

The Rise of Islamism in Nigeria: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Religious Violence

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Abstract

This study focuses on the unique religious landscape that Nigeria offers. The northern half of Nigeria is largely Muslim and identifies ethnically as Hausa or Fulani, whereas the south is predominantly Christian and identifies as Yoruba and Igbo. Poverty levels are concentrated slightly more than two times higher in the north than in the south, and recent political corruption of elected officials has left northerners feeling alienated. Islam in Nigeria carries regional, ethnic, socioeconomic, and political implications in addition to a religious identity, as Islam is politicized and permeates all facets of society. In an examination of violence between religiously-affiliated organizations, these implications must be analyzed to better understand the factors that contribute to the unrest. This study argues not that religious factors are absent altogether, but that the role that Islam plays in “religious” conflict is significantly exaggerated as factors of socio-economics and political interests are larger precipitators of conflict along religious lines.

One day in early October 2007, a large group of men wearing traditional Islamic garb and armed with machine guns and machetes were mysteriously handing out charms to Muslim and Christian residents in Kano’s Panshekara district. They explained that the charms would protect them in the fighting that was to come. The following day, a large mob consisting of some women and children attacked a local police headquarters. Ten policemen were killed along with a police official’s wife. Those incarcerated

at the jail were set free, and cars in the surrounding area, as well as the station itself, were set on fire. A six-hour battle ensued throughout the city as individuals in the mob were engaged by the Nigerian military. An additional ten people were killed (including innocent bystanders) along with 25 of the attackers (McGreal 2007, 1).

No one could identify one particular cause for the violence that occurred, and no one could confirm with certainty who the instigators were. However, most eyewitnesses identified the individuals as members of the “Nigerian Taliban.” The Nigerian Taliban is an organization allegedly founded by “radical students” who have taken exception to their “infidel government.” As for explanations for the occurrence of violence, other accounts link the violence to a ruling of the courts that disbanded the religious police who enforced dress codes and prohibited the sale of beer and women passengers riding in male-driven taxis (McGreal 2007, 1).

Most accounts, however, link the violence to the assassination of Sheikh Jafar Adam. Sheikh Adam was a renowned local cleric and political dissident who was shot to death by masked men as he led morning prayers in a local mosque just weeks before. He was alleged to have had a disagreement with the governor of Kano. Sheikh Adam was critical of the slow process by which *Sharia* law was being implemented and left his post on the governing commission in protest. He was also very vocal about his suspicion that elected officials adopted issues of importance to the Muslim majority only to gain political support and abandoned them after being elected. He also alleged that after large sums of federal money had been allocated to various commissions to oversee the issues, these same officials (religious and governmental) were reported to have bought new cars and larger houses. Several factors related to the timing of the Sheikh’s assassination lend circumstantial legitimacy to these accounts. First, the state governor was up for reelection the subsequent month. Second, Adam was shot the day after he delivered a message to his followers that he would direct them how to vote. Third, it was suspected that Adam would back the opposition and, given the Sheikh’s large following, he would have a very influential voice (McGreal 2007, 2).

Conflicts of this sort have occurred so frequently in Nigeria that they are experienced as normal. Over the last seven years, roughly 60,000 people have been killed in violence that appears to be along religious lines, and Christian minorities in northern Nigeria live in fear of being attacked (McGreal 2007, 2). A great deal of questions arise from these conflicts, but the most pressing are: Exactly what role does Islam play in these conflicts with Christians, what is the relationship between Islam and the government, what role does Islam play in the advancement of political interests,

and what led to the presence of sizeable Christian minorities in a largely Muslim region of the country? Addressing these questions requires meticulous attention to detail and a wealth of information combining data and analysis from disciplines of academic inquiry. Considering these factors, an interdisciplinary approach to gathering and analyzing information is required for examining this phenomenon. My research and analysis of statistics, social contexts, and religious principles indicate that the role that Islam plays in violence is not absent altogether but is exaggerated, as issues of conflicting socioeconomic and political interests are more definitive factors in conflicts between individuals and groups from differing religious orientations. In the process of explaining this conclusion, I will define the conceptualization of Islamism as it will be used in this study, examine the historical context in which Islam arrived in West Africa, address the issues of the unique religious landscape that resulted from British colonization, and examine the stages of violence that have taken place in the country. I will utilize the disciplines of history, religious studies, political science, and sociology to address these matters. All these separate facets of academic inquiry will be combined to provide an explanation of the role that Islam plays in violence in Nigeria. What will become clear in this analysis is that throughout the history of West Africa, and Nigeria specifically, Islam has always been closely aligned with the economic and political interests of elite individuals and groups.

Islamism

One of the key terms that will be used in this study is Islamism. There is great debate among the media, scholars, and even politicians with regard to the conceptualization of the term and the appropriateness of its application. Oftentimes called Islamic Fundamentalism, Islamism is frequently mistaken to have an inherent attachment to the religion of Islam itself. However, the connection between Islam (or any religion) and Fundamentalism is simply the foregrounding of religious language, interpretations, and/or symbols to a political ideology as it applies to broader political and cultural conflict. Islamism as it will be conceptualized for this study will be predicated on the ideas of Bobby S. Sayyid and Eva Evers Rosander. Sayyid notes that Islamism refers to a political ideology, and, more specifically, to individuals who place their Muslim identity at the center of their political practice and use Islamic language to establish their political advances (Sayyid 1997, 17). According to Eva Evers Rosander, the "...main characteristic of Islamism is its focus on Islamic Law, or Sharia. Islamists conceive of Islam as an ideology, a total mode of life and work for the

establishment of Islamic societies and, eventually, states based on Islamic law” (Rosander 1997, 4). She adds that Islamism attempts to fashion itself in a manner that recaptures the essence of movements that appeared in previous centuries when followers were faced with what was perceived as a withdrawal from the Koran and Sunna, which are the basis for Sharia (Rosander 1997, 5).

The conceptualization of Islamism that will be utilized for this study is a blend of the two authors’ ideas. The emphasis on the centrality of the Muslim identity being integrated into political activities and agendas, and the use of Islamic language to achieve these ends will be borrowed from Sayyid. These ideas will be fused with Rosander’s contention that the eventual desired end is the establishment of an Islamic State with Sharia Law as its founding principle, and the implementation of nostalgia within Islamic religious experience in which there is a concerted effort to return to the “ways of the prophet.” This conceptualization best suits the social contexts, events, and individuals as well as groups and their motives that will be the focus of this study.

The Arrival of Islam in Nigeria

An examination of how Islam became established in Nigeria is important as it reveals insights as to the role that Islam played in the earliest political, economic, and social contexts of West Africa. In turn, understanding its role in these particular contexts illustrates the role that Islam plays in Nigeria’s current political, economic, and social contexts and allows the researcher to make the necessary connection between the two periods. In order to provide an in-depth view of Islam’s arrival in Nigeria, I will track Islam’s earliest developments throughout West Africa and follow its role in the development and influence of what is modern-day Nigeria. One of the main objectives of this section is to show Islam’s prominent role in the earliest instances of the maintenance of the interests of elites, whether the interest be related to politics, economics, or other interests.

