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Original scientific paper
UDC 322(669)
323:28:27(669)

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NIGERIA: THE PARADOX OF A SECULAR STATE

Abstract

By its virtue of not declaring any religion as state religion, the Constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria has been adjudged by many to be temporal, and Nigeria, a secular state. However, the level at which religion influences governance and *vice versa* has begged for the question, is Nigeria really a secular state? In this paper, we attempt an interrogation into the origins and radicalization of religiosity in Nigeria's profanity. Adopting the Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* model as a framework, the work argues that the two preponderant religions – Islam and Christianity – have been in a serious struggle to influence the outlook, maintain *status quo* or exert control over the various levels of governments in Nigeria. The implication, the work has discovered, is that efforts by the government to appease these religious forces by maintaining equilibrium has culminated in institutional and structural reforms that have transformed the country's political orientation, by action, to a theocratic diarchy amidst the aura of secularism. There is, therefore, a need for nomenclature revision.

Keywords: Secularism, religion, theocratic diarchy, Christianity, Islam, Clash of civilization

Introduction

The foundation of the modern state system cannot be discussed without the mentioning of the various roles religion played in shaping it.³ Be it Christian-

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- 3 See: Natalie Goldstein, *Religion and the State*, Infobase Publishing, New York, 2010.

ity or Islam, the contemporary world has benefited quite a lot from the dynamics and interplay which ensued within religious adherents and between adherents and the state. For instance, Dale T. Irvin has demonstrated how Emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire embraced Christianity in the 4th century AD and coveted it as state apparatus “because he saw its ability to unify people across social, cultural, and geographical distances”.⁴ That relationship had remained enduring until the aftermath of the Thirty Years War in 1648. The interplay between Christianity and the Roman Empire later intertwined the fate of both entities, making it highly impossible to distinguish the post-4th-century heritage of the former from the latter. Today, the Roman culture is contagious with Christianity which, in the words of Samuel P. Huntington, “is historically the single most important characteristic of Western civilization”.⁵

The history of Islam, on the other hand, is synonymous with the history of theocratic centralization that sprouted in the 7th-century Arab world. Through its caliphate system, a superstructure was created for the foundation, Islam, to thrive. In an attempt to comparatively stress the nexus between some religions and politics, Huntington had observed that: Only in Hindu civilization were religion and politics also so distinctly separated... In Islam, God is Caesar; in China and Japan, Caesar is God; in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar’s junior partner”.⁶

Though pressures from the West had led to the unbundling of Islamic empires towards the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the drive for modernization and separation of religion from politics in the Islamic world was also brewing from within. While the reforms of Egyptian Pashas remain significant, Umut Azak⁷ has explained the feats of Kemal Ataturk at achieving a modern and secular Turkish state.

As religion remains the “opium of the people”, to borrow from the words of Karl Marx, secularism is considered a threat, and even so, in a multi-religious society. Erick Kaufmann has situated this more frankly when he submitted that “fundamentalism is a modern response to the threat of secularism”.⁸ Succinctly, only a few violent conflicts in today’s world can be dissociated from an attempt by a religious people to either fight for or against secularism or more broadly, influence political decisions within the state they operate. Nigeria has had a fair share in this religio-political impasse. The fact that about 96% of its total population are either of the Islamic or Christian orientations⁹ and the fact that the Muslims in Nigeria are projected to grow to a solid majority of Nigeria’s population (60%)

4 Dale Irvin, “Specters of a New Ecumenism, In Search of a Church ‘Out of Joint’”, in: *Religion, Authority, and the State: From Constantine to the Contemporary Words*, Lefebure Leo (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2016, p. 8.

5 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996, p. 70.

6 Ibidem.

7 Umut Azak, *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London, 2010, pp. 38-57.

8 Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth? Demographics and Politics in the Twenty-first Century*, Profile Books, London, 2010.

9 See: *Yearbook of International Religious Demography 2018*, Brian Grim J., et al, (eds.), Brill, Leiden, 2018.

by 2060¹⁰ has seen the former and latter fighting vociferously to checkmate the influence of each other on government – a situation that culminated in what we have described as a theocratic diarchy.

In this work, we have attempted an explication into the origins and radicalization of religiosity in Nigeria's secularism, to point out the struggle for dominance and control of state policies by the two dominant religions of Islam and Christianity. In subsequent headings, we have conceptualized the keyword, secularism. We have also adopted the *Clash of Civilization* model to justify and guide our analysis. In this work also, we have discussed British colonial policies as the root of Nigeria's theocratic diarchy. Two epochs of civilizational clashes have been examined with salient questions raised to dispute Nigeria's supposed secular status.

Conceptual Clarification: Secularism and Secular State

The idea of secularism is a product of centuries of dialectics between religion and apostles of reason, otherwise christened, science¹¹. The cerebral works and discourses of Western thinkers such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), David Hume (1711-1776), Friederich Hegel (1770-1831), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Karl Marx (1818-1883), Auguste Comte (1830-1846), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) *et al.* were repercussive in reshaping the idea and concept of "God" with a ripple effect that transcended the relationship between God, its representatives on earth, and the state.¹² The questioning of religion, by the above scholars led to the emergence of schools of thought that the extermination of religion in the near future was ineludible. Summarizing this position, Rob Warner explained that secularization: was therefore understood to be both a process of social change, closely intertwined with the evolution of the modern world, and also a theory of increasing religious marginalization not only descriptive of present and past transitions but predictive of a future society where religion would have little or no public influence, social utility or plausible claim to a revelatory authority that in any sense transcended reason. On its long march to obscurity and eventual extinction, religion would retreat from the public to the private, from universal truth to personal conviction, from the all-embracing life framework to the optional, spiritual lifestyle accessory. Increasingly eliminated from the corridors of power and cultural influence, the resilient residues of religion would have to make do increasingly with coloniz-

10 Conrad Hackett and Michael Lipka, *The Demographic Factors that Make Islam the World's Fastest-growing Major Religious Group, The Religious and Ethnic Future of Europe*, Vol. 22, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, 2018, p. 13.

11 See: *The Sources of Secularism: Enlightenment and Beyond*, Anna Tomaszewska and Hasse Hamalainen Hasse (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland, 2017.

