



‘The Ambivalence of the Sacred’: Religion and Mediation in Northern Nigeria, 2000-2005

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Keywords

Religion; Faith-based Actors; Mediation; Northern Nigeria

Abstract

It is generally believed that the position, influence and commitment arising from the moral and emotional credentials of religious actors serve as advantages over other actors when it comes to third party intervention, particularly in the realm of mediation. The question then becomes to what extent can these qualities promote successful mediation i.e. conflict transformation, which is the ultimate goal of mediation efforts during conflict. This study is a qualitative analysis of the levels of success achieved by faith-based mediation in three outstanding conflicts - the Yelwa, the Jos and the Kaduna conflicts in Plateau and Kaduna States of Nigeria between 2001 and 2005. This analysis is anchored on the three levels of success, namely process or output level, outcome or short-term level, and impact or long-term level. The position, influence and experience of mediators, as well as other factors such as timing, neutrality, external influence and the process of mediation are some of the explanations for the potential success or failure of mediation efforts at the output level and short-term level in the three conflicts. However, beyond these two, mediation's success at the level of long-term impact, as recorded in Yelwa, is tied to (i) the engagement of the real owners of the conflict and peace dynamics and (ii) the willingness of the latter to engage in peace. It is therefore the position of this paper that no matter the influence, appropriateness and acceptability of a religious actor involved in conflict resolution, the responsibility to transform conflict largely remains with the parties to the conflict.

Introduction

Religious actors are generally believed to possess certain specific qualities that enable them to positively influence a peace process, more so than politicians. This is because they are often perceived to have stronger moral and emotional credentials as well as a certain professionalism that commands the respect and confidence of conflict parties (WFDD, 2017; Stensvold, 2017; Thistlethwaite Brooks; 2012 Haynes, 2009; Appleby, 2000; Johnson & Simpson 1994). According to Weingardt (2008), although all actors involved in conflict resolution would ideally have the above features, religious actors often possess this credit of trust more so than others. In other words, the position, influence and perhaps commitment of religious actors gives them a unique space within peace processes and may, arguably, account for their success in conflict resolution efforts.

Nigeria is one of the few countries in Africa with a record of resounding success in faith-based interventions in conflict (Berkley Center for Religion, 2013; Umaru, 2013). Indeed, the roles of religious actors in resolving conflict in northern Nigeria, particularly in Plateau and Kaduna states, have become a reference point to both academics and practitioners within and outside Africa (Smock, 2009). To what extent can it be argued that faith-based actors have succeeded in their interventions in these two states of Nigeria, two states that continue to exist as centers of conflict? What were the underlying factors that contributed to their success? The current study is set to analyze these questions from both short and long term outcomes as well as to address the success basis of faith-based mediation in Yelwa and Jos conflicts (in Plateau State) and Kaduna conflict (in Kaduna State) from 2001 to 2005.

The United Nations Secretary General's report to the Security Council in 2009 served as a major landmark that renewed interest in international mediation as an

effective instrument of conflict transformation and turned it into an international policy framework (UN, 2009). Before this period, several mediation efforts had either failed or garnered little success. From the UN's records for instance, three out of every four mediation efforts between 1989 and 2002 had failed (High-Level Panel of Threats, Challenges and Change (HLP), 2004). This implies that only twenty-five percent of all mediation efforts succeeded during this period. The new interest in mediation can be explained from a multiplicity of factors, such as today's limited peacekeeping capabilities, failures of military crisis responses, the increased need to address internal asymmetric conflict, a broader and more transformative understanding of mediation and a shift in the normative approach to human rights violations (Chaziza, 2018; Putz, 2017; Griessmann & Oliver, 2011). Despite the renewed interest in mediation, however, not much has changed with regards to patterns of mediation (Brahimi, 2008; Jagans, 2006). Mediation is still generally conceived as a mediator(s)-driven process that conflict parties are to be invited into (Griessmann & Oliver, 2009, 2011; Greig, 2008). Consequently, scholarly attention is still focused on traditionally accepted determinants of mediation success; these include ripeness, timing, power, bias, credibility, the nature of conflict, the efficiency of mediation processes adopted by the mediators and the appropriateness and acceptability of the mediators (Bercovitch & Simpson, 2010; Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009; Svensson, 2009; Kydd, 2003; Zartman, 2000; Rubin, 1991; Bercovitch & Langley, 1993). If the target of mediation is long-term peace, i.e., conflict transformation, attention should move beyond the success of the mediators and mediation process and instead turn towards the development of long-lasting compromise between conflict parties.

