

Assessment of the Factors Influencing Islamic Movement in Nigeria's Protest and Peace in Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria

ABIERE DENISE PEREKPO

Department of Peace and Conflict Resolution, Nasarawa State University Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Abstract- Protest, a framework employed by rights and advocacy groups to demand social change and transition from existing societal norms, has been employed across times by the Gandhi-led salt march in 1930, the Selma march against racial discrimination in the US in 1967, the Arab Spring and UK Uncut of 2010, and the #EndSARS protest of 2020 against government's unfavorable policy, marginalization, and worsening economic situations. In the same light, the IMN protest in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, ensued to demand the release of El-Zakzaki, held in detention despite the court's acquittal of all count charges. In view of the incessant protests and the government's inability to proffer lasting solution to the crisis, the study employed the descriptive method to source relevant information from secondary sources of journals, newspapers, textbooks, and periodicals to infer the factors influencing IMN protest and its influence on peace in Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. The study found that the IMN crisis which is deeply rooted in politics, transcends Nigeria as the ripple effect of the intensification of the foreign policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia resulted in the Nigerian government's undue suppression of the penetration of IMN in the country. In addition to marginalization and protest nexus, poverty and ignorance proximately influence the penetration and mobilization of IMN members for protest, which impedes peace in FCT, Nigeria. The study concluded that IMN protest, which impedes peace in Federal Capital Territory, results from politics, marginalization, and undue suppression by the dominant group, as evident in the Sampang region of Indonesia and the Middle East. The study recommends that the consociational model of democracy, which advocates for fair representation of subgroups, be applied to enhance peace building

in the IMN crisis, as evident in the post-Apartheid regime in South Africa and the Rwandan Genocide.

Indexed Terms- Consociational Model of Democracy, IMN, Peace, Protest.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the onset, protest by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) started as a non-violent movement in solidarity for and the release of Sheik El-Zakzaky, incarcerated in Abuja in the aftermath of the Zaria fiasco in 2015. A non-violent movement is a social framework that rights and advocacy groups employ as a paradigm from existing societal norms through labor strikes, civil disobedience, procession, and protest. The IMN crisis in FCT embodies procession and protest carried out to demand their fundamental right to worship and the release of their leader after court acquittal. Protest as an embodiment of civil movement has been undertaken across times globally for social change. While Martin (2013) traced the origin of non-violent civil action to 1902 Gandhi's led opposition in Johannesburg, South Africa, against the government's oppressive law against Indians in South Africa, notable protests such as the Indian Salt March led by Gandhi in 1930, the Selma march led by Martin Luther King Jr in March 1967, the UK Uncut in 2010, the Arab Spring uprising in 2010, and the #EndSARS protest of 2020 in Nigeria were employed to demand social change from unfavorable government policies and marginalization. In lieu of the foregoing, IMN protests in FCT were embarked upon to exercise their fundamental right to peaceful assembly and movement enshrined in the 1999 constitution (as amended) and for the release of their incarcerated leader, El-Zakzaky. In order to illuminate the causative factors engendering the IMN

protest and influence on peace in FCT, there is a need to highlight the origin and penetration of IMN in Nigeria.

The origin and penetration of Shi'ism is contested in Nigeria. While Isa (2018) traced the origin of Shi'ism to the early encounters of Lebanese in Nigeria with Northern Muslim communities, a historical account by Mohammad and Abdullahi (2019) argued that the emergence of Shi'ism is traced to the return of Sheik El-Zakzaky as an emissary to Iran in 1979. El-Zakzaky's return to Nigeria birthed Shi'a in what is known as the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). To enhance its growth and penetration in northern Nigeria, IMN employed measures such as propaganda, charitable deeds, and rural evangelism to amass a significant portion of the Sunni-dominated Muslims in the northern part of the country. In addition, Isa (2018) submitted that other enticing approaches adopted in spreading Shi'ism include coordinating welfare schemes, temporary marriages, economic empowerment programs, and rural evangelism. It is noteworthy that there are various Shi'a sects in Nigeria, but the study is limited to El-Zakzaky's led Shi'ism (IMN) in Nigeria.