Islam’s earliest presence in West Africa is noted as being around the eighth century, through contacts with merchants from the northern region of Africa. Around the eleventh century, the conversions of the rulers of Senegal (War Diaby) and present-day Mali (Gao at the time, currently Kosoy) established the first West African Muslim states (Diouf 1998:4). In the eleventh century, Ghana was an international economic force due to the large reserves of gold that were present in the area, which boded well for the founding/ruling class of Ghana (the Soninke), who were traders themselves. Through the presence of Berbers from North Africa (also

traders), Islam had a presence in Ghana, which led to the establishment of a Muslim community in the empire. Although the Muslims were a minority, they were not viewed as a threat to the ruling order and were allowed to worship freely as freedom of religion was a principle that was widely supported in the kingdom (Falola 2002, 94). Not only were the Muslims not persecuted, their presence was encouraged by the kings of Ghana. The northerners brought the advantage of long-distance trade capabilities with them, which could potentially be maximized if the kings converted to Islam themselves. Being a Muslim granted kings citizenship in the *Umma*, or Muslim community, which simultaneously granted them respect and trust in the realm of trade with Muslims from distant lands. Their conversion also eased widespread concerns in the Muslim world about trading with non-Muslims in the Western Sudan. The presence of Muslims also ended the silent trade that oftentimes took place between West Africans and Muslims because they could not communicate with one another. The new knowledge of written and spoken Arabic that resulted from establishing relationships with the northerners served as a universal language, which allowed for more frequent and personal trade with others who did not speak the tribal languages. This also led to the establishment of a system of banking and credit, as the kings could order goods from distant lands (Kenny 2001, 2-3). In this, we see the presence of the economic interests of the politically elite. The rulers of Ghana encouraged the presence of northerners, as their presence promoted trade with other territories.

All these factors led the burgeoning trade of Ghana to become a Muslim monopoly, which put pressure on non-Muslim traders and merchants to convert themselves. This led to the occurrence of Islam appearing to be a religion of the ruling and middle classes, as conversion was not advocated or forced on non-Muslims. It should also be noted that the conversion of rulers to Islam also helped maintain the authority of the kings. Islam's all-encompassing ideology bridged the gaps between tribes and afforded them a "greater" identity beyond ethnic, tribal, and regional lines, which created the ideal social contexts for state Islam to occur later in the history of the region. The unifying quality of Islam was used to serve military interests as well. Due to the indiscreet territorial gains of Ghana, it eventually became threatened by the possibility of revolt from different groups within the kingdom's territorial margins. Recognizing this threat, rulers converted to Islam as a preemptive measure to discourage attack. The inhabitants of conquered lands generally became slaves (indentured servants) to the new administrative authority, but opposing groups (Muslims) would (ideally) not attack them if they, too, were Muslims (Kenny 2002, 2). Since Islam was primarily a religion of the ruling and middle

classes and the majority of the kingdoms' inhabitants were not coerced or even encouraged to convert, the Islamic community was a very small minority.

In 1054, Ghana was invaded by Almoravids from the North. The invaders came with the intent of gaining control of Ghana's immensely profitable trade industry and of spreading Islam to Ghana's unIslamized population. The Almoravids, however, had a very short reign, as their rule lasted only 33 years because they could not gain the loyalty of the founding Soninke of the Ghanaian empire. The Soninke, however, regained control of a territory that was much smaller in size than it was prior to invasion (Falola 2002, 94). In 1235, Ghana was attacked again by the Malinke, who would take over the kingdom of Ghana and establish the kingdom of Mali (95).

In the case of Ghana, we see the use of Islam as a tool by rulers either to maintain or protect their territorial gains. They hoped that the provision of the Koran, which states that Muslims were not to enslave other Muslims, would disqualify them as a target of attacks. However, it is important to remember that Muslims were still a minority in the kingdom because conversion was not required of the population, and no coercive actions were taken by the current governing aristocracy. When conversion for protection from other Muslims did not yield the desired effects of preventing attack or maintaining territory, the actions of the Ghanaian aristocracy became politically as well as economically motivated.

After roughly a hundred years, the empire of Mali had doubled the success of its predecessor in terms of wealth and territory under the rule of Mansa Musa. Mali had inherited the gold mines and successful trade relations of Ghana, which was combined with the emergence of Niani, Gao, and Timbuktu as world-renowned commercial centers. Mansa Musa is called one of pre-colonial Africa's greatest statesmen. A large portion of his popularity has been attributed to his conversion to Islam (Falola 2002; 97). Although he championed the cause of Islam in his empire, no established law stated that the kingdom's inhabitants had to convert. As a result of his efforts, some did convert, but due to the lack of an established bylaw that stated that others must convert, most did not. The largest contributions of Mali to Islam began in 1324 when Mansa Musa took a pilgrimage to Mecca. The journey enabled him to show his wealth to the world. On his way to Mecca, he arrived in Cairo with an estimated 80,000 attendants carrying gold and, according to legend, he spent so much of it that it lost its value. When he returned to Mali, he brought legal experts, teachers, Islamic scholars, and architects from Mecca with the intent to establish an Islamic educational system. He built an Islamic university at Timbuktu

where students came from all over the world, and he built mosques all over the empire for Muslim communities to have a place to worship (97). As a result of the great displays of progress and the new ability to propagate Islam in areas and in a manner that the aristocracy could not before, many more people began to convert to Islam. Although Musa's growth in popularity due to his conversion may not have been an intended effect, Islam in this particular case granted Musa legitimacy as a Muslim. Because he was a Muslim, his overt displays of wealth gave him a certain appeal to other Muslims from the Middle East. This more than likely afforded him the credentials necessary to establish the appropriate relationships to implement economic, educational, and religious advances in his own kingdom.

About 1400, the empire began to struggle due to constant civil wars, as there was no workable established guideline for succession of rule after Mansa Musa's death. Various cities within the empire began to bid for their independence. One of those cities, led by Sunni Ali, was Gao, which had been a powerful commercial and cultural center throughout the duration of the rule of Ghana as well as Mali. Ali, being strategically and militarily savvy, led Gao in an effort to assert its independence, and it eventually grew into the kingdom of Songhay (Falola 2002, 95). It was roughly around this time that Islam began to have a visible presence in the Hausa states (current northern Nigeria).

