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used, and each symbol properly aligned to distinguish superscripts.

Procedure

Notification of acceptance will be within one month. Article will be edited for style and clarity and returned to the author for review.

All articles are subject to the editor's normal peer review. No paper can be published without signature of the editor based on referees, recommendations.

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Books

Achike, O. (1980) *Groundwork of Military Law and Military Rule in Nigeria*. Enugu, Fourth Dimension publishers

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Glynn, P., Kobrin, S. J., and Nairn M. (1997. 7 27), *The Globalization of Corruption*, in Elliot, K. Aled) *Corruption and The Global Economy*, Washington DC, Institute for International Economics.

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RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, SHARIA QUESTION AND NIGERIAN UNITY

Idowu Johnson

Abstract

One of the noticeable problems in Nigeria's political history is religious conflict. Religious conflict has threatened the unity of Nigeria, because of the inherent politics played along with it. However, this problem was an age long phenomenon, as old as the emergence of modern Nigeria, with the advent of Christianity and Islam; and the attendant modes of worship and hatred for each other. The complexity of religion has adversely affected inter-group relations in Nigeria. Indeed the use of religion to gain political power is noticed, and has become a do or die affair, especially for attaining other benefits (social and economic) through the state. Today, the Sharia issue has become controversial not essentially because of its religious essence but for its political expediency. This paper explores the effects of religious conflict and the Sharia issue on Nigerian governmental policies, and examines its impact on socio-economic development. The paper argues that in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, this conflict is inevitable due to the ethno-cultural diversities and the universal claims of the two religions, but the responsibility of government is largely based on how best to manage and resolve these conflicting world views within the polity. The paper concludes that no matter the contradiction of secularism in our constitution, it is still the only alternative measure in resolving religious conflict for the unity of Nigeria within the context of a true federalism.

INTRODUCTION

Religion has been at the heart of some of the best and some of the worst moments in Nigerian history. In fact, one of the noticeable problems in Nigeria political history is religious conflict. Religious

conflict has threatened the unity of Nigeria, because of the inherent politics played along with it.

It must be noted that the rate at which these conflicts spread from one place to another in Nigeria indicates that religion is used for political gains by the political elites. Segun Allah-De in support of this view explains:

It is unfortunate that our religious immaturity, our parochial fanaticism compounded by our tribal and ethnic hatred have caused the present cut throat struggle for power and thus our sense of objective reasoning has been beclouded that the small class of the elites who are supposed to know better and who are opportuned to know better to champion the cause of unity are, themselves, the agents of disunity. (1987:5).

However, the conflict in Nigeria based on religion is due to the intolerance emanating from the people. On the other hand, the nature of the conflict is between Muslims and Christians, also within Muslims and within Christians. It is imperative to note that we have three religions in Nigeria i.e. Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion, but with the advent of the Europeans into Nigeria and the advancement of capitalist system into our country, the popularity of traditional religion have been subverted.

Essentially, the "Sharia" issue becomes the most controversial debate as related to political process and religion. This conflicting issue on Sharia have serious implication on government policies, especially in bid to follow an ideal federalism. It also contradicts the principles of democracy and threatens the existence of Nigeria as a state. The tensions around the role of religion and politics are largely based on the conflicting perspective of world religions. Both Christianity and Islam have different conceptions of politics. While Christianity attempts to separate religion from politics, Islam makes no such pretence (Hammed, 2002:260). While it is true that religion has often been directed into a negative role, this is not enough justification to ignore inherent potential for meaningful emancipatory projects (Enwerem.

1995:4). Thus, the integrative roles of religion in the national integration of Nigeria form the basis of this paper.

Religion in Nigeria: An Historical Exploration

The origin of Christianity can be traced to the period of colonialism in Nigeria. Christian mission in Nigeria came with the Europeans. The work of Ade Ajayi (1965), gave detail accounts of the Christian Mission and activities in Nigeria. Ajayi traced the origin to the mid-nineteenth century and to the town of Badagry. On the other hand, Ayandele (1967), gave a historical account of the Christian penetration to Nigeria through Badagry on the basis of Christian elites with political and social modernization.