In the aftermath of El-Zakzaky's return as an emissary to Iran, an ideology to lead Muslims faithful in strict adherence to Islamic principles was conceived. In his vision, in line with Khomeini's vision of an Islamic government ruled by the 'guardianship of the Jurist' *velayat e fagih*, and to emancipate the growing impoverished Nigerians, El-Zakzaky opted for radical and violent approaches to instill the Iranian styled Khomeinism in Nigeria (Khanabadi, 2021). These approaches included advocacy for Sharia law, protest, civil disobedience, and a parallel state through its military composition (Mohammad & Abdullahi, 2019). The emergence and growth of IMN became a threat to the Sunni-led government and allies such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the US, which necessitated various measures to suppress the growth and penetration of IMN in Nigeria (Khanabadi, 2021). Onapajo (2017) opines that Sunni-state-backed security forces were employed to clampdown on Shi'ites while, in the view of Sani (2018), measures such as the instruments of critical songs, open condemnation, and theological debates were employed by the Sunni

sect to curtail the growth and penetration of IMN in Nigeria.

IMN penetration and the growing Iranian support, which is a sharp contrast to the interest of the US, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Sunni elites in Nigeria, necessitate the prevailing measures to suppress IMN's penetration (Khanabadi, 2021). In addition, the increasing affiliation of IMN to Hezbollah constitutes a security threat to the US, Israel, and Saudi Arabia's interests as the body can easily be mobilized to engage in a proxy war in Nigeria. In view of the foregoing, Doukhan (2016) submitted that the Shi'a minority Islamic sect in Nigeria, which Iran openly supports to expand its revolutionary ideology, is capable of undermining peace in the country. This is evident in the shipment of weapons (rocket launcher and grenade in a container labelled building material) designated for FCT from Bandar-Abbas that was intercepted in Apapa Port, Lagos State, in July 2010. Khanabadi (2021: 57) submitted that "it is for this reason the IMN is, on the one hand, a victim of the hostilities of heretical and Wahhabi militants in Nigeria, and on the other hand, the target of the attacks of the Nigerian regime influenced by the external powers, especially by the Americans."

Hitherto, the IMN crisis in FCT, IMN has engaged in a series of confrontations with the government, among which are the 1991 clashes with security forces in Katsina, the 2009 confrontation with the police in Zaria, the pro-Palestinian procession fiasco with the Nigerian Army (NA) in 2014 with a resultant 35 casualties of IMN members, and the 2015 confrontation with the NA in Zaria with a resultant massacre of an estimated 300 IMN members (Leadership, 2015). As a result of the growing confrontations with the state, IMN is labelled as an anti-state and Islamic sect whose activities contravened Islamic principles and deterred people from embracing Islam (Muhammad & Abdulahi, 2019). In addition, Muhammad and Abdulahi (2019) submitted that IMN teachings promote activities such as the festival of *Ashoura*, *muzaharan* (demonstration), *Tattaki* (trek king in commemoration of the slain Hussein), and *mu'utamah* (annual *maulud* for Shi'a twelve Imams) that are marred with civil disorder and confrontations with state security forces. More also,

Doukhan (2016) posits that IMN's activities embedded in procession and demonstration on occasions such as Quds (the annual event held on the last Friday of Ramadan) and Ashura (the tenth day of Muharran) impede peace and create civil disorder by preventing movement and inciting confrontations with security forces whose permission are not undertaken. The foregoing IMN activities and penetration provide the basis for state-led measures in controlling the excesses of the sect so as to prevent an outbreak of another insurgency in the country.

