

**NIGERIA'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC
CONFERENCE (OIC): SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS
IMPLICATIONS ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN
AND THE UNITY OF NIGERIA**

Dr. Secunda Chizobam Onwuharaonye

Department of History and International Studies
Aivan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri
Email: onwuharaonyesecunda@gmail.com

&

Dr. Kelvin C. Ugwulebo

Department of Religion and Cultural Studies
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri
Email: comraadekeycee@gmail.com

&

Dr. Ebiziem Jude Ebiziem

Department of Political Science
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri
Email: mbanoguesthouse@yahoo.com

Abstract

The work assesses the decision of General Ibrahim Babangida's administration to register Nigeria as a full member of Organization of Islamic Conference, presently known as the Organization of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) in 1986, and its implications on the Constitutional Rights of Women and the fragile unity of the country. Going by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Nigeria is a secular state, meaning that, there is no state religion. Every citizen of Nigeria has the right and freedom to choose and profess any faith he or she likes. The work adopts a historical research approach which made use of secondary and oral source materials. Findings revealed that General Ibrahim who came to power in 1985 inherited a nation with very weak economy and severed relations with virtually all her African neighbours and the major Western powers,. Therefore taking Nigeria to OIC was an option among other reasons to access the much needed interest free loan the Islamic Bank offered to revive the nation's economy. Findings has also revealed that this action of General Babangida has given some governors and fanatical Muslims in the northern part of Nigeria the impetus to force some of the unfriendly Islamic practices and ideologies on women and non-Muslims residing in that part of the country. This work maintains that Nigeria is a secular state despite what Babangida did in 1986, any attempt to further push for the full Islamization of the country is an invitation to anarchy and the destruction of the fragile unity of the country.

Introduction

Historically, going by the provision of the independence constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other preceding constitutions, Nigeria as a nation is a secular state. Put differently, the Federal Government of Nigeria or any State within Nigeria shall not adopt any religion as state religion.¹ What this implies is that every citizen of Nigeria has the right to profess any faith he/she likes. Unfortunately however, the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida in 1986 took Nigerians by surprise,

changing the nation's observer status at the Organization of Islamic Conference to full membership.

Available evidences have shown that General Ibrahim Babangida who succeeded Major General Muhammadu Buhari in 1985 inherited a country with very weak economy and severed relations with virtually all African neighbours and the major Western powers. His major priority then was to revive the nation's economy and strengthen her relations with other countries.

It has been alleged that general Babangida's government registered Nigeria as a full member of OIC in order to access the Islamic Bank interest free loan which the bank offers its members. The truth remains that whatever may have been the reason for taking Nigeria to OIC cannot in any way be quantified with the trouble it has created for the country ever since. General Babangida and his men should have realized the dividing role religion and ethnicity had often played on the fragile unity of the country. Taking Nigeria to OIC implies making the entire country an Islamic State with full Islamic practices and principles to be adhered by all citizens both Muslims and non-Muslims. It also implies that more women, most especially those from other parts of the country would as well be subjected to the discrimination and other unhealthy practices synonymous with Islamic nations, and which are against the girl child and women.

There is a great difference between a Muslim and an Islamist. A Muslim practices Islam as a religion, while an Islamist manipulates Islam as a political tool. The Archbishop of Jos Archdiocese and Former President of Catholic Bishops Conference (CBCN), Archbishop I.A. Kiagama noted that "Islamism is a conscious attempt to manipulate religion as a tool for political and cultural domination".² As a political system, Islamists insist that Islam is meant to dominate the environment in which it is practiced. Therefore, this is where the problem lies for a country like Nigeria with divergent culture, religious and political ideologies. It is the attempt to implement this principle of Islamism which portends great danger to the fragile unity of Nigerian State that actually raised fear and suspicion among the non-Muslims in the 1980s. It is this Islamist political ideology that is driving the crisis in Nigeria currently.

The work therefore investigates the motives behind the decision of General Babangida's government to register Nigeria as a full member of OIC, its implications on the constitutional rights of the girl child and women in the northern part of Nigeria as well as the probable effects on women in other parts of the country if the planned full Islamization of the entire country is fully implemented.