Songhay, originally a province of Mali, was founded in a setting similar to that of Mali and Ghana. Under the leadership of Ali, the empire grew larger than both Ghana and Mali as he led many expeditions conquering new lands without ever suffering a single defeat. Songhay, as had Mali, inherited the gold reserves and the trade industry that were previously included in the Malian empire, along with the addition of the fertile farmland along the Niger River which added revenue from agricultural, trade, and gold sales. However, in 1493, Ali's successor, Muhammad Toure (Askia "the Great"), led the nation at its apex. Officially, he was also the first ruler of the Songhay empire to adopt Islam (99) as it is not clear whether Ali practiced Islam. In 1495, Muhammad Toure made a pilgrimage to Mecca, which endeared him to the Muslims within his own empire as well as those throughout the Middle East. He was appointed Caliph of the Western Sudan by the Sharif of Mecca and used this position to promote Islam by appointing Islamic scholars to positions in his administration. He also promoted Islamic education and used Islam to unite many of his followers. Toure provides yet another prime example of Islam's role in the advancement of political agendas. His high position in the local and international Islamic world afforded him the influence to appoint other Muslims to positions of great importance within the kingdom. Also apparent in this

example is Islam's potential as a means of possible upward social mobility, as Toure would ideally have been more willing to award favored positions to other Muslims. He also used Islam to unite Muslims of different ethnic and tribal affiliations to strengthen his followers in terms of numbers and influence. This (ideally) would yield a sense of camaraderie within the diverse populations within the kingdom which would decrease the likelihood of internal revolt as groups with competing interests would no longer view themselves as being in opposition to each other.

Another source of Songhay's great wealth was the slave trade. Under Toure, the slave trade increased as he supplied many slaves to Egypt, Turkey, and southwest Asia. One of the chief suppliers of slaves was one of the newly conquered territories in the Hausa states (northern Nigeria). Constant wars among the Hausa states created a burgeoning market for slaves. During the collapse of Songhay, the Hausa states were one of the internal provinces that revolted (Kenny 2001: 2).

Islam is thought to have arrived in Nigeria by way of the coming of Wangarawa traders and scholars from Mali at the end of the 14th century (Loimeier 1997, 10) and through the selling of slaves to Songhay in the 15th century (Kenny 2001, 2). Malian scholars came to Kano to occupy important administrative posts during the reign of Sarkin Kano Yogi. Just as in Ghana and Mali, Islam was the religion of the upper and middle classes in Kano. It was in this context, under the rule of Sarkin Kano Muhammad Rumfa, that Maghribinian scholar Muahammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Maghili wrote an essay (*Taj ad-din fi ma uajib 'ala muluk*) whose title translates as "The Crown of the Religion concerning the Rulers' Obligations" (Loimeier 1997, 10). He detailed the establishment of government according to the rules of Islam, which later on was used as the theoretical framework for the attack on the Hausa states that situated al-Maghili (considered by many to be the founder of Qadiri Sufism) as the first reformer of Islam in Hausaland. From this period, it was the visitation of several other Maghribinian and Moroccan scholars that many historians argue led to the establishment of the Maliki school of law in Hausaland.

Sufism is a very sensitive and complex topic within the Islamic community; many orthodox (Sunni and Shia) Muslims contend that Sufis are not Muslims at all whereas some Sufis contend that they are the "real" Muslims. The noteworthy distinction between the two groups that adequately suits the aforementioned purposes of this study would be that Sufism is thought to be "Islamic mysticism," as opposed to orthodox Islam, seen by Sufi scholars as more a system of practice absent of passion.

The principal concern of the detailing of Islam's arrival, advances, and influences is to establish a pattern of its involvement in society, politics,

and economics in West Africa. The historical analysis tells a story of Islam in which it has always somehow been connected to political and socioeconomic interests. From its earliest arrival in Ghana, it was used as a tool for the advancement of trade relations and further promoted for its unifying qualities to curb the threat of attack from other groups. The case of Mali is exemplary of Islam's role in social matters such as educational development. Songhay provides a look into Islam's role in military endeavors in that the empire grew larger through conquest than the two preceding kingdoms. Usually the inhabitants of these newly conquered lands became slaves. The expansion of Songhay into the slave trade through military endeavors also adds an element of economics. Human trafficking was a very profitable industry at the time, and it yielded large profits from Europeans and Arabs who frequently engaged in the slave trade. In the case of the Hausa states, positions of political importance were directly given to other Muslims from other lands, as Islam was also a tool for possible upward social mobility. There has always been a close relationship of Muslims and Islam to power, wealth, and widespread influence. This is important to keep in mind as the analysis of religious violence will be addressed later, as it is commonly asserted that religious violence is the result of political corruption, compromised religious authority, and an uneven distribution of resources.

The Religious Landscape of Nigeria and the Policy of Indirect Rule

What makes the religious landscape of Nigeria unique in the case of Islam is its attachment to factors not usually associated with religion. In general terms, Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation with 140 million people, accounting for over half of West Africa's population. Half of the country's population are Muslims, 40% are Christians, and the remaining 10% practice indigenous religions. The dense population and the Muslim majority make Nigeria one of the ten largest Muslim populations in the world (Morris and Edel 2006, 289). Of the 36 states in Nigeria, 13 are majority Muslim, 13 are majority Christian, and the remaining 10 have an even distribution of each (Paden 2002, 1). When Nigeria is examined closely, regional disparities become evident. The northern half of Nigeria is largely Muslim and identifies ethnically as Hausa or Fulani, whereas the South is predominantly Christian and identifies as Yoruba and Igbo. Although 54% of the total population of Nigeria is living in poverty, the three northern regions account for a disproportionate share of the total, with just over 70% of the region's population living in poverty (Jijji 1999, 2). In fact, the top ten states with the highest occurrence of poverty are all

in the north; in contrast, the ten lowest incidences of poverty are all in the south, with a general average of just under 35%. The north accounts for just under 11% of all bank deposits and slightly less than 9% of all bank loans (2). In terms of politics, the northern half is dominated by the NPC (Northern People's Congress) and the NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) and the south by the NCNC (Nigerian Council of Nigerian Citizens) and AG (Action Group). At a glance, being a Muslim in Nigeria not only carries an implication of a religious identity, it carries associations that are socioeconomic, ethnic, and political.

