THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC *DA'WAH* IN PROMOTING SECURITY AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Nigeria is a country which heralded human rights and freedom of expression since its independence. However, political, ethnic and religious crises flared up in various parts of the country immediately after the first coup after independence threatening a society apparently imbued with a culture of tolerance based on harmonious inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations. In a flurry of conflicts, a number of militant groups arose and engulfed the regions of the country with various forms of violent actions. The rise of violent individuals and groups gave a remarkable boost to the explosion of militant and violent religious and socio-political activism that threaten the country's reputation for peaceful co-existence and threaten, too, the integrity of the Nigerian nation-state as well, which failed to protect the lives and property of many of its citizens. Against the backdrop of this state of affairs, this paper looks at how this phenomenon of insecurity and violence could be eradicated or reduced to a minimum, in the socio-political and religious settings of Nigeria taking into account the role of Islamic Da'wah in promoting security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION:

Nigeria is a country which heralded human rights and freedom of expression since its independence. However, political, ethnic and religious crises flared up in various parts of the country immediately after the first coup after independence threatening a society apparently imbued with a culture of tolerance based on harmonious inter-ethnic and inter-faith relations. In a flurry of conflicts, a number of militant groups arose and engulfed the regions of the country with various forms of violent actions. The rise of violent individuals and groups gave a remarkable boost to the explosion of militant and violent religious and socio-political activism that threaten the country's reputation for peaceful co-existence and threaten, too, the integrity of the Nigerian nation-state as well, which failed to protect the lives and property of many of its citizens. The forerunners in these violent clashes are the unemployed youth whom researches have shown that they are the handy tools for inciting violence, hatred and intolerance anywhere in the world. Hence, the most peaceful societies are those with the least percentage of unemployed citizens.[1] In Nigeria, it is sad to note that a great percentage of its teeming youth are unemployed, about ¼ of the citizens are idle, and nearly half of its youth population (42.2%) jobless, it may be difficult for such a country to rest assured of peace or security, and as such its youth are prone to easily be recruited into the labor force of ethno-religious and political crises fueling mafias.[2] Against the backdrop of this state of affairs, this paper looks at how this phenomenon of insecurity and violence could be eradicated or reduced to a minimum, in the socio-political and religious settings of Nigeria taking into account

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the role of Islamic Da'wah in promoting security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria.

DEFINITION OF *DA'WAH.*

The term *Da'wah* is derived from the verb *da'a, yad'u* in the past continuous tense and the root is *Da'wah*. It is an attempt or endeavor in the form of speech or activity for inclining or bending people to believe and have faith on certain idea, thought or opinion which one is calling to.[3] Such an idea, opinion or thought may be good or bad as the Prophet peace be upon him says:

> He who called to righteousness, there would be reward for him like the rewards of those who adhered to it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who called to deviation, there would be sin for him, like the sins of those who followed him (in deviance), without their sins being diminished in any respect.[4]

In technical meaning, Shaykh Aliyu Mahfuz defines *Da'wah* as motivating and directing people to performance of good deeds in the right path.[5] It was also defined by Sayyid Wakil as summoning people to charity and directing them to guidance by enjoining on them righteous path and forbidding them the wrong doing.[6] Again, it was also defined by Muhammad Bayanuni as conveying Islam to the people and educating them (about its teachings) and implementing its rules in the state of affairs.[7] Adam Abdullah al-Ilori defined it as drawing people's attention and rationality toward an ideology or belief which is of benefit and advantage to them. It is also, rescuing people from going astray or from tribulations which beset them.[8]

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According to Muhammad Munir Hijab formal meaning of da'wah could be identified in two ways: first (teaching the) religion or Islam, its basic elements, facts and values and its legislation. It is in reality a complete social system which comprises all facets of human activity and all laws regulating this activity including those that involve the rights of the Lord over his servant. The second identification involves spreading, conveying and inducing or communicating and informing the religion.[9]In the contemporary time a recent conference conducted on Da'wah define it as:

> Sermonizing about Islam and communicating the message of Islam to the Non-Muslims. This is a rather limited view of the meaning of da'awah. The essence of da'awah begins in the Midst of the Muslim Ummah itself. It is the search for practical means of organizing and directing all aspect of individual and communal life according to the principles of Islam.[10]

According to Sayyid Qutb:

> The task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is not an easy one, especially when we consider that it inevitably conflicts with people's desires, interests and pride. There are in this world of ours tyrants who impose their authority by force, people who are interested only in carnal desires and who do not wish to be elevated to a nobler standard. There are also the lazy who hate to be asked to be serious, the unfair who hate justice, the deviant who do not for a moment contemplate a straightforward attitude, as well as those who think wrong of every right

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> thing and consider every wrong thing to be right. No nation, let alone humanity as a whole, can prosper unless goodness prevails, right is upheld and wrong is thrown out.[11]

DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTS OF SECURITY AND PEACE.

Security is an essential value at the heart of Islam. It is referred in the Qur'anic terms as *silm* and *amn*. Security has been defined as a function of protection of the interests of the State. However, this definition is narrow state-centric, therefore, the conception of "security" have currently been broadened to include spiritual and ethical components. Thus, the real purpose and source of true security is to draw closer to the ultimate origin and source of Peace: Allah (SWT).[12] In the Qur'an Allah (SWT), has named Himself "Peace":

> He is Allah other than Whom there is none (that has the right to be worshipped) the King, the Holy, the Peace...[13]

In both conceptual and in practical terms Islam is inseparable from the experience of safety and security at the individual moral level, and at the communal level of society and polity.[14] Peace is "an absence of a state of war." But it may means much more than that because one can be free of war but yet still suffers from anxiety or despairs and lack peace. Complete sense of peace can only be realized through Islam. The word "Islam" is the verbal noun of the verb *aslama*. This verb is defined as, "He resigned or submitted himself." When used with respect to God, it means, "He became

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submissive to God.[15] Islam brings about a complete tranquility and peace of mind. Allah (SWT) states;

> Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam…[16]

Islam is uncompromisingly a law of peace and a religion of mercy. The word Islam is having great relationship with the word peace (i.e. salaam). Even the greetings between Muslims is "May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you." Prayer itself is concluded with the announcement of peace. Furthermore, the revelation of the Qur'an was brought by the angels of peace in a night of peace.[17] The righteous servant greets his Lord on the day he shall meet Him with the greeting of peace,[18] and the Angels will welcome the righteous into paradise with peace.[19] Paradise is itself a place of peace.[20] Also, a Muslim only fights when forced to, and after exhausting all peaceful means of reconciliation, if any opportunity of peace can be reached then he must take it.[21] A Muslim is also required to extinguish the flame of war whenever and wherever he can.[22] The Qur'an says:

> But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allah. Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.' (Surat-al-Anfal (8), ayah 61)

THE ROLE OF *DA'WAH* IN PROMOTING SECURITY AND PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE IN NIGERIA.

From the above one can therefore state that, Nigeria can only rid itself of incessant disturbance of peace and peaceful coexistence through da'wah for a return to Islamic way of life which leads to peace and security. Da'wah towards the attainment of peace and security in Nigeria is so crucial that it becomes

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obligatory on all the Muslims of this country. Charity begins at home they say, The du'ats should be role model and living embodiment of Islamic values, ethical standards, moral behavior, social etiquette and human values as recommended, propounded and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in every aspect of life.[23] Similarly, the role of da'wah in changing the present state of affairs should also start at homes. There has never been a society on Earth without homes in which families could take comfort. It does not matter whether the society is rich or poor, large or small, Muslim or non-Muslim. Families dwell in homes and homes exist in all human societies. An institution of such pervasive and universal importance warrants our attention to call the people in our homes[24] and invite them to Islam and to avoid violence and live in peaceful coexistence in our country. The Prophet (peace be upon him) following the divine command to call his people[25] directed his earliest effort towards persuading his own family about the new message as instructed in the Qur'an.[26] This is a pointer to each and every da'i (preacher) that he should start from his immediate family and community. Preaching of high moral standards, good cultural values and norms, Islamic way of life, moderation and a sense of tolerance to the followers of other faiths in our homes is one of the various topics that can help reduce the present insecurity in the country.