The focus of this study is to examine the involvement of faith-based actors in the mediation process in three outstanding conflicts – Yelwa, Jos and Kaduna, in Plateau and Kaduna States of Northern Nigeria, between 2001 and 2005. This is in order to: (i) identify some of the conditions that promoted or hindered successful faith-based intervention in these conflicts, and (ii) find out the extent to which these conditions helped in transforming the conflicts.

Conceptual and Historical Frameworks

Conceptualizing Successful Mediation

There are two major approaches to understanding successful mediation. Success can be achieved at the process and outcome phases of an intervention. At the process level, success refers to what transpired during interventions i.e, the output of the intervention. It includes, among other things, the acceptability of the mediation efforts, the capacity of the mediator(s), the rules or terms of mediation, the venue of mediation as well as meaningful and active representation of the various concerned parties during the mediation process. Success on the outcome level implies what is achieved at the end of the mediation process. This is usually compartmentalized into short and long term outcomes or what Church & Shouldice (2002) refer to as “outcome and impact” respectively. At the level of short-term outcome, successful intervention occurs when the destructive elements of a conflict are reduced or removed in what Pearson d’Estree et al (2001) refer to as “settlement”. This implies that the conflict in question is not resolved but that its negative effects are neutralized through a ceasefire, an agreement or any other form of settlement that does not imply a permanent end to said conflict.

In terms of long-term outcome or impact, mediation is considered successful when the root causes of conflict are addressed in such a way that the threat of further conflict is forestalled (Bercovitch & Simpson, 2010). In other words, when the effect of a mediation process and its subsequent outcome leads to conflict transformation, thereby generating long-term impact (i.e. peace), it is referred to as long-term success. It is pertinent to note that success at the process-level does not amount to successful outcomes or an overall impact. In the same vein, a successful mediation outcome does not always imply hundred-percent success at the process level. Thus, success can be achieved if the parties, despite disagreements at the process level, are positively affected or empowered from the overall outcome of a mediation process (Bercovitch, 2006). It is equally possible to describe mediation as successful when the parties and mediator feel that the process of mediation was itself fruitful, although no positive outcome occurred. Satisfaction, fairness, effectiveness and efficiency are, as identified by Jameson et al (1999), four major attributes which can be achieved at any appropriate level during successful mediation efforts.

Beyond process and outcome models of assessment, success in mediation can be measured from the goals and expectations of an intervention. Where an intervention is meant to reduce the destructive effect of a conflict or to forestall conflict from escalating, a settlement is seen as a full success even if the root causes of the conflict might not have been addressed. In the same way, where the effort of the mediator is to assist in opening up a communication channel, such endeavors (if achieved) are recorded as successful despite the fact that the parties may not reach a negotiated settlement. Therefore, when the actual goal is a major determinant factor in the assessment of mediation success, it can cut across all levels: process (output) as well as short and long term outcomes. For the purpose of this study, the goals of religious actors at both the process and outcome levels are included to determine the success of mediation in Yelwa, Jos and Kaduna.

Historicizing conflicts in Plateau and Kaduna

For a stronger analysis of faith-based actors in mediation in Plateau and Kaduna states, especially for a clear assessment of the factors behind their successes and failures, it is important to understand the nature and development of these conflicts. Based on that, this segment of the paper is devoted to a brief historical development of the Jos and the Yelwa conflicts in Plateau; and the Kaduna conflict in Kaduna.

