RELIGIOUS MULTICULTURALISM: A CHALLENGE ON WEST AFRICAN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS

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Abstract : The development of human resource potential which requires a maximum set of supporters. Not only the economic and political stability but also support social elements. The continent of Africa in particular West African region is an area that is composed of different cultures or different religions. Not only Christian and muslim relations but today is precisely coupled with strife Wahhabism that trigger strife with sunni and Shia and more. The challenges faced by tribes or Nations in the West African countries is also related to diversity. This paper will discuss the African community in developing their potential for the sake of development of the country. The method used is a research library with chaos theory as a framework for analysis. The results showed that West African countries with a high potential of resources but have a tenuous bond between culture and tribal practices are high it is difficult to develop existing resources to the maximum.

Keyword: west africa, multiculturalism, human resources development, religious affairs.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism means different things to different people. For some it is directly linked to the politics of recognition and of difference (Taylor). In this regard, it concerns an appreciation of the necessity to deal with diversity in ways that affirm the value of different cultures and to respect the various claims made by minority groups. For others, multiculturalism concerns an explicit policy of protecting particularistic local cultures in the face of hegemonic and global cultures (both Australia and Canada have such self-conscious policies) or it can refer to a loose form of cultural pluralism (Kuper). Since multiculturalism is not a homogeneous concept or practice, it is important to differentiate between multiculturalism as a practical response to diversity and as an aspect of social philosophy advocating particular values with respect to cultural differences. There is no unifying theory of multiculturalism, and its respect for difference finds expression in a variety of political, social, and cultural approaches to problems of diversity.

The concept of multiculturalism does not enjoy widespread currency in African social thought. It is certainly not a topic of debate in early- twenty- first- century intellectual discourse on the continent. There are many reasons for this neglect, but it is undoubtedly connected to the fact that African societies are intrinsically multiethnic and multicultural. Diversity is not a new thing in Africa. Multiculturalism is premised on challenges to hegemonic cultures occasioned by the large-scale migrations of people who may experience alienation, marginalization, and exclusion in the host country. Sweden, for example, was remarkably homogeneous in a cultural sense prior to the influx of migrant laborers in the 1960s. African countries, in contrast, have entirely different histories. By and large, African states were formed by colonialism, usually to serve the interests of the colonists and, therefore, with little attention paid to the precolonial ethnic allegiances and other forms of belonging. These different histories play a critical role in the extent to which the concept of multiculturalism may be relevant in the African context.

II.   HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

After years of neglect, the theme of employment has returned to the forefront of the international development agenda, following on the heels of the global financial crisis and its aftermath. Prominent examples include recent reports by UNCTAD, UNRISD, the World Bank, in addition to the extensive work by the International Labour Organization. The social value of employment has been recognised within this revived attention, bringing the theme close to the heart of the human development approach.However, there is a danger of reducing the 'social' into a utilitarian framework.

For instance, the 2013 World Development Report treats the 'social value' of jobs as the individual value of a job (presumably the wage) plus its various spillover effects, which can be negative, such as environmental costs, or positive, such as social identity, sense of fairness, or gender equality. This idea of spillovers comes from modern welfare economics – an influence that leading thinkers of the human development approach have tried to critique and overcome since the origins of the approach.

Instead, the idea of 'social value' arguably needs to be anchored in a more nuanced sociological understanding, such as the social nature of basic needs. Like happiness, but unlike objective human development metrics, social values are inherently relative and subjective, such as the sense of security and dignity that people derive from work. These perceptions can adapt over time and to changing contexts. The perception of certain types of work as enhancing dignity in a rural agrarian context, for instance, might not persist through the course of urbanization. Structural and institutional transformations associated with development add even further complexities, particularly in a globalised setting where perceptions are conditioned by factors that extend far beyond the local.

Unemployment is a good example of these complexities. There is a consensus that unemployment must be generally avoided not only because it is detrimental to incomes and demand, but also to dignity and social cohesion. However, many policies that address unemployment have been controversial because, for example, they can often result in detrimental effects on peoples' dignity or social status by forcing them to accept substandard employment mismatched with their skill sets, or else by being used to discipline welfare recipients. On the other hand, sufficient social security can allow the unemployed to avoid situations where they are forced to accept any work at any wage. If affordable and accessible schooling options are also available for mature students, spells of unemployment might encourage reskilling and result in increased social mobility, esteem and income. Under such circumstances, the ability to be unemployed could become a source of dignity and advantage. In most developing countries that lack generalized social security, unemployment is generally a status that only relatively well-off people can afford.

The relationships between social and economic values are hugely debated on empirical, theoretical, ideological and even epistemological grounds. The utilitarian argument that the social value of employment is more or less imputed by its monetary market value is particularly problematic in a world in which people are compelled to work and are not necessarily free to withdraw from a hypothesized labour market bargain, whether their compulsion is driven by absolute poverty or else by more nuanced social needs. The lack of freedom to be excluded in this sense can lead to exploitation.

We might also question whether the processes that drive modern economic growth reinforce the social values of employment. The classical Marxist answer is that capitalist processes are fundamentally alienating for labour; the class conflict that follows is what makes capitalism so dynamic, rather than a harmony between social and economic values. As pointed out by Giovanni Arrighi, even Adam Smith viewed the division of labour within production units and the specialization of work into monotonous and uniform tasks as harmful to the moral and intellectual qualities of the labour force. This tension between productivity and social value can be observed today within increasingly complex and atomized factory systems of production and distribution, such as in the 'Walmartization' of retail stores across the globe.