In general, the history of Islam in Africa has primarily been a religion that consisted of the ruling and middle classes. However, the circumstances that resulted from the policy of Indirect Rule created an ideal context for the expansion of Islam beyond ethnic, geographical, and socioeconomic boundaries. Indirect Rule (a British colonial policy that was designed to leave traditional forms of authority in place) was instrumental in establishing the necessary contexts in which the propagation of Islam on the territorial margins (which oftentimes were populated by the economically destitute) became possible. The widespread conversion of those in rural areas drastically changed the appearance of Islam, as it went from a religion of an educated, wealthy, and politically influential minority to a largely uneducated, poor, and politically marginalized majority. Initially, the distinctions between the north and the south were only ethnic and religious as the regions (prior to colonization) were connected by trade networks but differed in their experiences and historical traditions (Loimeier 1997; 2). Loimeier notes that even in the time of colonial rule, the three regions (north, southwest, and southeast) developed independently of one another although under a blanket British administration. When the British colonized Nigeria, they had the intention of maintaining civil stability as much as possible. The best proposed strategy for this was to interfere with established institutions as little as possible by establishing a policy of Indirect Rule, a policy intended to allow traditional forms of authority to operate within the newly established framework of colonial authority. The northern aristocracy was subordinate to colonial authorities but maintained direct rule under the terms and conditions established by the colonists. At this time, Islam was still thought to be the religion of the status quo, and, unintentionally, the policy of Indirect Rule established the ideal context for the uninhibited pursuit of ruling class interests and the propagation of Islam. Indirect Rule established the prohibition of Christian missionaries proselytizing in the north and established the principle that Islam would be the religion of any state which had a Muslim ruler, regardless of the actual representation of Muslims in that given area. Muslims also received

funding from the British to build mosques and Islamic schools (Trimingham 1959, 204-205). Effectively, this sealed off the northern regions from any outside influences, thus extending the rule and influence of the ruling classes which, in some cases, involved the promotion of state Islam.

The result of Indirect Rule was a mass consolidation of Islam through Islamic principles being given preference over customary law and the organization of Islamic political entities which, in their combination, encouraged the widespread dissemination of the religion (Lewis 1980, 77). The consequence of this policy was the eventual disproportionate development of the south as opposed to the north. The British brought western forms of development in the arenas of education, economics, and the spread of Christianity while the northern half of the country remained largely undeveloped and segregated. In a matter of years, the population of the south became significantly more sophisticated educationally and politically than its northern counterpart, which set the stage for the drastic socioeconomic disparities that are present today. Recognizing this, the British began to open more northern territories for economic projects and education in an attempt to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of the North. But their institutions and innovations were rejected as western influence and viewed as an attempt to “westernize” or “Christianize” their societies and way of life. In the case of Kano City, westernization further marginalized groups on the society’s periphery and brought increases in crime, prostitution, and other deviant behaviors (Brenner 1993, 97). Northern Muslims promoted economic development initially, but, ironically, in this instance they were in opposition to it. It appears that the northern Muslims were willing to support economic development as long as it was on their own terms. They would not work in British-sponsored businesses operated by southern Christians and initially would not patronize them in protest. It was at this point that in the areas where Islam did not already have a stronghold, and the inhabitants were practicing traditional religions, Christianity did take hold. The people in these regions (mainly the Middle Belt) enthusiastically embraced Christianity as a means of upward social mobility and participation in the open markets that were created through colonization (Lewis 1980, 80). In an effort to keep developmental projects from remaining stagnant due to the initial protest of northerners who refused to patronize western institutions, newly converted Christians were relocated to the north to work as owners, managers, and shopkeepers. This factor, in combination with the promotion of high-paying employment opportunities in the north, brought a significant number of Christians to Northern Nigeria and placed educated, wealthy, and middle class Christians in largely impoverished Muslim areas. This phenomenon, coupled

with the continued pursuit of ruling interests of the northern aristocracy, created a context in which conflict that appears to be religious in nature begins.

Prior to colonization, distinctions between northern Nigeria and southern Nigeria fell primarily along ethnic and religious lines. All three regions (north, southeast, and southwest) were developing independently of one another, yet at a similar rate (Loimeier 1997, 1-2). The socioeconomic disparities are new phenomena in relation to the history of the region. The implementation of Indirect Rule created a context conducive to the propagation of Islam and the implementation of Islamic ideals at the expense of traditional ones (Trimingham 1959, 205). Simultaneously, the southern portion of the country benefitted from all of the developmental efforts of the British, advancing in the realms of education, economics, and political development. The northern region of the country remained disconnected, as all forms of westernization were initially prohibited and British funds were being allocated for the advancement of Islam. Once the vast socioeconomic and political gulfs were realized, attempts were made by the British to institute projects fostering education and eventual integration into the open markets that were being utilized in the south. But these efforts were dismissed by northerners as attacks on their way of life and religion, as the drastic decline in social morals was attributed to the influence of westernization.

Religious Conflict

This particular section will offer an overview of the religious conflict that has been characteristic of Nigeria throughout its history prior to colonization and post-independence. In terms of these conflicts, when examining the history of this particular phenomenon, it becomes increasingly clear that conflict does not hold to a static appearance or even a single set of actors. Conflicts have differed based on the attitudes, agendas, and issues of those involved at the given time. For the maintenance of clarity and organization, this section will be divided into several subsections pertaining to each subject of interest. The first section will begin with a focus on the intra-faith conflicts between the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya Sufi orders, followed by an exploration of the rise of anti-Sufism in the 'Yan Izala movement, and then move to an examination of the conflict as it appears currently.

Conflicts between the Sufi Orders

The Qadiriyya adherents, or Qadiri, have been present in the northern portion of the country since the fifteenth century and were established as the dominant (and only) order of the Sokoto Empire after the Jihads of the early 1800's led by Usman Dan Fodio (Loimeier 1997, 19). However, just as in the case of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay, the Sokoto Empire never established an official religion or Tariqa (Sufi order) of the empire. Once the Tijaniyya order came to popularity in the nineteenth century, the Qadiri lost their monopoly on the region and the Tijani began to be recognized as a potential threat. The Tijani became associated with an established resistance to the ruling aristocracies of Sokoto and the status quo (21-25). In the early 20th century, the British had weakened the control of Sokoto just enough to inhibit their ability to suppress any dissent among organizations or individuals. Eventually, more rulers in different parts of the empire began to align themselves with Tijaniyya due to increasing concern among Muslims in the north that the presence of western-style hairdos, the consumption of alcohol, prostitution, and the speaking of the English language were attached to the increasing presence of southern Christians. This realignment began the association of Tijaniyya with resistance to the current ruling aristocracy in the north, who were increasingly accused of being puppets for the colonial forces as the aristocracy amassed power and wealth (Griswold 2008, 3).

Until the 20th century, the conflict between the two orders was confined to scholars and the political elite (Loimeier 1997, 71). The conflict grew into direct confrontation in the late 1940's with the increased influence of Ibrahim Niass. He, along with Muhammad Sanusi, began to transform Tijaniyya into a mass movement of political and economic networks. This development posed a direct threat to the Qadiriyya as the widespread influence of Tijaniyya in combination with the influx of western influences increased the consciousness of a "greater Islamic world" in the minds of northerners. This allowed the Tijani to cultivate a population of voters (71-72). The election of 1951 greatly increased the political importance of both orders as both political entities, the NEPU (Northern Elements Peoples Union) and the NPC (Northern Peoples Congress), maintained a restricted party affiliation that stated once individuals joined a particular party, they could not leave. This forced the political parties to have to bid for the allegiance of the different orders. The political importance of the orders grew and they gained more bargaining power, which also increased the importance of the religious scholars. Because those with the largest followings commanded the greatest attention politically, being viewed as

having religious authority began to carry political implications. It was in this context that the conflict between the two orders began to change, with religious language and dogmatic interpretations becoming increasingly political (73).

