

Effecting Social Change and Global Peace among Muslims in the World: Unity as Determinant

Adeyemo Abduljeleel Taiwo

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

+2349030659554

taiwojeleel31@gmail.com

abduljeleeltaiwo1986@gmail.com

Abstract:

Unequivocally, social change and global peace are the engine oils towards fueling the ways of lives of people in a geographical location and Muslims are proclaiming for these to chiefly suit the means of livelihood of Muslims in the global village. In other words, absence of social change and global peace lead a country to destruction. It is on this truism that this research work revolves around. The research of this nature critically explores the status, influence and impact of social change and global peace on Muslim practitioners (adherents) of the world. The researcher portrays unity as active player and determinant of effective social development, solidarity and growth taking into cognizance the roles of social change and global peace in renovating and reforming the Muslim *Ummah* at large. The researcher therefore, suggests solutions to some of the problems combating Muslims globally while employing descriptive and exploratory approaches. This international conference paper conclusively propounds workable theories and proffers some recommendations to fill the gap between unity and diversity amongst Muslims of the world.

Keywords: Social Change, Global Peace, World-Muslims, Unity in Islam, Qur'an and Sunnah

Introductory Overview

The unity of the Muslim world is a term that refers to establishing a good and peaceful relationship among the various Islamic denominations, and usually refers to political unity in the form of a caliphate of some sort of federalism between Muslim nations

(www.islamicworldunity.com). The primary aim of Muslim unity is to unite all Muslims around the world. Although some divisions such as *Shia/Sunni* exist among Muslims according to the proponents of Muslim unity, these divisions are negligible and Muslims from different countries should forge closer ties with one another, especially after “The Amman Message” was signed by more than 500 *Ulama’u* from *Syiah* and *Sunni* denominations on November 9th, 2004 or 27 Ramadan 1425H (Arfah and Ishaq, 2013). It is also signed by King Abdullahi II bin al-Hussein in Amman, Jordan. The Amman Message started from searching definition of which is “Islam” is right and which is not “Islam.” The aim was to redefine “the right Islam” into modern society, about “the right in Islam,” (The Amman Message, 2004). According to (The Amman Message, 2014), it is said that anyone who is the follower of the four mazhabs of Islamic law of *Sunni* (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hambali), two mazhabs-Islamic law of *Shia* (Ja’fari and Zaidi), *mazhab*i Islamic law of Ibadhi and *mazhab*i Islamic law of Zahiri is a Muslim (Arfah and Ishaq, 2013). Therefore, it is hoped that all Muslims within the followers of those mazhabs mentioned are strengthening brotherhood (*ukhuwah islamiyyah*) to show that Islam is *Rahmatan lil-Alamin*; blessing to the universe (Arfah and Ishaq, 2013).

Similarly, during the International Conference on Islamic World Unity held by Universitas Muslim, Indonesia Makassar in collaboration with the Ambassador Islamic Republic of Iran, it is recommended that all Muslims in the world with full consciousness are upholding, keeping and developing brotherhood among one another. In the same vein, (Arfah and Ishaq, 2013) assert that it is a fact that Muslims consist of different mazhabs, so it is hoped that these differences are not becoming a gap among Muslims of having brotherhood and cooperation in many different activities for the world’s good including religious activities.

The crisis that Muslim societies are facing is multidimensional in nature, embracing political, social, economic, psychological and educational domains. (AbdulHamid, 1982). These crises as well as the situations of the contemporary Muslim societies have projected a negative impression about Islam to non-Muslims. The non-Muslims, especially western thinkers, as a consequence, have generally presented prejudiced and biased views about Islam. They have concluded that Islam is against change and development; therefore, it is the main cause of Muslim backwardness. According to them, Islam is a barrier to change and development. This myth was created by some Western thinkers and Orientalists, who influenced some Muslim thinkers who did not understand the real dynamics of change as articulated in Islam (AbdulHamid, 1982).

Islam has never ignored social change, and has always been concerned with it from the first day it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammed (SAW). It has changed people's lives from being non-believers to believers, and from being scattered in different places to one *Ummah* under one law, that is the Islamic Sharia and into believers in one God, Who is Absolute (AbdulHamid, 1982).

Islam is a religion of peace and it encourages and embraces global peace not only among Muslims but among non Muslims in the whole world. Therefore, this conference paper is an attempt towards effecting social change and global peace among Muslims in the world while projecting unity as a determinant and a role player of social change and global peace among all.

