

# Is Religious Violence Really a Battle for God or an Expression of Deep-rooted Socio-Political Dissatisfaction and Divide in society?

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## **Abstract**

Our contemporary world is being impeded by violent religious conflicts in the name of God. Such conflicts are becoming the hallmark of many countries of our contemporary world with devastating consequences. The aim of this paper is to highlight the menace of such conflicts enquiring if there are much deeper trepidations than religion that keep triggering the so-called religious conflicts. It is not infrequent to hear of violent conflicts between Muslims and Christians, Muslims and Buddhists or one religious-sect against another. Moreover, the declaration of global *Jihad* (Islamic religious war), Islamic Caliphate or Christian crusades by religious extremists in a modern world of diversity are flustering. Thus, is modern human civilization being threatened by violent conflicts, wars, and so-called religio-political terrorism? Is religion the true motive for the incessant skirmishes for instance in Africa (northern Nigeria), some part of the Middle East and Asia? This article seeks to unearth the clandestine causes of these so-called religious conflicts, enquiring if religion is the principal cause of such violence and offering some conclusive suggestions.

**Keywords:** Civilization, Democracy, Development, poverty, Religion, Violent conflict.

## **Introduction**

It can be argued that modern human civilization could not have been what it is outside of the innate contributions of religion and the ongoing impact of religion in society. As society continues to advance, people must grapple with the challenges that are in this process of growth. Sustainable progress means getting to know the true causes of the hurdles experienced and putting in place concrete mechanisms to address such complications. However, the experience in some parts of the world has been that of persistent violent conflicts, skirmishes, interethnic rivalries leading to conflicts and violent clashes between communities (ethnic and religious).

Furthermore, unrest, instability, strife, and discord fired by so-called religious sentiments on the one hand and on the other, dissatisfaction with the socio-political and economic status quo, the desire for political control, self-determination, and the total abhorrence of the poor condition of development for instance in Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia persist as perfect recipe for conflicts.

Not forgetting the painful memories of European exploration of Africa, the miff of slavery, colonisation, political-religious domination, and the so-called project of independence for African States. Further, the seeming failure of Western style democracy exacerbated by exploitive economic systems, poor development, and glaring poverty within communities in Africa (for instance) are all underpinning conflict stimulating factors. These events in history have provoked a steady growth of anti-Western feelings in some parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia; as Western democratic promises and aspirations have failed to bring about the projected development of African states' economy (Francis, 2007). Thus, local inhabitants are asking perturbing questions as to which religion is right at the core of it all.

The poor or total lack of socio-economic development in these regions means enduring the pain of abject poverty, conspicuous hunger, leading to violent conflicts, complete breakdown of law and order, poor security situation and destruction of life and property. The consequence is the emergence of refugee syndrome, an unprecedented migration of peoples, intensification of the menace of human trafficking, smuggling and the subtle promotion of modern slavery (Pulford, 2019). In Nigeria for instance, long term traditional ethnic feuds, unhealed deep divide between tribes, clans and traditional kingdoms continue to fuel mistrust. Furthermore, community leadership tussles, local political leadership scuffles, disputes over land and competition over scarce resources, intensified by sentiments of religious stereotypical-fundamentalist extremism, often result in violent conflict with unimagined fracas and utter desolation.

The question remains, what are the true causes of such violence in the name of religion, a battle for God or reaction against the sad and sorry state of such underdevelopment, poverty, poor governance, or perceived political-economic domination? Why is religion and religious sentiment always at the centre of violent conflicts in these regions? This article argues that violent conflict in the name of religion has nothing to do with battle for God as the sentiment of religion is only being used to express dissatisfaction with the dismal situation in society.

## **Religion-Human Civilization and the Development of Homogeneous Society**

Ancient Mesopotamian/Sumerians texts and chronicles attest to the fact that religious rituals and practises were part and parcel of early human endeavours alongside hunter-gathering and agricultural activities at the early phase of human society, as well as the strong believe that the divine Being was part of the community (Armstrong, 2014 and Brisco, 1998). Thus, the multifarious relationship between religion and society is born and persists so even in contemporary times, giving religion a unique place in the history of humanity.

