentary calmness imposed by the law enforcement agencies during wars/conflict situations.

## Conclusion

This paper has been a sincere and dogged effort towards exploring the challenges and prospects to peacebuilding in Nigeria. It is obvious that conflict is inevitable in human society especially as regards relationships at different levels. Conflict is here seen as a conscious opposition/strives between two or more actors/parties militated by personal, tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural interests among the participants groups<sup>23</sup>. In the same vain, peacebuilding is an attempt to assuage and mitigate the effects imposed by conflict factors to ensure order and harmonious existence in the society.

This paper identified considerable challenges to peacebuilding<sup>24</sup> minding the advent of globalization, civilization, transformation in science and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century which redefine new dimensions and lots of threat to peacebuilding. It is obvious that war and violence are taking a quantum leap in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as sustained by technological discoveries. These challenges include; guerrilla wars, inter-tribal/communal war, insurgency of Boko-Haram, herdsmen-farmers conflict, abuse of the mass media especially facebook; whatsapp; telegram, inter and intrareligious conflicts, political crisis before, during and after elections, domestic violence, banditry e.t.c. Unfortunately, these factors threatens national and international security, world socio-political and economic life, dehumanization and lost of cultural values, e.t.c. These challenges create emergency situation against peace, hence there is urgent need for even further research on prospects capable of encouraging peacebuilding in spite of these challenges.

To properly address these challenges to peacebuilding, the paper studies some prospects to encourage peacebuilding in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These prospects centre on winning peace not winning war, abating challenges of globalization through adequate information and communication technology, contemporary peace operations centered on research and modern comparative practices, dialogue as a necessity in peacebuilding, inclusion of traditional and religious institutions and leaders in matters of peace and reconciliation, e.t.c. There is great need for the government and her officials to reevaluate their actions and motivations leading to wars or activities in times of war. Also, it is timely to remind communities at war to understand that they have not won peace just because there is a momentary win to war, hence there is never an end to war. The best is not to begin a war because there is no end to any war. Therefore, these

factors will go a long way towards mitigating the spread of violence and its enablers and ensure peacebuilding; order and harmony in the society.

## End Notes

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