12 Rob Warner Rob, *Secularization and Its Discontents*, Continuum, London, 2010, pp. 14-21.

ing the margins of the late modern world.¹³

The idea of secularism, therefore, lies in the parting of ways between the age-long intercourse and romance between religion and state politics. Charles Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* observed this when he distinguished among three different forms of secularity: “secularity 1” and “secularity 2” designating the disappearance of religion from public spaces and declining belief and practice, respectively, while “secularity 3” indicates a shift “from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one which it is understood to be one option among others.”¹⁴ Taylor’s first definition of secularism is in tandem with the postulation of Jose Casanova who sees secularism, *inter alia*, in terms of “different normative models of legal-constitutional separation of the secular state and religion...or in terms of the different models of practical differentiation among law, morality, and religion, and so on.”¹⁵ As a statecraft principle, Casanova crafts secularism to encapsulate: some principle of separation between religious and political authority, either for the sake of the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis each and all religions, or for the sake of protecting the freedom of conscience of each individual, or for the sake of facilitating the equal access of all citizens, religious as well as nonreligious, to democratic participation. Such a statecraft doctrine neither presupposes nor needs to entail any substantive “theory”, positive or negative, of “religion”.¹⁶

Scholarly opinion, assembled by Erin K. Wilson, exists on typologies of secularism with the dominant two being *laïcité* (assertive) and Judeo-Christian (passive) secularisms.¹⁷ While *laïcité* or assertive secularism actively advocates the total exclusion of religion from the public realm, Judeo-Christian or passive secularism “does not attempt to expel religion from public life...but rather ‘requires that the secular state play a “passive” role in avoiding the establishment of any religions, allowing for the public visibility of religion” ...“Both types of secularism aim at some level to control or limit the presence of religion in politics and public life”.¹⁸

A secular state, therefore, Ahmed Kuru, has noted, is that which “excludes religion from the public sphere and plays an “assertive” role as the agent of a social engineering project that confines religion to the private domain”¹⁹. The

13 Ibidem, pp. 2-3.

14 Quoted from: Arvind-Pal S. Mandair and Markus Dressler, “Introduction: Modernity, Religion-Making, and the Postsecular”, in: *Secularism and Religion-Making*, Mandair Arvind-Pal S. & Dressler Markus (eds.), Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 5-6.

15 Jose Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms”, in: *Rethinking Secularism*, Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan Van Antwerpen, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 55.

16 Ibidem, p. 66.

17 Erin K. Wilson, *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, 2012, p. 30.

18 Ibidem, pp. 30-31.

19 Ahmed T. Kuru, *Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies Towards Religion*, *World Politics*, Vol. 59, No. 4, 2007, pp. 568-594, quoted from: Erin K. Wilson, *After Secularism: Rethinking Religion in Global Politics*... p. 30.

motivation for secularism lies in “the importance of the state maintaining a neutrality and equal distance from each religion”, and “the need to turn one’s focus away from just religion to acknowledging and respecting wider forms of cultural diversity and a variety of intellectual positions, including non-religious ones”.²⁰

Secularism, we infer, is not an in-between concept or that which can be mutated to fit some peculiar socio-political vagaries. A state is either secular or religious (theocratic). Though there might be a thin line between the aforementioned, the coordinates are palpable enough to draw a divide between that which is assertive, passive or “in-between”. While the “in-between” remains problematic, we drive this work on the precept of secularism as a political ideology based on the seclusion of a state from the conspicuous influence of religions.

Theoretical Framework – Clash of Civilizations

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Francis Fukuyama, in his seminal work titled “The End of History”, argued that liberal democracy has emerged triumphant against rival ideologies such as hereditary monarchy, fascism, and communism as “the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolution and the final form of human government, and as such constitutes the end of history”.²¹ This instigated counter-narratives such as Massimo de Angelis’ *The Beginning of History*,²² Robert Kagan’s *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*,²³ among others. The most interesting of such counter-narratives was Samuel P. Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilization?”.

Huntington’s “Clash of Civilization?” thesis refutes the claims that ideology or resources would constitute the fundamental sources of conflict in the post-Cold War order. According to him: The great divisions among mankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation-states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.²⁴ To Huntington, civilization defines the highest grouping of peoples and the broadest level of cultural identity and encapsulates variables such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions and subjective self-identification of people. Civilization, he explained, crisscrosses boundaries, and people can define and redefine their civilizational identities. He identified eight (8) civilizations to be in existence, including Western and Islamic civilizations. Accordingly, civilizations would clash because their differences are not just

20 Akeel Bilgrami, *Secularism, Identity, and Enchantment*, Harvard University Press, 2014, p. 10.

21 Quoted from: Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, The Free Press, New York, 1992, p. xi.

22 Massimo Angelis, *The Beginning of History: Value Struggles and Global Capital*, Pluto Press, London, 2007.

23 Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2008.

24 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993, p. 22.

real but basic, with increasing interactions and consciousness as escalating factors; economic modernization and the increasing separation of people from pre-meal local identities; the easy mutability and compromise of cultural identity; among others.²⁵

To this extent, people of different civilizations would clash because they: have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents, and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.²⁶ Interestingly, he identified religion, even more than ethnicity, to be the most conspicuous emblem, with sharp and exclusive discriminatory capacity among peoples of disparate civilizations.²⁷ Of these civilizations, the fault line, Huntington admits, has been more obvious between the Western and Islamic civilizations. In his words, “conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1,300 years.”²⁸ And such frictions which must not necessarily be violent in nature defines the “antagonistic interaction of Arab Islamic civilization...and the political conflicts, recurring riots and communal violence between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria”, hence, “the modernization of Africa”, he argued, “and the spread of Christianity are likely to enhance the probability of violence along this fault line.”²⁹

The postulations and predictions of Samuel Huntington have all manifested. Civilizational consciousness, suspicion, and the clash between the forces of the West and the Arabs, represented by Christianity and Islam respectively, have climaxed. Policies, constitution, candidates in elections, state paraphernalia, employments, appointments, admissions into schools, public rituals, subsidies, alliances, diplomatic conducts, etc. are guided either by civilizational precepts or carefully crafted in order not to antagonize civilizations. The reality, therefore, is that Nigeria is neither a secular, nor a theocratic state but is easily pushed around by the forces of these civilizations whose relevance and self-preservation, it appears, lies in how much they register their presence in government. Can we now say that Nigeria is a theocratic diarchy? We have analyzed the ‘secularity’ of the Nigerian state in the context of this civilizational clash.