Concept of Unity from Islamic Perspectives

Of all the religions of the world, Islam is the first, foremost and the only religion that along with the declaration of oneness of Allah (*tawheed*) it declares the unity of mankind. According to Q8:46

“And obey Allah and his messenger and fall not into disputes lest you lose heart and your power depart, and be patient and Persevering.”

Almighty Allah points to the sameness of our origin as a basis for the unity of man i.e (Muslim):

“O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another, indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is more deeply conscious of Allah.” Q49:13

Muslims are enjoined to unite so as to energize the universe. Dissention and disunity should not occur within the best *Ummah* that Allah has created for mankind. This is why Allah commands Muslims all over the world in Q3:103

“And hold fast, all together by the rope of Allah and not be divided among yourselves...”

However, when disagreement occurs, as they would from time to time, the recommended mode of resolving conflict also strengthens unity. This could be seen in Q4:59

“O, you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those with authority among you. If you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you do believe in Allah and the last day; that is best and most suitable for final determination.”

The unity of Muslim *ummah* is not in celebrating Eid on same day throughout the world but the unity of *ummah* is in following the Qur'an and Sunnah of our beloved Prophet Muhammed (SAW). If each and every Muslim starts following the commands of Allah (SW) and His beloved Prophet Muhammed (SAW), then unity among Muslims will prevail by itself. Today why Muslims all over the world are misery and so divided, even in a places where they celebrate Eid one day? It is because Muslims have stopped practicing Islam and does not give any importance to the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW). History has shown that whenever Muslims have followed the Qur'an and the practices of the Prophet (SAW), they were united and had ruled the world. No doubt every Muslim likes to have unity but at what cost? By abandoning the path of our Prophet Muhammed (SAW) and His companions. If we keep demolishing the Sunnah of our beloved Prophet Muhammed (SAW) one by one in the name of modernization and unity, then what will be left at the end? Imaan without amal!

Unfortunately, the scourges of disunity, particularly, sectarianism is tearing the *Ummah* apart. For too long, the enemies of Islam and Muslims have been allowed to sow the seeds of hatred between Muslim brothers and sisters, resulting in bloodshed and destruction. The time has come to Muslims to stand up against such cruelty and injustice, falsely committed in the name of Islam. A clarion call is made to Muslims to:

- (1) Denounce all forms of disunity, including amongst others, racism, nationalism and sectarianism committed by individuals, organisations and governments around the world.
- (2) Unite in our stance against all attempts to divide the *Ummah*, in accordance with *ayah* (3:103), the Qur'an and the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muhammed (SAW).
- (3) Commit ourselves to the promotion of good relations between all Muslims based on Islamic etiquette (adab). **(Adapted from The Charter, A Call for Muslim Unity, Charter 3:103)**

Concept of Social Change in the religion of Islam

“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”

Cesar Chavez.

Generally, change is a universal, unavoidable, irreversible and is a necessary phenomenon. Change is everywhere and happens all the time. It is unavoidable in the sense that it imposes itself upon us. It occurs whether we like or not. Change is endemic; therefore, all societies must change (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

During the time of the Prophet of Islam (SAW), there were so many evils in the social life of Arabia. The Prophet (SAW) wanted to reform all those evils according to the Islamic scheme but the method he opted was not a revolutionary one. Rather, it was what may be called an evolutionary method. An example of this evolutionary method can be seen in the case of slavery. At that time, slavery was widespread everywhere in the world including Arabia. It even enjoyed the status of a highly established institution but the Prophet (SAW) avoided a path that would seek to abolish slavery, right in the beginning stage of his movement for reform. Instead, he adopted a gradual process of trying to remove the evils by way of education, teaching and explaining by peaceful means (Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, 2015).

Indeed, the general view that is found in the Eastern and the Western literature affirms the universality, irreversibility, necessity and unavoidability of change. In contrast, there is an opposite view that denies change and considers it an abnormal and undesirable phenomenon. Christianity for example, presents change as sin and violence. On the contrary, Islam views change as an inseparable part of our life and it should be allowed to take its natural course at both the individual and societal level (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011). However, the importance of change and its powerful effect on the lives of people has been explained in different ways as cyclical and evolutionary processes. These theories have indicated the direction of change. (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011) also posit that change has been presented as an outcome of conflict between two or more groups.

