

CHURCH-MOSQUE JOINT PROJECT: A SYNERGY FOR CURBING SOCIAL VICES IN NIGERIA

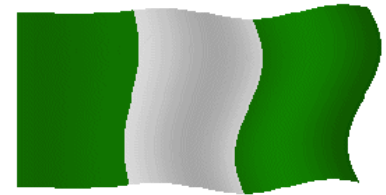
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NIGERIA AT A GLANCE

The Federal Republic of Nigeria



Independence: 1960

Capital: Abuja

Population: 155,215,573 (2010 estimate)

Currency: Naira

Land: 923,768 km²

Language: Over 250 languages

Major languages: Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba

Ethnic groups: Over 250 ethnic groups (the major ones being Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba)

States: 36 states with Abuja Capital Territory.

Religion: Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Worship

Economy: Based majorly on Petroleum. Other natural resources are gas, coal, bauxite, gold, tin, iron ore, etc. Agricultural resources include groundnuts, cocoa, palm oil, maize cassava, yam sugar cane. There are vast areas of arable lands that are underutilized.

Introduction

- The phenomenon of insurgency has intermittently diverted the attention of government from its core responsibility of nation building.
- This includes but not limited to vandalization of oil pipelines, kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killings and Boko Haram disturbances.

- **These manifestations of violence have largely consumed a lot of funds and sundry resources that government could have ideally deployed to the act of nation building.**
- **Any strategies that can, therefore, be mustered to stem the trend of insurgencies will qualify as an integral part of the act of nation building.**
- **And this informs the role of the Church and the Mosque.**

- **Basically, the Church and the Mosque should see the act of nation building as a form of worship in which both should vigorously participate being a normal and divinely prescribed function.**
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- **According to Islam and Christianity, physical development such as nation building is a prerequisite to worship.**
- **“It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein. (Q.11:61)”.**
- **The word settlement in this verse means the entire mundane activities Man routinely carries out such as dressing, eating, drinking, wealth creation, wealth dispensation, raising children, politicking, farming, tourism, manufacturing, sleeping, trading, leisure, etc.**

- **Conducting these activities presupposes making the environment ready and conducive because such activities (settlement) cannot take place on the mountains, trees and in the rivers.**
- **In the same vein, the Bible prescribes land development for man (Gen.2:15).**
- **Therefore, the development of the environment, being a commandment from God, equates to worship which is a cardinal point in both faiths.**

- Incidentally, the successive governments in Nigeria since 1960 to date, have tinkered with the ambition of nation building as expressed in many Development Plans such as:

- ❖ **Ten-year development plan (before the civil war in Nigeria);**
- ❖ **Five-year development plan (after the civil war);**
- ❖ **Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) by general Babangida;**
- ❖ **Vision 2010 by General Sanni Abacha;**
- ❖ **National Economic Empowerment Strategy (NEEDS) by President Obasanjo**
- ❖ **7 point agenda by President Musa Yar'adua**
- ❖ **vision 2020; and**
- ❖ **Transformation agenda by President Jonathan.**

... all of which have not translated into development as negating factors such as social vices have remained daunting.

Common Project

- **As the government strives to develop the society, the Church and the Mosque should participate by tackling the social unrests that have so far thwarted the development plans. The Church/Mosque's role is encompassed in what we term "common project".**

- **The rationale behind the project derives from the fact that social strive of any description is a function of the heart which is the source of conception of ideas.**
- **For example, any action of man, positive such as eating, drinking, traveling, trading, awarding scholarships or negative such as kidnapping, stealing, suicides, etc. is preceded by thinking; that is, before performing an action, man thinks about it first.**

- Thinking emanates from the heart which the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (SAW) describes as *mudghatan fil jasad* (a lump of flesh in the body).
- This piece of flesh if, according to the Prophet, is clean and sane the whole body is clean and sane.

- **And in case it is rotten, the body will be decayed (Hadith Bukhari).**
- **This suggests that the corrupt, devilish and violent actions carried out by some people in the society are a reflection of the state of their hearts.**

Problem Statement

- Synergy is defined in the context of this paper as the much needed cooperation between the Church and the Mosque as a prerequisite for a collaborative effort to liberate Nigeria from the menace of social vices that have so far negated the act of nation building.