Bearing these complexities in mind, it is nonetheless useful to focus on the conditions that might allow for sufficient and sustained social values of employment within development. Redistribution is a hugely important condition given its role in socializing the wealth produced by increasing productivity in order to support forms of employment that would be deemed socially valuable and that would reinforce other human development gains, such as in education. In the absence of such socialisation, the

perpetual quest for increasing worker productivity might well exacerbate certain structural aspects of vulnerability, thereby undermining the social valuation of objective (or absolute) gains made in human and economic developmentWarning radicalism

Islam is the predominant religion of the West African interior and the far west coast of the continent (70% of West Africans); and was introduced to the region by traders in the 9th century. Islam is the religion of the region's biggest ethnic groups by population. Islamic rules on livelihood, values, dress and practices had a profound effect on the populations and cultures in their predominant areas, so much so that the concept of tribalism is less observed by Islamized groups like the Mande, Wolof, Hausa, Fula and Songhai, than they are by non-Islamized groups.[41] Ethnic intermarriage and shared cultural icons are established through a superseded commonality of belief or community, known as ummah.[42] Traditional Muslim areas include Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, Niger; the upper coast and inland two-thirds of Sierra Leone and inland Liberia; the western, northern and far-eastern regions of Burkina Faso; and the northern halves of the coastal nations of Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana and ivory coast.

In view of recent terror attacks in West Africa, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso have raised fears of growing radicalization of youth in the region. Al Qaeda has claimed responsibility for attacks on a hotel in Burkina Faso's capital in January and an attack on a popular beach resort in Ivory Coast. More than 65 people died in the attacks, many of them foreigners. Experts say radical versions of Islam have been gaining ground in parts of the region like Mali and Niger and gradually spreading to other parts of the region. Analysts and security experts say the financial and doctrinal penetration of Salafism, the fundamental school of thought, advocating for a return to the original ways of Islam in the region and slippery propaganda from militant groups is making recruitment easier.

In Senegal's poor southern region of Casamance, Boucar Gassama, a retired civil servant is still shocked that his 25-year-old medical student son in Dakar abandoned his studies to join the Islamic State. "He's a humanist. During his fourth year at university, he was part of a group that cared for the sick and their peers. For the last two years, he had been doing consultations at the mosque. With this behaviour, he is acting alone. I never thought he would do this,"He said he has since lost contact with his son after an argument over his decision to depart. ISIS propaganda and security sources confirm fighters from countries including Chad, Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria are already in Libya, where the group is consolidating its presence.

However, they represent the minority of between 3,000-6,000 ISIS fighters, with the lion share coming from North Africa and the Middle East. Some religious scholars say more needs to be done to guide students' readings of the Koran which they often rote-learn at religious schools.

"These are not people who grew up with Islam, with an Islamic education. Education is a process. You and I are muslims, and it's not like we just converted. We received a certain type of education, we were taught about love, peace, tolerance, affection, and being open. Where we come from, we were taught that everyone is the same, no matter what their ethnic background or race is," said Imam Cisse Djiguiba.

With growing concern in the region about recruitment into ISIS and other militant groups, countries like Mauritania have closed several Koranic schools since January for security reasons. In Mali, where an Islamist insurgency is intensifying, some are calling for audits of mosques and NGOs.

The region is being torn by several conflicts with armed groups fighting to control vast territories for trafficking of all kinds; jihadists are still present in Mali's northern regions; terrorist groups close to Al Qaida threaten to kidnap people; and the sect of Boko Haram terrorises vast stretches of Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroun.

Security forces, including the police, are therefore a key target group for the protection of rights in West Africa. Also, in a region with the lowest human development index and the highest illiteracy rates in the world human rights documentation and knowledge is crucial.

A. PEOPLE OF WEST AFRICA

Culturally, the people of the region belong for the most part to one of three major language families. In the northern and least-populous Saharan regions, Arabs and Imazighen (Berbers; singular Amazigh) of the Afro-Asiatic language family predominate. South of a line connecting the course of the Sénégal River, the Niger River, and the southern two-thirds of Nigeria, Niger-Congo languages are spoken. Along the middle course of the Niger River and around Lake Chad, Nilo-Saharan languages related to those of peoples farther east predominate. These peoples are divided into a very complex ethnic mosaic but may often be conveniently classified by their individual languages.

