APPRAISAL OF THE ROLE OF CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS ON PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Nigeria's story has been one long, unrelieved history of despair. What is today Nigeria was a plethora of various nationalities, with over 371 other ethnic groups which are usually lumped together as minorities. The birth of Nigeria as an independent state on 1st October, 1960 proved especially difficult. It was beset by intense and complex rivalries between its three regions, each of which was dominated by a major group with its own political party, a complexities that has led to several crises eruptions in the country. Nigeria has been rocked by one crisis after another since then. First, the Nigerian census crisis of 1963 – 1964, which shocked the nation to her very foundation, then the federal election crisis of 1964, which was followed by the western Nigeria election crisis of 1965 which again threatened to split the country (Achebe, 2012; Alubo, 2012).

Nigeria has been plagued with ethnic and religious conflicts; the country has therefore not been immune to violent conflicts. It has and continues to witness high levels of ethnic and anti-state violence. Ever since the country gains her independence from Britain in 1960 Nigeria has been torn apart by wars, violence and ethnic conflicts which have a drastic effect on the socio-economic condition of the country. The basic underlying factors that mostly account for the occurrence of all these violent conflicts in the country include: poverty, unemployment, ineffective security and culture of impunity by government, illiteracy, corruption/corrupt practices, unresolved ethnic differences, selfish interest among politicians and so on (Edet 2015 cited in Wapmuk, 2018). From 29th May, 1999 after her return to civil rule, internal security crises eruptions in the country assumed a completely new dimension affecting the entire social system of Nigeria. In a simple language, the last nineteen years plus of democratic rule, the levels of diverse killings have steadily increased (Ucha, 2010). Parallel to this development is the corresponding explosion in crime, especially its urban and rural variants which include drug peddling, armed robbery, kidnappings, human trafficking, militia, thuggery, hooliganism, youth violence, banditry and the worst of all - terrorism.

This background certainly triggered the establishment and involvement of critical stakeholders in peace building and conflict resolution – different groups, agencies and sectors working together on a combine objectives (to prevent, manage and resolve conflict). It is assume that, bringing together the resources, knowledge, perspectives, skills and constituencies of the stakeholders can lead to the political

will, collective capacities and sense of ownership needed to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. With their establishment and involvement in resolving conflict, building peace, and preventing conflict via their various deployed mechanisms for over two decades, can conclusion be safely drawn that they are accomplishing their core mandates – preventing and managing violence and preventing conflict via peace building and conflict resolution/management in Nigeria? This chapter therefore appraises the role of critical stakeholders on peace building and conflict resolution in Nigeria. To achieve this core task, the remaining part of this chapter was organized in five (5) sections after the introduction. Section two provide explanation to key terms/literature review like critical stakeholders which includes individuals, groups and agencies covering: Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR); National Peace Committee (NPC); Faith-based Organizations; Traditional rulers/community elders; Security agencies; international diplomats; Think-tanks and Civil Society Organization among others mandated and skilled to offer solutions to particular issues confronting communities or societies. Section three covers the theoretical framework adopted and applied to this chapter; section four critically examined the mechanisms and roles of these critical stakeholders on peace building and conflict resolution while section five conclude and suggested some recommendations capable of sustaining what they have achieved thus far and the areas they should improve upon.

Clarification of Key Concepts/Literature Review

At this sub-section it is necessary to clarify some key concepts as used in the contexts of this chapter. These key concepts include: critical stakeholders, peace building and conflict resolution.

To begin with, critical stakeholders encompasses influential leaders and organizations within a larger community of stakeholders; it include individuals or groups within a larger collection of stakeholders who are often positioned and skilled to offer solutions to particular problems or issues confronting communities or societies. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) (2015) cited in Blank, (2017) critical stakeholders may be internal, actively involved in the development and implementation of a strategy, procedures, or proposal to combat or manage a lingering conflicts or crises and prevent its future occurrence. These critical stakeholders in peace building and conflict resolution to be considered in this chapter include: Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR); Civil Society Organization/Non-governmental Organization; Faith Based Organization; and Traditional leaders among others.