At this particular period, credit is due to the Christian zeal of the liberated Africans, former slaves, who had been christianized during their stay in Europe. The abolition of slave trade allowed African slaves to settle in Sierra Leone. Those who could trace their roots in Nigeria immigrated back to their homeland, and Sierra Leone became the "nursery" for missionary penetration into Nigeria (Enwerem, 1995:23). The spread of Christian mission now reached Abeokuta, Onitsha and other parts in the Southern region. Even in the North, Christianity has gained ground.

The major aim of the Christian mission is to make known to the adherents the good news of Christ; which also involves spiritual behaviour and freedom from ignorance. But as time went on, the missionaries and mission-connected churches were closely associated with the colonial administration. Indeed, Christian missions gave Nigerian the opportunity to acquire Western education. This western education later produced the western oriented elite; who later became interested in the administration of Nigeria.

Essentially, the intrusion of Christianity and the beginning of colonial administration marked the starting point in politicizing religion in Nigeria. This was witnessed in the attitude of the Northern Muslims towards their Northern Christian counterpart. For instance, the Northern indigenous Christians were perceived as traitors to the Northern system; especially their religious affinity with the Christian South which was

perceived as posing a political threat to the Fulani-Islamic hegemony (Enwerem, 1995:30).

Today, different Christian denominations have spread all over Nigeria with different doctrines. The first being the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Methodist and the Baptist which became prominent in Yorubaland, the Roman Catholic which concentrated more in the Eastern and Middle Belt region of Nigeria, and the twentieth century arrivals which include the Seventh-Day Adventist, the Salvation Army and the Apostolic Church. We also have the indigenous churches like the African Church, Christ Apostolic Church, the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Celestial Church of Christ, the Aladura Movement and some native churches who combine both the orthodox and indigenous methods together in their mode of worship.

However, the most significant of this denominational spread is the new Charismatic, Evangelical and Pentecostal movements which have its roots in Europe and America. These Pentecostal movements have their own doctrines and often regarded the orthodox ones as not having "spiritual power" in their dealings. Hence, their born again syndrome, with their "speaking in tongue" attitudes.

Similarly, Islam arrived Nigeria through the Northern region from Saudi Arabia. It must be noted that Islam became prominent in Nigeria with the help of Usman Dan Fodio, particularly from 1804 to 1810. Usman Dan Fodio used the Jihad to win to his side his followers. Thus, Sokoto became the seat of Islamic affairs and Hausa the dominant language.

From all information, Islam have been introduced to Nigeria before Nigeria became a state. The Kanem-Bornu area is worth mentioning in the influence of Islam in the present day Nigeria. The existence of earlier Muslim rulers in Kanem-Bornu is indicated by the suggestion that Muhammed Ibn Mani, the Muslim scholar who was credited with the conversion of Umme Jilmi, was also a contemporary of three predecessors of Mai Umme, namely Buhl, Arki and Kadin Hawani (Smith, 1961).

More importantly, with expansion of territories and the quest for victory in the Jihad War, the Sokoto caliphate wielded more power for political and religious issues. With the exception of Bornu which

escaped full integration into the Sokoto caliphate, the bulk of the present day Northern Nigeria came under the political domination or influence of the caliphate in the nineteenth century before the British brought the area under their authority as part of colonial Nigeria (Balogun, 1989). With the arrival of militant Islam and the founding of Sokoto caliphate in the nineteenth century by Usman Dan Fodio, Islamic theocratic state have emerged and the application of Sharia law in all ramifications follow suit. On this expansion of Islam and the introduction of the Sharia law, it became inevitable that this will affect both social and economic activities. The pursuit of their leaders' economic and political interests had led to systematic policies of slavery, compulsory labour and hereditary succession of emirate throne. By the time of the advent of the British in Lagos in 1861, Islam was already a force to be reckoned with in Yorubaland, particularly in Oyo-Yoruba, Egba, Ijebu and what later became the Lagos colony areas (Gbadamosi, 1978).