Also the first thing that comes to people's mind when we talk of security is that it has to do with laws. Laws are definitely important for security as they lay down the parameters of acceptable behavior. Hence, application of fair judicial system in Nigeria is one of the greatest means of assurance of peace and guaranteeing security of life and property. The need for da'wah to

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the people to respect the rule of law is obligatory seeing the contemporary state of insecurity, Du'at should ensure that judicial officers were 'informed and guided' not to compromise the cause of justice in the country. Judicial corruption and miscarriage of justice should also be eradicated. In fact, implementation of Islamic law among the Muslims, and respect for the rule of law by all is one of the strongest solutions to the problem of insecurity and violence. Islam provides general principles for life and detailed laws. These laws are means of bringing about peace and security. See for instance the law of retaliation in the following verse and similar ones in the Qur'an. Allah says;

> Verily there is life in the [law of] qisas for you, O people who understand, so that you may attain piety.[27]

Da'wah for the application of justice is indispensable in maintaining the security and peaceful co-existence. To judge according to justice and let everybody have his right constitute the foundation of peaceful co-existence in public life.

Attached to the above, da'wah to the well to do people for poverty reduction through payment of poor dues and general alms giving is also identified as a great source of peace and security. The financial assistance to the poor and needy can come from assistance from government (leadership), from the nearest kin, the neighbors and in the form of mandatory charity like (*Zakat)*, general alms giving and temporary and permanent endowments.[28] The situation here in Nigeria is sad to note that with the teeming wealthy Muslims, the above were not given due attention. That is perhaps one of the reasons that we are in a situation described by Prof. Sam Aluko that;

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> the poor Nigerians can no longer sleep because they are hungry and the rich Nigerians can no longer sleep because the poor Nigerians are awake.[29]

It is therefore pertinent to move the poor away from the recruitment exercise of the Devil, who waits anxiously to employ the poor and unemployed into the labour force of violence and civil strife. The role of da'wah here is to ensure public enlightenment of the importance of Zakat and general alms in lessening the burden of poverty to the poor and needy.[30] Its importance in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised, it strengthens the bonds of love between the rich and the poor, for it is from human nature that a person shows affinity to those who treat them well and it purifies and cleanses the soul of the rich distancing it from greed and avarice, in addition to, motivating the performance of acts of generosity, hospitality and sympathy towards those who are in need.[31]

The concept of moderation in Islam is another topic of great importance in da'wah. Its application in behavior can leads to peaceful coexistence among the society. For instance, if harm is inflicted, inflict exactly the same, but to forgive is more honorable and rewarding, transgressing limits leads to violence, not peace and tolerance is a quality of moderation which leads to peace, it provides the opportunity to know differences and respect them, on the other hand, injustice is a quality contrary to moderation and it leads to the absence of peace.[32]

As *Du'at*, it is also imperative upon the Muslim Ummah to effectively plan for Da'wah programs for enlightening on human rights which may leads to peace and security of mankind. For

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example, teaching and educating the public on the need for the respect of Islamic system of human rights as enshrined in the Qur'an and Sunnah is of vital importance. These rights are universal and fundamental, and that all individuals are to enjoy and observe them under all circumstances. According to Maududi,

> Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected in all circumstances whether such a person is resident within the territory of Islamic state or outside it, whether he is at peace with the state or at war. Human blood is sacred in any case and cannot be spilled without justification.[33]

Disunity and divisions into sects is another cause of violence and insecurity in Nigeria. It has been narrated by Abu-Hurayrah that the Prophet (peace_be_upon_him) said:

> The Jews were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and the Christians were split up into seventy one or seventy-two sects; and my community will be split up into seventy-three sects.[34]

From the above therefore, the Muslim community will be split up into seventy-three sects, sectarian differences is one of the causes of insecurity and violence in Nigeria. Du'at should therefore advocate for the settlement of opinion and dispute in accordance with the book of Allah and Sunnah of the prophet (SAW). Allah says:

> …If you are in dispute over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last

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> Day. This is the best [for you], and most suitable for final determination.[35]

Differences among humans emanate in various aspects/dimensions, it may be sexual, racial and ethnic differences,[36] differences in socio-economic status,[37]differences in faith or sectarian differences.[38] All these differences are but the will of the Creator[39] which can be balanced and engender harmonious co-existence in spite of the differences.

