

9. The Role of Islam in Dialogue and Peacebuilding



By

Abubakar Akande

(Co-Chairman, NIREC Youth Forum)

Quick Review

- This is the 9th Lecture of the NIREC Public Webinar. So far, we have covered:
 1. Anthropological Foundation of Character
 2. Education from Womb to Tomb
 3. Principles and Dynamics of Dialogue
 4. Challenges of Religious Pluralism
 5. Basis for Dialogue in Africa
 6. National Unity and Religious Cooperation
 7. The Role of NIREC in Strengthening National Unity
 8. Human Destiny and Time
 - 9. The Role of Islam in Dialogue and Peacebuilding**

Presentation Outline

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- Islam: An Overview
- Dialogue in Brief
- Peacebuilding in Brief
- The Dilemma of Peace
- Shariah: An Islamic Terminology
- Objectives of the Shariah and Peacebuilding
- Islam, Dialogue and Peacebuilding: The Nexus
- Models of Peacebuilding from the Islamic History
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Preamble

- Religion, culture, and indigenous traditions play a critical role in restoring respect for humanity and love for one another and shaping our beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Also, the concepts of peace, love for one another, and the environment are embedded in the teachings and practices of various religions, cultures, and indigenous traditions.
- Meanwhile, in the post-9/11 world, religions and religious actors are more commonly associated with extremism and conflict between religious communities than before. However, there are many other dimensions and contributions of religion, particularly concerning peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, that are less known, or maybe misunderstood, if not entirely neglected.
- This presentation explores the different ways that religion contributes to peacebuilding, with a specific focus on the teachings and principles of the Islamic religion.

Islam: An Overview

- As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah - that is why it is called Islam. The other literal meaning of the word "Islam" is "peace." This signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and mind through submission and obedience to Allah.
- Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah- indeed it is in the remembrance of Allah alone that the heart of man finds rest-those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to. (Q13: 28-29)
- So, the complete meaning of “Islam” is attaining a state of peace by submitting oneself to the will of Almighty God (i.e. Allah); and by definition, one who does this is called a “Muslim” (which also comes from the root word sa-la-ma) meaning someone who has submitted to the Will of Almighty God (a believer).

Islam: An Overview Contd.

- Islam is built on five pillars: Testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad (SAW) is His Prophet and Messenger; Establishing regular Salat (prayer); Paying Zakat; Fasting in the month of Ramadan; and Embarking on pilgrimage to Makkah.
- Furthermore, there are six (6) Articles of Faith in Islam: Belief in the oneness of God; Belief in the Angels of God; Belief in the Books of God; Belief in the Messengers of God; Belief in the day of resurrection/judgment; and Belief in destiny.

Dialogue in Brief

- Dialogue is a safe space or a “container” for people to surface their assumptions, to question their previous assumptions and judgments.
- Dialogue has a mission to clarify and overcome misunderstandings. It focuses on building relationships, raising awareness and finding common ground.
- Dialogue focuses on listening, understanding and acknowledging the view held by others.
- There are four forms of Dialogue: Intra and Inter-Faith; Intra and Intra Culture; Intra and Inter Generation; and Inter and Intra Worldview