It was not surprising therefore that by the time Nigeria got her independence, Islam had spread to most of Northern Nigeria even though non-Muslims are still common in areas like Plateau, Nassarawa, Adamawa, Benue, Taraba and Southern Kaduna (Zaria). Even Islam continued to spread into the South East, reaching through traders to places as distant as Onitsha and Calabar (Gbadamosi and Ajayi, 1980:348). It is important to note that the Edos had a strong Muslim influence through the Nupe; and a majority of Muslims can be found in Edo State among the Auchis.

Nevertheless, there are hundreds of Muslim associations each with its own style of worship and doctrines. Today, we have the Tarigah Movement, the Izala Movement, the Sufi Orders, the Shites, Jumaatu Nastril Islam, the Ahamadiya Movement, the Zumuratul and the Ansar-ud-Deen Society.

The historical exploration indicates that Northern Nigeria was Islamized as a result of their contact with Arabs of North Africa, while the Christian mission intrusion into Southern Nigeria was as a result of slavery and colonialism. Thus, Nigeria was polarized into two geographical entities, with Muslims in the North and Christians in the South.

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Religious Conflict in Nigeria: An Overview

Since 1945, when the first inter-ethnic clash between the Hausa and Igbo was recorded, it has since been characterized by ethno-religious disturbances party clashes, electoral violence, political assassination and their violent conflict that have undermined national stability (Plotnicov, 1971). From this period, political events were based on religious affairs. Within the context of party formation, Nigeria political elites were much more religious than ethnic; this is because religion for individuals is a *sine qua non* to see and attain the goodwill of God.

However, at the eve of Nigeria's independence, colonial policies have divided the country of the struggle for political leadership along religious lines. During this period, Christianity and Islam had made tremendous impact on the society (Ekoko and Amadi, 1989). Many Nigerians had identified themselves with either of the religions. This period witnessed many political gestures which took the form of religious sentiments. Thus, causes of struggle between Christians and Muslims were recorded and interdenominational rivalries were rife. In fact, politics in the First Republic was religious affiliated. On accounts of events, political appointments were religious-based and the trend continued until the termination of the civilian regime in a military coup of July 29, 1966.

Beginning from 1970, religious intolerance in Nigeria has increased and citizen's identification with religion is witnessed within the political division. Religious conflicts in the 1970s became a source of political manipulation by the political elites for their own selfish end. In the wake of Nigerian Civil War, there were rhetorics of religious polarization which have domestic and international influence (Garba, 1998, Tamuno, 1989).

Essentially, the most devastating religious fanaticism in Nigeria was the one organized by the Maitatsine Movement in 1980. Two Maitatsine uprisings occurred; that of Kano and Kaduna state, which claimed many lives. The Maitatsine doctrine was to averse anything modern. However, the Maitatsine group does not fall within the pattern of Islamic-Christian conflict; rather, it was an insurgency against the orthodox Islamic sect. Quite obviously, with the Maitatsine uprising in 1980, violent religious conflict has come to occupy a center stage in the

body polity. Similarly, the violent demonstration in Sabon Gari Kano by the Muslim student's society on Saturday 30th October, 1982, involved killing on much smaller scale (Usman, 1987:72). However, the attack on, and destruction of Christian churches in Sabon Gari, Kano marked the highest, and most dangerous point this manipulation of religion has reached in its opposition to the unity of the people of Nigeria.

It is important to examine intra-religious conflict in Nigeria. Within the organization and structure of the church among the Christians and the Mosque among the Muslims, there exist conflicts. In Christianity, conflicts have splitted churches into different denominations; and conflict exists within churches either for leadership tussle or ideological differences. The most noticeable of this conflict among churches is ideological differences between the orthodox churches and the Pentecostal sects. While the Pentecostal churches were condemning the orthodox for their inability to be involved in Holy Spirit *as a way of preaching, the orthodox also lay attack on the Pentecostal in their attitude towards social life.* The conflicts which arise within the Christian sect can be summarized in these words:

The Celestial Church of Christ ran headlong into a leadership crisis shortly after the death of Samuel Bilewu Oshoffa; the Anglicans besieged the law courts in Lagos over the appointment of a new Bishop; the Catholics are yet to recover from the emergence of the Charismatic movement within the erstwhile close-knit orthodox church, and the Baptist, Apostolic and Aladura churches are reproducing and multiplying like maggots after bouts of crisis in their respective mother churches (Newswatch, Lagos, July 14, 1988).