In response to the state clampdown (the 2015 Zaria and incarceration of El-Zakzaky despite court acquittal), IMN engaged in solidarity processions and protests across northern states and the FCT to demand the release of their leader, El-Zakzaky. These protests and processions are fundamental rights of the members to exercise freedom of expression, assembly, and to demand social change from government's oppression and marginalization as evident in global events such as the Gandhi-led salt march in 1930, the Martin Luther-led civil movement for equality in the US (notably the Selma march of 1967), the Arab uprising of 2010, and the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria in 2020, among others. However, the Nigerian government's inability to address the IMN crisis engenders the crisis that led to violent measures in controlling IMN protests in FCT. Among others, the confrontation between IMN and NA on October 29 2018, led to the death of 42 members of IMN, while an estimated 492 casualties of IMN members spanning four years was envisaged by Femi Falana to be investigated by the National Human Rights Commission (Olu, 2021). While these protests, which impede peace in FCT, are heightened by marginalization and the use of force by the state, Onapajo (2017) avails poverty and ignorance as leading factors influencing IMN uprising and activities in the country. Being poor with inadequate knowledge of the tenets of Islam, the growing impoverished youth and rural dwellers are easily mobilized into Shi'ism to advance the Iranian foreign policy and civil disorder in the FCT (Muhammad & Abdullahi, 2019). This provides the basis to assess the statement of the problem

- Statement Of The Problem

Khanabadi (2021) submitted that the use of state forces, marginalization, and high-handedness by the Sunni-led Nigerian government to suppress the growth and penetration of IMN in Nigeria, as evident in the massacre of an estimated 300 IMN's members in 2015 by the NA has engendered the IMN's crisis in Nigeria. In addition to the massacre, the Federal Government ignored four court orders, including that of ECOWAS, acquitting El-Zakzaky from all count charges (Sadiq & Ahmadu-Suka, 2021; Olu, 2021). Consequently, the government's refusal to release El Zakzaky spurned into a series of protests and processions demanding the release of El-Zakzaky by IMN members across the country, notably in FCT. On September 26 2016, members of IMN marched into FCT to demand the release of their leader El-Zakzaky from which they were manhandled and stopped from entering Abuja by the police (Guardian, 2016). Furthermore, a clash between IMN and security forces in November 2018 during a procession of *Arbaeen* led to the casualty of an estimated 57 members (Okakwu, 2018). An estimated ten deaths were reported in the July 22 fiasco with the Nigerian military and police in 2019 (Achirga&Sotunde, 2019).

While a study by Abidin, Faudi, Kholis and Aziz (2020) inferred the relationship between state-backed security marginalization against Shi'a in the Sampang region of Indonesia as a proximate factor impeding peace in the region, empirical enquiry addressing the factors spurning IMN procession and influence on peace in FCT is inadequate. In addition, while works of literature abound on Arab uprisings and their influence on peace in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Ottaway & Hamzawy, 2011), the influence of the #EndSars protest on social-economic functioning in Nigeria (Ochi & Mark, 2021), literature addressing the factors influencing IMN procession and influence on peace in FCT is inadequate. It is against this backdrop the work is undertaken to infer the following research questions.

- Research Questions

1. How has state marginalization resulted in IMN's protest and its influence on peace in FCT?
2. How have poverty and ignorance influenced IMN's protest and its influence on peace in FCT?

- Objectives of the Study

The main objective is to assess the inhibiting factors influencing IMN protests and the effects on peace in the Federal Capital Territory.

The specific objectives of the study are;

1. To assess the influence of state marginalization on IMN protests and peace in FCT.
2. To assess the influence of poverty and ignorance on IMN protests and peace in FCT.

- Research Propositions

1. State marginalization does not influence IMN protests and civil disorder in FCT.
2. Ignorance and poverty contribute to IMN protests and civil disorder in FCT.

2.1 IMN Protests in FCT

IMN's protest from the onset started as a non-violent movement in solidarity with the incarcerated El-Zakzaky and his release after court acquittal. Protest as a measure for paradigm from existing societal norms has been employed across times in India by Gandhi, in the US by Martin Luther King Jr, in MENA as the Arab Spring uprising, and in Nigeria as #EndSARS protest, among others to demand social change from unfavorable government policies and marginalization. In view of the foregoing, IMN embarked on protests in FCT to exercise their right. Among several protests, these highlighted protests and confrontations with security forces led to casualties and civil disorder in FCT. On the 29th of October 2018, a confrontation with the Presidential Guard Brigade of the Nigerian Army led to 42 casualties at Kugbo, Karu, over 10 deaths were recorded in the confrontation with the Nigerian Police on the 22nd of July 2019, and 12 deaths on the 9th of July 2019 over a confrontation with the Nigerian Police at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja (Reuters, 2019; Vanguard New Media, 2019; Human right watch, 2019).