History of Nigeria's Association with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)

The Constitution of Nigeria provided for a secular state and it simply and clearly stated that "the government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion".³ This was intended to give every section of the country and its citizens ample opportunity to enjoy freedom of worship, expression and association. Secularism of a state implies a state in which the temporal/secular ruler enjoys full autonomy as ruler with no control from religious or spiritual authorities.⁴

Despite this provision of the constitution, successive leadership in Nigeria most especially the Muslims among them, had right from post-independence period up till the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida made several attempts to thwart this section of the constitution in order to strengthen its (Muslim) relations with the Arab world (Arab countries). This they had done without putting into consideration the dividing role religion and ethnicity play on the fragile unity of Nigeria as a sovereign nation and the desired continued existence of the North and South as one country. According to O.A. Eke,

In the early life of Nigeria's independence, there was confusion over which position Nigeria should adopt in its Afro-Arab policy. At the time in 1961, Sultana of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello had canvassed against Nigeria's political arrangement and worked assiduously to promote Islamic nationalism in which there would be instituted common diplomatic, economic and cultural ties thereby forcing Nigeria into the League of Islamic States with countries such as Iran, Lebanon, United Arab Republic (UAR), Jordan and Saudi Arabia as members.⁵

However, the full history of Nigeria's association with the OIC cannot be divorced from the links between Muslim groups within Nigeria and their counterparts in the Middle East and other parts of the world, in the years preceding the formation of the Organisation in 1971. The government of the defunct Northern Region led by the then Premier late Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduna of Sokoto was among those charged with the responsibility of creating or forming a permanent forum at which Islamic governments could interact on regular basis for their mutual interests and benefits. His contributions and those of other Muslim leaders worldwide formed part of the success story of the Muslims World Congress held in 1966 and the 1969 Rabat summit respectively which culminated in the formation of OIC in 1971.

Given the situation in the country then, the lingering Biafran Civil War and the dividing role religion plays on the delicate unity of Nigeria, General Yakubu Gowon who was the Head of State at the time exonerated Nigeria government from being part of the Gumi led delegation to the 1969 Rabat summit, noting that "the presence of some Nigerian Muslims at the conference did not in any way represent a declaration, direct or indirect, of Nigeria's intention to become a member of the Organisation of Islamic State".⁶ As a result of Nigerian government's position on this issue and an urgent message sent through diplomatic channels to King Hassan of Morocco, the Nigeria Muslim delegation was denied accreditation at the Rabat meeting and was instead allowed to observe the proceedings. Gowon's message to King Hassan in 1969 set the tone for Nigeria's observer status in the OIC, a position which was retained by the successive governments of Murtala/Obasanjo administration, 1975-1979, the Shehu Shagari administration 1979-1983 and General Muhammadu Buhari administration 1983-1985.

Olukoshi in Olusanya and Akindele (1990) are however, of the view that concerted and vigorous efforts began to be made to change Nigeria's observer status to full membership following the overthrow in 1983 in coup d'état of the civilian government of Shehu Shagari on 31 December, 1983. Powerful domestic Muslim groups with extensive business ties with the Middle East commercial, industrial and banking groups lobbied the new military government of General Muhammadu Buhari very hard to upgrade Nigeria's status in OIC,... to encourage the government to reach a speedy decision in favour of Nigeria's full membership of OIC, vague promises of Arab economic and financial assistance was made at a time when there was a stalemate in the negotiation between Nigeria and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) over the former's application for a loan of some two billion dollars (\$2 billion), which led to blockage of lines of credits to the country by western banks and the withdrawal by western export credit guarantee agencies of insurance cover on exports destined for Nigeria. There was therefore, an acute shortage of basic commodities in the country, with the accompanying inflationary spiral that it generated.⁷

In spite of the fact that General Buhari is an ardent Muslim and not too friendly with the ideal of secularity of the state, but he threaded very cautiously on foreign issues which had potentials of dividing the country. Also based on the advice of his External Affairs Minister Ibrahim Gambari against the alteration of Nigeria's observer status in OIC, citing inter alia the provision in 1979 constitution for the maintenance of the secularity of the state, the inherent danger of dividing the country and distraction of his government from the crucial task of economic and political reconstruction, General Buhari dropped the idea of changing the nation's observer status to full membership.