According to a scholar and commentator on religious affairs, Karen Armstrong (1994), history of religions has revealed that human beings are spiritual animals, that *homo sapiens* is also *homo religious*. Armstrong argues that men and women started worshiping god as soon as they became recognisably human, creating religion at the same time as they created works of art (1994). Besides, the religious expression of our ancestors articulated the wonder and mystery that was an essential component of human reality in their experience of the beautiful, yet startling cosmos, and like art, religion became an attempt by men and women to find meaning and value in life despite the challenges that existence presented (1994).

The ancient world was religious, and religion accompanied their every action in the community (Pat and Alexander Bible, 2009). The desire in humans to conquer their environment, led to advancement in the dynamics of territorial administration, security, and sustenance. Consequently, there arose the need for political-intercommunal relations, dealings, and transactions between homogeneous groups. Although such federations were not large, the evidence of sophisticated social structures, temples and cult of worship indicates the central place of religion in a growing civilization and the place of the king as a divine ruler was prominent (Brisco, 1998). Moreover, improved transportation along the course of rivers meant enhanced communication, better encounter between peoples and the smooth flow of trade in and between communities. Meanwhile, sustained agricultural practices generated food surpluses that supported large population of society and trade in goods that were not locally available (1998). Thus, politics, commerce and of course religion became intertwined in a complex correlation that must be understood and acknowledged within the undercurrents of such impasse.

It can therefore be stated that religion, politics, and commerce have substantially impacted on humanity and contributed immensely to shaping human civilization and the nuance of society even till today. However, in the voyage of civilisation or advancement, it is complex to discrete these elements; as men and women (who may be religious or not) participate in politics, commercial activities and other functions in the building and sustenance of

society. Consequently, negotiating within such multifaceted dynamism can be daunting, correlating to the sentiments of people. Moreover, the ancient people found it impossible to see where 'religion' ended and politics and commerce began, as both were mutually entwined (Armstrong, 2014).

Politics it can be argued as an art of governance evolved as part of growing human civilisation that sought to cultivate a sense of community, creating order and security for the protection of each homogeneous society, with religion permeating all aspects of society and every activity was dubbed as deeply sacred (2014). Rulers in ancient societies were comprehended as gods who ruled according to divine principles of justice, truth, and the natural order, they were idolized and so venerated as exemplified in the early Egyptian dynasties (Brisco, 1998). And since pre-modern state ideology was faith imbued, even warfare acquired a sacred character with the patronage of powerful military; that gave protection to both religious and political imperial ideology of the state (Armstrong 2014). Evidently, pre-modern people clearly engaged in politics thinking in religious terms as they struggled to make sense of the world around them in a way that our contemporary world may not fathom and treasure due to our advancement and the secular nature of our world (2014).

Thus, humans have evolved, and civilization has never been static. It must be recognised that men and women in all ages have always been tweaked toward the divine, with the sense of the sacred underpinning and cognisant in the drive towards a more broadminded societal ethos contemporary secularism cannot rub civilization of this reality. Moreover, people have functioned in society shaped by their religious beliefs which calls and challenges them to faithfully commit to their responsibilities, guided by the positive values of their faith in the service of the 'other' and society at large.

This paradigm will never be lost because in the process of human civilization, religion has matured to become an essential element in human and humane social order, impinging on human sentiments with the capacity to create identity, form relationships, build community, nurturing formidable bonds among and between peoples, creating totalities (Sacks, 2002). Religion functions and continues to perform a task fundamental in large groups as it links people emotionally, behaviourally, intellectually, morally, and spiritually in a communion both physical and metaphysical, with grounds for social structures of society and the basis for both political mobilisation and manipulation (Sacks, 2015).