British Colonialism and the Roots of Theocratic Diarchy in Nigeria

British interest in what later became Nigeria predates the 19th century. However, its inward penetration into its interior spans some forty years linking its 1861

25 Ibidem, pp. 25-27.

26 Ibidem, p. 25.

27 Ibidem, p. 27.

28 Ibidem, p. 31.

29 Ibidem, p. 33.

annexation of Lagos and the 1903 occupation of Sokoto.³⁰ Before the British incursion, an Islamic cleric, Usman dan Fodio had, in 1804, led a successful *jihād* against the Hausa states in northern Nigeria and had successfully unified the entire region under a theocratic state of Sokoto Caliphate of which foundation was based on Islamic civilization with its attendant *shari'a* jurisprudence.³¹

Inversely, the peoples of southern Nigeria held firmly unto their decentralized traditional religion until the advent of European missionaries in the early 1840s. Thus, while early Christian mission groups such as the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Presbyterian Mission found it convenient to penetrate and proselytize in the south, it was herculean and quite daring to penetrate the north which by this time had embraced Islam and the feudal structures of its Fulani overlords. For the prospects that the north had for British trading and strategic interest, the British colonial government was ready to truncate anything that could disrupt cordiality, create tension or portray it to be against the ruling Fulani elites or subverting Islam. Ayuba Mavalla had noted that “when Lugard conquered the Sokoto Emirates in 1903, he declared that the colonialists would not interfere with the religion of the people”.³²

In his seminal treatise, *The Missionary Impact of Modern Nigeria*, Emmanuel Ayandele has documented the difficulties which Christian missionaries encountered, both in the hands of the locals and colonial agents, in their attempt to establish mission posts in the north.³³ British agents and merchants appreciated that Islam, as practiced by the Sokoto Caliphate, was indeed a civilization on its own but just that “Christian missions taught a higher form of Civilization”.³⁴ This explains the reason why the mission group to Lokoja, led by Graham Wilmot Brooke in April 1890, had to wear Muslim clothing, turban, and shoes to endear themselves to the locals.³⁵ It also explains the justification behind the admonition of Major Burdon, a Resident, that Lugard should “acknowledge the submission which Islam enjoins on all Christians and pledge the administration’s religious submission to the Sultan of Sokoto”.³⁶

The dilemma of choosing between pragmatic state interest (trade) and the advancement of British soft power (religion) was settled with the adoption of policies to placate the former. Hence, Christian missionaries were declared *persona non grata* in northern Nigeria. The fear was that, if in a situation of violent civilizational clash while proselytizing, the British government might get involved in

30 Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 85.

31 *Ibidem*, pp. 61-62.

32 Ayuba Mavalla, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the Face of Structural Violence in Northern Nigeria*, Regnum Books International, New York, 2014, p. 52.

33 See: Emmanuel A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria, 1842-1914: A Political and Social Analysis*, Longman, Green and Co. Ltd., London, 1966.

34 *Ibidem*, p. 140.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 122.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 142.

some face-saving punitive effort that might escalate the existing tensions between both civilizations. Thus, Lord Salisbury, the Foreign Secretary, addressing the Wesleyan Mission Society on June 19, 1900, averred that “you will not convert them...I think that your chances of conversion of them as proved by our experience are infinitely small, and the danger of creating great perils and producing great convulsions, and it may be bloodshed which shall be a serious and permanent obstacle to that Christian religion which we desire above all things to preach, is a danger that you must bear in mind”.³⁷

For unavoidable clash, the colonial government and the merchants conspired and enshrined “Indirect rule” system as a civilizational conflict management mechanism. Restrictions were imposed on missionaries in predominantly Muslim areas; more authority was conferred on the emirs; proficiency in Hausa, rather than academic qualification became “the sole condition for promotion of officers”; from 1910 to 1912, defaulting missionaries were expelled and sent to *Sabon gari*; and colonial agents such as Major Burdon “became a regular worshipper in the mosque on Fridays”.³⁸

When in the 1920s, colonial policies were relaxed for the establishment of schools such as Katsina Training College (1921), civilizational diffidence had become ingrained already. For instance, Zum’atu, a Muslim and poet, had cautioned that “they have brought churches to misguide/Their schools are of no use – save for old lies and confusion”.³⁹ Hence, there was an “iron curtain” and rising anti-western consciousness of which southern Nigeria was representing. This was repercussive in the statistics on the north/south educational dichotomy. According to Max Siollun: At independence [1960], Northerners accounted for just 10% of primary school enrollments, and of over one thousand students at the University of Ibadan, just over fifty were Northern. Despite the fact that Northern region constituted two-thirds of Nigeria’s landmass, the number of secondary schools in the south outnumbered those in the Northern Region by a ratio of over twenty to one.⁴⁰

Consequently, the prohibition of the missionaries from penetrating the north, it has been argued, is repercussive of the generational gap and advantage placed on the south against the north – a phenomenon that has culminated in structural violence on the Muslim north and a potent source of friction.⁴¹ The policy also, which disfavored Christianity and favored Islam, “set a future struggle between the faith communities for self-identity, over religious hegemony”.⁴² In the words of Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, the “followers and leaders of both reli-

37 Ibidem, p. 137

38 Ibidem, p. 147.

39 Muhammad S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule*, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2006, p. 212.

40 Max Siollun, *Oil, Politics and Violence: Nigeria’s Military Coup Culture (1966-1976)*, Algora Publishing, New York, 2009, p. 14.

41 Ayuba Mavalla, *Conflict Transformation: Churches in the Face of Structural Violence in Northern Nigeria*... p. 54.

42 Ibidem, p. 57.

gions were not encouraged to maintain healthy relationships, for they tended to see each other simply as antagonists or bitter rivals at best".⁴³ Britain could have left the already antithetical Northern and Southern Protectorates as independent entities or accept the suggestion of Charles Temple (colonial agent) and E. D. Morel (the Editor of *African Mail*) that "rather than have one country from the two almost polarized geopolitical areas they could be split into four or seven countries, provinces, or even confederated units".⁴⁴

The two protectorates, defined by distinct civilizations, were rather, amalgamated in 1914 as a single political entity. Political power was also technically handed, at independence, into the hands of northern Islamic elites through series of constitutional arrangements⁴⁵ and "rigging the [1960] election in favor of northern Nigerian political candidates".⁴⁶ This provided the Muslim north the opportunity to enshrine Islamic presence into the body politics of Nigeria, which it sees as an embodiment of western civilization. This has been the origin of the dialectic between what was designed to be a secular state and that which became a theocratic diarchy.