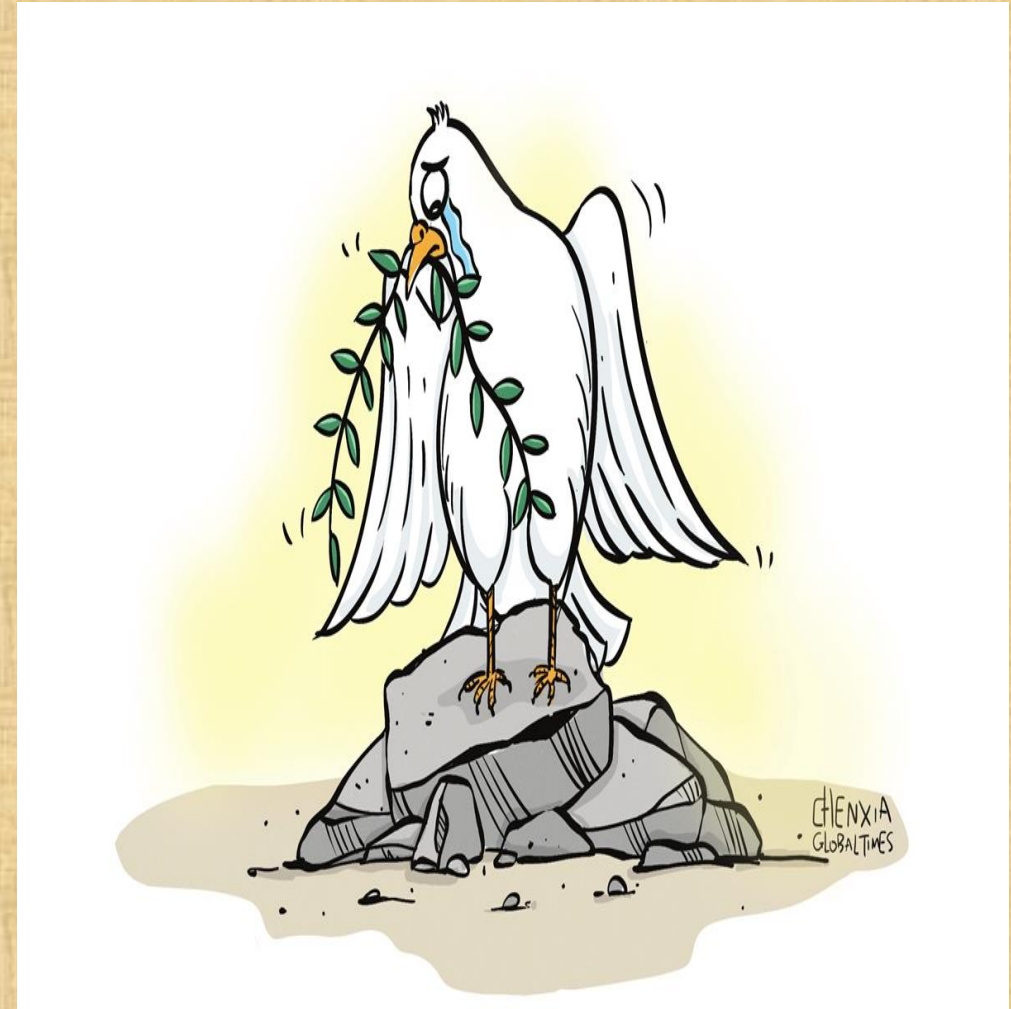


Peacebuilding in Brief

- The metaphor of “building” in peacebuilding, points to the fact that peace is not a given or happenstance. Rather, peace is built consciously and systematically.
- Peacebuilding is a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships.
- Peacebuilding involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct (Lederach 1997, p. 20)
- It aims to transform conflicts in a constructive way to create an environment conducive to sustainable peace. Peacebuilding isn't just about solving a single situation or managing a conflict – rather it is concerned with changing the way parties interact and ultimately solving the deeper problems at the core of the conflicts.

The Dilemma of Peace

- “Even people who wage wars claim they do so to maintain the peace”- Hansen 1987
- The world community is in desperate need of an expanding peace narrative. Throughout the world, targets of unrestrained violence cry out for peace. War narratives are plentiful, while peace-centered narratives are routinely marginalized.
- As a sobering plea, passionate peace voices are needed to counter the ongoing din created by war narratives.



Shariah: An Islamic Terminology

- Shariah literally means “the correct path” in Arabic. In Islam, it refers to the divine counsel that Muslims follow to live moral lives and grow close to God.
- Shariah is derived from two main sources: the Qur’an, which is considered the direct word of God, and hadith – thousands of sayings and practices attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) that collectively form the Sunnah.