Consequently, if religion as part of human civilization and experience is valued as that perceived divine impetus in human historical development and faith expression as the corresponding innate desire in humans to respond to that deific activity in human life, then religious beliefs will unendingly be as

coherent part of our evolution (Miller and Huber, 2015). It can further be asserted that, no matter where a person of religious belief finds his/herself, their faith will influence directly or indirectly their conducts. However, the snag will constantly be where to draw the dividing line between for example politics and religion, to avoid the pitfall of the use of religious sentiment in the art of politics/governance.

### **Violent use of Religion is Consequent of Perceived Democratic-Economic Failure**

To understand how possible, it is to use religion to mobilise for violence, it is expedient to critically examine what religion as a phenomenon does to a person/people or community. According to the scholar Jonathan Sacks (2002), the word religion stems from the Latin *religere*, which means 'to bind' and that is what religion does. Religion binds people to one another in a unique way and to the divine. It has the propensity to bring together people of various backgrounds to form communities, create unities, systems and wholes that unify groups together through rituals, narratives, collective ceremonies, symbols, meanings, and totalities in such an unimaginable sturdy bond (2002).

The world history of religion is a testimony to the fact that religion has been at the centre of forming and shaping cultures, customs, peoples, and traditions. It has set the pace and tones of political civilizations, empires, commerce and social dynamics in society. The Roman Empire remains an impressive example of the proficiency of religion (Novak, 2001). Moreover, religious political history details how religion has been mobilized (and used) for political wars of conquest, expansion of frontiers and control of economic resources and to dominate people with shocking consequences (Pakenham, 1991 and Rodney, 2012). It is true for instance that the early century crusades and *jihads* were motivated more by (political) domination, economic rewards and by religious zeal that promised heavenly rewards to the 'martyrs' of such wars (with slavery as integral part of it all (Esposito, 2002 and Jon, 2018).

The close of the nineteenth century ushered in the end of slave trade and international slavery, then the political colonization of Africa. Religion was fully part of that exploitative project of socio-political, economic domination of Africa and some part of Southeast Asia (Rodney, 2012). It must further be said that the two world wars had a devastating effect on the world, then came the formation of new political alliances (the cold war), the push for secularism and Western liberal humanism. This was an experiment entirely new and unprecedented in the history of humanity and a challenge to the religious sensibility of many societies (Armstrong, 1994). It was a shift away from religion as the central potency in our world, which further meant that religion was slowly been ebbed out as a force in public life (Daisley, 2017).

Nonetheless, the twentieth century saw the end of political colonization after the so-called wars of independence and the enthronement of Western style democratic system of governance, especially in Africa. This went along with the propositioned economic cooperation and growth, purported to bring about development, tackle poverty, and thus, raising the hopes and aspirations of many poor people. However, many of these formerly colonized communities have remained undeveloped, divided, ravaged by poverty, perennial violent conflicts, and wars (Adetula, 2005). According to the socio-economic and development indices, in the sphere of international division of labour, Africa for example has moved from the periphery of the centre to the periphery of the periphery, reddened in extreme poverty, conflicts and total lack of development (Francis, 2007).

The Western style democracy has failed the common man and woman in these poverty-stricken societies. Economic democracy on a global level has not delivered on its promise to the masses. The yearning and aspirations of people have been let down. The democratic principles necessary for human endeavour and essential for society to function have failed (Nolan, 2019/20). Meanwhile, many developing nations have not succeeded in putting in place their own unique democratic mechanism for growth and economic development. Communities are reacting differently. People are asking lots of socio-political, as well as economic questions and turning to religion for answers. Regrettably, inappropriate hermeneutics of religion is being used by some fundamentalist extremist Jihadists, whose literal interpretation of the sacred text or religious tradition they believe remains the ultimate truth. These, tend to omit the possibilities of other perspectives of a more dynamic interpretation, coming from within their own or other religions, of the same text and or religious tradition (Groff, 2008). Many of such people are rebellious against modernity; convinced that liberal, secular society is determined to wipe out religion (Armstrong, 2001). They instigate jihad or battle for God perpetrated by their own interpretation of scripture. And granted that some of our holy books contain certain verses that seem to endorse conflict and promote violence (which must be understood and interpreted within their contextual ambience), they exploit and export such segments. They distort religious tradition for political reasons by amplifying the more aggressive passages that exist in their scriptures, using religion to evoke the desire for a better society; but they do this by their own standards and they feel justified in ignoring the more compassionate principles of their faith (2001).