Located in the North Central Zone of Nigeria, Jos is the capital of the present day Plateau State of Nigeria. It is made up of five local governments, of which Jos North is the beehive of economic and political activities in the state. Although it is a cosmopolitan city with virtually all the major ethnic groups in Nigeria heavily represented, it is generally taken to be the ancestral home of the Berom (in majority), the Afizere and the Anaguta - known as the indigenous group. There is also the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group whose presence, like the Igbo, Yoruba and Urhobo, dates back largely to the colonial period. Fanned by other disputes such as the issuance of certificates of 'state of origin' from the Local Government Area (L.G.A.) as well as elections, ethnicity, religious diversity and many others, the Jos conflict largely revolves around contestation for ownership of Jos Town between the indigenous groups who are dominantly Christians and the majority Muslim Hausa-Fulani who are referred to as settlers.

Though traceable to the pre-colonial era, the creation of Jos North Local Government Area in 1991 by the military government of Ibrahim Babangida inaugurated the violent phase of this conflict. Beginning with the 1994 eruption of violence over the appointment of a perceived non-indigene as the Chairman of the Caretaker Committee of the Jos North L.G.A., Jos formally known for its peacefulness gradually turned into a volatile city in Nigeria. The first major violent eruption to occur after the 1999 re-democratization was in September 2001 over the mishandling of a Christian woman from among the indigenous community, by a Hausa-Fulani Muslim paramilitary group guarding a mosque during Jumm'at prayer on a Friday afternoon. This developed into a crisis that spread to other parts of Jos and beyond, leaving the city devastated. From 2001, Jos and its environs became the epicenter of violent clashes between Christians and Muslims.

Another major conflict in Plateau which erupted during the period under review is the Yelwa conflict. Located in Shendan Local Government of Plateau State, Yelwa was inhabited by the Goemai ethnic group of Plateau and the Jarawa of Bauchi. As in Jos, both groups claimed ownership of Yelwa. The Jaarawa, a predominantly Muslim community supported by other Muslim groups like the Hausa-Fulani, Boghom and Pyem in Yelwa and its surroundings, claimed ownership of the traditional political administration of the town. Arguing that they had always lived in the town independent of any other group, they blamed the British for the subordination of Yelwa to Shendan District (Best, 2008). Dismissing this claim, the Goemai community, backed by other Christian ethnic groups particularly the Taroh and Sayawa in Yelwa and its surrounding areas, maintained that the Jarawa were settlers who moved from Bauchi. While this was the basis of the Yelwa conflict, there were some other factors that fanned its embers. Among them were the political crisis arising from an attempt by the two groups to manipulate the 2002 ward chairmanship election; frustrations from the Jarawa's quest for the creation of a separate district; cattle rustling; ethno-religious divide and the Jos 2001 crisis (Best, 2007). The sudden release of the Taroh traditional masquerade on the night of June 26th 2002 sparked off a round of violence that engulfed the town, producing killings and destruction along religious lines. The 2002 violence was followed by the February 2004 killings, in which 47 Christians in a church lost their lives to a group of unidentified mercenaries. Since the February attack appeared to have been masterminded by Muslims, a reprisal organized by the Christians in May 2004 claimed the lives of more than 600 Muslims. It was this development, among others, that led to the declaration of a State of Emergency in Plateau State.

Like Jos, Kaduna metropolis is another major city in the study area that is known for violent eruptions since 2000. The Kaduna conflict, which equally pre-dated the colonial period, seems to have centered on the determination of the non-Hausa-Fulani of the old Zaria Emirate-Province to throw off what they perceived as the yoke of economic and political domination by the Hausa-Fulani. While their agitations had earlier produced violent encounters in 1946 and 1966 (Suberu, 2001), politicization of religion during military rule heightened the rate of violent clashes in the state. Although these eruptions were suppressed by the military, the transition to democracy, as Nwaka (2012) argues, threw open a new wave of violent encounters between the two groups in the Kaduna metropolis.

As a sequel to re-democratization, some states in northern Nigeria adopted the Sharia legal system. This generated further tensions between Christians and Muslims in the north. The plan of the Kaduna State House of Assembly to pass the Sharia Bill into law provoked a peaceful Christian mass protest in February 2000, which degenerated into a bloody clash between Christian and Muslim youth in the city. From Kaduna city, the crisis spilled over to Kachia and Birnin Gwari in Kaduna State, where unemployed youth and social miscreants destroyed shops and residential houses. Between 2000 and 2005, Kaduna City, in addition to the Sharia crisis, witnessed some other major eruptions of ethno-religious character. Among them were the second Sharia crisis, which occurred in May 2000 following the murder of a Christian woman purported to have defiled the Quran in a Muslim-dominated community; and the 2002 Miss World crisis generated by an allusion to Mohammed in *This Day* newspaper by the fashion journalist, Isioma Daniel.