The conception of the idea of making Nigeria an Islamic state was the brain child of or better still originated from Alhaji A. Gummi who was a controversial and fanatical Muslim and a close ally of the Sultan, the Sultana of Sokoto Ahmadu Bello. According to M.H. Kukah, between 1954 to 1966, Alhaji Gummi's closeness to the Sultan earned him respect and recognition. His achievement came to a climax in 1963 when he succeeded Sharikh Awad as the Grand Khadi of Northern Nigeria. But the creation of states in 1967 rendered a centralized sharia court redundant and eroded his powers and privileges.

The disrespect and attempt to officially destroy the secular nature of the country gained ground during the 1977/1978 Constitutional Drafting Committee Conference when Muslim delegates and members raised objections to the secular state of Nigeria, as recognized by the constitution saying that "a secular state is a godless state".⁸ They

demanded for the establishment of a Federal Sharia Court of Appeal throughout the country to protect the interest of Muslims, as envisaged in some quarters, to reassert Northern hegemony by the Hausa-Fulani ruling class. This move was vehemently opposed by the Christian delegates and some anti-sharia Muslims on the ground that it was not healthy for a multi-ethnic and religious nationality like Nigeria. The determination of the members of the Constituent Assembly from the Middle Belt, working with other members from the Southern minorities of the then Bendel, Rivers and Cross River States successfully put a check on the planned Islamization of Nigeria after the death of General Murtala Muhammed.⁹

During the 1977/78 Constituent Assembly debate, P. Unongo (Kwande) a member of the Constituent Assembly from the Middle Belt Stated unequivocally that “there is no basis at all to even discuss the probability of providing a court structure or system which by definition is a court and use Federal fund to maintain such a court in a basically secular state... Sharia system runs counter to the political objectives and social order on which we seek to build our nation”.¹⁰

Collaborating the above view, J. Udoji who represented Ihiala and Nnewi/Idemili Federal Constituency of Anambra state noted that to establish, on a national level and with national funds, a court which will only deal with the laws of a particular religion is not only giving that religion a preferential treatment, but it is tantamount to making that religion a state religion.¹¹

The Administration of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) represented the beginning of unmitigated Islamization of Nigeria. General Ibrahim Babangida was one of the loyal followers of Late General Murtala Mohammed. This therefore accounted for the reasons why General Babangida took the fateful and unilateral decision in 1986 to implement the grand plan of Muslims and the Northern Oligarchy, without considering its effect on other sections of the country. General Ibrahim Babangida, without official presentation and the approval of the governing organs of the Federal Military Government (Armed Forces Ruling Council), organized a mission led by the Sultan of Sokoto to formally admit Nigeria into the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).¹²

Reviewing the genesis of the entry of Nigeria into Organisation of Islamic Conference, E.A. Obi noted that

Though Nigeria took part in the formation of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), presently known as Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in 1971, Nigeria maintained an observer status. During the Buhari regime, pressure were mounted on him to upgrade the country's status to that of full membership, so that the Country could obtain some economic assistance, since the regime was finding it difficult to make any head way with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). General Buhari refused based on the advice of his

External Affairs Minister Dr. Ibrahim Gambari on the issue. This pressure continued during General Babangida's regime and despite the advice of Prof. B. Akinyemi, the then External Affairs Minister against succumbing to the pressure, General Babangida in January 1986 upgraded Nigeria's 15 years observer status in the Organisation to full membership.¹³

When the Chief of General Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe complained that he knew nothing about it, and definitely said that he could not remember the matter coming up to the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), he was shown his way out.