Problem Statement/2

- By extension, joint project connotes a jointly planned and carefully prosecuted strategy by the Church and the Mosque as a means of curbing social vices in order to evolve the culture of stability which is a scene-qua-non for development.

Theoretical Frame Work

- Adopted for this study is what Chava and David Nachmias (1996:10), term the 'universal rule of probabilistic explanation leading to a prediction'. It states thus, X leads to the disappearance of Y. In other words if X is present, we expect absence of Y.

Theoretical Frame Work/2

- **For example, if there is an economic recession, government spends more. Similarly, job placement can culminate in the disappearance of unemployment.**
- **In the biblical and qur'anic perspective, a clean heart will not harbor dirty thoughts, that is, with the cleanliness of the heart, corruption disappears because corruption (evil thoughts) cannot coexist with cleanliness.**

Shared Values

Shared Values	Bible	Qur'an
God	<p>The first of all commandment is, hear o Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. There is one God; And there is none other but He.</p> <p>(Mark 12: 29 – 31)</p> <p>The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God (Psalm 14:1)</p>	<p>Say He is Allah (God), the One; Allah the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none unlike to Him (Q112:1-4).</p> <p>Their messengers said: Is there a doubt about Allah, the Creator of heavens and earth? (Q.14:10).</p>

Justice	But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (Amos 5:24)	Do not let hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness (Q5: 8).
Worship	Thou shall worship the Lord thy God and Him only shall thou worship (Matthew 4:10)	And I did not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship Me (Q51:56)
Last Day	And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall wake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel12:2-3 Rev.7:9-17)	And fear a day when you will be returned to Allah. Then every soul will be compensated for what it earned and they will not be wronged (Q2: 281)

Heart Cleansing	Keep thy hearth with diligence; for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23)	By the soul and the proportion and order given to it and its inspiration as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeed that purifies it and he fails that corrupts it (Q.91: 7-10)
Goodness to Parents	<p>Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old (Prov.23: 22)</p> <p>Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (Ex. 20: 12)</p>	<p>And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whenever one or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them uff and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say My lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up when I was small. (Q 17: 23-4)</p>
Murder	<p>Thou shall not kill. Exodus (20:13)</p>	<p>And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden (Q6: 151)</p>

The Project Implementation

- The implementation of the project is operationally preceded by a set of objectives that are stated as follows: that at the end of the execution of the project, Nigeria must have been transformed into:
 - A God trusting nation;
 - A socially well organized country;
 - A corruption free society;
 - A poverty free society.

Meanwhile, the attainment of the set objectives is necessarily anchored on the determination by the Muslims and Christians to:

- **make a paradigm shift in the approach to Inter-Religious Dialogue by means of replacing the tradition of trading accusations and counter accusations with common project;**
- **use spiritual instrument to curb vices that have hitherto thwarted development plans;**
- **put in place the right instruments for occasional evaluation of the activities to ascertain the efficacy or otherwise of the common project.**

The implementation takes the following stages.

- **Stage One** aims at fighting obstacles
- **Stage Two** jointly search for more values
- **Stage Three** Heart cleansing

The process of heart cleansing follows thus:

- Regular reading of the scriptures.
- Being God conscious.
- Remembrance of death.
- Being conscious of the responsibility which the status of *Khilafah* (vic-gerence of God) has placed on man.
- Taking appreciation of God's benevolence to man as the essence and true meaning of worship.