Admittedly, the main source of this conflict within churches was based on selfishness and not evangelism. It was as a result of this that the Pentecostal churches swept across the country including Northern Nigeria in the 1980s. Their "non-denominational", "puritanical", and "fundamentalist" Christianity not only posed a serious challenge to the old churches – their main target – but also began to cause ripples among Muslims across the country, especially in the North.

Similarly, within the context of intra-religious conflict among the Muslims, it has been documented that the *Tarigah* brotherhood versus *Izala* movement recorded the highest confrontation, with political undertone. The background to the crisis dated back to the First Republic, or perhaps even earlier. More often than not, preaching attitudes and the interpretation of the Koran are the major causes of this conflict. To the *Izala*, every kind of *Tarigah* is un-Islamic. The *Izala* also contended that members of *Tarigah* cannot lead in prayers. It was this last contention of the *Izala* that led to most of the violence that erupted in quite many mosques in most of the major cities of the North through the 1990s and early 1980s (Ibrahim, 1997:478).

Indeed, both Christians and Muslims responded to the country's social and economic malaise in religious terms. In so doing, they attacked both non-fundamentalist co-religionists and worshippers of other religions (Mohammed, 2002: 271).

In the same vein, two important religious issues both significantly explosive dominate the period of military rule in Nigeria. The Sharia debate and the controversy over Nigerian membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). This issue had earlier come up with as much passion in the 1977 Constitution Drafting Committee and the 1978 Constituent Assembly (Laitin, 1982, Kukah, 1999). Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly asked for a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal while their Christian colleagues, particularly those from the North, vehemently opposed it. This led to a series of demonstrations for and against the move across the country (Mohammed, 2002:272). Although, the military government tried to cool down the tension regarding the issue of OIC, but the Sharia controversy was unresolved, as the issue resurfaced in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The Fourth Republic and the Sharia Question

The Fourth Republic began on the 29th May, 1999, with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo assuming the post of the president. Unfortunately, the introduction of Sharia law in some Northern states of Nigeria particularly in Zamfara created widespread tension in the country.

In examining the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 4 of the Constitution divided the legislative powers of

government between the federation and the states. In its second schedule, it specifies the exclusive legislative list, on which only the federation may make laws, and also the concurrent legislative list, on which both the federation and the states may make laws. In addition it empowers the state to make laws on any other matter not included in the two lists. Sharia falls within the residual, and this is what the pro-Sharia held on to in declaring Sharia in their states.

In view of this, Alhaji Ahmed Sani of Zamfara state officially launched the adoption of Sharia law as a legal system by the state, on Wednesday October 27, 1999, which according to him was in fulfillment of his campaign promise. He stressed that the Quoran contains a complete code, which has no boundaries of time, place or nationality and that the Islamic legal system governs the entire life of the Moslems who consider it to be the embodiment of the will of God.

Furthermore, there is also the legal and constitutional question regarding the introduction of Sharia. Section 10 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution forbids the adoption of a state religion by either the government of the federation or of any state. This means that no government, either federal or state should be allowed to take any action that will compromise the secularity of the country. It is pertinent to point out the obstacle prescribed by the constitution in respect of the application of Sharia law. The obstacle is the legal supremacy of the 1999 Constitution. Section 1 of the constitution read thus:

This constitution is supreme and its provisions shall have binding force on all authorities and persons throughout the Federal Republic of Nigeria; if any other law is inconsistent with the provisions of this constitution, this constitution shall prevail and that other shall to the extent of the inconsistency, be void (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

However, the argument of the anti-Sharia movement is that state enforcement of Sharia, in all the plenitude of its injunctions, cannot, in the multi-religious society of Nigeria, co-exist with a truly federal form of political association. This was the trend of the Sharia in states where the subject had been broached until February 21, 2000, when a protest march by Christians against the introduction of Sharia led to violence in

Kaduna, with many lives lost and property worth millions of Naira destroyed (Johnson, 2001). Following this imbroglio, Niger, Sokoto and Kano followed suit.