It is significant to note that radicalisation that initiates the so-called Battle for God in many cases is instigated and sustained through preaching hateful, violent, intolerant messages or teachings, based on extremist doctrines and interpretations by deviant sects within faith traditions. They dwell and

promote negative comparative analyses that outrightly catechise hate for people of other faiths (Dahiru, 2020). According to Majeed Dahiru (2020) a Nigerian public affairs analyst, radicalisation generally begins from the home, through negative utterances by parents or an extremist against people of other faiths, to the Islamiyya (the place where Islamic religious instructions are given to children) where religious supremacy and negative comparative religious studies are taught (2020). Later in life, the continuous reading and digestion of poisonous literature, which teaches hate and intolerance of people holding different views from one and unrelenting indoctrination have continued to produce generations of potentially radicalised individuals with some putting to practice what has been imbibed over time in acts of terrorism (2020).

Sadly, some of these extremists are well educated and privileged individuals in societies. They take advantage of the pathetic situation of poverty and illiteracy to politically brainwash (some) people, setting a new paradigm for a novel political future that must be violently fought for (Stern and Berger, 2015). They aim to instigate revolt against the secular state, to restore a sense of the spiritual to modern society and a future that uses puritanical strict religious ideals to set the tone for politics and society (Armstrong, 2000).

Besides, religion offers a different kind of solace as it impacts on the dignity of the person, blending with the faculties of a person's spiritual sentiment. However, threatened by persistent anguish of unrelenting poverty and hopelessness, this tends to nudge people to turn more towards religion as a source and expression of stability, self-worth and in some cases, such have been used as a means for venting frustration (Sacks 2002). Furthermore, such inclination advanced by poor hermeneutical interpretation of religious text and tradition, one can argue has encouraged extremist terrorists' acts, with suicide bombers ready and willing to wear the suicide belt all in the name of scoring political goals (Quadri and Keogh, 2018).

For some, the West and western style democratic principles and policies are the reason why countries on the periphery of the centre are poor. For others, the local political leaders who have not delivered on the dividends of democracy (and in collaboration with foreign powers) are the culprits. American or Western foreign policy is of considerable interest. For instance, in some Islamic States or societies, western style democratic actions are viewed and interpreted from a religious viewpoint (since for some of these communities, there is no separation between religion and politics (Sampson, 2012). Such foreign policies are beheld by some as the plan for continuous political suppression and economic exploitation of available local resources, in order to dominate and keep people poor. Moreover, when a society becomes disillusioned by situation of perceived political, economic domination and exploitation, and fuelled by the desire for a full control of its own destiny from presumed voracious external

(international) bodies deemed to suppress and exploit, that becomes the most authentic trigger for the so-called religious conflicts. And especially in places where religion for some remains the only succour, and the lone way out, religious sentiments become the rallying point for mobilization as it offers the perfect platform to galvanise people.

Recent world history is of prime example: the global terrorist activities of central Al-Qaeda whose network, support, and even fund the plans of other jihadist-groups aimed at awakening the sleeping Islamic-ummah to lead them to the right direction, such that the masses would then rise and more or less take matters into their own hands is of significant concern (Stern and Berger, 2015). The declaration of an Islamic Caliphate (a state ruled by Islamic shari'a law) by ISIS is an instance of typical use of religion for political warfare (Hosken, 2015). Furthermore, the conflict in the Central African Republic, violent conflicts in some part of North Africa; the Sahel region of Islamic Maghrib, and the violent activities of Al-Shabaab in East Africa, the horn of Africa and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria (Umaru, 2013 and Smith, 2016), are all classical examples of the use of religious sentiment to express disgruntlement and discontent with Western style democracy. It is, however, the local citizens that bear the impact of such violence as these clandestine groups espouse violence and terrorism to disrupt and destabilise societies politically and economically. They sought to overthrow democratic government for the establishment of a so-called Islamic Caliphate ruled by Islamic jurisprudence (Esposito, 2002).