While in the past two decades, the region of WestAfrica has experienced various armedconflicts, a new security threat that has emerged is the growing threat of violence byradical Islamist groups. This phenomenon has assumed prominence in the aftermath ofthe 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States of America. Against the backgroundof a politically unstable region, impoverished by poverty, disease, conflicts, and a highrate of illiteracy, a foothold by radical Islamist groups could destabilize the whole region.The recent escalation of violence perpetuated by radical Islamists groups in the northernparts of Nigeria and other countries poses a grave threat to the region as Nigeria is hometo approximately half the population of the region. Some measures that governments,inconcert with other stakeholders can take include poverty alleviation measures, economicdevelopment of deprived areas, socio-political reforms, inter-faith dialogue andconsultations,prevent institutionalization of Sharia law, promotion of good governanceand inter-governmental cooperation.The region of West Africa is bound by the Atlantic Ocean in the west and south,by the Sahara desert in the north, and in the east, by an imaginary line approximatelyalong the present eastern boundary of Nigeria. It is difficult to define the northern andeastern limits of West Africa in geographical terms because of the non-existence ofnatural geographical barriers marking off this part of Africa from the rest of thecontinent.Two major movements influenced the West Africa region in pre-colonial era: thedispersion of the Bantu people, which led to the development of many kingdoms andempires, and the expansion and consolidation of Islam. Between the 11th and 15thcentury, West Africa was a major trading region, exporting goods to Europe, India,Malinke Sundiata to become renowned throughout the Arab world for its wealth andlearning. The Mali Empire rose out of the regions' feuding kingdoms. At its heights, theempire of Mali composed most of modern Mali, Senegal, and parts of Mauritania andGuinea (BBC Religious Compilation on Africa n. d.).The Mali Empire was a multi-ethnic state with various religious and culturalgroups. Muslims played a prominent role in the courts as counselors and advisors. Whilethe empire's founder, Sundiata Keita, was not himself a Muslim, many Malian kingsbecame Muslims. The most famous of them was Mansa Musa. He made Islam the statereligion and in 1324 went on pilgrimage from Mali to Mecca (Hill 2009). A hundredyears later, the kingdom fell into decline and became the target of Tuareg raids. By the18th century, the northern part of West Africa was a patchwork of city-states andkingdoms and further south, the Ashanti kingdom (in modern Ghana) rose topreeminence. Other prominent kingdoms were the kingdoms of Dahomey, Songhai, andTekur.During this period, traditional religion played an important role in the lives of thepeople of West Africa. Although there were differ

ent varieties of traditional religiouspractices, almost all these religions had common characteristics; a belief in the existenceof one God above a host of other lesser gods, a belief in ancestral spirits, the idea ofsacrifice to induce divine protection and the need to undergo the rites of passage fromchildhood to adulthood (BBC Religious Compilation on Africa, .).

B. RELIGIONS IN WEST AFRICA

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attack, there appears to be a rise inreligious conflicts in parts of West Africa, most notably in Nigeria. This conflict appearsto revolve around the perceived rise of radical Islam that was born out of theglobalization of Al Qaida. Whether or not Islam, and more specifically radical Islam isbecoming more prevalent in the region is the main focus of this research.Islam is difficult to define or generalize. In one sense, it denotes a religion, asystem of beliefs and worship, and in other, the civilization that grew up and flourishedunder the aegis of that religion. Islam therefore denotes more than fourteen centuries ofhistory, a billion and a third people, a religion and a cultural tradition of enormousdiversity (Lewis 2003). Islam is a monotheistic faith regarded as revealed throughMuhammad as the Holy Prophet of Allah (Oxford Dictionary Eleventh Edition). TheHoly Prophet Muhammad, who was born in Mecca in about 570AD, is credited with theorigin of Islam. The Arabic word "Islam" is derived from the Arabic word "AlSalaam"which means peace. The root word of Islam is "alsilm" which means "submission" or"surrender." It is understood to mean "submission to Allah" (Orlich n.d.). There arediffErent sects and grouping of Islam such as the Wahhabism, Sufism, and Salafism.Wahhabism is a conservative Sunni Islamic sect based on the teachings ofMuhammad ibn18th century scholar from what is today known asSaudi Arabia, who advocated to purge Islam of what he considered innovations in Islam.Wahhabism is the dominant form of Islam in Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism has developedconsiderable influence in the Muslim world through the funding of mosques, schools andother means from Persian Gulf oil wealth. The primary doctrine of Wahhabi is Tawhid,or the uniqueness and unity of God (Glasse 2001).The principal tenet of Salafism is that Islam was perfect and complete during thedays of Muhammad and his Sahaba (prominent companions of Muhammed), but thatundesirable innovations have been added over the later centuries due to materialist andcultural influences. Salafism seeks to revive a practice of Islam that more closelyresembles the religion during the time of Muhammad (Hoebink 2007).Sufism is a mystified version of Islam. Sufism is a science whose objective is thereparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God (Zarruq 2008). SeveralSufi sects, such as the Mourides and Tijani in Senegal, follow the tenets of Islam asinterpreted by those sects' founding prophets.Arab traders, and the Berbers of North Africa, brought Islam to West Africathrough the northern part of Africa. The Berbers converted to Islam as far back as the 7thcentury and through their commercial transactions and influence on northerners, wereable to spread Islam quickly among inhabitants of the region. In West Africa, large citieslike Timbuktu, Goa and Djenne, had large Berber and Arab populations and with themcame Islam from the Middle East. On the east coast of Africa, a new culture came aboutfrom the mixture of Arab traders and Africans living together. City States like Zanzibarand Kilwa were a testament of the greatness of the two cultures building together andsharing knowledge. There is evidence that many rulersconverted to Islam not becausethey wanted to be Muslims but rather for economic and political reasons. Islam continuedto spread with its trade links to the Arab world, converting many West Africans who sawIslam to be lucrative because of its economic prospects (Kalagenesis 2009).In West Africa, great kings like Mansa Musa of the Mali Empire, who made theHajj to Mecca, on his return from the trip, brought many famous Islamic scholars fromCairo to build new schools and mosques in Timbuktu. These Islamic scholars later beganto demand strict interpretation of Islamic law as the Muslim population grew largerMansa Musa's pilgrimage projected the Mali Empire's enormous wealth and potential,which further attracted many Muslim traders and scholars. Local leaders took keeninterest in the Islamic legal system and Islamic theology. Timbuk

tu became a center ofIslamic learning and civilizatio n and established Sankore University, the first Musli mUniversity in West Africa (Doi 2006). Many majo r towns became the principal focus ofIslam and relat ions were established with the Arab world in the Mi ddle East. The varioustrade routes between West Af rica and the North made places like Gao, Timbuktu, Sijilmasa, Taghaza, Borneo in northern Nigeria and Hausa land very important (Hill2009).