Influential Tijani began to take mission tours to increase their prominence throughout the region. One of these individuals was Umar Muhammad Al-Hadi. He took a tour to Sokoto (the base of the Qadiriyya) and had great success in establishing new Tijani networks, especially the relationship he forged with the wealthy scholar/trader Shaykh Atiku Sanka. Sanka was an influential businessman with contacts throughout West Africa and the Middle East. With a significant Tijani presence now located in the stronghold of Qadiri authority, the influence of this particular network grew exponentially and posed a threat to the Sultan's (of Sokoto) authority. The Tijani's influence became so strong that they eventually received the *zakat* and *sadaqa* (alms tax and charity donations) from faithful members that had previously gone to the Sultan of Sokoto. The Sultan had at times publicly rejected a salary from the colonial authorities, which made him dependent on the donations and tax revenue that was now being received by the Tijaniyya. Tijani mosques were being built all over the city, and the Sultan had no choice but to view this activity as a direct attack on his territory as well as his finances. In response to the aggressive efforts of the Tijaniyya in Sokoto, the Sultan ordered the demolition of all recently-built Tijani mosques in Sokoto under the premise that their construction amounted to a sin (*bida*) since there was no need for new mosques. In 1950 some Tijani networks had petitioned the colonial authority to start their own political party, Jam'iyyar Tijaniyya (Congress of the Tijaniyya), an indication that some religious scholars were already using their networks as political tools of mobilization and promotion of interests (74-75).

The year of 1956 was marked with heavy clashes between the orders in the Isa and Zurmi districts of Sokoto where, in one incident, four people were killed. However, in Kano, the disputes remained relatively civil and took place largely among religious scholars. As the influence of the Tijani grew, some networks established affiliations with influential individuals that granted them greater recognition and visibility than others. In fact, territories with Tijani-oriented officials generally did not have violent clashes as the conflicts were not between the Qadiri and Tijani, but between competing Tijani organizations (Loimeier 1997, 75). In 1954, Muhammad Samsi (a close associate of Niass) assumed the position of Emir in Kano, and the competition became intense when he removed all the existing powers of authority throughout the palace and replaced them with members of a single Tijani network attached to the Fulani aristocracy. In terms of ethnic

relations, this was also a significant move: the Fulani is one of the largest ethnic groups in the northern region. Sanusi's one-sided reorganization of power ousted several advisors, including Nasiru Kebara (Qadiri) and Muhammad Dan Amu (Tijani), which attracted the disdain of Qadiri in general and of specific Tijani orders. Further, Sanusi's established political relationship with the current Prime Minister (Ahmadu Bello) was strained. His overt promotion of one particular Tijani network clashed with the interests and ideology of Bello, whose aim was to unite the north politically as well as religiously under his leadership. Eventually, Bello began the process of removing Sanusi from office and (out of spite) was supported by the Qadiri and Tijani networks who had lost positions of influence due to Sanusi's new organization of power. Ado Bayero assumed the position of Emir of Kano; he was the first since the jihads of the early 19th century not to be affiliated with any order. This conveniently positioned him to mediate the relations between the two Sufi orders. One of his first acts as Emir was to reinstate Malam Dan Amu and Nasiru Kebara, whom Sanusi had previously ousted (77).

Because representatives of competing orders often used accounts of history to substantiate their claims, the doctrinal disputes spawned a society-wide interest in Islamic education in which history (*ta'rikh*) had become increasingly important. Around 1950, tensions erupted within the Qadiriyya when Narisu Kebara published an essay entitled *Sulalat al-miftah min minah al-fattah* (The Descendants of the Key of the Donations of the Opener) in which he declared himself the *Ghauth*, a title claimed by Ibrahim Niass in the 1930's (Paden 1973, 136). Appearing at first to be merely a game of he-said-he-said, Kebara's declaration became a serious issue as the position of Ghauth can be claimed by only one authority figure. A discussion then began over whose claim was credible. Kebara began to bid for the position of leadership within the Qadiriyya and focused on increasing his following. He began to establish himself as the heir to the leaders of an Islamic reform movement that was known as the "19th century jihad," emphasizing his religious links with Usman Dan Fodio and Ahmadu Bello. In 1955 he published another essay called *Naf' al-'ibad bi-haqiqat al-mi'ad fi madinat babhdad* (The Well-being of Mankind through the Truth Concerning the Visit in the City of Baghdad) during his campaign to gain a large following (Loimeier 1997, 78). His strategy was successful and he began to develop a mass following. However, in the midst of the movement of the Tijaniyya becoming more prominent, Kebara began to shift his message slightly to the center, publishing another essay called *an-Nafahat as-nasiriyya fi t-tariqa al-qadiriyya* (The Nasirene Fragrances within the Sufi Brotherhood) in which he began to stress

the idea that the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya were similar and that their only distinction was one of strategy rather than doctrine or intention. Seemingly pressing for a unity among the orders, he also stressed that Qadiriyya had a spiritual monopoly as they were closer to God and, on this principle, he would claim the supremacy of the Qadiriyya. This claim agitated the already fragile relations between the two orders. Kebara's assertion of Qadiriyya being closer to God was viewed as an insult to the Tijani, who previously had made the same claim. Further, he prohibited any members of the Qadiriyya leaving the order, saying that it was a sign of disrespect to the order, its founder, and the Prophet Muhammad himself. In response, a Tijani scholar (Abubakar Atiku) published a work entitled *Risala fi tah-dhir al-'isaba* (Treatise of Caution in Respect to Factionalism) in which he accused Kabara of being envious and imposed the same prohibition of leaving the order on Tijanis (77).

In the 1950's and 60's a debate began about the correct positioning of the arms during prayer. The act of *qabd* (arms folded) is what had been publicly observed by Niass and was consistently followed by other Tijani. In protest, Kebara began to practice *sadl* (outstretched arms) during prayer in an effort to differentiate himself further from the Tijani network. The practice of *qabd* versus *sadl* became a heated discussion among scholars and followers of each order. Matters were further complicated as followers were not willing to pray behind an imam who had a different practice than their own. Numerous publications by scholars on behalf of each order and each practice began to appear. Niass published an essay in which he condemned *sadl* and promised to donate his library to any individual who could quote a *hadith* showing *sadl* being practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (80). In 1958, Kabara responded to the challenge by publishing *Qam' al-fasad fi tafdil-asadl -qabd fi hadhini al-bilad* (The Avoidance of Error by Preferring Sadl Rather than Qabd in this Country) in which he contended that the prophet used both forms, but the number representing the instances of the Prophet practicing *qabd* were greater than those of him utilizing *sadl*. He went on to note that *qabd* was an innovation brought to Hausaland later in history and, prior to its appearance, *sadl* had been practiced for centuries. It was eventually adopted as a populist issue by politicians in the 1960's. Ahmadu Bello was present (representing the NEPU) on one side, and Muhammad Sanusi and representatives from a Tijani network on the other. A series of violent confrontations erupted between Qadiri and Tijani followers, beginning in the 1950's, eventually culminating in the Argungu Riots of 1965. The conflict was interpreted as being along religious lines due to the Tijani on one side and the Qadiri on the other; however, this conflict is much more the result of an insignificant

difference in worship forms that became politicized for the purpose of drawing a religious distinction.