Beginning in the year 2000, a number of measures were adopted by various groups to address these conflicts. The relative peace in Jos, until recently, has partly been attributed to these measures (Ogbonna, Personal Communication (P.C.), Sept. 27, 2016). Similarly, the fragile peace in Kaduna, amidst tension and residential segregation, and most importantly, the twelve years of interrupted peace in Yelwa (2004-2016), were both credited to series of moves made by individuals and groups in the search for peace (Kazaure, PC. Sept. 26, 2016; Nmadu, PC. Sept. 4, 2016; Ibrahim, PC. Sept. 17, 2016). Among the groups that have been conspicuously present in conflict resolution efforts were faith-based actors. Unfortunately, their involvement, especially their post-conflict activities, has not been given adequate scholarly attention in terms of critical analysis (Best & Homlong, 2011). Literature on conflict in these two states largely pays attention to the role of the state and security agencies in conflict management and peacebuilding (Lamorde, 2018; Omotola, 2006; Best, 2007; Nwaka, 2014a), an analysis of conflict situation (Ndubuisi, 2018; Danfulani & Fwatshak, 2007; Nwaka, 2012; Imobighe, 2003), the causes and effects of conflict (Alozieuwa, 2011; Boer, 2003; Nwaka, 2014b; Best, 2008) as well as the conflict dynamics and trends (Plateau Indigenous Association Network (PIDAN), 2010). In trying to shift the focus from the above, this study critically analyzes the levels of success in faith-based mediation in these states between 2001 and 2005.

Data and Method

Data collection for the research combined field-based primary sources from qualitative methods of data collection: In-person, in-depth interviews (IDI), focused group discussion (FGD) and official/documents, with extant secondary source materials. Data for IDI was generated from first-hand informants. These included religious leaders and other representatives of faith-based organizations, participants at various peace meetings, workshops, conferences and dialogues as well as ordinary men and women knowledgeable on the topic of study. About 31 IDIs were conducted in the study area. These informants were accessed using purposive samplings and snow-balling. Their views on the conditions that explained the success or failure of mediation were elicited. 5 FGD sessions were held. Primary information was also generated from official documents. Chief among them were reports of peace dialogues, peace meetings, training workshops with conflict parties and various communiqués at the end of peace conferences. Data presentation and analysis was done using content analytical tool.

Result and Discussions

Faith-based Actors in Mediation

Although conflicts in the study areas during the period under review appeared to be of complex nature, their entanglement with religion as well as their destructive nature informed the involvement of faith-based actors in the search for peace (Petek, PC. Sept. 26, 2016). Mediation featured prominently from 2001 as a strategy of conflict resolution by religious actors. The increasing volatility of the region called for proactive measures to address the issues in and around the conflicts. About six outstanding mediation attempts were identified between 2001 and 2005. The table below, created by the authors, captures the interventions undertaken by faith-based actors in the study areas during the period under review. It is pertinent to note that some of these interventions involved secular actors who either collaborated with religious actors in the process or were used as resource persons. While some of these interventions yielded positive results at various levels, as could be seen in the table, others partially failed.