Although, Governor of Zamfara state revealed that Sharia is applicable to Muslims only. However, both Muslims and non-Muslims became victims. Apart from the notorious cow thief (Jangebe) whose hand was chopped off, one Mr. Ejike Ugbaja was sentenced to a six-month prison term for possessing alcohol in Kaura Namoda local government area of the state. It is from this indiscriminate usage of the Islamic law which geared up non-Muslims to reject the implementation of Sharia wherever it operates. For them, this will amount to total islamization of the whole country. Thus, Christian leaders in Nigeria believe that the formation of quasi Islamic states in the North is a ploy by the Northern elite to regain political power.

Sharia, Politics and the Fourth Republic

The introduction of Sharia law into the country at this present democratic governance has been viewed by some to be politically motivated by some forces that are all out to destroy the democratic structures already put in place, since political executive decisions have not fulfilled their desires. One needs to take into consideration why Sharia was not launched in those states in the Second Republic.

In the same vein, some Northern Muslim elite attributed the clamouring for Sharia as a result of lost of power. For instance, Governor Ahmed Makarfi attributed the whole situation, including the moves for and against the Sharia issue along with the violence which erupted over it, to the machinations of some malcontent political forces who are desperately seeking a return relevance through the collapse of the democratic structures in Kaduna State (The Comet, August 31, 2000:33). His theory is that once these forces succeed in fostering anarchy in Kaduna state, which is more than a microcosm of the Nigerian nation because of the large presence of people from virtually every Nigerian tribe in the state's capital, then the sponsors of anarchy made an easy move for a distressed center in Abuja, the seat of power (The Comet, August 31, 2000:33).

More importantly, the introduction of Sharia into the country in this present political dispensation is meant to raise the political temperature. But people have emphasized that this will serve as the root cause of the nation's disintegration. From Abubakar Umar's observation; "it is counter-productive because it will engulf the same people that are manipulating religion so as to divide people to destabilize the center" (Tell Magazine, November 13, 2000:29).

However, the leader of the Zaria-based Muslim Brotherhood, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky disagrees with the Governor of Zamfara state on the implementation of Sharia as an Islamic legal system. While Governor Ahmed Sani wholeheartedly believes that the state government can capably lead the efforts to revive Islamic ways as panacea to corruption, theft, prostitution, drug dealing and other social vices, Sheikh Zakzaky and other like-mind Muslim clerics scoff at the idea. Thus, these interesting critics and other ordinary Muslims prefer to see the initiation of Sharia by Zamfara state as "mere political opportunism which is only aimed at exploiting the ordinary people's loyalty to Islam" (The Comet, August 31, 2000:33).

Consequently, those who opposed the clamouring for Sharia law argued that at no point in history have the religion's epochal revivals been led by any political figures, and that extremely significant pre-conditions for true Sharia, such as the complete dismantling of Western secular structures of governance. As a result, the declaration of Sharia law in these Northern states only makes the new wave of Sharia implementation a political, vote-catching strategy. Indeed, as observed by Ali Mazrui (2001), "Sharia cracy"⁶ was seen by some as a counter to the shift of power and wealth to the south.

An Appraisal of Sharia in Modern Society

Those who subscribed to the application of Sharia argued that the legal concept (i.e. Sharia) is based on divine elevation of Koran and the Hadith. In other word, that the words of Allah and Mohammed regarded as unchangeable. The pertinent question is, how and why should those words be subject to the opinions of modern scholars which undergo continuous changes? Do these scholars have the power and the

mandate to change the voice of Allah? What if they disagree among themselves as to which change to adopt or apply?

In view of the above, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, noted that the present Federal Constitution makes the implementation of the Sharia impossible. He lamented that many of the Judges in Northern Nigeria are unlearned in Islamic jurisprudence, and also noted that in a decadent society where most people live in poverty, Sharia will be an instrument of oppression (Weekly Trust, Kaduna, November 4 – 11, 1999).