Peace building on the other hand is a combination of two words 'peace' and 'building'; peace is a state in which there is no war or fighting. From a more scholarly point of view, Ibeanu (2006 P. 4) clearly conceptualized peace as a means to an end, and as a necessary condition for sustainable development. Peace also refers to a situation where people are able to resolve their conflicts without violence and can work together to improve the quality of their lives. To further broaden our understanding, Francis (2006 P. 6) stressed that; peace is primarily

concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means. He further identified six meanings of peace accepted by peace researchers and other stakeholders as follow: peace as absence of war (absence of direct violence), peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence), peace as respect and tolerance between people, peace as Gaia (balance in and with the ecosphere or nature), inner peace (spiritual peace), and peace as 'wholeness' and 'making whole'.

There is no doubt from these various understandings that peace, whether as a concept or as a field of study, is quite broad. For the purpose of this chapter, peace is when everyone lives in safety, without fear or threat of violence, and without any form of violence tolerated in law or in practice. It is also an activity that aims to revolve around injustice in non-violent ways and to transform the cultural and structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict. It equally revolves around developing constructive personal, group, and political relationship across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. This process includes violence prevention; conflict management, resolution, or transformation; and post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing among others, before, during, and after any given case of violence (Rapoport, 1989; Rapopart, 1992).

Furthermore, building is the gradual process of increasing size or intensity overtime; the style or form of constructing things. When juxtaposed, peace-building is understood as the opening move or the first task to consider in negotiating peace deal between individuals, groups, or society. It also refers to the

first step, opening move, initiative, or the opening of the first of a series of actions towards forestalling situations that could otherwise lead to violent conflict. Galtung (1975) also viewed peace-building as a concept that developed from interest in identifying the conditions that lead beyond a temporary cessation of violence to sustainable processes of conflict management and mutual cooperation between those who have previously been adversaries. More succinctly, the term "peace-building" can have two broad meaning according to Schirch, (2013); first, it can refer to the direct work that intentionally focuses on addressing the factors driving and mitigating conflict. Second, it can also refer to efforts to coordinate or set up channels for communication to develop a comprehensive, multileveled, multi-sectoral strategy, including development, humanitarian assistance, governance, security, justice, and other sectors that may not use the term "peace building" to describe themselves.

The concept of conflict resolution was also clarified as used in this chapter. As such, it is appropriate to begin with this probe; when can we say that conflict has been resolved or prevented? Conflict resolution is therefore the process of resolving an issue or problem between two or more warring parties. It is best understood as a working model with two key elements, conflict management and negotiation. While conflict management is a communication process for changing the negative emotional states in a conflict to emotional states that allow for working out a solution to the conflict, negotiation is a communication process for enabling the disputing parties to achieve an outcome with respect to their differences (Francis, 2006). Conflict resolution according to Wooddrow & Oatley

(2013) can therefore be scholarly defined as the informal or formal process that two or more parties used to find a peaceful solution to their dispute. Best, (2006) and Miller, (2003) further conceptualized conflict resolution as the methods and processes explored in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution between warring parties. In resolving conflicts of whatever variants, effective communication, understanding of the parties and the phenomenon, motives or ideologies as well as collective negotiation are critical elements to ensuring peace and preventing conflicts. Conflict resolution as a concept can equally be used interchangeably with dispute resolution so long as the societies or persons involved has underlying philosophies and traditional techniques. These underlying philosophies and African traditional techniques of resolving conflicts includes accommodation, compromise, and genuine reconciliation, as opposed to winner-take all.

Theoretical Framework

The chapter adopts the structural functionalist theory also known broadly as system theory to probe the phenomenon under discourse. The perspective draws substantially upon the ideas of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Emile Durkheim. Its theorist takes a broad view of society and focus on the macro aspect of social life (Hughes, Kroehter, & Zanden, 2002).