The theories offered by Western sociologists are generally materialistic in nature. The reason is that these theories were formulated to oppose religion in general as well as Christianity in particular, which was against change. Muslim theories on the other hand, explain change not

only materially, but also spiritually and morally, because these theories are based on Islam (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

Islam has a unique vision about social change, which is not found in other ideologies and religions. It agrees with the necessity, unavoidability, irreversibility and universality of change. Therefore, it advocates the necessity of changing human societies particularly Muslims in accordance with Sharia requirements (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

Islam uses many special concepts that are not found in other theories particularly Western, to refer to change. These concepts are generated from the basic Islamic sources; the Qur'an and Sunnah and they include *tagghaiyyur*, *tabaddul*, *tabauwwul*, *khoroj*, *tajdid* and *Islah*. It agrees and does not oppose Western concepts such as evolution, progress and development. But it offers different definitions and interpretations of these concepts. In addition, it defines social change as it refers to spiritual, moral and material changes, which occur in a society and its elements on the basis of *tawhid* (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

Global Peace from Islamic Perspectives

Quest for global peace is perhaps a core issue and major shared aspiration in most of the world religions. Peace initiatives and peace process are generally associated with peaceful settlement of disputes; concern for collective security, disarmament, preventive diplomacy and functionalism. Disputes and disagreements whether political, economic or ideological have been generally settled either through use of might and power or through negotiations i.e. brain power, mediation, face to face interaction and dialogue (Anis Ahmad, Jan, 15, 2004).

Etymologically, the term Islam draws its origin from the Arabic root *slm* which literally means peace and acceptance of servitude to Allah (SW) or to surrender to His Authority as the Ultimate. If this is so why a global uproar about the so called "blood doctrine" of holy war or "Islamic *Jihad*," it may sound naïve nevertheless, a major cause for this misconception is the fictional image created by electronic media and journalistic writings of a group of orientalist, neo-non intellectuals and freelance lobbyists. To take one example, "we refer to Judith Miller's God has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East. As a correspondent of New York Times, without having lived much in the Middle East and with no working knowledge of Arabic language, she writes authoritatively on Islam (Anis Ahmed, 2004).

There is a common misconception that Islam is a religion of violence. There is no basis for this in Islam. Islam is a religion of peace.

The first verse of the Qur'an reads:

"In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful and the Most Compassionate."

This verse, which is repeated in the Qur'an 114 times, clearly shows that the God of Islam is the God of mercy and compassionate, and the book of Islam too is the book of mercy. The people of Islam in the world (Muslims) must also possess the quality of mercy and compassion. Qur'an as the holy scripture that was revealed to the noble Prophet Muhammed (SAW) has analyzed in details either directly or indirectly the spirit of peace. In Q10:25:

"And God calls to the home of peace."

This means that the destination of Islam is peace. All the teachings of Islam are centred on the goal of peace. Muslims in the world need to embrace global peace in order to live in harmony and tranquility. According to Q41:34:

"If you deal with your enemy positively and return good for evil, he will become your closest friend."

These references from the Qur'an and Sunna make it clear that peace is the greatest concern of Islam. It is on this truism that Muslims regardless of ideologies, religious affiliations, colours and races are enjoined to promote peace in their day to day activities. They are not only to be peaceful among themselves but to encourage peaceful dealings among other religious adherents.

Why does Islam lay such a great emphasis on peace? Because all the good things which Islam wants to see in human life can be brought about only in peaceful environment. For instance, such constructive activities like spiritual uplift, character building, educational activity, social welfare, worship and prayer-and above all *da'wah* work, can be performed only in peaceful conditions. No peace, no progress, no development. Peace in Islam is required for the sake of a great purpose because no Islamic activity can be carried out except in peaceful conditions. Due to this importance, the Prophet Muhammed (SAW) always wanted to maintain peace even at the price of unilateral adjustment (Khan, 2005), (www.cpsglobal.org/content/concept-peace-islam).

Provisions of Sharia Law on Social Change and Global Peace in Modern Era

Sharia law plays the role of an evolutionary and dynamic force which leads to solutions for the contingent issues of life and fulfils the needs of changing times and requirements of new phenomena of human civilization. It also plays an important role in the Muslims' daily life, in the formation of the spiritual, intellectual, and mental balance of their personality as a vicegerent of Allah on earth.