2.1.1 Factors Influencing IMN's Protest and its Influence on Peace in FCT, Nigeria

A critical literature review deduced the following factors as germane to the IMN uprising that distorted peace in the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. However, issues influencing the Shi'a uprising are deep-rooted and transcend the IMN crisis in Nigeria. This necessitates a global historical account in understanding the Shi'a crisis in Nigeria.

2.1.2 Marginalization as a Factor Influence IMN Protests and Influence on Peace

Sunni-Shi'a suppression and marginalization emanate from the variations in interpretation of Islamic law and jurisprudence, which finds its roots after the demise of the prophet Muhammad and the murder of Hussein at the battle of Karbala. Summarizing the Shi'a marginalization and suppression by the Sunnis, Sergie (2023) posits that Shi'a, whose identity is rooted in victimhood over the slaying of Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Hussein, in the 7th century, was marginalized by an estimated 1.6 billion Sunnis and labelled by Sunnis extremists as heretics and apostates. Similarly, Long Term Strategy Group (2007) posits that "in the beginning, however, the Shi'a lacked state institutions and thus, as a minority holding controversial and even heterodox ideas, were subjected to repression by the Sunni authority." p.2. The report further confirms that the repression climaxed during the Abbasid dynasty with the mass beheading and burial of Shi'ites, the assassination of the sixth Imam, and the destruction of Hussein's tomb in Karbala, modern-day Iraq.

The Shi'a-Sunni conflict embedded in repression and marginalization is a bi-directional tool that the dominant group (either a minority group in a position of power like the situation in Iraq before the 2003 election or the situation in Syria) employs to marginalize the vulnerable group. Shi'a-Sunni marginalization ranges from the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt, among other) to Asia (Indonesia) and Africa (Nigeria). Despite being a conflict spanning centuries, the repression and marginalization of a sect with demographic advantage by the ruling minority class in Iraq paved the way for the new sectarian feud that has permeated the Middle East and created fissures in global peace

(Modica, 2015). In conclusion, Modica (2015) avails that in a post-2003 Arab world where sectarian identities have attained unprecedented social and political relations, there is no fire more easily started than a sectarian one.

Historical accounts abound of Shi'a marginalization by the Sunni-led government of Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Modica, 2015) and in the Sampang region of Indonesia, where unfavorably government policies against Shi'a culminated in civil disorder in the region (Abidin et al., 2020). In Nigeria, Khanbadi (2021) submitted that the Sunni-led Nigerian government have, over time, employed state resources and security forces to marginalize and suppress the growth and penetration of IMN in the country. The growing repression and marginalization evident in the 2014 killing of 35 IMN members, including one of the sons of El-Zakzaky, the 2015 Zaria massacre of an estimated 300 IMN members, including one of the wives of El-Zakzaky, and his incarceration after the fiasco spurned IMN protest in FCT in demand for their fundamental right to worship and the release of their leader, El-Zakzaky. Appendix I highlights the magnitude of the protest and the resultant casualties. These protests, which occurred across FCT, notably Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), impede movement and free passage as IMN members often turn out amass to air their grievances. In addition to distortion of free movement, confrontations with security forces often translate to civil disorder and loss of lives of passers-by and commuters via stray pullets, which led to the death of Alex Ogbu, a journalist, in January 2020 at the Berger Roundabout in Abuja (Olu, 2021).

2.1.3 Poverty, Ignorance, and Politics as Embedded Factors Influencing IMN Protests and Influence on Peace.

Although the Shi'a crisis is hinged on ideological variations in the interpretation of Islamic laws, evidence has shown that politics and poverty are underlying factors influencing the growing Sectarian fault lines that have impacted adversely on global peace, the Middle East, and the FCT (Khanabadi, 2021). Contrary to Khanabadi's view of IMN, which is modelled after the Iranian foreign policy of Khomeinism built on the Qur'anic notions of *mostaz'afan* (oppressed)

and *mostakberan* (oppressors) to liberate the impoverished and marginalized Nigerians, Muhammad and Abdullahi (2019) submitted that IMN (an unstructured Islamic organization) capitalized on the impoverished and illiterate Sunnis in Northern Nigeria and ignorant scholars to propagate Shi'ism in Nigeria. Being an unstructured organization characterized by an unparalleled security outfit, IMN, through its demonstration and violent underpinning, portrays Islam as a violent religion and a divided house that discourages proselytes (Muhammad & Abdullahi, 2019).