Functionalists take as their starting point the notion that society is a system, a set of elements or components that are related to one another in a more or less stable fashion. It focuses on the parts of society, particularly its major contributors which include family, religion, the economy, the state, education and in the

context of this chapter peace builders and conflict resolutors in Nigeria. It identify the structural characteristics of these parts much as biologists described the principal features of the body's organs, and determine what the functions of these parts are.

One way to clearly introduce structural functionalism is to examine the word 'function': what is the function of school? What is the function of Police station? And Under the context of this chapter, what is the function of peace builders and conflict resolutors? In everyday language, function refers to roles, purposes and contributions; structural functionalism has similar meaning (Alubo, 2012). These different parts with their different functions, work together to maintain equilibrium or a good working form. The theory further posits that, society has inbuilt mechanisms to resolve challenges. This form of inbuilt correctors may be likened to some stabilizers and is called homeostasis. The idea is when one part is in trouble the other (like the peace builders and conflict resolutors) rally round both to take on extra responsibility and to pull it out of trouble.

Structural functionalism is therefore concerned with the relationship between the whole and its parts. It explains the parts by examining their role and contributions to the larger whole. However, the whole is greater than the summation of its part. From the understandings above, the theory holds that, social order is possible in society because there is a common consensus in norms and values. Indeed, as Emile Durkheim one of the central exponents of structural functionalism cited in Alubo, (2012) puts it, "there is collective consciousness, to which all subscribe." To him, the collective consciousness has a life of its own and is like a big oracle

hanging over the heads of individuals. It coerces itself down on human beings and thus fosters solidarity. He was aware that, this form of integration, which he called mechanical solidarity, obtains only in simple societies where everyone has basically the same kind of vocation. However, with population increase, the situation changes; division of labour becomes more complex and there are multiple types of vocations in the society today. Under this condition, integration is forged through necessity and mutual interdependence. Everything exists in an ecological relationship, just as the parts of a computer, or organs in the human body. It focuses on the whole, rather than on parts. Functionalists or system theorists believed that, a part of a system can only be understood by examining its relationship and contributions to other parts for the overall good of the larger system. As such, a system-based approach to peace-building and conflict resolution grew out of the study of complex systems.

Examining the Role of Critical Stakeholders in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria

To really appreciate the roles that these critical stakeholders have played and still playing in peace-building and conflict resolution in contemporary Nigeria, there is a need to review some vital literature in this aspect or area. As such, the assessment was done in the following sequence: Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) and Traditional ruler/Community elders.

IPCR: Established in February 2000 as the official peace-building and conflict resolution institution in Nigeria and beyond to checkmate the recurring violent conflict through research, advocacy, evidence-informed policy options and

practice. Empowered by the Establishment Act, No. 34 which mandated the institution to engage in conflict prevention, management and resolution in Nigeria and other parts of Africa; IPCR have adopted several strategies such as: research, training, dialogues, Advocacy, sensitization and awareness creation, early warning mechanism, peace education and few others to addressing the underlying causes of the recurring conflict in Nigeria (IPCR, 2006).

Some of the programmes they have successfully formulated and implemented to building peace and mitigating violence conflict in Nigeria includes: the Election Conflict Management Project (ECMP); Mainstreaming Gender into peace-building and conflict prevention; Conflict sensitive Reporting on Elections and Good Governance Advocacy for Media Group; Conflict Sensitive Approach to Development and Budget Formulation for state legislators, public servants, local government chairmen, traditional rulers and civil society; and interfaith dialogues on religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria among many other (Babatunde & Anyadike, 2020).

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Civil Society Organizations have been facilitating stakeholder dialogue across the country to enhance peaceful coexistence; conducting advocacy and capacity building for harmonious living, enhance local ownership and inclusion through the involvement of diverse groups in discussion around security – related issues. They have also influence and still influencing critical policies capable of promoting unity and national cohesion, provides humanitarian support to vulnerable groups in conflict and emergency situations. Other critical role that CSOs have played and still playing is their

engagement in conflict analysis which involved gathering of information and data, monitoring violence conflict development and providing early warning signals on situations that can lead to violence. And because they have access to parties involved in conflicts and have the ability to bring the parties to dialogue makes them a critical stakeholder in peace-building and conflict resolution (Idris, 2020).