Muslims in the world need to embrace the concept of *ijtihad* in order to promote intellectual *jihad* to solve the social problems facing the *Ummah* today. *Ijtihad* is needed in all aspects of our lives, while the process of change is taking place because *ijtihad* provides an answer to the emergent and contingent issues of life. Exercising *ijtihad* solves almost any problem that Muslims are faced with, while they are purifying their soul, practicing *Islah* or performing *Jihad*. Though, it constitutes the basis of other principles. It is needed by the individual, society and the state to solve their problems on the basis of Islamic sharia (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

Sharia law allows the intellectual exertion of an individual to modify the flexible Islamic laws to the changing situations of a society but it is a movement to bring about changes in all aspects of life. When we say a movement, it means that it involves a collective of people who exercise it in different fields. The decision arrived in this manner in a group can be considered as consensus that all Muslims should adhere to. It is Allah's command for Muslim *Ummah* to work together when they exercise *ijtihad* (Sumaya and Shadiya, 2011).

Conventionally, the provision of peace, or global peace and security has always been perceived as the mandate of the state. Majority of the population look to the state to ensure social justice and peace through its formal institutions such as the police, military, judiciary, parliamentary organizations and other law enforcement agencies (Nancy Annan, ND). However, Muslim *Ummah* need to rise up to promoting peaceful conditions of Muslims all over the world without relying on any provisions from State.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SOLUTIONS

Muslims all over the world are enjoined to build and promote unity in Islam irrespective of colours, races, organizations, ideologies etc. towards becoming a morally, physically and spiritually balanced Muslims in Nigeria and beyond. This conference paper therefore,

recommends the following to fill the gap that exists between unity and diversity in the Muslim modern world.

1. **Effecting** positive change in Muslim brothers and sisters in the Muslim and non-Muslim world.
2. **Focusing** on youths' empowerment, growth and development in Islam
3. **Making** a violence free jihad (intellectually practical *jihad* and positive *jihad*); a way of life of every individual Muslim youth.
4. **Praying** for the Muslims towards achieving educational standards, political and economic stability and global peace of the Muslim *Ummah*.
5. **Building Muslims' Unity** through Da'wah among Islamic organizations worldwide.
6. **Organizing** national and international conferences, seminars and workshops for the sensitization of Muslim Ummah to uphold Unity, Good Governance and Justice while proclaiming unification of religious ideologies or doctrines among the Muslim nations of the world.
7. Inviting Muslims in the world to the Annual Public Da'wah Lecture while acclaimed Nigerian and foreign scholars of Islam be invited to deliver lectures on the Philosophy of Unity in Islam.

These recommendations/solutions to the problems combating Muslim *Ummah* are in line with the aims and objectives of **Muslim Brotherhood Network (MUBNET)**, a fresh non-governmental religious organization geared towards promoting unity and religious tolerance among religious organizations in the world. Her philosophy is based on Q3:103 which reads: "And all of you hold firmly, to the rope of Allah (i.e the Qur'an) and don't create divisions among yourselves and keep in mind the favour of Allah, when you were enemies of each other Allah induced mutual love in your hearts (As a result of this), then you became brothers by His Grace. (Another favour of Allah is that) You were on the brink of a pit of fire (due to your disbelief), Allah saved you from falling into this pit. In this way, Allah makes His revelations cleared to you so that you may be guided."

CONCLUSION

The prospect for global peace, social change, unity and coexistence is inextricably linked to the accomplishment of a certain level of religious, moral and socio-cultural progress. It cannot be attained in an environment of conflicts, confrontation, misunderstandings and unstable situations. Islam is a religion of peace and social change. It is a way of life that

guides human beings not only Muslims to the right path. Islam has changed many people from bad attitude to the good ones. If the Muslim *Ummah* can follow the indelible footprints or the footsteps of the noble Prophet Muhammed (SAW) and utilize the various practices of the Prophet of Islam in their day to day dealings, the whole world not only the Muslim world will progress and achieve social growth. The Muslim *Ummah* must shun away all forms of religious disunity, diversity, divisions, dichotomy etc. be it ethnic, tribal or inter-tribal, private or governmental. A clarion call is made to the Muslims to effect positive social change, world peace and security so as to unite together as **ONE**.

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Professor Dr. Anis Ahmad is vice Chancellor of Rephah International University, Islamabad. This is his working paper that he presented at International Seminar on ‘Peace and Justice: The Religious Perspectives, held in Islamabad on January 15, 2004 under the auspices of IPS.

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Muslim Brotherhood Network is a fresh non-governmental religious organization geared towards promoting unity and religious tolerance among religious organizations in the world. It is based in Osiele, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Founder: Usthaz AbdulJeleel A.T

Year Founded: 2016.

ACRONYM: (MUBNET)

Membership: All Muslims

Motto: Unity Among Muslims

Nature: Sect-free Muslim Organization