The Shi'a sectarian fault lines with religious underpinning have become a political tool for the elite to incite adherents for political gains and control. Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two leading gladiators in the sectarian conflict, have often incited and sponsored uprisings to topple regimes and instill new regimes in the Middle East. Modica (2015) opines that the sectarian divide between the Shi'a and Sunni in Iraq is not the source of conflict between the two sects in the country; the conflict is influenced by colonialism and the authoritarian regime, which favored their supporters and marginalized their opponents, thus sowing a seed of discord and enmity between Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq. Similarly, Haddad (2013) asserted that the conflicting landscape in the Middle East since the 2003 Iraq war is a nexus of political struggle between those clamoring for change (the marginalized Shi'a majority) and those threatened by the change (the dominating Sunni minority).

Also, In Turkey, the widespread clashes between "leftists and rightists in the 1970s were driven by sectarian dynamics as by political, ideological ones" as Shi'ites in the 1950s and 1960s threw their weight behind left-wing parties that were hostile to religion (Long Term Strategy Group, 2007). In Nigeria, Isa (2018) submitted that the ideological differences between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites in northern Nigeria and other factors, such as poverty and politics, factionalized the Muslim community. Mohammad and Abdullahi (2019) assessed the spread of Shia and its activities in Nigeria by tracing the origin of Shi'ism in Nigeria to a factional body of the Muslim Student Society of Nigeria (MSSN) led by El-Zakzaky. After the refusal of MSSN to

propagate Khomeinism in the country, the Iranian-led delegates, in appreciation of the MSSN visit to Iran, covertly enlisted the support of El-Zakzaky to expand the Iranian foreign policy in Nigeria. El-Zakzaky operated clandestinely until 1981, when, in an Islamic Vocational Course (IVC) in Zaria, Kaduna State, his allegiance to Shi'ism became known to the public. The thematic study submitted that IMN lacks organizational structure and violates constituted law that mandates all religious organizations to be duly registered. The Iranian infiltrated IMN engages in activities such as *muzaharan* (demonstration), *Tattaki* (trekking in commemoration of the slain Hussein), *maulud* (celebration of the birth of Mohammad, which happens to be the activity agreeing with the Sunni sect), and *mu'utamah* (annual *maulud* for Shi'a twelve Imams) that are marred with civil disorder and confrontations with state security forces. Also, unlike Iranian clerics, IMN, whose clerics lack scholarly training, is characterized by structural deficiency. Besides notable individuals such as the late Sheik Muhammad Turi (Kano State), Sheik Yakubu Yahaha Katsina (Katsina State), and the late Hamza Yauri (Kebbi State), IMN lack state representatives with a vested authority to oversee the state activities, which gives El-Zakzaky power to exercise undue control over IMN. IMN capitalized on factors such as ignorance among Islamic scholars, poverty, and illiteracy at the grassroots level to infiltrate and amass adherents from the Sunni sect in Northern Nigeria. In conclusion, the study avails that the activity of Shi'a, which contravenes the cardinals of Islam, is the biggest calamity to Islam after the demise of Prophet Muhammad and revealed that IMN capitalized on impoverished and vulnerable Sunnis in Northern Nigeria to enlist adherent and propagate the Iranian foreign policy of Khomeinism in Nigeria. It recommends that the Sultan be empowered as the legal authority to scrutinize the activities of Islamic sects in Nigeria to prevent religious anarchy in the country. From the foregoing, it can be deduced that why the Shi'a crisis is hinged on religion, politics, poverty, and ignorance are proximate factors influencing IMN protest with a resultant adverse effect on peace in the FCT.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Conflict Theory