Objectives of the Shariah and Peacebuilding

- It is generally held that the Shariah aims at securing benefits for the people and protecting them against corruption and evil.
- Preservation and protection of life
- Preservation and protection of religion
- Preservation and protection of lineage
- Preservation and protection of intellect
- Preservation and protection of Property

Objectives of the Shariah and Peacebuilding

- **Islam, Dialogue and Peacebuilding: The Nexus**
- Islam plays a significant role in promoting dialogue and peacebuilding through its teachings and principles. Here are some key aspects:



Emphasis on the Unity of Mankind

- Like other Abrahamic religion, Islam maintains that human beings exist on the earth for a common purpose and they have patrilineally and matrilineally descended from a single parent, Adam and Hawah (Eve). Thus, it is incumbent upon human beings to live together in peace rather than constant hostility to fulfil the purpose of their existence on the earth.
- *O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honoured in the sight of Allah is the one is most righteous of you and Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things. (Q49:13)*
- *O people! be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you. (Q4:1)*

Emphasis on Peace

- Islam promotes the concept of peace and encourages its followers to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts and imbibe the spirit of forgiveness. The Qur'an teaches that Muslims should strive for peace and reconciliation, and it condemns violence and aggression.
- *And if a woman fears ill-usage or desertion on the part of her husband, there is no blame on them, if they effect a reconciliation between them, and reconciliation is better, and avarice has been made to be present in the (people's) minds; and if you do good (to others) and guard (against evil), then surely Allah is aware of what you do. (Q4:128)*
- *Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust. (Q3:159)*
- *...And the recompense of evil is punishment like it, but whoever forgives and amends, he shall have his reward from Allah; surely He does not love the unjust. (Q42:40)*

Dialogue and understanding

- Islam encourages dialogue and understanding between people of different faiths and cultures. The Quran emphasizes the importance of respecting others' beliefs and engaging in constructive dialogue to promote mutual understanding and harmony.
- *O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God, that we associate partner with Him, that we should not appoint from among ourselves lords and patrons other than God. (Q3:64)*

Social Justice

- Islam advocates for social justice and equality, which are essential components of peacebuilding. The principles of charity, compassion, and fairness are central to Islamic teachings and can contribute to creating a more just and peaceful society.
- *O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do. (Q4:135)*
- *O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do. (Q5:8)*
- *... And if you judge, judge between them with equity; surely Allah loves those who judge equitably. (Q5:42)*

Mediation and Conflict Resolution

- Islamic teachings provide guidance on mediation and conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation and forgiveness. Muslims are encouraged to act as mediators and peacemakers in resolving disputes and promoting harmony within their communities.
- The Prophet of Islam (SAW) was involved in ‘mediations’ with Muslims and non-Muslim communities and positioned himself in continuation to the revelations of the people of the Book (Jews and Christians).
- *If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them with justice and be fair. For God loves those who are fair.*

Promotion of Human Rights

- Islam upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of their background or beliefs. The religion advocates for the protection of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion, expression, and dignity, which are fundamental to building peaceful societies.
- In addition, humanity is described as “Allah’s family” and thereby human rights are sacred. The Qur’an whilst repeatedly telling the believers to worship the Lord emphasizes the respect for human rights.

Models of Peacebuilding from the Islamic History

- The Treaty of Hudaibiyyah
- The Madinah Charter

Efforts of Some Islamic Personalities and Organisations in Peacebuilding

- King Abdullah Bin AbdulAzeez
- Fetullah Gullen
- His Eminence, Sultan Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar
- International Institute of Islamic Thoughts
- Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
- Islamic Education Trust

Conclusion

- Overall, Islam's teachings and principles can play a crucial role in promoting dialogue, understanding, and peacebuilding, both within Muslim communities and in broader interfaith and intercultural contexts.
- By embracing these principles, Muslims can contribute to building a more harmonious and peaceful world. Islam's emphasis on dialogue, peacebuilding, and social cohesion provides a valuable framework for resolving conflicts and promoting understanding and cooperation.
- Islam emphasizes the diversity of human nature as the different religions, cultures and races are a part of the divine plan of God. Allah says:
- *Unto every one of you we have given a different law and a way of life. And if God had so willed He could have made you all one single community. (Q5:48)*

Closing

- I want to close by sharing a verse from the Glorious Qur'an that has been described as the most comprehensive social plan in Islam. The verse is being recited by Imams at the end of their sermons on Fridays.
- Allah says:
- *Surely Allah enjoins the doing of justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred, and He forbids indecency and evil and rebellion; He admonishes you that you may be mindful. (Q16:90)*

THANK YOU