Clash of Civilizations: 1979 Constituent Assembly and its Aftermath

Part of the concessions reached between southern and northern Nigerian elites for the attainment of political independence was the relaxation of the *shari'a* jurisprudence. Nevertheless, the imperious approach of Muslims in northern Nigeria, championed by characters such as Ahmadu Bello (the powerful leader of the Northern People's Congress [NPC] and the great-grandson of Usman dan Fodio) at Islamic proselytization⁴⁷ had culminated in radical responses from its Christian counterparts. Following the declining fortunes of Islam in northern Nigeria between 1952 and 1963,⁴⁸ as well as the post-civil war climate of distrust⁴⁹, there were concerted efforts by Muslims to stir Islamic revival and this culminated in the foundation of groups such as *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (Society for the Victory of Islam [JNI]); Muslim Student Society; The Young Muslim Association of

43 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria: The Challenges of Inclusive Cultural and Religious Pluralism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2013, p. 40.

44 Ibidem, p. 28.

45 See: G. O. Olusanya, "Constitutional Developments in Nigeria 1861-1960", in: *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ikime Obaro (ed.), Heinemann Educational Books, Ibadan, 1980, pp. 518-544; Charles E. Ekpo, Interest, Diffidence, Rigidity and the Challenge of Constitutional Change – the Nigeria's Experience, *Legal Aid Oyo Journal of Legal Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2017, pp. 27-34.

46 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*. . . p. 39.

47 See: Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2016, Ch. 4.

48 According to the national census of 1952 and 1963, while the growth of Islam in the north was declining (from 73.0% to 71.8%), the growth of Christianity for the same period in the north rose from 2.7 to 9.7 percent of the total population of the region. See: Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*. . . p. 42.

49 The January 15, 1966 Coup that led to the assassination of two Muslim elites and politicians, Sir Ahmadu Bello (Sardauna of Sokoto and leader of NPC) and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa (the Prime Minister) was interpreted as a Christian upsurge led by the Igbo against the Northern Muslims. See: Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*. . . p. 117.

Nigeria; *Kungiyar Izalatu'l Bidi'a* (Association for the Removal of Innovation); etc. Sir Ahmadu Bello would never pretend about his desire to behold the complete Islamization of entire Nigeria. Indeed, the objectives of the JNI, which Ahmadu Bello co-founded with Sheikh Mahmud Abubakar Gumi, the Grand Khadi of the Northern Region, have been summarized thus: to bring all Muslims in northern Nigeria under one umbrella; to end the issuing bitterness and rancor among the different Muslim brotherhoods and sects; to effectively spread Islam among the non-Muslim northern areas, and to Islamize the entire country.⁵⁰

Being a ranking religio-political leader, Bello's disposition towards Islamization inspired the convergence of Christian groups, too, to be better positioned for the inevitable civilizational clash. The hysteria witnessed the emergence and renaissance of already existing Christian groups such as Christian Council of Nigeria; Northern Christian Association; Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); Catholic Bishop Conference of Nigeria (CBCN); among others. Each of these civilizational lines, represented by the above groups or other conduits, monitored the government and ensured that it influenced policy or engineered a counter-policy. For instance, the General Yakubu Gowon military regime (1966-1975) capitulated to the pressure from the JNI and established a pilgrim board that marked the beginning of the federal government's annual sponsorship of Muslim faithful on *hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca. The Christians too, in order not to be disadvantaged, pushed for same privilege too and were granted by the Shehu Shagari administration (1979-1984). The implication of this development, Iwuchukwu has argued, is that the religious neutrality of these administrations was grossly compromised and abused.⁵¹

As toxic and insidious as these struggles between the forces of Christianity and that of Islam were on the outlook of the Nigerian polity, religion still maintained a blurred distance from the state until late 1970. Larry Diamond, in his investigation into the collapse of Nigeria's second republic, affirmed that "religion further divided the people of Nigeria but religion cleavage was generally less significant than ethnicity and region".⁵² It was the coincidence between 1966 and 1975 which saw the assassination of a Muslim Prime Minister (Tafawa Balewa [1960-1966]) being replaced by a Christian (Aguyi Ironsi [January – July, 1966]) whose assassination too culminated in the emergence of another Christian (Yakubu Gowon [1966-1975]) who was finally deposed by a Muslim (Murtala Muhammed [1975-1976]) who was brutally murdered by some Christian soldiers and paved way for the emergence of another Christian (Olusegun Obasanjo [1976-1979]) as head of state, that created the hysteria which played out in the buildup to the 1979 Constitution.

50 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*... p. 47.

51 Ibidem, p. 56.

52 Larry Diamond, *Class, Ethnicity and Democracy in Nigeria: The Failure of the First Republic*, The Macmillan Press Ltd., Houndmills, 1988, pp. 24-25.

It was in this tension and exuberance that representatives of the various civilizations approached the Constituent Assembly – a body that was responsible for the drafting of the 1979 Constitution. Here, the effort by the agents of Western civilization (Christians) to declare Nigeria a ‘secular state’ met an unwholesome resistance by representatives of Islamic civilization who did not just oppose that clause, but insisted on the inclusion of *shari’a* jurisprudence⁵³ into the proposed constitution. The basis of their demand was on the presupposition that secularism and everything it represents is Western and therefore, *shari’a* is a veritable ingredient in achieving some kind of equilibrium between what was Occidental and that which was Oriental in the political physiognomy of the Nigerian state. In fact, many Muslims believed that “sharia law should not be less important than the constitution”.⁵⁴ Ladi Hamalai *et al.* have captured this friction aptly, thus: ... efforts to entrench the notion of secularity in the 1979 Constitution met with stiff opposition from northern Muslims who argued that the notion of secularity was Judeo-Christian in origin. The compromise that was achieved in the context of stalled deliberations in the 1977–1978 Constituent Assembly was the replacement of a ‘secular’ state with the formulation that there shall be ‘no state religion’. This veiled acceptance of secularity was retained in the 1999 Constitution.⁵⁵