In that same year, public health authorities initiated a vaccination campaign in the Yeldu district of Argungu which the residents resisted due to their not being informed of the purpose of the campaign. They fought with security forces, and a number of people were killed. This particular incident was taken out of context by the local media, and they framed the conflict as being a Qadiri/Tijani conflict (81). In response to the reports, the Sultan of Sokoto denounced those who resisted and placed responsibility for the disturbance on an influential Tijani network in the area (81). The riots in the Yeldu district can be viewed simply as suspicion among locals reaching a climax due to past indiscretions and antagonistic actions of the Emir of Kano.

These particular incidents are examples of conflicts being a result of a culmination of factors that are not primarily religious. Sanusi (a close associate of Niass) made decisions that fostered conflicts along ethnic lines when he removed all position-holders and replaced them with members of a single Tijani network and members of the Fulani tribe. His actions translated into a series of conflicts between Tijani orders and Qadiriyya on the whole, as the loss of political representation became the source of widespread fear. This was followed by an intellectual dispute about the spiritual authority or authenticity of the Tijani and Qadiri that initially was conflict-free, but then grew into a series of violent conflicts when Kebara began to practice the outstretching of the arms during prayer. The proper positioning of arms during prayer was later adopted as a populist issue by politicians (as we saw in the introduction) that spawned violent conflicts on the ground when members of different mosques would not practice one form of positioning of the arms while the mosque leader practiced another. These instances are characteristic of ethnic and political interests being placed at the forefront of conflicts among religious organizations. However, it should also be noted that the conflict about the proper method of prayer did add a religious element to the conflicts.

The issue was never really resolved. Bello assembled a compromised committee of individuals who would not challenge his interpretations (that had existed since 1963) to propose a resolution to the issue. They established that any Imam could practice only the form of prayer advocated by his followers. If a mosque were oriented toward the Maliki School of Law of Sufism, they could only practice that which is endorsed by “the majority of the faithful,” which they established as *sadl* (81). The problem with this decision, outside of it being made by a compromised council, is that the Maliki School of Law was virtually the only school of Islam in Nigeria at

the time. This decision effectively outlawed the public practice of prayer particular to many Tijani networks. However, just six months after this decision had been reached, Ahmadu Bello was assassinated in a violent coup of young military officers. In the ensuing chaos, the issue of the *qabd/sadd* debate lost its prominence and faded to the background as other issues became more pressing. The assassination of Bello marked the beginning of the ‘Yan Izala movement (82).

The ‘Yan Izala Movement

The period of influence of the Jama’at Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat as-Sunna (Association for the Removal of the Innovation and for the Establishment of the Sunna), or ‘Yan Izala, was marked by several important developments: conflicts between Sufis and their critics, the uniting of the Sufi orders, greater participation of Muslims (especially women) in the political process, and efforts to expand Islamic education (Loimeier 1997, 207). The establishment and development of ‘Yan Izala is attached to the political and religious ideologies of Abubakar Gumi, the Grand Kadi (judge) of northern Nigeria. After the assassination of Ahmadu Bello, it became obvious to Gumi that the JNi would not be suitable for the pursuit of his efforts of *tajdid* (new interpretations of Islam) since from the 1970’s the JNi had been dominated by Sufis and the traditional political establishment (Brenner 1988, 191). Gumi’s political career had been blocked as a result of a resistance to the introduction of a federal Sharia Court of Appeal with Gumi serving as the chief official. He was forced to adopt a new strategy and establish a public life of his own. He set out to establish a mass movement with the intent to bring the JNi under his control (Loimeier 1997, 209). Gumi began his struggle against the Sufis as early as 1972, but much of his success is owed to his organizational efforts in having his former pupils from the School of Arabic Studies or JNi-sponsored schools spread his ideas. Others were sent into different parts of the north to take either administrative or educational positions within the JNi. In this period he began to use his authority to suppress Sufi interests and became active against the Sufi orders with a series of activities including the 1976 expulsion of a Tijani-affiliated Imam from a mosque and a non-Sufi affiliated imam being put in his place. Gumi further fanned the flames of tension already present in the area in a sermon stating that anyone seen reciting the *salat al-faith* (practice typical of Sufis) was to be regarded as a *kafir* (infidel) and, therefore, it would be legal to kill them or divorce them. In the event that a divorce was preferred, remarriage would

be possible only after the individual had denounced all Sufi affiliations and paid a second bride price. The sermon began a campaign of militant resistance to the Sufis (209). Ten months later, the ‘Yan Izala was officially formed. In response to Gumi’s sermon, seventy Sufi scholars (from both orders) published a pamphlet accusing Gumi of various forms of corruption including fashioning his practice of *tafsir* (interpretation) on his own personal views rather than the Sunna (Brenner 1988, 192). These same scholars challenged Gumi to a public debate in which he sent two of his closest associates in his place. The debate never happened and the conflict threatened to turn violent.

After a series of tours by influential personalities, the ‘Yan Izala rapidly grew in numbers. However, in 1978 the ban on political parties that had initially been instituted during the military coup of 1960 was still in place. Many saw the ‘Yan Izala as a way to manifest their dissatisfaction with the authority and politics of the north. More conflicts of political interests became present as new organizations directly tied to the ‘Yan Izala were established and Gumi’s former students were placed in roles of leadership, causing many Tijani members of the JNI to leave the organization to protest the mass influence of ‘Yan Izala (209). The Sufi orders did resist ‘Yan Izala’s movement in some areas and clashes began to occur. At this time, attempts to suppress and marginalize Sufis became blatant, as the ‘Yan Izala openly instigated conflicts. Most of these clashes involved the ‘Yan Izala and the Tijaniyya, the dominant Sufi order in the plateau regions of the north. The disturbances usually occurred at Tijani preaching functions in which members of ‘Yan Izala would engage in painstakingly obvious efforts to disrupt the programs. Clashes continued to occur until late in 1980 and began to influence the political and religious climate of the north. The disturbances, as we have seen in the past, began to gain the attention of politicians. Even in 1978, when political organization was still prohibited, the ‘Yan Izala grew in membership and influence. After the elections of 1979, when civilian rule returned, the organization, as was expected, became more politically oriented and the number of clashes decreased. [Ironically, after another set of elections in 1983, they moved back to their prior orientation of being more religious rather than political, and the occurrence of violent clashes once again increased (216).] It is very fitting that once the ‘Yan Izala moved to a more politically-oriented operation, the incidences of violence decreased. This can be attributed to the new alignment of politics allowing them to directly address their most pressing concerns (often matters of political interests and representation) without having to make allegations or take antagonistic measures against other organizations with competing interests. The trends of the decline of