Another point to take note is the reform undertaking in the Muslim countries where majority of them are Muslim. One-third to half of the population of the Muslims in Egypt, Algeria, Turkey and Indonesia resist the full implementation of Sharia in their land, even though all these places have greater concentration and percentage of Muslims than it is in Nigeria. After a long-term experience of the Sharia in Turkey, the people became disenchanted and in 1926, they discarded it as backward. Since then Turkey has remained a secular state, despite the fact that Turkey is 99.5% Muslim and 0.3% Christian. Syria also was an Islamic state until 1973. Even though the country is 90% Muslim and 8.6% Christian, an attempt to reintroduce Sharia by the Muslim Brotherhood led to the country's civil war in 1982. Syria has remained a secular state after the war (Abdal-Nasih and Salam, 2000:55).

On the other hand, if we examine the economy of these Arab countries in which the Northern Nigeria fashioned out this Islamic law, we can see that their standard of living is encouraging. However, Sharia supporters claimed that it would make Northern Nigeria "safer", "wealthier" and "godly". Yet in most Northern states, Sharia compliant or not, crime is still rising, state corruption continues, and so does grinding poverty for most of the talakawa. Thus, Zamfara as an architect of Sharia law remains not only one of the poorest places in Nigeria, but one of the poorest in Africa.

Implications of Sharia on Government Policies

The introduction of Sharia law in some parts of Northern Nigeria has serious implication on Nigerian governmental policies. On this note, the Sharia law if implemented in the country poses serious problems on the following policies which hold Nigeria together as a virile nation.

(1) *Sharia and National Integration*

The issue of religion is something many did not regard as violent oriented means; not until recently when the issue of Sharia surfaced into the political scene of Nigeria. Nigerians, particularly those residing in the North were forced to return to their various states of origin. The point is that our brothers from the North will be the ones to separate the various nationalities from the country. At the wake up of the massacre over the Sharia controversy in Kaduna, the governors of the five South-Eastern states came up with the proposal for confederacy. The South-West saw the opportunity to intensify their demand for a Sovereign National Conference.

In view of this, it would then mean that through a deliberate and well thought project, the Muslim North has handed to the proponents of a return to "True Federalism", Confederation and Sovereign National Conference of Ethnic Nationalities that they had been asking for, but which the central successive and present government have lacked the political will to do. Going by the wave of enacting Sharia Islamic law, the Northern states would have become an Islamic state. The implications are clear and delicate. In such moves, an integrated Nigeria will be a divided nation and the talk about a federal state, a mere illusion and wishful thinking. The phenomenon, precisely, will be too delicate for a nation on the throes of separatist agitations. Part of the reasons is the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), displaying the Biafran flag in Aba as a result of scores of their kins killed in the Kaduna mayhem. In recent times, there has been greater emphasis on the Yoruba or Oodua Nation. The truth in all these incidents is that Nigeria is today saturated with victims of social dislocations. Many of such victims are the direct product of several ethnic violence. Thus, there is a sense in which the adoption of Sharia in the Northern states will heighten the new wave of ethnic nationalism. Sharia, undoubtedly will compound the problems of a nation in the despair of social and political upheavals.

(2) *Sharia and Inter-Governmental Relations*

The units in a federation look up to a system of revenue sharing as a means of realizing their economic aims for joining the union in that it helps to redress imbalances that may exist amongst the units on one

hand, and between the revenues and responsibilities of each units on the other (Awa, 1976:62). Thus, inter-governmental grants are revenue transferred from ~~one~~ government to another. In Nigeria, it is the unconditional grants which are applicable with the constitutional provision. In other words, the Federal Government is constitutionally required to divide all federal collected revenue between itself and its sub-national government (vertical revenue sharing) in accordance with legally specified revenue sharing formula. Side by side with this, the revenue sharing process serves as a major instrument for maintaining in K.C. Wheare's words the relationship among the units on a coordinate status (Wheare, 1967:1).

Unfortunately, the introduction of Sharia law in some parts of the Northern region has threatened this development. The South-South states appear bent on making good the threat to control their resources for as long as the Northern states would not renounce Sharia law. This will constitute the real beginning of the disintegration of the Nigerian nation as other geopolitical zones of the country who have no oil would be bound to suffer serious hardship.