The above milieu marked the beginning of brazen government’s susceptibility to religious manipulations and dilemma in its response to civilizational pressure from antagonizing camps – a situation which amplified tension between the two civilizations. Situations become more dicey and confrontational following the decision by General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993) to register Nigeria as a full member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986. The *shari’a* cum OIC politics were perceived by Christians as ‘double’ onslaught which should not be ignored. There were fears of a possible Islamization – a concept which depicts victory over western civilization – by Christians, especially in northern Nigeria. In respect to the *shari’a* proposal, Marinus Iwuchukwu quoted the tirade from a northern Christian, Wilson Sabiya of Gongola State thus: The issue, put bluntly, is the DECLARATION OF ISLAM AS STATE RELIGION to be ENFORCED, PROPAGATED and MAINTAINED BY THE STATE at the expense of non-Muslim taxpayers. It is in this light do we understand some state Government systematic confiscation of Church Institutions, the Inauguration of Pilgrims Welfare Boards, appointment of Grand Khadis, the establishment of only Islamic Institutions in some of our universities, the appointment of only Islamic teachers in many of our primary and

53 *Shari’a* has been defined as “the complete Universal code of conduct drawn by the creator, Allah, through his Messenger, Muhammad, to mankind, detailing the religious, political, economic, social, intellectual and legal systems. It is meant for universal application, covering the entire spectrum of life, prescribing what is lawful (*halal*) and proscribing what is unlawful (*haram*)”. See: Nnamani Ogbu O., Is Nigeria a Secular State? Law Human Rights and Religion in Context, *The International Human Rights Review*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 2014, p. 1.

54 Douglas A. Phillips, *Nigeria*, Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 59.

55 Ladi Hamalai, Samuel Egwu, Shola J. Omotola, *Nigeria’s 2015 General Elections Continuity and Change in Electoral Democracy*, Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland, 2017, p. 29; Also see: Olufemi Vaughan, *Religion and the Making of Nigeria*... pp. 121-122.

post-primary institutions, all paid and maintained by the State at the expense of non-Muslims.⁵⁶ Quoting Ogbu Kalu, Akintunde E. Akinade captures the perturbing climate of fear and desperation for survival by Christian groups with the following admonition: the bible advises that when someone slaps you, you should turn the other cheek. When he slaps you for the second time, the bible is silent; so you should now do everything possible to ensure that your cheek is intact for preaching the gospel of the kingdom.⁵⁷

Consequently, the coincidental growth of Pentecostal and charismatic movements and the OIC debate, Ousmane Kane argued, shaped the nature of civilizational clash in Nigeria between the 1980s and early 1990s.⁵⁸ These dynamics escalated in the form of bitter and “regular violent clashes and riots [which] pitted Muslims against Christians in a number of northern states”.⁵⁹ Religion, to borrow from the words of Richard Bourne, henceforth became “a tool for anger rather than harmony”⁶⁰ even as each civilization seek to position itself as a major shareholder in negotiating the trajectories of the Nigerian political project.

Strategies utilized were not limited to activism, violent clashes and lobbying. From the 1980s onward, Pentecostal and charismatic Christian figures joined active politics to maintain equilibrium from the ‘inside’. A Baptist minister, for instance, was elected as a local government chairman in Kaduna city in 1988 as the choice of the Pentecostal Christians. Between 1991 and 1993, two leading northern charismatic Christians, S. S. Salifu and Professor Jerry Gana, contested the primaries of the presidential election. During the same period, an evangelical pastor, Rev. Jolly Nyame, was the first executive governor of Taraba state. He went on to hold the same executive position for two more terms (from 1999 to 2007). This trend continued with a Pentecostal pastor, Chris Okotie, establishing a political party and contesting under his party’s platform as a presidential candidate in the 2003 and 2007 elections.⁶¹ Today, it is a “law” in the “unwritten constitution” of Nigeria that for every election and appointment, a religious balance must somehow be attained.

Clash of Civilizations: 1999 Constitution, *Shari’a* Politics, and its Aftermath

One of the unsung achievements of late General Sani Abacha is the ability of his autocracy (1993-1998) to, through cruelty, deter the various ethnic and civi-

56 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*. . . p. 61.

57 Akintunde Akinade, *Christian Responses to Islam in Nigeria: A Contextual Study of Ambivalent Encounters*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014, pp. 126-127.

58 Ousmane Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A Study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition*, Brill, Leiden, 2003, p. 178.

59 Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, The University of Chicago Press, 2009, p. 224.

60 Richard Bourne, *A New History of a Turbulent Century*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 2015, p. 269.

61 Marinus C. Iwuchukwu, *Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Postcolonial Northern Nigeria*. . . pp. 80-81.

lizational clashes that could have fractured the Nigerian state. His demise paved the way for the emergence of a regime whose greatest task was crafting a constitution that would usher in a civilian government. It should be noted that Christianity and Islam never ceased to “draw followers into a common culture, but also urged them to remain combative and exclusive”.⁶² Being a Muslim and perhaps, subscribing to the school of thought that secularism is synonymous with Western civilization, the Abdulsalami Abubakar regime concocted a constitution from Decree No. 24 (5th May, 1999) which made Nigeria neither a secular nor a theocratic state⁶³. It identified and recognized Nigeria as a State of religions but with the injunction that “the Government of the Federation or of the State shall not adopt any religion as State religion”.⁶⁴

Consequently, the religious ingredients of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have generated a plethora of scholarly attention and debates to deny or magnify the contradictions in its ‘decorated’ secularity. There are basically two lines of arguments – those who summarily argue that the Constitution is secular (deniers) and those who identify but fault its secularism (critics). The first school has as its apostle, scholars such as Pius O. Abioje, who do not just hold that Nigeria is a secular state, but as well argues that Nigeria’s perennial problem is a culmination of the failure of the religio-political leaders to respect “the secularity status of the country”.⁶⁵ Mark A. Iruayenama, another disciple, posits that “Nigeria is constitutionally a secular country” dominated by religious citizens.⁶⁶ Yet still, Momoh Yesufu avers that “Nigeria is a secular state” capable of being impacted by religion.⁶⁷ The unique thing about the deniers’ line of argument is the terse premises it utilizes for seeming absolute conclusions.

On the other hand, critics find it problematic to brazenly qualify Nigeria as a secular State. Insa Nolte *et al.*, as critics, believe the Nigeria’s secular appellation is inappropriate since “religious politics revolve around both the sacred texts and historical practices of the faith communities and the constitution and its provisions”.⁶⁸ Another critic, Akinwunmi-Othman, summarizes the contradictions for his reservations thus: Section 38(1) of the 1999 Constitution provides for freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The structure of section 38 followed the general pattern of recognized rights in Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution.

62 Nurudeen M. Akinwunmi-Othman, *Globalization, and Africa’s Transition to Constitutional Rule: Socio-Political Developments in Nigeria*, Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland, 2017, p. 68.

63 See: “Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Promulgation)”, No. 24, 1999.

64 *Ibidem*, Part II (10).

