

Muslim Civic Cultures and Conflict Resolution: The Challenge of Democratic Federalism in Nigeria. John N. Paden. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2005.

While Paden's laudable efforts here are to explain the role of Islam in the conflicts in Nigeria, his target audience includes policymakers in the United States. The book represents a powerful appeal to understand the role of Islam in Nigeria, along with the best ways to attain long-lasting global peace in a post-September 11, 2001, world. Impatient U.S. readers in search of global peace are well advised to limit their reading to just three pages (224-226), where the author makes a number of suggestions to the United States: the maintenance of "full diplomatic strength in Nigeria"; nongovernmental and professional agencies must support the police, army, and media in Nigeria; U.S. government must support institutions (rather than leaders), such as the local government and political parties; constructive engagement, by vested interests in the United States, with existing mechanisms for resolving internal conflicts in Nigeria; and some kind of dialogue with elements capable of generating conflicts. All these are important ideas and deserve implementation, although, as with similar studies, they are always about what the United States should do to prevent local actions rather than how to contribute to poverty alleviation, which is at the root of many conflicts. Moreover, it has become necessary, I think, to also discuss what Nigeria owes to others, especially to millions of its migrants living outside its borders and diaspora communities whose origins date to West Africa.

The strength of the book lies in what Paden knows best: the analysis of facets of religious culture and politics in Nigeria. One may question his motive for omitting some important literature from his bibliography, but no one can question his comprehensive knowledge. He has been a student of Northern Nigerian society for over forty years. His deep knowledge of the region shows in the way he uses enormous amounts of data to teach us about local Islamic values, as well as grassroots and civil cultures, to analyze political leadership and other solutions for conflict resolution. On one hand, we see ideas and behavior that can produce chaos, yet on other hand we see how enduring reforms can emerge. The overall intellectual paradigm is that knowledge of Nigeria is crucial to the attainment of global peace. Here is a country with not only a large Islamic population, but a country with one of

the largest Black populations in the world, and abundant resources of oil. Paden emphasizes how Nigerians' participation in policies can be democratized and how local conflict resolution systems can be put to more effective use.

The details are impressive, comprising well-written analyses of the role of Nigeria in international politics, its complicated federal arrangement, the place of Islam, and the discussion of *shari'a* and the motivations for conflicts between Muslims and Christians. Many of the discussions connect with larger issues of conflict models and conflict resolution in such a way as to attain global peace. The two organizing frameworks of the data—civic culture and democratic federalism—enable us to understand how ethnicities interact to manage and complicate religious and political divides and how they also contain the ingredients to transform Nigeria.

Paden has his fingers on a set of important subjects, and he is correct in his overall assessment of the role of Nigeria in the global world of Islam. His conclusions are mature, and they deserve both profuse praise and serious attention.

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