The Christians opposed this action (the attempt to Islamize Nigeria) vehemently and the much General Babangida who initially denied the planned Islamization could do for them was to set up a 20 man panel of inquiry headed by Col. John Shagaya the then Internal Affairs Minister which was inaugurated on 3rd February 1986 in Abuja, to determine Nigeria's status in the Organisation and the economic implications of the country's full membership of the Organisation. This was a diversion and the Christians were victims. This is because even though the committee handed in its report on 21st March, 1986, on the basis that bonds of friendship had been established between Christians and Muslims, but there was no concrete agreement, as its report was not unanimous as both sides held on to two diametrically opposed positions. Besides, the Federal Government did not publish the white paper, made no further comments on OIC. All discussions on the matter became a question of speculation as no one knew whether Nigeria remained in or left the OIC.¹⁴ This is because even the panel confirmed Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference and subsequently made recommendations for Nigeria's withdrawal from the Islamic body, citing the secular nature of Nigeria, but the panel's recommendations was not implemented.

Later General Babangida set up an advisory council on Religious Affairs. The council was only advisory in nature. One was not surprised that this council was not privy to General Babangida's decision to take Nigeria further down the lane of Islamization. General Babangida unilaterally made Nigeria a shareholder of the Islamic Development Bank in January 1988. Nigeria at the time of becoming a shareholder held 0.32% shares and till date Nigeria is still a shareholder of this bank.

This was followed by religious cleansing of Christian officers in 1989 by Babangida's regime, bringing in its trail some implications which are as follows;

1. It re-enacted the Muslims religious dominance of Nigeria.
2. It dislodged the Langtang Mafin with the humiliation of General Domkat Bali out of office and the removal of General Dogonyaro from command and influence;
3. It empowered General Abacha by making him chief of Defence Staff, a more elevated position than the one held by General Bali who was just Chairman Joint Chief of Staff. In spite of protest by many Christians Organisations, that fell on Babangida's deaf ears.

Socio-Economic/Cultural Impacts of Islam on Women

In the past half a century or more, women in majority of the Muslim dominated states in the northern part of Nigeria, like their counterparts in other parts of the world had witnessed the entrenchment of rigid political religious and cultural norms that have little trace of democracy, freedom and equality. This has exposed them to all forms of inhuman treatments and hardships, yet over the years they had remained docile in the face of these challenges.

Women's rights in Islamic countries most especially in the Arab world have been plagued by serious cultural and religious restrictions. Nigeria is among the countries that have not shown much improvements in this regard, as rights and privileges of the women to gender equality, access to education and political participation is still very low in Muslim dominated northern part of the country.

It was this inhuman treatment against women occasioned by Islamic culture and practices that led to the Arab spring in Maghreb Tunisia in the town of Sidi Bouzid in January, 2011, in which hundreds of thousands of unarmed women marched on the streets, shattering traditional gender norms and practices, and utilized the instrumentality of social media, internet access and mobile phones to mobilize their folks to sustain the uprising.¹⁵

Recognizing what should be the proper place of women and the girl child in our societies, and the essence of empowerment of women, Marie Beauty Dirisu quoting Malhorta A., Schuler S. and Boender, C. noted that:

Empowerment could be assessed in different dimensions namely political (knowledge and access to political system, right to vote and to be voted for and representation in local, regional and national agencies of government); economic (control over income and access to employment, access to credit, and ownership of land assets), legal (constitutional protection of rights of women, knowledge and access to legal rights and use of the judicial system to redress rights violation), Socio-cultural (freedom of movement and absence of discrimination, visibility and access to social net-works and access to educational opportunities), family and inter-personal (participation in domestic decision making, access to reproductive health services and marriage rights options, freedom from domestic violence and psychological self-esteem and sense of inclusion and entitlement).¹⁶

Going by the above analysis of A. Malhorta, S. Schuler and C. Boender as it pertains to gender equality and empowerment, majority of the girl-child and women in most

states in the northern part of Nigeria do not have access to some of these packages and privileges as demanded by the law of the land, because of Islamic culture and practices which tend to inhibit them.