The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 strengthene d the rise of anti-British andanti

Western sentiments, particularly among Islamic sch olars, which   gave rise to PanIslamism. Over the ye ars, this British occupation led to the formation of v arious militantIslamists groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which fought against British colonialr ule. These groups soon spread throughout Egypt, Su dan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan,Palestine and North Afr ica (Servold n.d., 46)Throughout the nineteenth cent ury and in the beginning of the twentieth century,Su fis stood at the forefront of the Jihad against Europe ans in all parts of Africa. TheLibyan, Omar alMukht ar, led the struggle against the Italian occupation; th e SomaliSayyid Muhammad Abdullah Hassan led th e struggle against the British, Italians andEthiopians ; and other less known Islamic Sufi scholars, such as those who took part in theMaji Maji rebellion again st the Germans in Tanzania (Terdman 2007).Gradua lly, this militant form of Islam penetrated both inlan d and southwardthrough the activism of major chari smatic figures that inspired intense resistance agains tEuropean domination. These activities sowed the s eeds of resistance against the colonialpowers and lo cal leaders that supported them. This process of Isla mization in Africa didnot cease after the colonial pe riod and continues even today with the result that so meAfrican Muslims now carry on a tradition that ha s had a long history in certain areas ofsubSaharan A frica.Christianity finally came to West Africa with t he arrival of the Portuguese andDutch in the 15th ce ntury. Although there were previous attempts to intr oduce thereligion, these attempts did not yield any p ositive results. The indigenous peoplehowever, cont inued to indulge in their own traditional religious pr

actices until the 19thcentury when Christian mission s to Africa increased because of antislavery crusade s andthe interest of Europeans in colonizing Africa. In areas where people had alreadyconverted to Isla m, however, Christianity had little success (BBC Re ligious Compilationon Africa n.d.).Christianity cam e as an agent of change to West Africa in that it brou ght newopportunities to some and destabilized the p ower base of others. In the Gold Coast,present day Ghana, Christianity culminated in a series of battles and wars between theAshanti kingdom and the colo nialists. These Christian missions brought education ,literacy and slave trade to the shores of West Africa . Although the practice of slavery hadoccurred all o ver the world for many years, this was the first time that so many peoplefrom one continent had been tra nsported to another against their will. Spread of the Christian religion, at this point, was minimal and li mited to the coastal regions (BBCReligious Compil ation in Africa n.d.).

Radical Islam may be described as a group of Musli ms with extremist views whowant to bring about fu ndamental change. It has normally been associated with the MiddleEast, South East Asia and parts of N orth Africa. Radical Islam has been associated withI slam largely because of various interpretations of th e Qu'ran by many people to achievegroups or indivi dual objectives. Radical Islam is commonly promot ed through extremeacts of violence and terror such a s that promoted by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaida.I slamic fundamentalism is a conservative religious m ovement that seeks a return toIslamic values and Isla mic law (Sharia) in the face of Western modernism, which it seesas corrupt and atheistic (Britannica Co ncise Dictionary). Radical Islam is thereforedifferen t from Islamic fundamentalism in the sense that whil e radical Islam seeks to bringabout change in a radic al way, Islamic fundamentalists aim to return to the f undamentalsof Islam in the face of what they percei ves as corrupt and atheistic tendencies of Western culture.

It is pertinent to note, however, that both radical Isla mists and Islamicfundamentalists seek to bring abou t change. The former seeks radical changes usually b

yviolent means and the latter by a return to the fund amentals of Islam. Many people haveassociated radi cal Islamists with fundamentalism perhaps because of the difficulty indifferentiating one from another. Fundamentalists seeking change or a return to thefu ndamentals of Islam may not necessarily be associat ed with violence. It is fair to state,however, that fund amentalists with extremist Islamic views who seek t o bring aboutradical changes through violence can b e referred to as radical Islamists.

Radical Islam can be traced as far back as the 13th C entury when the armies ofIslam waged war, destroy ed and completely conquered Persia, which at that ti me hadbeen exhausted by many previous wars. The defeat of Islam and the advent of theIndustrial Revo lution turned Europe and Western economies into d eveloped nations(Demant 2006, 26, 39)

Over time, as some analysts have argued, the collap se of the Soviet Union and theend of the Cold War r esulted in the gradual rise of radical Islam. During t his period,radical Islam metamorphosed into a comp lex ideology manifesting itself in various formssuch as kidnapping and terrorist attacks. Islam, which sta rted in the early days ofMuhammad, has often been t urned into a radical ideology by some and has been usedseveral times by various Muslim sects to propa gate their own group interests (Pipes2000). While m any followers of the religion would regard radical Is lam as a religion,others may want to visualize it as a n ideology, just like fascism, communism and Marxism.