Similarly, the federal revenue allocation that goes to the states that want to operate the Sharia law includes the excise duties from breweries, custom duties and the Value Added Tax (VAT). Why should these states government take such money and spend? Moreover, everybody pay these duties in one way or the other. How do you take this fund to practice Islam to the detriment of the people of other religion? These are the questions which are yet to be answered by the proponents of Sharia, the Islamic law.

Another controversy that arose out of the introduction of the Sharia legal system is the sharing of VAT on alcohol and hotel services being received by the Sharia states. It seems these Sharia states still receive the VAT until there will be an agreement between the federal and state governments. From this point, it amounts to cheating on the part of those who consume beer. It is not fair for a section to be producing and consuming what is perceived as harmful, and the revenue being derived from it shared with other sections that banned its production.

The implication of this lopsidedness in Nigerian federalism is that Federal-state relationship will continue to be strained. We must note

that quite a number of variables besides revenue allocation condition relationships amongst governments in a federation. Notable among these other factors are: the constitution and nature of party politics. Therefore, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is the “grand norm” in which all parties must obey.

(3) *Sharia and NYSC Program*

The National Youth Service Corps Program is one of the policies initiated by the Federal Military Government as part of the measures to integrate Nigeria. The scheme which began in 1973 following the end of 30 months of civil war in Nigeria is to foster unity. Unfortunately, the 35 years old NYSC scheme is being threatened as corpsers have been encouraged by their parents and other concerned groups to shun their posting to Sharia states. The argument is that if the conceptual framework which informed the initiation of the scheme was to foster unity and bridge the gaps of understanding among the diverse tribes of the nation, then the introduction of Sharia and its implementation ultimately negates the concept of freedom of worship and of course religious tolerance.

In this vein whereas, it may be easy to say that while the NYSC members from the Southern states will find it difficult to serve in a regimented atmosphere where the supreme law of Sharia holds sway, Northern NYSC members posted to the South will not be subjected to a teleguided existence like their counterparts up North. The argument of those who opposed the posting of Christian corps member to Sharia states is that:

The basic teaching of Sharia negates, in their entirety, the values of the national service some of which include fraternity among the corps member irrespective of sex, religion and ethnic leaning for the overall development of the country (The Post Express, July 17, 2000:1).

Although, the issue of NYSC and Sharia debacle is not pronounced today, but many Southern Christian parents are pessimistic about the unity of Nigeria, especially in recent resurgence of religious conflicts in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

Conclusion

In trying to analyse religious conflict in Nigeria and politics associated with it, it is evident that religious divisions are important element in Nigeria's complex pluralism. The constitutional path to Nigerian development has been disrupted by religious conflict. The Muslims have followed in establishing an Islamic order in Nigeria, which was clearly epitomized in the course of the debates on the provision of the Sharia in the country's constitution. On the other hand, the interpretation of the secular nature of the Nigerian constitution has been a problem. While Christians emphasized the separation of religion from governmental affairs, the Muslim counterpart's belief that secularism is an European invention, which for them have nothing to do with the polity.

However, the cost of ethno-religious riots since Nigeria became an independent country so far must be too enormous and beyond quantification, especially in terms of invaluable human and material resources. The destruction of lives and property as a result of religious conflict has adversely affected socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Specifically, religious conflict in the Fourth Republic became a subject of debate due to the introduction and launching in some part of Northern Nigeria of the Sharia legal law. This has altered the existing federal principle. The significant point here is that none of these problems is an essentially religious problem; they are mainly for political expediency.

Finally, there is an urgent need for social mobilization. Government and religious leaders should enlighten the populace, especially the youths; in their attitudes towards religious issues. However, in kicking against secularism in Nigeria is to avert the relevance of federalism. Nigeria being a secular state cannot base Nigerianism on the platform of Christianity or Islam, rather on the basis of conscientious nationalism as a religion of the people. Therefore, no matter the contradiction of secularism in the Nigerian constitution, it is still the only alternative measure in resolving religious conflict for the unity of Nigeria within the context of a true federalism.

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