violence here are possibly key indicators of exactly what the issues of conflict were and predictors of possible solutions for the conflict. When ‘Yan Izala and Tijaniyya functioned primarily as religious organizations, there were incidents of conflict, yet once Nigeria returned to civilian rule and the prohibition of political organization was lifted, the conflicts decreased. The shift in ideological appearance of both organizations shows that religion can be used to disguise and lend legitimacy to the mobilization of individuals and groups. Further, violent conflict recurred once political mobilization again became prohibited and the organizations engaged in more religiously-oriented activities. This phenomenon shows the malleability and adaptive nature of politics and religion; both orientations were employed by both groups in an effort to address their concerns. The actual points of conflict between the organizations never changed, just the language to articulate these concerns and the appearance of the orientation of the groups themselves.

The Maitatsine Riots

An immigrant from Cameroon named Muhammad Marwa (nicknamed Mai Tatsine, meaning “master of condemnation”) emerged in Kano as an influential preacher in the late 1980’s. In his sermons he spoke against the use of western technology such as the wearing of watches and riding bicycles (219). He also suggested that the number of daily prayers be reduced from five to three and rejected all sources of religion other than the Koran. He was condemned as a heretic by local religious leaders. However, Marwa gained a large following due to the large population of ‘Yan Cirani (migrants from Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and the middle belt) that came to Kano in search of employment during the economic difficulties of the 1970’s, times characterized by heavy inflation and growing unemployment. As the immigrants became increasingly discontented with their situation, they were attracted to Marwa’s organization, and he used their resentments to fuel his religious movement. In response to a violent clash with security forces in which Marwa’s son was killed, the governor of Kano asked Marwa to leave Kano. He responded by gathering his followers throughout the north and attempted to take over a mosque. The attempt was suppressed by the military and 600 people were killed in an eleven-day conflict. In awe of the brutality of the suppression and the extensive property damage that resulted, a commission was put together to investigate the cause of the disturbance and establish responsibility for its occurrence (220). The commission was used by Sufi orders to allege that the attacks were inspired by the ‘Yan Izala. The ‘Yan Izala were susceptible to

these accusations due to the violent nature of their activities in the recent past, and they struggled to adopt a new image, focussing on the expansion of Islamic education in an effort to divert the accusations of their critics. However, the 'Yan Izala's attachment to the Maitatsine riots continued as the riots themselves continued. Several more violent clashes occurred between 1982 and 1993, and the potential of expansion for the 'Yan Izala was severely curtailed. The 'Yan Izala eventually began to lose influence as Shehu Shegari's regime was taken over by General Buhari in 1983 and the operations of the 'Yan Izala were suppressed. Members were imprisoned and tortured by the secret service (Brenner, 1988). However, after a coup of Buhari by General Babangida in 1985, the political activity resumed, its followers were released, and Gumi was reinstated as religious advisor to the government. The 'Yan Izala resumed their efforts against the Sufi orders, but in 1987, the conflict between Muslims and Christians became more important as riots broke out between the two in Kafancon. The 'Yan Izala were again implicated as instigators, and they were never able to recover (Loimeier 1997, 221).

Implications of Intra-religious Violence and Anti-Sufism

The Qadiri/Tijani conflicts, the activities of the 'Yan Izala, and Maitatsine's followers are all indicative of the larger trend of conflict being the result of competing economic and political interests that is oftentimes articulated through religious language. The conflict between the Sufi sects grew out of a context in which the Tijani rapidly grew in influence and numbers, becoming significant politically and economically and posing a direct threat to the political dominance and economic agendas of the Qadiri. Further, the Tijani's new-found prominence provided another option for the NEPU and NPC to court for the allegiance of the Tijani as their political importance grew, which placed political significance on religious scholars and their ideas. In the case of the 'Yan Izala, the conflicts revolving around this organization were primarily the result of an Islamic cleric (Abubakar Gumi) being disgruntled with his own political career. With the increased political influence of religious scholars that characterized this time, Gumi used his position as the chief judge of northern Nigeria to appoint those who would sympathize with his ideas (frequently his former students), and engage in activities that directly suppressed Sufi interests, including the removal of Sufi-affiliated officials. Accordingly, the influence of the 'Yan Izala rapidly grew, as did the anti-Sufi propaganda and activities which spawned numerous violent conflicts. It should be noted that once political mobilization was no longer prohibited, the violence ceased

but reignited once political parties were once again banned. This particular conflict was characterized by a dispute that arose out of a debate concerning prayer, which indicates that there was a sincere concern for religious matters. But this religious concern was secondary to the concerns of competing political interests as catalysts for conflict and only came about because of Gumi's personal desire and willingness to stretch to lengths of questionable reason to disassociate himself from the Tijani. Marwa's organization is also exemplary of economic interests (or hardship) being used as a means to inspire a religious movement, but the larger issue here is how the actions of Marwa's followers were intentionally fallaciously attached to the 'Yan Izala by the Sufi orders. This was done as a sort of political spite which, in turn, eventually led to the decline in influence of the 'Yan Izala. All these instances are indicative of organizations being mobilized primarily to address political and economic interests under the guise of religious entities which lent political and economic legitimacy to religious matters, language, and clerics.

Christian/Muslim Violence

Other specific cases of violence that have occurred since Nigeria's return to civilian rule provide instances characteristic of the frequency and severity of the religious conflict that has developed into a humanitarian crisis. This section will be organized slightly differently than the others in the category of religious violence, as those previous sections serve as the background analysis for what is currently occurring. It should be noted that since Olsegun Obasanjo's election in 1999, there have been at least 11,000 killings in religious and ethnic conflicts (Morris and Edel 2006, 290). Obasanjo employed a strategy similar to that of Sanusi when he removed all military generals he believed could be potential sources of opposition. An overwhelming majority of them were northern Muslims. Northern Muslims began to feel politically marginalized and implemented full Sharia law in response (Kenny 2001, 3). Although, legally, Sharia can be applied only to Muslims, Christian minorities were well aware of the potential danger it posed for them and their interests. This set the stage for a long series of violent clashes between Christians and Muslims that, with the exception of isolated incidents in the Middle Belt, primarily occurred in the northern half of the country. In this section, it will become clear that the same or very similar catalysts of violent conflict are still in play.