Unfortunately, events in the Western world and America have repercussions in Africa and other parts of the globe (Griswold, 2010). Regrettably, some Islamic political leaders and communities associate American/Western secular culture, values, custom and lifestyle with Christianity or the Christian faith (Kukah and Ilo, 2020). Consequently, Christians in various parts of the world bear the burden of such stereotype, bias, and prejudice. Furthermore, violence against Christians in some part of the world can arguably be said to be stimulated by the past feeling that Christianity was wrapped up with colonisation and is alien. Such association with a secular West poses an even greater challenge for Christianity in an age of global Islamic terrorism (2020). For instance, Christians in Northern Nigeria in 2006 suffered violent-killings, maiming, and the destruction of their places of worship, homes, and businesses as a result of a violent reaction by some Muslim youths against the publication of a Danish cartoon; even though there were reprisal attacks against the Muslim community (Polgreen, 2006).

Thus, the world order is such that democratically elected governments of each Nation have the responsibility to see to the wellbeing, security, and the development of their state and to provide quality life for their citizens. The inability of any government to achieve this for the common man and woman

means the failure of democracy. In most so-called developing or third world countries, that is the situation and some people have taken to the extremist form of religious interpretation to prey on the vulnerability of a great majority, taking advantage of the weak political system to create havoc. Islamic state in the Levant and Syria, and Northern Nigeria are of significant example.

### **Battle for God in Northern Nigeria or an Expression of Socio-Political and Economic Dissatisfaction**

It is undeniable that religion has an immensely powerful influence that permeates every aspect of human life and society. This is significantly visible in Nigeria as sentiments of religion have a strong sway that pervades the public and private life of citizens to different degrees. Some people, however, are so deeply religious such that the effect of religion on them seems to have an upper hand and controls every facet of their lives. Their world view or acuity is from the prism of religion. They tend to spiritualise everything to the point that some have become extremely fanatical in their stance on matters of faith, with strong religious opinion for instance on politics, economy, and social life. Conversely, for others the sad and painful experience of educational, economic, and political poverty means that they are not stake holders in society due to lack of skills, aptitude, and proficiencies. Thus, they take to violence in the name of God, group like Boko Haram is an example. To such people and groups, religion becomes a tool and a means of consolation and of course false hope, exacerbated by poor interpretation of religious texts and tradition. And because they see no way out of their impoverished situation, they become susceptible to being mobilised for violence by those who want to take advantage of such instances. For example, in Nigeria, the awful dissatisfaction with the general condition of abject poverty, lack of infrastructural, economic, and social development, poor political administrative governance, high level illiteracy and falling standard of education (poor or total lack of religious education of oneself or the 'other'), poor morale, endemic corruption, high rate of crime and the overall insecurity continue to set the tone for conflict (Alechenu, Chiedozie, Nwogu and Isenyo, 2020). Meanwhile politicians, policymakers and public office holders seem not to fluster, dwelling in their own spheres protected by the state mechanism.

Generally, religion independently does not cause violence, but can be manipulated to suit various interests; and violence does not result from the fact that people are religious (Umaru, 2003). The conditions that lead to conflict are disputes of ideological, socio-political, and ethnic identities (Cavanaugh, 2009). Further, violence is related to the wider problems of extreme poverty, political instability, poor governance, and total lack of security (Blackwell, 2020). It is important to note that, the subtle Christian-Muslim dichotomy in Northern Nigeria is further made complex by issues of language, ethnicity, ideology and

the underlying socio-cultural and political statues of these two identities (Kukah and Ilo, 2020). Intriguingly, religion and religious affiliation becomes the most viable outlet for ventilating both political and social opposition and many times especially for the illiterate poor of that region, the sentiments of religion evoke and promotes a messianic expectation for instance of the Caliphate that was overthrown by the colonial masters in 1903 (Kukah and Ilo, 2020).