Year	Mechanism	Conflict	Actors	Aims	Output	Short term outcome	Long term outcome
2001-2002	Mediation	Kaduna	Inter-Faith Mediation Center (IMC)	To get stake holders from the two sides of the divide to declare their commitment to peace in Kaduna and through this put an end to violent eruption in the city	22 persons (11 from each group) targeted were all present	Kaduna Peace Declaration in 2002, which was based on the Alexandria Declaration for peace in the Holy land	Intermittent / fragile peace, tensions and city polarization
2001-2002	Facilitative mediation	Jos	Christian Association of Nigeria – CAN	To bring the two groups together for a reconciliatory meeting	Hausa-Fulani Muslims in poor attendance. Absence of opinion leaders.	No outstanding outcome recorded	Not identified
2002	Mediation	Jos	Inter-faith Mediation Center Kaduna-IMC	To find a solution to the Jos conflict by bringing the two sides together at various levels for meaningful discussion	Opinion leaders of the indigenous group in poor attendance. About 60% of the youth responded	Harmonized the position of the youth in a signed document but failed to reach concrete agreement	Not identified
2004	Facilitation/mediation	Jos and other conflicts in Plateau	IMC	To find solution to persistent conflicts in Plateau state	Hausa-Fulani group in Poor attendance	Plateau Peace Accord produced and signed though without the major Hausa-Fulani stake holders	Short lived peace. Failed to forestall future violence in Jos
2004	Facilitation/mediation	Yelwa Shendan	Catholic Archbishop of Jos and the Emir of Wase	To open up a channel of communication for the parties in the conflict by bringing the stake holders together to discuss the issues in the conflict	85% of the expected participants turned out	Made some recommendations, Peace affirmation, and acceptance of the Long Goemai(chief of Goemai) as the traditional authority of Yelwa by Muslims and Christians	Relative peace in Yelwa that prepared grounds for subsequent interventions
2005	Mediation	Yelwa Shendan	IMC	To bring various factions: together to address the conflict issues and find a workable mode of living together in Yelwa	All the expected groups were represented through their leaders in the five days sharing and negotiation	A joint peace affirmation signed by all the participants on the 19 th of February 2005 after the two groups had willingly apologized to each other	Restored peace in Yelwa (10 years -2005 to 2015 - of uninterrupted peaceful cohabitation)

Five outstanding Faith-Based Interventions in Plateau and Kaduna between 2001 and 2005

Explaining the Levels of Success in Mediation

Mediation was one of the prominent strategies of conflict resolution utilized by religious actors between 2001 and 2005 in the study areas. While it succeeded beyond the output and short-term outcome levels in Yelwa, success of faith-based actors in Kaduna and Jos was limited to these two levels. From our findings, the success of mediation at the process and short-term levels in Yelwa as shown in the table above is attributed to a number of factors. Prominent among these factors was the mediators' experience, influence and commitment, which were largely underscored in the success of mediation at the levels of output and short-term outcome (IMC, 2016). The Catholic Archbishop of Jos, Ignatius Kaigama, and the Emir of Wase, Alhaji Abdullah, were not only the highest religious authorities in Plateau; the two have earned themselves reputations as respectable and honest advocates of peace. Their unusual friendship, orchestrated by their responses to violent conflicts, endeared them to both Christians and Muslims. Kaigama, who already had a history of successful conflict intervention in Jalingo before his transfer to Jos, proved himself a lover of peace long before his involvement in the Yelwa case. As the presidents of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama' tu Nasri Islam (JNI) respectively, Kaigama and Abdullah co-chaired the Inter-Religious Council in Plateau where they both worked to improve Christian-Muslim relations (Kaigama, PC. Sept. 30, 2016). In addition to this, Kaigama had gained popularity among Muslims in Jos and beyond for giving protection to Muslim faithful during the September 2002 violence in Jos. The past records of these actors endeared them to people, who did not only oblige their invitation to peace meetings but also opened up their bottled-up grievances with confidence in and commitment to a final solution to the conflict (Focused Group Discussion (FGD) 1). In the same vein, Imam Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye of the Inter-Faith Mediation Center (IMC) in Kaduna were religious leaders of high repute. Having led opposing camps in a violent clash in Zango-Kataf in 1991, they later re-channeled their energies away from violence and towards the search for peaceful relationships between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna and beyond. With support from funding bodies, they set up the IMC Kaduna, which has championed interfaith conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigeria (IMC, 2013). With their wealth of knowledge and experience, they committed themselves to measures and processes that gave the people an upper hand in determining a framework for their future relationship in Yelwa. In an expression that showed their determination to lead the people through all the necessary steps needed for peace, Wuye (PC. Oct. 1, 2016) revealed that they spent 17 days in a programme that was slated for 5 days, bearing the cost and other inconveniences generated by that decision, including sharing accommodation.