Faith Based Organizations (FBOs): Faith Based Organizations have been playing a tremendous role in diverse areas in peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria. Some of these roles include: education, advocacy, intermediaries, mediation, changing behaviors, providing peace building education, health or relief services, and dissemination of ideas (Bercovith & Kadayifci, 2009). Kadayifci-Oreliana (2009) also argues that, FBOs have been playing a unique role in accessing and mobilizing faith communities. Through Sermon and preaching they have reach out to a large number of people with relative ease. Furthermore, Heynes (2009) outlined four critical areas that FBOs have been contributing to peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria. They include: emotional and spiritual support to war affected communities; mediating between conflicting parties; and their conduct in pursuit of reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

FBOs have been able to act as early warning indicators, due to their close connection to communities. For example, in Kaduna, Kano and Jos in 1999, 2010, 2012 & 2015, the Inter-religious Council of Nigeria was able to alert the government to the worsening security situation (Flanigan, 2013). Other critical

efforts of faith based organization towards peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria include, providing immediate relief during and in the aftermath of conflicts, providing social services and psychological support. Following the violence in Jos in 2008, FBOs provided immediate support to victims and their families through prayer and counseling, shelter, food, clothes and medical distribution. The Christian Organization of Nigeria (CAN) organized a week-long fasting and prayer session (Best & Rakodi, 2011).

According to Best & Rakodi (2011), documenting the effects of violence conflict is an important first step in resolving conflict. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) established a documentation committee to count the number of Christians killed and the churches destroyed. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria and the Ansurul Islam both set up committees to collect data back to the government to assist in making reparations, and some monitored the distribution of relief materials to ensure it reached all affected communities fairly. FBOs have been able to pursue activism and lobbing of governments to push for peace (Flamigan, 2013). In Kano, Nigeria, the radical Islamic movement Jama'atu tzalatil Bid'ah Wa'ikamatis Sunnah (JIBWIS) lobbied the government for fairness in distribution of relief items and for justice for victims (Best & Rakodi, 2011).

Religious actors have been playing a significant role as educators and in bringing people together for conflict transformation. Military officers have been sent to peace-building workshops facilitated by FBOs (Berkley Center for Religious Peace and World Affairs, 2011). Peace-building training provided by Catholic Relief Services has helped the military understand the different positions in

conflicts; and has also helped other actors to see the military as colleagues rather than opposition. This educational initiative has trained peace builders who have gone on to establish bridge between communities, and change attitude within the military. This has been significant in reforming the military's reputation and enabling them to build relationships with communities in the peace-building and conflict resolution project.

Traditional Leaders/Community Elders: It is apparent that the traditional leaders/community elders possess basic knowledge and skills of the customs, traditions, and values of their people as well as the indigenous patterns of conflict resolution that have placed them in a better position to play a critical role in mitigating violence and ensuring peaceful co-existence in their various communities in Nigeria (Hamza, Pandian, & Ramli, 2019).

Studies carried out with different approaches in Nigeria have examined the extent to which traditional leaders/community elders played critical roles in resolving a range of conflicts from ethno-religious, farmer/herder clashes, militancy, Boko Haram insurgency among others. Aliyu, Moorthy, & Idris (2016) examined the role played by Kano Emirate in resolving the spate of ethno-religious crises between Hausa and Igbo that the state faced in the past. They found that Kano Emirate played a vital role in resolving such ethno-religious conflicts by using traditional informal mechanisms. As a result, peace and harmony was restored between Hausas and Igbos that led majority of the people indicating their preference to the conflict resolution of Kano Emirate over the modern patterns by the police and courts in the state. Although the study has proved the legitimacy