Saheed Badamus Suraju observes that in the North-West of Nigeria, over 70% of the women are unable to read and work compared to over 9% in the South-East. Majority of the girls have dropped out of school either because of financial incapability of their parents who can only spend on the male gender which would fetch them returns or because of sexual harassment on the part of the male teachers in the schools with shortage of female teachers.¹⁷

Therefore if the islamization of Nigeria as intended by Babangida's decision in 1986 succeeds, then it means that all parts of Nigeria and all Nigerian citizens no matter their faith would be plunge into a similar mess. There is therefore an urgent need to reverse this embarrassing trend in the affected areas, and also it is a wakeup call on the government of the day to stop any plan or attempt to Islamize the country as it will not end well, because Nigeria apart from being a multi-ethnic and religious nationality, constitutionally is a secular state.

Nigeria's Membership of OIC and Islamic Banking

Islamic banking was first introduced into Nigeria in 1963 when the Muslim congress established the Al-Barakan Microfinance Bank with Dr. Abdul Aakeem Mobelaji as its Chairman. One major reason for the establishment of this bank was to make provision for alternative microcredit products for the less privileged members of the society who had made consistent demands for this in the past.

Olukoshi A. in Gabriel O. Olusanya and R.A. Akindele noted that the OIC has as one of its aims the promotion of economic co-operation among its members and given that the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) one of the associated institutions of OIC extends interest free loan to its clients, it was thought that Nigeria should seek ways of taking advantage of that facility. As at December, 1979, the IDB had approved \$943.32 million in interest-free loans covering 114 projects in 30 member countries of OIC. Babangida and his men had justified their taking Nigeria to OIC on the basis of exploring all possible means or avenues including the Islamic bank interest-free loans to salvage the Nigerian economy which was at its lowest ebb by the time he came to power in 1983.¹⁸

However, the idea of establishing Islamic Banking and making it a state issue gained ground by the time General Babangida registered Nigeria as full member of OIC, with full paraphernalia of the organisation. In any case, the controversy surrounding its establishment which now made it a state issue arose in 2011 when Sanusi Lamido Sanusi became the Central Bank Governor and attempted to introduce sharia in the operation of Islamic Banking system.

The membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) and Islamic banking operation is not limited nor peculiar to Nigeria alone, neither is the country the only with predominant non-Muslim populations that registered with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Nations like Republic of Benin and Cameroun are good

examples. Islamic banking as a non-interests financial system is not restricted to Muslims alone and is operated in many parts of the world, even in Africa. According to B.A. Akinteriwa, alongside with the African Development Banks, the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) was established in 1975 by twenty-two member states of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to promote co-operation among South-South Countries. The IDB currently has fifty-seven member states, twenty-seven of which are in Africa, and the legal operational conditions for the bank vary from one country to the other.¹⁹

In any case, the problem with Islamic banking in Nigeria and opposition to its operation has originated from the antagonistic posture of the proponents of the two religions (Islam and Christianity), and the dividing role religion had often played in the past which in turn has created deep-rooted suspicion among the predominantly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south. K. Whyte observed that religion begets the desire for Islamic banking in Nigeria, that the people of non-Muslim faith interpreted different motivations to the desire, especially beyond economic considerations as General Babangida's administration made Nigerians to believe. The interpretation by the non-Muslims was largely anchored on the constitution, thus bringing in the issue of politics to religion.²⁰

The Christians and other opponents of the Islamic banking in Nigeria are of the view that the establishment of Islamic banking is nothing more than another way of making Nigeria an Islamic state, contrary to the secularity provided for in the nation's constitution of 1999. This fear is more so when the idea and move is spearheaded by some ardent Muslim scholars like the Former Central Bank of Nigeria Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who was reported to have said that Islamic banking project would be "Sharia Compliant". The then CBN governor is a grandson of the Emir of Kano and holds a Masters degree in sharia from Sudan. To him, Islamic Banking is a constitutional right and duty of all Muslims.²¹ This explains why Sanusi was deeply committed towards ensuring that Islamic banking was promptly put in place during his tenure as Central Bank of Nigeria Governor. The general feelings and fears of the Christians in Nigeria has been captured by the Bishop David Bakare of the Kaduna State chapter of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) who argued that if the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, had come up with an Islamic Banking agenda as a religious leader, it would have made a better sense than as a government official. Sanusi should come out and tell the nation whose errand he is running and for whom he speaks, whether he speaks for himself, Islam or government of Nigeria.²² On the other hand, P.E. Iroegbu in B.A. Akinteriwa sees the introduction of Islamic banking:

As a continuation of government efforts to rebrand Nigeria from a very dishonest perspective... There is something fundamentally wrong with using religion to play monetary and banking policy politics in Nigeria... why is the role of the clergy, ordained persons, Imams, charged to minister to their followers in the mosques being taken over by the CBN? There is an underlying critical religious agenda that is

making the public nervous and therefore traumatized about the move to establish and force Islamic banking on Nigeria...²³

To this scholar therefore, the former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor was seeking to use his office to Islamize Nigeria. The fear of non-Muslims, over the plot to use Islamic Banking as a stepping stone to Islamize the country is also based on the posture and public utterances of some Islamic leaders who had publicly declared that anything short of establishing Islamic banking system in Nigeria would compel Muslims to go to war. For instance, Prof. K. Azogu of Federal University of Technology, Yola, while responding to questions from the researcher noted that Alhaji Datti Ahmed, an influential member of the Supreme Council of Sharia had said that Muslims would go to war if Islamic banking was not allowed in the country.²⁴ Such unguided statements and utterances from people who occupy such dignified positions in a constitutionally recognized secular state explains the fear and suspicions of the non-Muslims who believe that one of the main objective of Islamic banking is to assist in the struggle to make Nigeria a non-secular state contrary to the constitution of the country and must therefore be resisted by all means. The question of Islamic banking being sharia compliant implies that non-Muslims who may wish to benefit from the banking project may likely fall to its traps. From every indication therefore, the controversy over the registration of Nigeria in OIC and the Islamic Banking may not actually be about the viability of the banks and the extent to which Islamic banking could assist national economic growth and development, but it is all about the suspicion and controversy surrounding the intention to establish Islamic banking in Nigeria, contrary to the constitution, which prohibits any form of state religion. The provision of secularity in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, therefore forms a major dynamics, and perhaps the political question around which all other dynamics resolves.

Conclusion

Major General Ike Nwachukwu who replaced Prof. B. Akinyemi in the cabinet reshuffle of 1987 adopted Economic Diplomacy which was occasioned by the need to attend to pressing needs of Nigerians who were confronted with serious domestic economic crisis and international isolation.

It was in order to address and arrest this economic crisis in line with the new Economic Diplomacy that Babangida decided to change Nigeria's observer status within the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) to full membership, so as to benefit from the Islamic banking interest free loan facility, an option which was rejected by regimes before him. This contentious decision and action of General Babangida generated heated arguments between the Muslims and non Muslims as to the constitutionality of taking a secular state to OIC. This has left a big crack on the unity of the country ever since. The non Muslims within the country had accused the Muslim leaders of trying to Islamize Nigeria, giving advantage to one religion over the others in an assumed secular state.

Although the fears and suspicions of non Muslims, Christians and other religious groups over the alleged plan to Islamize Nigeria is attributed to the activities, actions

and utterances of some Muslims leaders, scholars and Boko Haram insurgent groups within the country. Also some northern Muslim governors had attempted to make Sharia a state law in some states of the federation, as exemplified by the action of the Former Governor of Zamfara State Sani Yerima, under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration who officially announced and introduced Sharia as a state law.

It is pertinent to note at this stage that the problem of Nigeria is not one of Christians versus Muslims or Muslims versus Christians, neither is it that of North versus South or South versus North, rather than focusing on the above, the problem of Nigeria is both religious and ideological, that is the agenda to Islamize Nigeria by the northern oligarchy. It is simply a conflict between democracy versus sharia. Nigeria as a democratic country is under the invasion of sharia ideology which in any case was instituted by General Babangida's decision to register Nigeria as a full member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference in 1986.