Taking the conflict parties through many days of continuous interactions, the two were able to generate a peace affirmation which they signed after they had willingly and publicly tendered apologies to each other.

In addition to the influence and commitment of mediators, timing was another factor underscored. Some key informants were of the view that the two mediation teams came at a time when the two parties had tested their strength and were ready for peace (Byang & Philip PC. Sept. 7, 2016). A widely held opinion was that Yelwa would have witnessed another outburst if the mediation teams had come before the revenge attack in May 2004 (FGD 2). Other factors in the success of mediation at the levels of process and short-term outcome in Yelwa include the support from

the state government and its agencies, the process of mediation as well as the presence and influence of other non-state actors such as traditional rulers, cultural groups and NGOs. For instance, the Plateau State Government, as Kaigama (2011) noted, provided adequate security that convinced one of the parties that had earlier declined involvement in Yelwa peace process on grounds of insecurity, to adjust its position. Additionally, some members of the University of Jos Peace Studies Center were engaged as resource persons.

Beyond these two levels, the long-term success of faith-based actors in the Yelwa mediation effort can be explained from the relatively low interest of external actors or shadow parties in the conflict. Compared to Jos and Kaduna cities, which are regarded as microcosms of Nigeria (Zuwau, PC. Sept. 7, 2016), Yelwa is a small town of limited significance. Although the two sides had their backers both within and outside the town, ownership of the conflict and peace was largely that of the local people. This view was further affirmed by some informants, who decried the lull in commercial transaction during the period of crisis, insisting that they needed peace to protect their businesses (Danladi & Puwal, PC. Sept. 8, 2016). According to Puwal, “nobody will pray for a repeat of what happened in 2004. It affected us severely here in this market (sic). We could not open our shops for weeks for fear of attacks. I used to have a fuller shop than what you are seeing here now”. Local ownership of the Yelwa peace was also visible in the joint vigilante group set up on the heels of the peace affirmation, to guard against developments that may generate further crisis in the town. At the time of this research in 2016, the group was still very active in the town. Furthermore, the determination of the people to maintain and keep active the Peace Initiative Committee formed during the intervention is partly proof that Yelwa's peace was the people's peace. Some members of the committee referred to the group's usefulness in keeping Yelwa peaceful since 2005. One of the leading members of the Yelwa intervention in 2005, Wuye (2016), confirmed the local ownership of peace in Yelwa, noting the presence of spoilers from outside who pressed for the termination of the peace process. “We brought them to Kaduna. While in Kaduna, some spoilers were calling them not to agree. But the people said ‘no no no, there is no double standard in what these guys are doing. It is our process” (Wuye, 2016). Arguably, there was willingness on the part of those who owned the conflict to prioritize peace and sustain such prioritization.

We were to work with the parties for five days. When the process started, it did not move as planned. There were a lot of back and forth negotiations and sub-negotiations. Even when we extended it to ten days, we could not leave until after seventeen days. It got to a point where we had to share rooms to save cost.

Kaduna city was another area where mediation appeared to have recorded substantial success. However, in terms of long-term impact, there are two opposing interpretations of the Kaduna Peace Declaration of 2002. The first school of thought argues against the success story associated with the declaration, noting that the city recorded a series of eruptions after the Sharia riots (Petek, 2016). The second school of thought, on the other hand, maintains that the city has recorded 14 years of relative peace since the Declaration, irrespective of the 2002 and 2011 crises (Onoh & Maduekwe, PC. Oct. 2, 2016). Based on the model used in this study for determining successful mediation, the Kaduna Peace Declaration could be viewed as successful since it brought together different stakeholders to proposed meetings and produced a document which was signed by all the parties involved. Thus, at the level of output and short-term outcome, mediation in Kaduna recorded success. But unlike Yelwa, it appeared the Kaduna Peace Declaration was influenced by suspicion and pretense. A majority of respondents were of the opinion that the Declaration was a product of window dressing because participants were eager to tell the world that they desired peace in Kaduna, whereas the opposite appeared

to be the case (FGD 3). Deductively, success of mediation in Kaduna was limited to the levels of output and short-term outcome because none of the parties wanted to be seen as the source of the problem. It, however, failed to bring about long-term peace because in such situations, issues at the root of the conflict are unlikely to be fully addressed. Expressing his view about the failure of the Peace Declaration to ensure peace in Kaduna, Petek (2016) remarked “you do not tell me to sign that we will live together for us to live together; there are conditions that must be met. Unless those conditions are met, we are wasting our time”. On the signing of the document, Petek (2016) reasoned further:

As to why these issues have not been addressed, Zuwau (2016) argued that Kaduna is a miniature Nigeria and thus manifests all the problems bedeviling the nation. The perspective of external actors’ involvement was equally emphasized by Nmadu (2016), who observed that both sides were backed by powerful actors whose interests appeared to be different from the issues manifesting in the conflict. The signing of the Declaration was further linked to the desire of the mediators to produce a positive outcome by all means (FGD 4). With the presence and sponsorship of a foreign religious organization from Britain that was in collaboration with the IMC, the mediators were not ready to fail. In this sense, the peace associated with the Declaration further lost its owners as well.

In Jos, the two interventions of CAN and IMC in 2002 produced little success only at the process level. Most of our informants were of the view that the Hausa-Fulani party was in poor attendance in CAN’s move to facilitate a reconciliatory meeting between Christians and Muslims because the venue of the meeting, the Fellowship of Churches of Christ in Nigeria (FCCN) Conference Hall, lacked the required neutrality (FGD 4). FCCN is a Christian body while CAN is an umbrella body of all Christians in Nigeria. Both the convener and the venue were said to have accentuated suspicion in the minds of Muslims who interpreted the move as an attempt to undermine their interests. Thus, the Muslims that attended were few and were not viable opinion leaders who could not arrive at any tangible decisions with their Christian counterparts. Similarly, the intervention of Inter-Faith Mediation Center in Jos 2002 partially succeeded only at the process level. The main representatives of the indigenous group failed to honour the invitation. The indigenous groups, especially the Berom, were absent from the meeting because they were said to be mourning the death of their traditional ruler.

Although further attempts by the IMC (in conjunction with other actors) to facilitate peace talks in Plateau in 2004 equally witnessed partial success at the process level, they produced a peace accord which was signed by representatives of all parties to the conflict (FGD 5). However, unlike Yelwa, the Plateau Peace Accord failed to produce lasting peace in Jos. Within three years of its documentation, Jos witnessed another major violent eruption. Most of our informants were of the opinion that the issue of the ownership of Jos hampers efforts at long-term peace (FGD 5). Although the Jos conflict, like Yelwa, is largely over the indigene-settler question, the centrality of Jos in north central Nigeria makes the city the hub of all resistance to perceived Islamic expansionism. As one of the first colonial cities in Northern Nigeria, Jos was and continues to be not only the commercial nerve center of Central Nigeria, but also the seat of Christian religious activities in the north as a whole. Given its historical resistance to the flag bearers of Islamic Jihad in the 19th century, it seems to have assumed the center of resistance to Islamic expansion in north central Nigeria. According to Elder Dung (PC, August 16, 2014),

“Though religion is largely manipulated by the political class and conflict entrepreneurs, beyond religious exploitation is a question of Islamic expansion and domination, which Jos stands against. If Jos becomes a Muslim state, Abuja is only a question of time”.

“Two parties are involved in a conflict, you call them to sit on a table to sign that they will live in peace, if you do not sign, that means you are the problem. No one wants to be identified as the problem....so you will sign not because you believe in what you are signing..., that is why we do not uphold the Declaration because people have issues that have not been addressed”.

Arguably, parties to the Jos conflict are located within and outside Jos. It is therefore not surprising that the Jos conflict is generally subjected to strong influence of shadow parties and spoilers whose inputs contribute to frustrating efforts aimed towards lasting peace in Jos. The failure of the IMC's 2002 peace move, according to Abdulrahman (PC. Oct. 4, 2016), was linked to external pressure on one of the groups to decline participation in the meeting using the death of Jos' traditional ruler as an excuse. Similarly, the presence of external parties was identified as partly responsible for the failure of some other peace efforts that were subsequently made in Plateau. Narrating why the Saminaka peace effort of 2014 failed, Wuye (2016) pointed out the influence of some spoilers from Bauchi and Kano who pressed party representatives so much that their attempts ended in stalemate, thereby frustrating the Alternative Road to Peace in Plateau programme.