In West Africa, characteristics of radical Islam can b e traced to around the 18thcentury, when Uthman D an Fodio, a Fulani scholar, led a major jihad 1802. With the helpof a large Fulani cavalry and Hausa pe asants, Fodio overthrew the region's Hausa rulersan d replaced them with Fulani emirs. The movement l ed to centralization of power in theMuslim commun ity, education reforms, and transformations of law. Uthman Dan Fodioalso sparked a literary revival wi th a production of religious work that included Arab ictexts and vernacular written inArabic script.His he irscontinued the legacy of literaryproduction andedu cation reform (Hill 2009)During that period of Briti

sh colonial rule, the Muslim north perceived itself a sseparate from the Christian and animist south. The British modified indigenous practicesas necessary to assure the continuation of colonial rule, but they did not fundamentallydisturb Islamic practices in the n orth. They permitted the application of Sharia in so measpects of criminal law and removed some of Sh aria's more stringent penalties such asstoning, ampu tation, and death (Falola 1999).

In northern Nigeria, the most conflictridden cities in cluded Kano and Kaduna,where there were substant ial Christian communities. In addition to Sunni activ ism forSharia, violenceprone Shia sects also emerge d. These sects have been involved inclashes in Kano , Kaduna, and Zaria, where they were most promine nt and referred toAyatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as t heir source of inspiration for revolutionary leadershi p(Falola 1999). Many believed that this attempt to i mpose Islam in all spheres of lifeagainst African tra ditional religion marked the beginning of radical Isla m in the region.In recent times, the idea of rejecting modernity in favor of a return to the sacredpast with its varied and ramified history has given rise to a nu mber of movements. Themost important of these un doubtedly has been that known, after its founder, as *Wahhabism* (Lewis 2004). Additionally, the phenom enon of radical Islam, which calls onMuslims to use violence, has become a common feature in some We st African countries.

The 11 September 2001 attacks awoke the world to a sophisticated form ofIslamic terror whose network was worldwide with far reaching consequences. Th e attacksalso ushered in an era of a new wave of viol ent attacks by radical Islamist groups. Recentefforts by Al Qaida leadership to extend its bases into Afric a and events in recent past insome countries, especia lly Nigeria, suggest a growing trend of radical extre mist activitiesin West Africa. In the most recent viol ence in 2010, a group calling itself the *BokoHaram* unleashed mayhem on the population in some north ern states of Nigeria resultingin the deaths of about 700 people (Bauchi 2009). Other radical groups hav e alleged,among other issues, that Christians have e ncroached on their farms and grazing landsdriving t

heir communities into economic deprivation and poverty. This brings to fore thesettlers and indigenes problem, which alludes to the role of economic resourcemisallocation as a potential source of religious conflict (Paden 2010).

A range of socioeconomic and psychological factors have been associated withthose who have chosen to radicalize to include the bored and frustrated, successfulcollege students, the unemployed, the second and third generation, new immigrants, pettycriminals, and prison parolees. Invariably, these individuals seek other likemindedindividuals and often form a looseknit group, cluster, or network. Commonalities amongthese individuals' age, residence, schools, interests, personality, and ethnicity are criticalin determining who becomes a member of a particular group or cluster (Sageman 2004).

Islam represents about 50 percent of the population in the West Africa regiongainst approximately 40 percent for Christians. Social changes in West Africa havegiven rise not only to a complexity of religious expressions but also diversity anddivergence of theological expression. There are fundamentally different views of Islamwithin the religion. There is the Ahmadiyya, which has a theology quite different fromthe patterns of worship in orthodox Islam. There are variant groupings referred to as Sufisects, such as the Tijanaiyya, Qadriyya and the Badirriya (Assimeng 2010). While thesevarious movements have differences, which sometimes resulted in conflicts in the region,they have generally co-existed in relative peace.

The process of radicalization, often described by many authors, seeks to attributecertain factors to the cause of radical Islam. These factors include large Muslimpopulations, poverty and unemployment, illiteracy and marginalization amongst others. Aclose look at the region however indicates other underlying factors. For instance, Gambiaand Guinea, with significant numbers of Muslims and deplorable poverty levels, have notrecorded significant activities of radical Islamists. Senegal, a country with about 95percent Muslims has also not experienced violent activities of radical Islam. Nigeria onthe other hand, with about a 60 percent population of Muslims, has been ravaged byviolence by radical Islamist groups. There are indications therefore that other factorspeculiar to the region may be responsible for the radicalization of the Islam.Arab Berbers introduced Islam in West Africa from North Africa through trading.

Islam coexisted with West African traditional religion until the era of colonial rule whenradical Islamist groups began resistance against to what they perceived to be oppressionand an affront to Islam.

In the post independence era, when militant Islamic struggles continued in otherparts of the world, West Africa remained relatively peaceful and devoid of any seriousreligious conflict until the latter parts of the 20th century. The 11 September 2001 attackon the United States ushered in an era of increased violence by Muslim radicals in certaincountries in the region especially in Nigeria. The interest and presence of radical groupsin Africa assumes an alarming dimension in the wake of political violence in Nigeria andreflects West Africa as a viable region for the growth of radical Islam. This hasmanifested itself through selfradicalized sympathizers of global Jihad, which follow thestrategy and doctrines of AlQaeda and its supportive clerics and scholars. In the recentpast, the world has witnessed a growing presence of newly formed radical jihadi groupsin Nigeria and other parts of West Africa using violentconflicts to radicalize AfricanIslamic elements, recruiting and bringing the African arena under the Jihadi "globalumbrella" (Terdman 2007).