Conflict theory was used as the theoretical underpinning to provide an understanding of inhibiting factors influencing conflicts and why conflict exists in the first place. There are various schools of thought on conflict theorizing. The positive and negative schools of thought are leading dimensions of conflict. While the former sees conflict as a social fabric in society to foster social change and social transformation, the latter sees conflict as injurious, with the conflicting parties aiming to maim and neutralize the opposing party (Coser, 2010). Despite these leading schools of thought on conflict theorizing, conflict theory is attributed to Karl Marx, a German political philosopher and economist of the 19th century. Marx's theory, which was built on the methodology of dialectical materialism, revolves around the exploitation and marginalization of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, who controls the means of production to subject the have-nots to perpetual penury (Daoxin, 2020). Marx opines that the continuous exploitation of the labor class will brew social stratification and class struggle, resulting in a paradigm shift to communism. In congruence to Marx, Max Weber, and Wright Mills, German and American sociologists, respectively, provided empirical support to class struggle and social stratification embedded in economic factors (mode of production) but differ slightly in terms of class division. In addition to Marx's view of economic order as the influencer of class struggle, Webber took a deeper insight to include social and political factors in the class struggle. In furtherance to Marx's view of the struggle between two classes, Webber's view encompasses struggles within classes.

Mills' conflict theory, in line with Marx, renamed the "ruling class" as the "power elite," which comprises business, economic, military, and political leaders who make important decisions with their status and wellbeing in mind.

Standing on the aforementioned conflict theories, the study enlisted key principles advanced by Sanderson (ND) to analyze the IMN crisis, which has metamorphosed into unrest and civil disorder in Abuja through protests, processions, and confrontations with state security forces. Sanderson

(ND) posited that conflict, whether intra-societal or inter-societal, culminates into dominant and subordinate groups. To keep the sub-group in a perpetual lower stratum or bottom of the food chain, the dominant group often employs state forces, economic, and political measures to suppress the growth and wellbeing of the sub-group. Khanabadi (2021) agrees with the assertion as he submitted that despite the well-conceived policies of Iran towards Nigeria through trade relations and positive incentives of IMN as a peaceful organization that engages in economic measures to enhance the wellbeing of meaningful Nigerians, the Saudi-led Sunni forces in Nigeria have employed violent measures to repress the growth of Shi'ism in the country. Similarly, in the pre-2003 Iraq election, the government of Saddam Hussein used state power to marginalize the majority Shi'a Iraqis by diverting developmental projects and major political appointments to the minority Sunni Iraqis. These repressions by the dominant group often translate to an uprising by the sub-group, as evident in the IMN crisis in Nigeria, the Shi'a-Sunnis crisis in Iraq, and the Sunni-Alawi crisis in Syria (Long Term Strategy Group, 2007).

Having established economic, social, and political factors as the forces propelling class struggle, the consociational model of democracy advanced by ArendLiphart (1968) was employed to provide a lasting solution to the sectarian conflict in Nigeria. The consociational model of democracy is a power-sharing model of equitable representation among segmented groups to enhance proportionality and decision-making in the political sphere among competing sub-groups in a plural state. The model comprises four characteristics of: a grand coalition, mutual veto or concurrent majority rule, proportionality in political representation, and autonomy for each group (Modica, 2015). Having achieved successes in the post-Apartheid regime reconciliation in South Africa and the post-Rwandan genocide, employing the model in the IMN crisis in Nigeria will enhance sustainable peace in Abuja, Nigeria.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive research design was used to source relevant information from secondary sources (journal articles, newspapers and periodicals, and textbooks) to analyze and infer the factors influencing the IMN crisis and its influence on peace in FCT, Nigeria. The study placed emphasis on contexts, themes, theories, and scope to provide sound inferences on the influence of IMN protest on peace in FCT, Nigeria. A detailed library search on works of literature with related themes was retrieved from Google Scholars Academia, Scopus, and Research Gate and sieved to provide a sound empirical investigation for the study.

CONCLUSION

The Shi'a (IMN) crisis, which is deeply rooted in politics and variations in the interpretation of Islamic laws and tenets, transcends Nigeria as a conflict spanning centuries. It permeates into present times with spillover adverse effects on peace in Abuja, the Middle East, and the globe (Sergie, 2023). Originating as an intra-religious conflict after the death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD, the two leading power nations of Saudi-led Sunni and Iranian Shi'a have intensified their foreign policies to neighboring countries in the Middle East, Asia (Indonesia), and Africa (Nigeria) to sow seeds of political contestation and marginalization and the rise of extremist groups such as al-Qaeda, ISIL, and ISWAP (Abidin et al., 2020; Long Term Strategy Group, 2007).