In addition to external influence, the Plateau Peace Accord, much like the Kaduna Peace Declaration, suffered the effects of peace on the gallery. Although the IMC and other actors were to facilitate mediation, the third parties were said not to be fully in-charge of the process. According to Dangiwa (PC. Sept. 30, 2016), the government subtly dominated the process, reducing the representatives from IMC and other non-state actors to mere resource persons. Arguably, in a bid to justify its six months mandate in Plateau under the State of Emergency, the military government of Chris Ali was not ready to fail in the 2004 peace initiatives. Thus, the popular “Plateau Resolves” (Plateau Peace Accord) could neither resolve the conflicts in Jos in particular nor other ones in Plateau in general. It was hastily produced with little or no input from those who ought to have been its owners. Suffice to argue here that unlike Yelwa and Kaduna, neither the parties nor the mediators were the owners of the peace that was produced in Plateau in 2004. In other words, the Plateau Peace Accord, as Nwaka (2014a) argued, talked so much about peace without talking to peace.

Conclusion

There was obvious involvement of faith-based actors in mediation in Plateau and Kaduna States during the period under review. Success or failure in mediation at the levels of output and short-term outcome result from the mediators' influence, experience and commitment as well as the timing, ripeness and neutral nature of the intervention. These variables accounted for the nature of representation during mediation meetings and the signing of peace agreements in the case studies of this paper. For example, the presence and commitment of highly reputable religious leaders from both sides of the conflict in Yelwa restored the peoples' confidence in the peace process, thereby producing fruitful output and outcome. CAN's move to mediate in Jos and the choice of location for the meeting, however, denied that mediation effort success and instead afforded it the perception of bias. The factor of “peace on the gallery” equally accounted for the dynamics of success at these two levels. The Kaduna Peace Declaration was signed by both parties because none of them wanted to be tagged as an obstacle to peace in the city. The mediators working in collaboration with a foreign body were eager to produce a document that would justify the resources that had been pumped into the process. Hence, the declaration for peace in Kaduna by the two sides, which was indeed popular, was followed by another violent clash only a few months later. In the same vein, the Jos Peace Accord was hastily produced by the military head of state, who was eager to showcase his achievements within six months of placing Jos under the State of Emergency.

Arguably, success beyond these two levels, as recorded in Yelwa, was linked to the engagement of the real owners of conflict and peace. The relatively low-profiled Yelwa conflict, compared to Jos and Kaduna, attracted fewer shadow parties and spoilers, and so allowed the parties the chance to determine the course of the peace process and its impact. Such ownership appeared to be lacking in Jos and Kaduna. The Kaduna Peace Declaration, as noted earlier, was signed by those who, from all indications, did not want the world to view them as the problem. It was equally the mediators' peace. In Jos, the Peace Accord signed in 2004 could be regarded as the peace of the state's military administrator, who needed to showcase his achievement within a six-month mandate. The peace agreement of 2002, although signed, lacked ownership. The Berom, the major stakeholders in the conflict, were not really part of the process. Although youth were represented, the Berom youth leader, as noted by Best & Homlong (2011), confirmed that they were not able to enter any tangible agreement because the Berom had no chief then who would have negotiated such agreement on behalf of his people.

Although timing, ripeness, credibility, power, conflicting issues, the process of mediation, mediators' influence and position all do determine success in mediation, mediation as an instrument of conflict resolution is likely to succeed beyond the output and short-term outcome where: (i) there is willingness on the part of the conflict owners to engage peace; and (ii) the willingness and readiness of the conflict owners for peace is engaged not necessarily by the mediators but by the involved parties themselves. Thus, no matter the influence, appropriateness and acceptability of religious actors in mediation as a means of conflict resolution, the responsibility to transform conflict largely lies with the parties involved. Indeed, local ownership, as Martin & Bojicic-Dzelilovic (2016) and McCann (2015) argue, should be a guiding principle for successful African peacebuilding in contemporary times.

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