Although many studies have pointed to certain underlying factors, which facilitatethe process of radicalization of Islam, West Africa does not fully lend itself to suchinterpretations, prompting an analysis of other factors. This thesis was developed with astudy of the phenomenon of radical Islam, using Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire as casestudies.

C. SUSCEPTIBILITY OF AFRICAN MUSLIMS TOWARDS RADICAL ISLAM

Charlotte and Frederick Quinn, in their book, *Pride, Faith, and Fear: Islam inSubSaharan Africa*, says Islam in West Africa is referred to as local Islam where thereare no institutions of higher Islamic learning, ordained clergy or international body toregulate doc

trine. Without any specific educational or doctrinal standards beyondadherence to the five basic tenets of Islam, there is considerable variety among thepreaching and practices of individual mosques. Islam overlaid with traditional local beliefsystems usually has provided its own explanation about life and death and how to dealwith reverses and good fortunes. Elements of folk belief, rituals and music were retainedand given an Islamic overlay. Thus, the blending of Islamic with preIslamic cultures wasa distinction of Islam in West Africa to which the prayers of Sufi mystics and thelanguage of the Quran was added.

They observed that despite the leaderless nature of Islam in the region, Sufismand several brotherhoods have expanded throughout the region beyond national borders.For instance, Senegal's Tijaniya has a large following in northern Nigeria and theMouridina clerics follow peripatetic Wolof traders throughout West Africa, Europe, andNorth Africa.

According to Hussein D. Hassan, in a *Congressional Research Service Paper,Islam In Africa,* African Muslims, like other Muslims in Asia, the Middle East and therest of the world, seem to be locked into an intense struggle regarding the future directionof Islam. At the core of the struggle are questions about the way in which Muslimsshould practice their faith. This scholar asserts that the majority seems to prefer to remainon the moderate, tolerant course that Islam has historically followed. However, arelatively small, but growing group would like to establish a stricter form of the religion,one that informs and controls all aspects of society. He noted that although the majorityof Muslims in Africa are Sunni, the complexity of Islam in Africa is revealed in thevarious schools of thought, traditions, and voices that constantly contend for dominancein many African countries. African Islam is not static and is constantly being reshaped byprevalent social, economic, and political condition.Hassan states that African Islam has both local and global dimensions. On thelocal level, experts assert that African Muslims operate with considerable autonomy anddo not have an international organization that regulates their religious practices. This factaccounts for the differences and varieties in Islamic practices throughout the Africancontinent. On the global level, however, African Muslims belong to the Umma, theworldwide Islamic community, and follow global issues and current events that affect theMuslim world with keen interest. With globalization and new initiatives in informationtechnology, African Muslims have developed and maintained close connections with thewider Muslim world.

Lamin O. Sanneh in his book, *The Crown and the Turban*: *Muslims and the WestAfrican Pluralism*, reveals that when Islam first appeared in West Africa, people wereintrigued, curious, puzzled perhaps bewildered but seldom hostile. The warm receptionreceived by Muslims enabled them to flourish and the indigenous people found theirusefulness as important traders and Arab importers of a written language. In time,Muslim commercial enclaves grew in size and influence, attracting converts from thelocal population. As time elapsed, converts practiced the old African traditional beliefsand at the same time drawing on their new found faith, which became inconsistent with earlier custom and usage. As knowledge increased, the practice of Islam became lax. Thebook reveals that persistent visits to West Africa by prominent Islamic scholars raised thegeneral standard of observance by bequeathing requisite symbols of Islam, like theQur'an, a legal document, a turban, prayer rug, some prayer beads, a silk gown and otheritems. It further notes that Muslims took a favorable view of Africa's religious openness,found affinity in certain practices and exploited gaps in local techniques and resourcesand asserted the primacy of Muslim scripture, law and practice. This dynamic historicaltheme of affinity and challenge, accommodation and primacy helped establish Islam inWest Africa.

Not everyone, however, alludes to the growing influence of radical Islam in thesubregion. In his book, *The Dark Sahara*, Jeremy Keenan, is of the opinion that citingthe need to combat the growth of Al Qaida in Africa is a deception by the U.S. toestablish bases in the region and pursue its multiple imperial objectives in the name ofsecurity.

John Paden, in an article, "Is Nigeria a Hotbed of Islamic Extremism," disagreeswith the assertion that ra

dical Islam is on the rise in Nigeria. He notes that religiousviolence in Nigeria must be understood as part of a complicated political context in acountry striving to maintain national unity amongst an ethnically diverse population splitevenly between Christians and Muslims. Paden states that Nigeria is not a hotbed ofIslamic extremism but one of Islamic moderation. He observes that while much of WestAfrica's Islam is influenced by Sufism, the Sokoto Caliphate has maintaineddecidedlyWest African version of Islam, less dependent on external Arab influences.

D. WHAT MAKES RADICAL ISLAM APPEALING TO WEST AFRICA MUSLIMS

The question of why extremist groups continue to be able to attract followersperpetually seems irrational especially in the face of social stigmatization, emotionalseparation from one's family, professional risks, and police harassment. Yet recruitingefforts nevertheless continue to draw members into the fold. David Mc Cormack, in hisOccasional Paper Series titled, *The African Vortex: Islamism in SubSaharan Africa* ,notes that while the historical complexities that allowed the penetration of radical Islamare many, greatest consideration is generally given to two potential sources. First is themixture of dire political, social and economic conditions that arose from the inability ofAfrican states to forge representative governments and strong economies following thecollapse of colonialism in the 1950s and 1960s. He observes that while Africa has takendesirable steps in recent years away from its economic and political backwardness, thesehave not been enough to discourage its large Muslim populations from the Islamist lure,as Africa continues to be plagued by unaccountable and corrupt governments and underdeveloped economies. Ironically, he notes that, where democratic transformation istaking place, Islamists have been afforded greater freedom to implement their program,while sometimes painful but important economic reforms have created dislocation usedas ammunition by Islamists. Undoubtedly, poverty, disenfranchisement and generalsocietal disorder play a role in making African Muslims susceptible to Islamistinfluences.