The socio-cultural implication remains that the obvious discrimination against the girl-child and women prevalent in the northern part of Nigeria may likely be exported to other parts of the country if Nigeria is fully islamized. The offer of loan by the Islamic Bank which General Babangida gave as the major reason for taking Nigeria to OIC made the loan sharia compliant, that is attaching Islamist principles as a condition to receive the loan even by non-Muslims. It is therefore pertinent to note that every other problem rocking the country presently has its origin from the attempt to Islamize the country from behind. Every country in the world derives its identity and system of governance from its national ideology. Nigeria is a democratic country under common law but in 1999 the military junta smuggled in Sharia Law into the 1999 constitution, thereby placing Nigeria under two conflicting political ideologies.

This work is of the view that Nigeria is a secular state and should be treated as such. The constitution stated clearly that no religion should be made a state religion. Therefore, in providing solutions to the security challenges and other burning issues in the country, government at all levels should address the conflict between Democracy and Sharia. Nigeria is a democratic country under Common Law as recognised by the Nigerian constitution. Sharia Law should only apply to the citizens of countries that recognise Islam as their state religion, to allow true democracy and freedom of worship. The general impression of most non Muslims rightly is that the Federal Government of Nigeria has been aiding and abetting the imposition of Islamic law (Sharia) on all Nigerian, contrary to the spirit and provision of the constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. This calls for caution if the continued existence of Nigeria as one entity is still desirable.

ENDNOTES

¹Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Section 10, p.6

²S. Eyoboka, "It is impossible to Islamize or Christianize Nigeria, says Archbishop Kaigama". Sunday Vanguard Newspaper, August 11, 2019, pp.8-10

³Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria section 10, p.6

⁴A. C. Anyanwu, Lecturer and Foreign Policy Analyst, Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. Interviewed on 26th of January, 2021

⁵O. A. Eke, *Globalization Challenges and Nigerian Foreign Policy: Emerging Issues in the Formulation and Conduct of Nigerian Foreign Policy*, Abakiliki: Willy Rose and Apple Seed Publishing Company, 2009, p.168

⁶A. Olukoshi, "The Long Road to Fez: An Examination of Nigerias decision to become a full member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference". In Gabriel O. Olusanya and R.A. Akindele, *The Structure and Processes of Foreign Policy Making and Implementation in Nigeria, 1960-1990* (ed.). Ibadan: Vantage Publishers International Limited. pp.497-498

⁷A. Olukoshi, p.494

⁸M.H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993, p.125

⁹M.H. Kukah p.217

¹⁰M.H. Kukah, p.218

¹¹O. Omoniyi, "Nigeria History with the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC)" Article of Naralane and Forum, August 2, 2018 <https://www.p.19> Maralane.com.

¹²M.H. Kukah, p.218

¹³E.A. Obi, *Fundamentals of Nigeria's Foreign Policy. A Study on the Role of National Interest in Foreign Policy Making*. Onitsha: Abbot Communications Ltd., 2006, p.193

¹⁴M.H. Kukah, p.233

¹⁵M.B. Dirisu in Bola A. Akinterinwa, *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.37, No. 2, May - August 2011. pp.137-138

¹⁶A. Malhorja, S. Schuler and C. Boender, "Measuring Women's empowerment as a variable in International Development". World Bank Gender and Development Group Background Paper, 2002. pp.142-143

¹⁷S. Badamus, "An Islamic Perspective on Gender Issues and Women's Right in Nigeria", *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, Vol. 4, June, 2016. p.135

¹⁸A. Olukoshi, p.499

¹⁹B.A. Akinterinwa, *Islamic Banking in Nigeria: Dynamics, Politics and Implications*. *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 38, No. 1 January-April, 2012 p.10

²⁰K. Whyte, Retired Foreign Affairs Ministry Staff. Interviewed at Abonema Rivers State on 21 February, 2021

²¹B.A. Akinterinwa, p.8

²²B.A. Akinterinwa, p.13

²³B.A. Akinterinwa, p.15

²⁴K. Azuogu, Professor of Science, Federal University of Technology, Yola. Interviewed on 26February, 2021