65 Pius O. Abioje, *Secularization and the Imperative of Nigeria’s Secularity*, *Journal of Humanities and Social Science (JHSS)*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2013, pp. 31-37.

66 Mark A. Iruayenama, *Situational Influences of Religious VS. Secular Symbols on Cognition in Nigeria*, Ph. D. dissertation, Brunel University, London, 2016, p. i.

67 Momoh L. Yesufu, *The Impact of Religion on a Secular State: The Nigerian Experience*, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, University of South Africa, 2016, pp. 1-11.

68 Insa Nolte, Nathaniel Danjibo and Abubakar Oladejo, *Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria*, *Religion and Development Working Paper*, Vol. 39, 2009, p. 16.

This is the grant of individual entitlements and permissible derogations based on individual and group considerations; Section 38(1) contained the primary right of protecting the freedom of religion. Several secondary rights reinforce the enjoyment of the freedom of religion as well. These are freedom of association protected by section 40, the right to private and family life protected by section 37, the right to freedom of expression protected by section 39, and the right to freedom of movement protected by section 41. To reinforce this and to ensure that the entitlements to these rights are meaningful, section 42 of the 1999 Constitution provides that 'no person shall be discriminated against on the basis of his or her religion'. While on the one hand, this ensured that people could freely embrace any religion of their choice, it further underscored the equality of all religions. The right to freedom of religion is also to be enjoyed in a context in which no religion is to be preferred above others; Thus, section 10 of the 1999 Constitution provides that the government of the federation or of a state shall not adopt any religion as state religion. It must be noted too that the right to freedom of religion contained in section 38 is not absolute. Similarly, the provisions of section 10 of the same constitution prohibited any state or the federal government from adopting a state religion.⁶⁹

He, therefore, concludes that Nigeria is not completely a secular state - that religion has a place in Nigeria's public and political life.⁷⁰ Furthermore, Osita N. Ogbu has called attention to Sections 262 and 277 of the constitution which empower any state that wants to establish a *Shari'a* Court of Appeal and Section 237 (2) (b) requiring that not less than three members of the court of appeal should be persons learned in Islamic personal law, but maintained that if Section 10 (which prohibits adoption of state religion) of the constitution is read with other sections that enshrine human rights (Section 38[1]), supremacy of the constitution (Section 1) and sovereignty of the people and the nation (Section 14[2](a)), "then the plausible conclusion is that Nigeria is a secular state".⁷¹

The bone of contention has been the politics of *Shari'a*. As Nigerian Christians often deny that secularism, by default, is a product of Western civilization, it faults their views on the attempts by Muslims to register their presence in the body politics of Nigeria, through the politics of *Shari'a*. Christian O. Ele, for instance, queried the justification behind the fact that: The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria mentioned Sharia 73 times, Grand Khadi 54 times, Islam 28 times, Muslims 10 times and there is no single mention of Christ, Christian, Christianity or Church... These gaps... in the Constitution were calculated... to give the mischievous impression that Nigeria is an Islamic Country.⁷²

69 Nurudeen M. Akinwunmi-Othman, *Globalization and Africa's Transition to Constitutional Rule*. . . p. 127.

70 Ibidem, p. 128.

71 Nnamani Ogbu O., *Is Nigeria a Secular State? Law Human Rights and Religion in Context*. . . pp. 1-22.

72 Christian O. Ele, *Islamization of Nigeria: Implication for sustainable Peace*, *International Journal of Social Science and English Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2018, p. 17.

The hysteria of Islamization became very pervasive following the implementation of the *Shari'a* jurisprudence in Zamfara in 1999 by the then governor, Alhaji Ahmed Sani Yerima. Yerima had made *Shari'a* a vital part of his campaign manifesto and had ridden through its opium to emerge victorious. This wildfire of *Shari'a* spread so fast that it engulfed almost all the northern states – a development that its progenitor, Alhaji Yerima, admitted as being “politically motivated and intended to allow governors to be re-elected to office”.⁷³ Ruth Marshall has argued that the push for a *Shari'a* court was a means of negotiating Muslims’ position and influence in the construction of the nation-state and the maintenance of northern political domination.⁷⁴ Benson Igboin has exhaustively analyzed the response of the then president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, who in a circumscribed and diplomatic phrase confirmed that the development was a ‘political sharia’ not ‘real sharia’ and would ‘soon fizzle out’.⁷⁵ Asides contradicting himself on several occasions, as traced by Benson Igboin, President Obasanjo, in the wake of the 1999 *Shari'a* politics brought another dimension into the arguments on Nigeria’s secular status when he mentioned that “we [Nigeria] are not a secular state but a multi-religious state”.⁷⁶ This was a political response to religio-political tension with the sole aim of placating both ends of the civilizational divides.

The wake of the 1999 *Shari'a* politics is associated with the proliferation of radical teaching that culminated in Islamic fundamentalism – a striking reaction by forces of Islamic civilization against supposed corruption by western “*boko*” which was found to be “*haram*”.⁷⁷ It also fanned the embers of sectarian conflicts that rubbed politics with piety. For instance, the 2002 Miss World riots did not just show how ingrained religion has penetrated the fibers of the Nigerian environment but how much it has infiltrated the government. With the phrase “What would Mohammed think? He would probably have chosen a wife from them”, the *This Day* journalist, Isioma Daniel, was accused of blaspheming the Prophet. Though she was not a Muslim, the Zamfara State government, through its spokesperson, Aliyu Shinkafi (deputy governor), had declared a *fatwa* against her with the words “Like Salman Rushdie, the blood of Isioma Daniel can be shed. It is abiding on all Muslims wherever they are to consider the killing of the writer as a religious duty”.⁷⁸ The kerfuffle did not end there as a serving Minister of Abuja,

73 Gunnar J. Weimann, *Islamic Criminal Law in Northern Nigeria: Politics, Religion and Judicial Practice*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010, p. 16.

74 Ruth Marshall, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* . . . p. 224.

75 Benson O. Igboin, ‘The President of Nigeria Has No Final Say’: Sharia Law Controversies and Implications for Nigeria, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2014, p. 277.

76 *Ibidem*, p. 278.

77 See: Edlyne E. Anugwom, *The Boko Haram Insurgence in Nigeria: Perspectives from Within*, Palgrave Macmillan, Switzerland, 2019; Charles Ekpo, *et al.*, Towards Containing Terrorism in North-East Nigeria: A Befitting Strategy for a Protracted War, *Public Policy and Administration Research*, Vol. 8, No. 7, 2018, pp. 67-93; Edlyne E. Anugwom, Islamic Fundamentalism and Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Reflections on the Boko Haram Insurgence, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2018, pp. 225-243.