According to S. Shehu, the calamities that have befallen the Nation include poverty, ethno-religious violence and armed conflict. These lead to a theater of killings, bloodbath and community displacements and disharmony. Man if left alone without Divine Guidance cannot engender an enduring peace because of inherent weaknesses in him such as Injustice, Wrong doing and Ignorance,[40] Selfishness, Greed and Avarice,[41] Haste, impatience and anxiety,[42] Incessant contention, controversy, and dispute.[43] The only solution is Allah (SWT) Who is the absolute source of peace, and complete submission to His Din is the surest guarantee for peace.[44] Mankind is therefore charged to strictly adhere to the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah in order to avoid violence and insecurity.

Practicing the religion as revealed by Allah (SWT) is the most complete and comprehensive way to maintain security and arrive at peace, which leaves no room for anyone to introduce anything new, or remove anything from it. Likewise, the only way of life which Allah is pleased with and which can lead to peaceful co-existence is the Islamic way of life.

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Another way of arriving at peace is for the preachers to study and know the causes of violence and crises in Nigeria and use wisdom to admonition people to avoid them. These include; ethno-religious intolerance, bigotry and tensions. Struggle/scramble for scarce resources and unjustified urge for domination and expansion. In addition, struggle for power and dispute over political positions, the mischievous indigene-settler issues and manipulation of ethnic and religious differences/faultiness by wicked religious and political elements/leaders. Pseudo-religiosity and sham scholarship among religious activists- hate sermons and hostile preaching, election rigging and imposition of unpopular people as leaders, pathological hate, ethnic chauvinism and ethnic jingoism are among the identified causes of violence and incessant crises in Nigeria.[45] Having identified the disease the Da'i should use his knowledge and wisdom to solve the problems at hand. The Da'i is like a doctor who studies various diseases and then provides the medicine for cure.

The concept of Islamic moral behavior is an important area requiring the attention of Du'at in Nigeria. The concepts of love, compassion, humility, sacrifice, and understanding promotes peace and security of life and property. A Muslim who lives by good moral standard in its true sense will be most polite, careful of thought, modest, decent, noble, just, trustworthy and peaceful. He will spread harmonious and peaceful co-existence and the joy of living all around him will manifest. In fact, security can only be ensured by practicing good moral values of the Qur'an and Sunnah.[46]

Techniques of da'wah can also assist in promoting peace and security in Nigeria. For instance, in correcting people's misdeeds a

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Da'i should not blame someone in public for his mistakes or be critical of him. Many people are hypersensitive to criticism and can easily reject his da'wah. Again, some people may become defensive when blamed in front of others and cannot easily accept their misdeeds, therefore, Du,at shouldn't embarrass by correcting someone in front of others. They should use plurality when correcting a particular person in front of a group.[47] Wisdom and eloquent preaching is also desirable in ensuring peace. Allah (SWT) states:

> Invite (people) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner. Your Lord knows best who strays from His path and who are rightly guided.[48]

CONCLUSION.

This paper concludes by drawing the attention of those who are called or receives admonition to respond and answer the *da'wah* of Islam once it is conveyed. Allah (S.W.T) states;

> O our people! Respond to Allah's Caller, and believe in him. He (Allah) will forgive you some of your sins, and protect you from a painful torment.") ("And whosoever does not respond to Allah's Caller, he cannot escape on earth, and he will not have besides Allah any protectors. Those are in manifest error.[49]
>
> Or you who believe, respond to the call of God and the Messenger when he calls you to that which will give you life, and know that God comes in between a man and his heart, and that to Him you shall all be gathered.[50]

By accepting the da'wah of Islam, peace and security will virtually prevail not only in Nigeria but all over the world.

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