In his book, *The Crisis of Islam, Holy War and Unholy Terror*, Bernard Lewisstates that almost the entire Muslim world is affected by poverty and tyranny. Both ofthese problems are attributed to American economic dominance and exploitation, thinlydisguised as globalization. He notes that the increasingly wretched economic situation inmost of the Muslim world and subSaharan Africa, compared not only with the West butalso with the rapidly rising economies of East Asia, fuels these frustrations. To buttressthe point further, he observed that the World Bank reported that in the 1990s, thecombined gross national products of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, three of Israel'sneighbors, were considerably smaller than that of Israel alone. He also cited World Bankreports in 2000, which stated that the average annual income in the Muslim countriesfrom Morocco to Bangladesh was only half of the world average. He concludes that these problems, coupled with the combination of low productivity and high birth rate results ina growing population of unemployed, uneducated and frustrated young men

E. SOCIO-POLITICAL IMBALANCE

Sociopolitical imbalance and its associated problems of poverty and deprivationremain a significant part of the north. Many people feel discriminated against on accountof their ethnicity, religion, and region. In the northwest of Nigeria, only 25 percent ofpregnant women use clinics compared to 85 percent in the southeast and maternalmortality rates in the northeast are 939 percent higher than in the southeast. Additionally,core poverty in the northeast is twice as high in the north west of the country than in thesoutheast. There is also discriminatory allocation of government projects and grants anddifferential access to key sectors of the economy, such as oil and gas andtelecommunications (Langer, Mustapha, and Stewart 2007, 9).

Despite the large number of Ibos in Lagos and Kano, Hausas in Shagamu andYorubas in Funtua, their absence from modern governance structures in their respectiveareas of abode is a testimony of the extent of their marginalization. In many parts of thecountry, such as Plateau, Nassarawa, and Taraba states, some Nigerians are labeledindigenes and others, settlers.

The former claim to be the natives and owners of the landwhile all others are regarded as tenants. In daily existence, the indigenes contend that allopportunities must go to them to the exclusion of the settlers. These exclusionary politicssow the seeds of violence. Muslims, who are marginalized even for reasons asideireligion, become peeved and seek to do same in areas perceived to be dominated by the(Langer, Mustapha, and Stewart 2007,).

The state of Sokoto, for instance, is relatively peaceful as compared to otherstates. There is however, the existence of inequality between indigenes an settlers withdiscriminatory practices based on religion and ethnic divides. There is evidence ofdiscriminatory practices in terms of job opportunities, conditions of work, educationalopportunities, and basic amenities are not equality distributed. Settler communities lackaccess roads and good schools. The nonindigenes of Sokoto are only allowed to vote, butnot to be voted for. Except for token appointments, political appointments are reservedfor the sons of the soil. The non indigenes are employed on contract and pay higherschool fees than the indigenes (Langer, Mustapha, and Stewart 2007).A region with a high fertility rate coupled with lack of employment opportunitiesinvariably would result in a large number of disgruntled unemployed youth who thenbecome disillusioned with life. If a group is excluded from political power and marginalized economically, group consciousness arise and disparate subgroups will bebrought together under a common identity to create a more effective resistance (Steward2009). These groups of people are the willing tools of any radical Islamic group or leaderwho seeks to recruit them.Religious leaders, Muslim and Christian, did not distance themselves from therhetoric of the politicians. The politicization of the religious sphere and injection ofpolitical rhetoric with faith was one of the underlying factors of the crisis. For instance,as their followers were subject to police pestering and brutality, Muslim leaders did not hesitate to make pronouncements against this state of affairs. Their political militancyand partisanship came to the surface when Imam Boubabar Fofana, the spokesperson ofthe Superior Council of Imams of C

ote d'Ivoire, stated that Muslims have no qualmgiving their support to Alassane Ouattara, if the community deems him the bestcandidate. He said Muslims should not be blamed for their support for Ouattara, becauseit is as legitimate as the support the Baule people give to Bedie, and the support that theBete people give to Gbagbo as well. The repression that the Muslims underwent duringthe elections and Gbagbo's utterances forced the Supreme Leader of the Muslims to statethat the regime of the current President was built by the blood of the martyrs of Islam(Konate 2004).Just like the Muslim congregations, the Christian church was steeped in thepolitical strife, with church leaders choosing sides openly. Archbishop Bernard Agre ofthe St. Paul Cathedral of the Plateau, Abidjan, was cited for being instrumental in therejction of the candidacy of Mr. Ouattara. The bishops of Cote d'Ivoire, during aconference convened in September 2000, in Yamoussoukro, a few days before thepresidential elections of October 2000, released a common statement where they publiclyopposed Ouattara's candidacy. They argued that in the opinion of the people of Coted'Ivoire, some candidates raise more problems than they solve. For the sake of thecountry, therefore, which is dear to all Ivorian, be it naturalized or native, they ask theseleaders to be brave and wise enough to reconsider their stand and pull out of the politicalrace (Konate 2004).