Consequently, such pathetic situation gives rise to the feeling of desperation, displacement, and despondency among the populace. People are pained and frustrated, desiring something new and momentous. Their disappointment turns into anger and, aware of the values and ideals of religion, they feel cheated and sometimes resentment grows towards, for instance, the political system, public office holders or the religious 'other.' Their progress is perceived as a threat and the reason why the other is disadvantaged. In such pain and isolation, the sentiments of faith or religion may be the only optimism and consolation when and if ordered conscientiously.

However, the danger is when people become so sentimental about their religious beliefs and allows such sentiments to be-cloud their sense of reason. They fail to discern for example between a political issue as different from religious or ethnic concerns. They miss comprehending the bigger picture of the unique diverse nature of society and the need for collaboration and negotiation through dialogue of engagement. Regrettably, some so-called religious leaders have politicized and exploited such sentiments in mobilising people to violent conflicts. This creates a stereotypical situation of 'us' versus 'them', where bias and division thrive leading to tension, mistrust and doubt. Hence, any misunderstanding becomes a trigger for conflict with the propensity of becoming violent when propelled by negative religious sentiments. Such religious sentiments many times have been used to vehemently express deep rooted political, economic, and socio-ethnic dissatisfaction (Sacks, 2002 and Kaigama, 2006).

People for instance tend to vent their political desperation and anger on others in the name of God, call it *Jihad or crusade?* (Fighting for God). The religious 'other' is labelled the enemy and religious and public structures are attacked, businesses and private properties destroyed, people are killed and in some instances, there are revenge attacks all in the name of religion and a Battle for God (Armstrong, 2000). The real issue for the misunderstanding or conflict is many times lost and religious sentiments takes the centre stage, and propelled by such passion people become blind to the common good for which society exists. The 'other' is then perceived from the perspective of their religious expression or ethnicity. And instead for instance, of acknowledging ourselves

as Nigerians, the 'other' is denoted as the enemy because they profess a different faith or political affiliation (Christianity or Islam, further... Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba). The conflict then brews along such lines and visible religious representations are attacked, businesses are destroyed, life and other valuables are lost. The post-election riots of 2008 in Jos Plateau state are an example (Adigun, 2008). In such context's religion is only being used as it is so easy to galvanise people using the sentiments of religion to perpetrate violence.

### **Effectiveness of Religion in the Socio-Political Development of Peoples**

The global history of the development of human civilization and socio-political evolution of peoples will not be complete without recognising and acknowledging the place and contributions of religion in such advancement. Religion (understood as divine potency) throughout the history of man has remained a catalyst, a binding, and a compelling force in the growth of society. Right from ancient times, the reverence, respect, commitment, and devotion accorded to the sacredness of faith and things of the divine presented an opportunity for the mobilisation of the community to achieve common goals for the good of all. Sentiment of religion was valuable for conscription into military force, boasting agricultural activities, building of structures, water ways, problem solving (territorial defence, wars), and the most efficient way to keep society homogenous as ancient Near-East data testifies (Brisco, 1998).

In the Greek and Roman times, religion was at the centre of Empire administration and the driving force for civic, political, and state control (1998). The positive impact of religion on people and its upbeat energy was harnessed and channelled into economic growth, political fortification, social cohesion, and advancement in the process of production. This was and has been successful because religion teaches and challenges citizens to serve the divine in the 'other' and the state. Moreover, kings and rulers were perceived as gods hence, whatever orders came from the ruler was highly effective in getting things done for the common good.