After the introduction of Sharia law in 2000, large-scale riots broke out in Kaduna State, and over 2,000 people were killed (Brand 2007, 2). The riot was primarily the result of widespread fears that Christians would

be held to the standard of the Sharia in addition to its implementation being indicative of an increasingly Muslim-dominated local government. In 2001, the majority-Christian northern city of Jos was the site of a similar occurrence. Two thousand people were killed after an election revealed that the new government official was a Muslim (2). The predominantly Christian population feared that the seating of a Muslim official was not only a threat to their political representation, as he would pass legislation that conflicted with their interests, but also their personal safety, as the threat of Muslim acts of violence against Christians was not uncommon. The year 2004 marked the end of a series of violent clashes between workers (Muslim and Christian) and militias over control of farmland in the Plateau State which left 1,000 people dead and 258,000 displaced (2). This conflict was the direct result of the rapid decrease in fertile farmland that has resulted from the expansion of the Sahara. In some of the more rural areas where farming was the only source of income, the land itself became a precious resource and conflict grew out of disputes over land ownership. In the same year, in the Middle Belt town of Yelwa, an incident occurred that appears to be nothing more than a manifestation of Christian hostility towards Muslims (also not uncommon) in which an inhabited church was burned to the ground. The survivors gave accounts of hearing the call "Let us go for Jihad" from the mosque (right next door) and then gunshots. The members fled the church but were met by armed men wearing military fatigues (posing as members of the Nigerian military). The men assured them that they would be protected. They were herded back to the church and the men opened fire. The pastor of the church was chased to his home and killed. In this incident, the pastor's home, the church, and a nursery were all set on fire. The conflict resulted in the deaths of 78 people. Also in Yelwa, in an incident that was only two years removed from the aforementioned incident, 660 Muslims were killed in an attack by members of CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria). CAN is one of the largest Christian organizations in Nigeria that also has significant political representation. They openly receive support from government officials and often serve as political agents. This attack being attributed to them fuels not only inter-religious tensions, but tensions among competing political parties as well. In this incident, twelve mosques and 300 homes were burned. Young girls were taken to another Christian town, forced to eat pork and consume alcohol, and raped. Fifty of the young girls lost their lives (Griswold 2008, 4). In a separate but similar incident that occurred at the same time as the CAN attack in Yelwa, two young ladies give an account of a Christian militia coming to their home. They were abducted and taken to the Christian town. On the way, they saw militia slaughtering children

outside of schools. Once they arrived at their destination, they were forced to drink alcohol and to eat pork and dog meat. Although one of the women was pregnant, she was repeatedly raped for four days. CAN was again implicated in this incident (4), and Christian/Muslim hostilities continued to grow. In 2006, tensions between ethnic groups in the southern town of Onitsha erupted as 96 people were killed in riots that began after reports of a Danish cartoon depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Accounts say that soldiers opened fire on a gathering of local residents (mostly Christian). The gathering was in response to allegations that Hausa Muslims attacked a school in which a number of children were killed (Adewale 2006, 1). There were more deaths attached to the controversy of the Danish cartoons in Nigeria than in any other part of the world (Brand 2006, 2).

All these instances of violence, with the exception of those in which CAN was implicated, were clearly the result of conflicting interests, whether they were political, economic, ethnic, or a combination of the three. Religious issues were a factor in the conflicts, but the religious matters more times than not were heavily subordinated to the factors pertaining to the aforementioned political, economic, and ethnic interests.

Conclusion

The best way to summarize religious violence in Nigeria would be to reference a pair of quotations that characterize the current situation. BBC journalist Dan Isaacs is quoted as saying that Nigeria's religious conflict:

...most often boils down to competition between those that see themselves as the true "indigens" of an area, and those that are considered the more recent "settlers." Whatever the historical justifications, the conflict is always and everywhere about access to scarce resources. This might be farmland, or employment, or access to political power. It could even be jealousy over the provision of water or electricity to one village but not to its neighbor ... At their root, these differences are not cultural or religious. They are economic. (in Morris, Michael and Edel 2006, 14)

This sentiment is echoed by Archbishop Josiah Idowu-Fearon of Kaduna, who says: "Every crisis is automatically interpreted as a religious crisis. But we all know that, scratch the surface and it's got nothing to do with religion. It's power" (Griswold 2008, 3).

Several things have become increasingly clear in the course of this research: 1) Islam in Nigeria carries social, political, ethnic, and geographical implications as well as religious ones, 2) the use of Islam as an instrument for the promotion of ruling interests, politics, and economic agendas has been a long and enduring chapter of the history of the region, and finally, 3) many of the underlying causes of conflict in Nigeria are residual effects of colonial legislation as the policy of Indirect Rule yielded consequences that created the ideal contexts for the physical segregation of the north from the south, the economic neglect of the northern region, and the presentation of favorable circumstances in which state Islam could easily be promoted and implemented.

In examining the phenomenon of violence in Nigeria, one can reasonably conclude that religion is possibly the only or most effective outlet for mobilization available to the population. The banning of political mobilization primarily places the responsibility on religion, religious institutions, and religiously affiliated individuals to not only cater to the spiritual and personal matters of the population, but also the economic, political, and social matters of their adherents as well. This factor leads to the politicization of religion and its permeation into affairs that are viewed as being outside the realm of religion by westerners. In the United States, for instance, the Constitution prohibits the formation of a theocracy and the sponsoring of a particular religion by the government. This is not to imply that the politicization of religion does not occur, but it does not take the same forms and does not render the same catastrophic consequences, as Americans are encouraged to address specialized individuals for specific concerns. Americans can use political language because political matters are the concern of politicians. We can use religious language and symbols for the sole purpose of a religious agenda because it has been given its own domain. In the case of Nigeria, religious language is political, economic, ethnic, and regional as there is no shared space for the manifestation of concerns. It is fitting that the addressing of all their concerns will utilize the language of the outlet that is available to them: Religion.

Although Nigeria is half-a-world away geographically, it plays an important role in the maintenance of stability (ironically) in the region and is projected, by the year 2015, to supply at least 25% of the United States' oil imports (Klare and Volman 2004, 226-331). However, of more urgent importance is the potential humanitarian crisis that can result if this situation is not given adequate attention. The rapid spread of this type of violence in combination with the politicization of Islam and Christianity can evolve into a situation that potentially threatens not just the stability of Nigeria, but the entire region.

I would also like to endorse the use of interdisciplinary methods to examine phenomena such as the situation in Nigeria. This method encourages the insights of different disciplines in an effort to forge a more complete understanding of the situation that is being observed. Combining the focus of different methods of scholarship shows significantly more promise in raising and addressing more pressing questions that could potentially lead to uncovering the cause of the conflict in question. This method could have been effective in observing Somalia in 1992 and Rwanda in 1994 and could be instrumental in understanding the present crisis in Darfur. The desired result of the employment of interdisciplinary analysis would be more effective intervention strategies, more informed foreign policy, and more judicious use of military force.

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