and respect the Kano Emirate enjoyed and still enjoys from the people, it however, negates the fact that whenever conflict becomes uncontrollable, it is normally the formal pattern (by security personnel like the military and police) that is also deployed to resolve and restore peace. Supporting Aliyu's (2016) findings, Okonji (2016) further stressed that traditional leaders contributed greatly in resolving and restoring peace in the Kosofe ethno-religious conflict in Lagos. Findings from his study show that, 88.8% of the respondents acceded to the decisions of the traditional chiefs over other actors in the arbitration of the conflict in Kosofe LGA in Lagos State. This shows that the traditional leaders played a vital role in the resolution of ethnic and religious conflicts because people honour, respect, and accept their decisions. In Similar vein, Hamisu, Makinta, Muhammed, Garba, & Umar (2017) examine the impact of traditional leaders in resolving farmers/herders' conflict in Borno State. They found that majority of the people involved in the conflict believed that traditional leaders played a vital role in resolving the conflict between them leading to restoration peace and corporate coexistence in the area.

In another studies, Chizea & Osumah (2015), Nweke (2012) and Olusola & Aisha (2013) all argued that most of the crises like ethno-religious crises, militancy in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram insurgency, farmer/herder clashes, among others occur and aggravate in Nigeria as a result of the lack of involvement of traditional rulers from the initial stage. They therefore submitted that the traditional rulers are embodiment of knowledge of values, norms, culture, and

traditions of their people with which they can resolve and manage any conflicts and crises and ensure peace and harmony prevail in their respective areas.

Conclusion/Recommendation

The task of peace-building, conflict resolution and ensuring peaceful coexistence among citizens in any part of the world require multiple measures and the effective efforts of various actors and institutions. It is upon this premise that this chapter appraised the role critical stakeholders in peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria from the structural functionalist theoretical platform; and their various roles have been significant in peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria but it is the conclusion of this chapter that the present security situations or realities in the country is not in tandem with their various efforts due to several challenges. First among such numerous challenges is the lack of unification of our multi-ethnic configuration hence our confrontation with issues of national cohesion or integration. This situation is obvious today because each group regard itself as distinct nationality with defined customs and territories. Second, as Magstadt (2009) cited in Okoro & Bariledum (2019) evidently noted, dysfunctional states are wretched places where extreme are the norms, where government is either extremely repressive or too weak to maintain a modicum of law and under such circumstances the most violent elements in society will definitely take over. A queen from the above shows that Nigeria state is weak and is gradually collapsing into a fail state; in the face of high inflation, poverty and unemployment; it is obvious that Nigeria government is unable to meet the basic needs of majority of her citizens. This situation is more than enough to propel people to violence and posed a grave challenge to the peace building and conflict

resolution efforts of the critical stakeholders. No republic could remain untroubled and developed, if large numbers of her citizens were economically marginalized. This account to why violence conflicts and insecurity of all sorts has not only remained with us but also escalating like wide fire despite the roles that the critical stakeholders have played and still playing in peace-building and conflict resolution in Nigeria.

Flowing from the conclusion above, the chapter offers the following recommendations:

i.   There is a need to build effective synergy among the stakeholders to managing conflict and building peace in their various domains. There should be continuous consultation among these actors and institutions to reduce duplications, contradictions, and faulty perceptions of others roles and responsibilities.

ii.   Actors and institutions that have expanded their scope of responsibilities to including conflict resolutions, mediation and peace-building should be strengthened. For instance, government-led peace-building initiatives should incorporate the already existing local platforms. Furthermore, their various approaches to peace-building and resolving conflicts should be adopted and implemented in other areas that are affected by violence conflicts.

iii.   The Nigerian government must tackle the challenges of endemic poverty and the ever increasing rate of youth unemployment especially its graduate variant as well as social inequality. Since the inception of democratic rule

in 1999 to date, there has not been any viable industry or any policy framework marshalling out appropriate plans to carry the youths along. This trend makes them vulnerable to crime and any crisis upheaval as they are easily manipulated and recruited by politicians and other crises driven agents.

iv.   The task of rebuilding trust and peaceful co-existence among her citizens will require multiple measures at all levels, but most of all, such reforms and rebuilding will require strong and effective leadership with the political will to addressing the lingering challenges of internal security crises in the country.

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