These developments condoned the stratification of the citizens of the country byreferring to them as Ivorians by origin and Ivorians by adoption, which was the rhetoricof the politicians. Under normal circumstances, wisdom and religious values, virtues ofpeace and tolerance, respect of the other, the condemnation of injustice in whatever formit presents itself, and the separation of religion from the State as enshrined by theConstitution of Cote d'Ivoire would have restrained religious leaders from assuming acentral role in the political arena (Konate 2004). From their pronouncements, leaders ofthese two religious institutions were polarized along political lines, and religion thusbecame a determinant factor in the politicalThe conflict also led to emergence of militant pro-government youthorganizations, the Young Patriots.

While the Young Patriots initially were able tomobilize a wide crosssection of the population in Abidjan, they soon developed intourban militia forces under the control of the government, consisting exclusively of peoplefrom the southwestern part of the country, the home region of President Laurent Gbagbo(Stewart 2009, 23). The Young Patriots were used several times to conduct violentdemonstrations against other ethnic groups. The writer witnessed several instances wherethe government propagated demonstrations by the Young Patriots even against the United Nations forces.

F.   PROMOTION OF INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE

Religion and ethnicity are part of the political process in most West Africancountries. Both Nigerians and Ivorian politics are split along ethnic and religious lines.The government of Nigeria should organize regular interfaith dialogue betweenChristians and Muslims to promote peaceful coexistence of both religions in the society.The Nigerian government should intensify its use of the Christian Association of Nigeriato dialogue with credible Muslim organizations to sensitize their members to refrain fromviolence and resort to peaceful means of resolving differences. The government shouldtransform the National Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) to a more communityentrenched institution with active branches in all the states and support judicial conflictmediation.The government of Cote d'Ivoire should foster interfaith dialogue by regularmeetings of the Supreme Council of Muslims and the Conference of Archbishops. At the local levels, local leaders, senators, and mayors should be empowered to involve localChristian and Muslim leaders in peace building efforts. Additionally local politicians andnongovernmental organizations should be encouraged by the Ivorian government tosponsor and organize regular dialogue between representatives of all the major ethnicgroups. This should not take place after violence has broken out but must be a regulafeature of the local government authorities.

G. RESOLVE SETTLERS AND INDIGENES DISTINCTION

The settler and indigenes distinction in northern Nigeria is manifested in Coted'Ivoire by the concept of *Ivoirité*. With a quarter of the population affected by theconcept in Cote d'Ivoire, it is almost certain that civil strife will resurge if the issue of*Ivoirité* is not properly addressed.The government of Nigeriashould initiatea nationalprocess aimed at addressingthe settler and indigene problem.This should bringtogether key leaders from allthe settler and indigenecommunities to find anamicablesettlementto the problem. Thegovernment shouldaim at a new land reform policy for the affected areas.

The government of Cote d'Ivoire should institute constitutional reforms aimed ataddressing the problem at the national level. This could be preceded by a nationalreferendum to ascertain the level of support before taking the issue to the legislature.

The international community represented by the United Nations, United States,African Union, ECOWAS and other stakeholders like France and Burkina Faso shouldsupport the government in establishing a new socio-

political climate based on equality,tolerance and mutual respect for all parties in the Ivorian conflict. Cote d'Ivoire shouldembrace a concept of universal citizenship rights for all the citizenry.

H.   CURTAIL EXTERNAL ISLAMIC INFLUENCE

The government should curtail external Islamic influences fromcountries such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran. This can be achieved through themonitoring of states' interaction with other nations by the federal government.Thefederal government   should also explore diplomatic avenues to reduce interaction betweensuch countries and individual stateThe West Africa subregion in recent times has witnessed a number of radicalIslamists activities, raising security concerns for a region already saddled by poverty,disease and conflicts. Some, like Keenan, see the increased awareness of radical activitiesin West Africa as a ploy by the U.S. and western allies to propagate its imperial motives.

Keenan's views, for instance is contrary to those who believe that the activities of radicalIslamist groups have been prominent.

CONCLUSION

The government of Nigeria should set conditions for economic development ofpoor communities especially those in the northern parts of the countries. There should beinvestment in infrastructure to improve social services, provision and access to basicamenities to all people irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Governorsshould encourage trading between the northern states and other neighboring countries toincrease trade and expand markets across the northern half of the country. In this regard,the governments should invest in the construction of rail and road networks linking thenorth and neighboring countries to facilitate economic development.

The government of Cote d'Ivoire should develop the northern parts of the countryby building and extending water and electricity facilities. It should also provide tax reliefto companies directly involved in economic development in the northern parts of thecountry.Islam over the years has coexisted with traditional religion for a long time. Thedecline of Islamic influence, blamed on the West, gave rise to the birth of an ideologycalled Islamism. This ideology has been generally characterized by violence, perpetuatedThe governments of Nigeria should improve local governance structures in thenorthern parts of the country. The federal government should be transparent especiallyduring local and national elections. Government officials should be held accountable tothe people through by upholding the tenets of justice and equality, freedom, probity, andaccountability. This would ensure the reduction in the levels of corruption by governmentand public officials and thereby boost confidence of the population in the government'sability to administer its affairs.From the aboveanalysis, sociopolitical imbalanceinfluencesthe ability ofindividuals and groups to resortto violence especiallywhen they groupunder the banner of religion.

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