78 Daniel Isioma, ‘I Lit the Match’ *The Guardian*, 17 February 2003, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/17/gender.pressandpublishing> (accessed 24.08.2019).

Mohammed Abba Gana, “broke down in front of camera, weeping that I [Isioma Daniel] had blasphemed the prophet”.⁷⁹

Subsequently, politics was being played on civilizational lines with different groups using religion as bargaining chip in their route to power. This scenario is aptly captured by M. J. Balogun when he observed that “even though “secularization of faith” is a contradiction in terms, secularized is what faith has become under the leadership of the clergy and with the connivance of the laity”.⁸⁰ More so, micro-nationalistic groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeast Nigeria adopted the attachment of religious ingredients as part of the variables in demarcating the “we” against “us” and mounting pressure on the national government on that basis.⁸¹ The recent herdsmen attacks, which escalated from 2015, have also been interpreted as Islamization agenda, spearheaded by the Muslims-dominated federal government.⁸² In all, a humongous pressure is being mounted on the government, which must either appease both or tilt a bit to the west or east, albeit intermittently. As would be discussed in our subsequent subhead, religion has permeated almost every dimension the Nigeria state even more than ever.

The Paradox of Nigeria’s Secularism

A chunk of our analysis above has captured the problematic of Nigeria’s secularism. A careful reader may have observed the twist that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been defined to be secular, partially secular, non-secular and even multi-religious. If we are to go by the pervasive secular state that Nigeria is often designated as then it becomes very complex to demonstrate this choice at an empirical level. By the various provisions of the Constitution cited earlier in the work, Nigeria is influenced tremendously by its two antagonizing religions.

In his empirical study of Muslims’ reaction to the “Coroner Law System” in Lagos state, Danoye Laguda has demonstrated the complexity involved in creating secular laws for a secular society that houses non-secular citizens.⁸³ Asonzeh Uka has illustrated the influence of powerful religious cartels such as the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) in “manipulating state laws and its

79 Ibidem.

80 M.J. Balogun, *The Route to Power in Nigeria: A Dynamic Engagement Option for Current and Aspiring Leaders*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, p. 33.

81 IPOB sees itself as a Judo-Christian group struggling for independence from Islamic Fulani. See: Charles Ekpo and Cletus Agoyre, A (un)Just and (un)Holy War? The Theme of Imagery and Symbolism in the IPOB Secessionist Struggle, *International Journal in Management and Social Science*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 2018, pp. 28-55.

82 See: Frank N. Enor, Stephen E. Magor and Charles E. Ekpo, Contending Perspectives and Security Implications of Herdsmen Activities in Nigeria, *International Journal of Research – GRANTHAALAYAH*, Vol. 7, No. 7, 2019, pp. 265-285.

83 Danoye O. Laguda, Religion and Government Policy Formulations: A Study of the Responses of Muslims to the Coroner Law System in Lagos, Nigeria, *Politics and Religion*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2013, pp. 399-412.

implementations".⁸⁴ Uka's position is supported by Ruth Marshall who has observed that "from the early 1990s pastors have increasingly used their status as spiritual authorities and the wealth thus acquired not only as a means of access to the state and channels of accumulation but also as means of political influence".⁸⁵ The author has also demonstrated the overt influence exerted on the politics of Edo State by Archbishop Benson Idahosa in the early 1990s as well as the influence of the PFN in Lagos (early 1990s) and Nigerian (1999) politics.⁸⁶

Similarly, the influence of Islam over the larger body politics of Nigeria has been most conspicuous. This is because attempts by Islamic apologists to register some kind of presence in the national political sphere is perceived by the Christians as an antithesis that seeks to dismantle the existing 'secular' order, whereas, the Muslims conceive of the pre-*shari'a status quo* to be a Judo-Christian invention which is by default western in nature. This position is explained by the JNI, who queried why a secular state should adopt: a Christian political system; an English legal system (which is western); declare a perpetual holiday for Christian holiday day (Sunday) as against Muslims' (Saturday); use of Christian cross as a symbol of medical and health services in government-owned establishments at the detriment of Islamic crescent which serve same purpose; adopt the Gregorian calendar which makes January 1st a public holiday and negating Islamic calendar and its deserving 1st *Mubarram* holiday. Hence, the Muslims are only pursuing civilizational equilibrium, not obstruction of the inexistent 'secular' order.⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, powerful Islamic clerics, such as Sheik Abubakar Gumi, and groups, such as IJN, were phenomenal in mounting the pressure that led to the creation of the pilgrimage board by the Gowon administration. The influence of groups such as IJN is demonstrated in the 2003 *Politics of Polio* which saw the Kano State government rejecting the findings of the federal government at the behest of IJN's lab. scientists who, at variance with the federal government health team, claimed the Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) was contaminated and made to reduce Muslim's fertility.⁸⁸ The move to institutionalize the *shari'a* has been the most 'intimidating' and most definitive in drawing the civilizational lines. Incidentally, as these pressures mount from both sides of the divides, the 'secular' identity of the government further gets blurred.

Consequently, policies, laws, candidates in elections, state paraphernalia, emblems, employments, appointments, admissions, public rituals, subsidies, alliances, diplomatic conducts, etc. are infiltrated by civilizational precepts. The reality, therefore, is that Nigeria is easily pushed around by the forces of these

84 Asonzeh Ukah, Banishing Miracles: Politics and Policies of Religious Broadcasting in Nigeria, *Politics and Religion*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2011, p. 55.