- **Appreciating God's benevolence in its two forms of thanks giving (theoretical) and maintenance of man's environment which includes beautification of earth and prevention of skirmishes of violence (practical).**
- **Injecting shared values in the school curriculum'**
- **Selling the idea to the government through Nigerian Inter-Religious Council (NIREC).**
- **Application of cleansing model to all and sundry.**

The Question of Efficacy

- **One question that may agitate the minds of the stakeholders is that of the extent of efficacy of the project.**
- **The question was addressed through two instruments. The first Instrument is a two unit credit course (IRS 492) which is offered by both Muslim and Christian undergraduate and post graduate students.**

- **The question I asked them at the completion of the course each year in the last three decades is:**
- **What has been the impact of the course (IRS 492) on your perception of the opposite faith?**
- **Their responses are both revealing and interesting. A few excerpts from their responses suffice:**

Christian Students

- **The Course (IRS 492) has proved to me why I should consider Muslims true believers.**
- **I have been convinced that calling Muslims infidels is naïve**
- **I used to see Muslims as a threat, but I have been persuaded to see how pleasant and peaceful they are as indicated in the common tenets between the two faiths.**
- **I am amazed by the shared values between the two faiths.**
- **The Course should be offered by all students as it will invoke in them liberal attitude towards the other religion.**

Muslim Students

- **The Course (IRS 492) has made me relate to Christians as friends**
- **I can now feel at home with Christians.**
- **How I wish all Muslims participated in this course.**
- **All Muslims should have the feeling I experience now towards Christians.**
- **I found amazing the way and manner the Bible and the Qur'an teach the same principles and commandments**

The Second Instrument

- The second instrument is a questionnaire which was distributed to 50 respondents cutting across the Pastors, the Imams, the Academics and Politicians all of who are stakeholders in the Nigeria project.
- Out of the 50 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 47 (=96%) were returned.

Analysis of Results

- Table 2: Question No 1 (Viability of the Project)

Sample	V. Viable	Viable
47	38 = 81%	9 = 19%

Table 3: Question No 2 (Efficacy of the Shared Value)

Sample	Truly Possible	Possible
47	40 = 85%	7 = 15%

Table 4: Question No 3 (Expected Impact of the Project)

Sample	Responses
47	100%

Analysis of Results/2

- Table 5: Question No 4 (Implementation Strategy)

Sample	Responses
47	100%

Table 6: Question No 5 (Perceived Obstacles)

Sample	Yes	No
47	30 = 64%	17 = 47%

Table 7: Question No 6 (Perceived Obstacles)

- a) The places of worship that commercialize religion may resist the idea;**
- b) Lack of funding may stiff the project implementation;**
- c) New/fresh ideas are usually resisted out of ignorance;**
- d) Religious bigotry can make some of the stakeholders indifferent.**

Analysis of Results/3

Table 8: Question No 7 (Other capacities the respondent can help)

- (a) Acting as a mentor**
- (b) Acting as a supervisor;**
- (c) Training the trainers;**
- (d) In any capacity that may be assigned to me**

Discussion

- The first instrument clearly indicates both the viability of the project as well as the efficacy of shared values when packaged into an instructional material to conscientize the adherents.

Discussion/2

- The responses show that the students *must* have been acting out of ignorance *before* their exposure to the course, and *when* they are cured of the disease (ignorance that is) their vision becomes clear and horizon widened.

Discussion/3

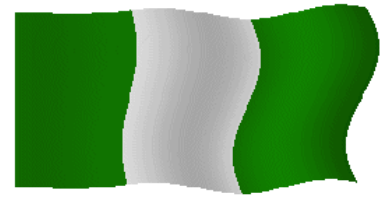
- *This suggests that if the shared values are well packaged into instructional material and carefully administered to the subjects, a new mindset will emerge. A fresh relationship (positive that is) among adherents is created.*

Conclusions

- **Therefore, the thesis of this paper is that since the negating factors to the act of nation building are a function of the mindset, the Church and the Mosque can come to the rescue by means of using spiritual instrumentality to tackle the negating factors. Their antidote is the shared values which can be designed into strategic plans to work on mindsets of the nation builders.**

Conclusions/2

- **If they (the church and mosque) succeed, as predicted in the theoretical framework, they would have achieved two feasts; first, making a unique contribution to the project of nation building and, secondly, getting their attention diverted from petty jealousies and trading accusations/counter accusations which have hitherto characterized their relationship. In the final analysis, they will become sincere worshipers of God devoid of hypocrisy.**



• Thank you for listening