In modern times, religion continues to play a key role in keeping society together and is pivotal in fostering the process of development. For instance, political parties and organisations have been organised along religious line with amazing results in term of getting people to commit time, talent and treasure for political and social independence. Encouraging religious sentiment have proved effectual at getting political, civic, and religious leaders to engage with each other in enhancing the process of development, peace, and security.

However, with the growth of secularism, atheism and social diversity, the place of and influence of religion is been questioned. Nevertheless, in contemporary developing societies like (Northern) Nigeria, religion still holds a powerful sway as one of the most important components for defining and sustaining

civilization, cohesion, and cultural identities in the community (Paden, 2005). It has been characteristic for example in the development and setting up of conflict mediation and resolution mechanisms by religious identity groups, using localized available resources in the community, all aimed at fostering growth in society (2005). And in times of violent conflict, the Nigerian government have resulted to the use of such structures to quell such ferocity.

Religion remains critically relevant in contemporary society as the values and discipline taught by various religions have the capability to promote freedom, growth, and collaboration between religious and non-religious people. Moreover, a balanced interpretation of religion by religious people can significantly foster cooperation that builds and sustains homogenous society, where the talents and dexterity of everyone becomes relevant in the service of all. The unfortunate arrogation of the prospects, potentials, and possibilities that religion brings to society for violence in so-called battle for God impacts damagingly; as such actions generates and sustains mistrust, tension and division between distinct religious groups fostering insecurity. Nonetheless, the positive impact of religion on society presents an opportunity for growth in nurturing our diversity when for instance each religious, political, social and community leader aims to foster communion in diversity, which is not just any unity, but one that welcomes and harnesses the abundant variety of possibilities and charisms everyone brings for the growth of all and the development of our society.

### **Conclusion**

Religious violence in the name of battle for God remains an unfortunate phenomenon in contemporary society. The central role religion plays in our civilization means that religion is blamed for every conflict, even though there are no logical and consistent ways to articulate and distinguish socio-political or ethnic ideologies with peculiar tendency towards violence from religious inclinations. The complex nature of conflict needs critical analysis of the situation as the seeming distinctions between religious, political, or secular conflicts may not be helpful in understanding the intricacies of disputation especially in a setting where for instance religion and ethnicity are perceived as one and the same phenomenon (Umaru,2013).

Nonetheless, religion will always be part of society contributing to the dynamism of our civilization. Besides, in every religion, there will persistently be some form of battle or fighting for God, been spearheaded directly or indirectly by some religious fanatics or extremists (Lamb,2020). And such violent physical engagement in the name of the divine continues to rub communities of that collective responsibility towards achieving an ideal society we all desire.

Building bridges between people on opposing sides of any conflict requires a largeness of heart and a breath of vision that is enduring. This is possible if the voice of our religious and civic leaders vehemently condemns violence or battle(s) in the name of God and speak the language of peace aimed at uniting all and sundry in society. This includes standing for a system of justice that nurtures harmony in fraternal communion of our diversity. Fortunately, our holy books are a rich resource for such peace project. They teach and present us with the alternative to violent conflict, providing the building blocks for peaceful encounters that cultivates growth.

Further, education is key. Consistent and balanced religious education that fosters responsible collaboration in diversity between government and religious communities or leaders to ensure harmony and development can weaken violent tendencies. This is possible through dialogue of negotiation even with those who hold contrary view about issues of governance.

On a global level, our contemporary civilization demands a more dynamic political/economic paradigm that is new and more inclusive. A politico-economic system based on equality, effective corporation, negotiation, and support. This ought to be the approach to politics and international policy making aimed at helping local communities in the periphery of the centre to forge a new future of peace and sustainable economic development using their available resources (not the top-down approach of exploitation) is indispensable. The goal of such model of politicking is collaboration that puts in place proper political-economic structures necessary for growth, peace, and harmony. Such, I am convinced, will weaken the push to battle for God and the use of religion by extremists and guarantee the continuity of our universal solidarity in shared civilization which religion will continue to nurture.

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