85 Ruth Marshall Ruth, *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*... p. 215.

86 Ibidem, pp. 215-217.

87 Nnamani O. Ogbu. Is Nigeria a Secular State? Law Human Rights and Religion in Context... p. 18.

88 Elisha P. Renne, *The Politics of Polio in Northern Nigeria*, Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 39.

civilizations whose relevance and self-preservation, it seems, lie in how much they register their presence in government. Ambassador John Campbell has captured this vividly when he reasoned that: From an American perspective, Nigerians, both Christian and Muslim, are highly religious. Almost everybody, in what Americans would regard as secular circumstances, uses faith vocabulary. Almost all public events are opened and closed with prayer. Causation of events, big or small, public or private, is routinely ascribed to divine intervention or the willful lack thereof. Christians and Muslims in Nigeria share a rejection of the Western concept of separation of the religious and secular spheres of life. Each religion seeks to find in the other evidence of deviation from the literal interpretation of sacred texts. Each tries to outdo the other in opposition to “moral laxity,” often reflecting traditional West African social and behavioral norms as much as religious teaching. For example, both are homophobic, and adherents of both faiths favor government sanctions against homosexuality. Leaders of both religions bitterly criticize the American integration of gays and lesbians into the national mainstream, and they often cite it as evidence of Western degeneracy... Muslims fear Christians are bankrolled by American evangelicals and Christians cite Saudi and, more recently, Iranian money allegedly flowing to Muslim foundations and charities... Over the past fifteen years, Muslims appear to have become more “Islamic” in the Saudi Arabian sense.⁸⁹

Consequently, while the generality of northern states and southern states look forward to Islamic and Western collaborations respectively, the preferred destination of study by students in northern and southern Nigeria is determined by religion. While the Christians court western countries, northerners prefer “Cairo, Khartoum or Riyadh”.⁹⁰

By implication, these series of punches by each divides of civilizations ensure that Nigeria’s secularism is majorly cosmetic. Its laws are in agreement with Islamic and Christian principles; Christian candidates in presidential and multi-religious states’ elections are often deputized by Muslims and vice versa. In fact, since 1999, Muslim’s succession of a Christians President is seen as a form of justice which must be protected at all cost. This, among other factors, was blamed for the defeat of the incumbent Christian president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, by his Muslim opponent, General Muhammadu Buhari, in the 2015 presidential elections.⁹¹

Furthermore, emblems, logos, seal and insignias of most state institutions and national symbols carry Arabic inscriptions. Such include the logo of the Nigerian Army and most of the national currencies. It should be noted that the Constitution does not recognize Arabic but rather, Section 55 identifies English,

89 John Campbell, *Nigerian: Dancing on the Brink*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, 2011, p. 43.

90 Richard Bourne, *A New History of a Turbulent Century*... p. 255.

91 See: Olusegun Adeniyi, *Against the Run of Play: How an Incumbent President was defeated in Nigeria*, Kachifo Limited, Lagos, 2017, Ch. 2, 3.

Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba as the official languages. Arabic is an emblem of Islamic civilization and continues to serve that function. Also worthy of mentioning is the fact that appointments, employments, recruitments, and admission are based on a quota which to a large extent encompasses religion. As John Campbell had already identified above, prayers are often recited on public functions with Christians and Muslims offered opportunities. The second stanza of the national anthem, too, is a prayer that calls on “God of creation” to not just “direct our noble cause” but as well “guide our leaders” and “help our youths”. Even so, Nigeria’s presidential lodge (Aso Rock) has both a Mosque and a chapel for the presidency and its aides to perform routine religious rituals, among other functions.

The country also spends billions of Naira annually in sponsoring Muslim and Christian pilgrimages. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reveals that 66,000 Nigerians have gone on religious tourism between 2013 and 2015.⁹² Even so, the nature of the country’s diplomatic conduct is dependent on the religion of the president. The decision by Nigeria to, in 2018, vote against Israel’s movement of its capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was speculated on this context and generated much controversy that warranted official refutation by Nigeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama.⁹³ It should also be noted that of the 31 public holidays in Nigeria, as identified by *Time and Dates*, more than 15 are religiously motivated.⁹⁴ Importantly, too, using religious attires (*hijab*) in public schools and functions with regulated uniforms is presently challenged by Muslims with series of court cases and protests with the most eccentric being the Firdaus call to bar fiasco⁹⁵ and similar upsurge at the International School Ibadan, Oyo State - Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria cannot be termed as a secular state with the current system it operates. Secularism, as we had observed earlier cannot be an “in-between” concept as former President Olusegun Obasanjo had framed it. Whether as passively or assertively secular, Nigeria lacks the variables to defend these demarcations. There are two dominant religions of which whim and caprices, determine, to a large extent, what becomes of the state. The quest by the competing forces of Islam and Christianity to dominate the Nigerian polity might not be deleterious

92 “Social Statistics Report”, National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, 2016, p. 12, available at: <http://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/486> (accessed 25.08.2019).

93 Leo Sobechi, Nigeria’s Vote Against Jerusalem Was Not Political, Says Onyeama, *Guardian Nigeria*, 14 January 2018, available at: <https://m.guardian.ng/business-services-industry/nigerias-vote-against-jerusalem-was-not-political-says-onyeama/> (accessed 25.08.2019).

94 “Holidays and Observances in Nigeria in 2019”, *Time and Date*, 2019, available at: <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/nigeria/> (accessed 26.08.2019).

95 See: “Nigerian Law Graduate Denied Call to Bar Over Hijab”, *Aljazeera*, 16 December 2017, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2017/12/nigerian-law-graduate-denied-call-to-bar-hijab-171216084329791.html> (accessed 25.08.2019).

since friction is necessary for development. The false image and identity of the country as a secular state is, however, baneful and sharpens the level of suspicion between both civilizational lines – a situation that is becoming very dangerous with time. Perhaps, the two civilizations can parley to set modalities that would officially recognize what we have termed “theocratic diarchy” – a dual religious state with clear canons on what constitute the state, the Gods, the law, the people, the checks and the balances.

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НИГЕРИЈА: ПАРАДОКС СЕКУЛАРНЕ ДРЖАВЕ

Сажетак

Федерални устав Нигерије дефинише да ниједна религије није државна религија, и да је Нигерија секуларна држава. Међутим, постојећи степен утицаја религије на политику и обрнуто поставља питање да ли је Нигерија заиста секуларна земља? У овом раду се анализирају почеци и радикализација религиозности у Нигерији. Користећи тезу о сукобу цивилизација као модел, овај рад тврди да су две најдоминантније религије у Нигерији – хришћанство и ислам – у озбиљном сукобу око утицаја на политичке исходе, одржавање статуса кво или око утицаја на различите нивое владања у Нигерији. Импликације ове ситуације се заснивају на томе да је држава покушавала разне институционалне и структурне реформе које су на крају довеле до трансформације политичке оријентације државе, која је постала теократија под велом секуларизма. Наравно, ово стање захтева суштинску промену и ревизију.

Кључне речи: секуларизам, религија, теократија, хришћанство, ислам, сукоб цивилизација, Нигерија

Date received: September 1, 2019

Date accepted: November 15, 2019