The IMN, which accounts for 12% of Muslims in Nigeria (US Department of State, 2022), is the second leading Islamic sect in the country. From the onset, it engaged in aggressive advocacies through charity deeds, propaganda, and rural evangelism to gain adherents from the majority Sunni sect in Nigeria. Fearing the consequences, the Sunni-led government and elites employed measures such as open debate, critical songs, criticism by polemicists, and state repression to curtail the growth and penetration of Shi'ism in the country (Kanabadi, 2021; Isa,2018).The marginalization of IMN necessitates reprisal attacks through protests and procession, which connote the concept of class struggle envisaged by Sanderson (ND). From the

standpoint of conflict as intra-societal and inter-societal contestation, the dominant group employs state forces and economic and political measures to keep the sub-group in the lower strata of the economy. The foregoing ensues class struggle, as evident in the IMN protests that have impeded peace in FCT, Nigeria.

The study concluded that while politics stands as an inherent factor influencing IMN's marginalization by the government with counter-protests by IMN members to exercise their fundamental rights, ignorance, poverty, and class struggle in contemporary times account for the growing IMN's protests and processions, as idle and unemployed youth are easily mobilized to incite violence as evident in IMN protests which impact adversely on peace in FCT, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study advanced the following recommendations in line with the findings.

1. Conflict as a necessary social fabric to usher in structural transformation and changes in existing societal norms cannot be separated from society as long as humans as social beings interface with one another. Rather than employing the negative conflict resolution approach to curtail conflict from the surface level, the study advocates for a more encompassing approach to positive peace building. Positive peace seeks to curtail conflict by proffering solutions to the root cause of conflict. Poverty is a leading factor influencing conflict in Nigeria, as a significant 42% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2000). This is a recipe for disaster, as fundamentalists and extremists often rely on weak, idle hands to incite violence. There is a need for the government to engage in structural transformation and employment generation to absorb idle and unemployed youth in Nigeria.
2. IMN uprising stems from suppression and marginalization owing to skepticism of the leading Sunni elites and allies such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the US towards the growth and penetration of Iranian Khomeninism into the most populous black nation (Khanabadi, 2021). The growing repression and marginalization, as seen

in the 2015 massacre of Shi'ites in Zaria and the detention of IMN leader El-Zakzaky after his acquittal by the State High Court in Kaduna, spurn a wave of protest and procession in Abuja with resultant casualties of lives and loss of property. Against this backdrop, the study recommends the consociational model of democracy advanced by ArendLiphart (1968) to provide a lasting solution to the IMN crisis in the country. The consociational model, which advocates for a power-sharing and equitable representation of segmented groups to enhance proportionality and decision-making in the political sphere, successfully fostered peace in the post-Apartheid regime in the South and the post-Rwanda Genocide (Modica, 2015). Employing the model in the IMN crisis in Nigeria will enhance peace and sustainable living in the country.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abidin, A. Z., Faudi, I., Kholis, N. & Aziz, T. (2020). Between Conflict and Peace: The Government Policies and Sunni-Shia Relationship in Sampang and Yogyakarta. *Esensia*. Volume 21, No.2. <http://ejournal.uin.suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/esensia> .
- [2] Achirga, A. &Sotunde, A. (2019, July 23). Shiite Protester Clash with Nigeria Military, Police in Abuja. Reuters. 15/04/2023. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-shiites-idUSKCN1UI1RS>.
- [3] Doukhan, D. (2016, January 12). Wings of War in Nigeria and the Tropical Shi'ism Zone. IOC Herzliyy-International Institute for Counter-Terrorism.
- [4] Khanabadi, S. (2021). The Impact of the Iranian 1979 Iranian Revolution on the Creation of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria. *Iranian Politics and Law*. Volume 1(1&2).
- [5] Leadership (2015). Army, Shi'ite Showdown: Army Arrests Sheikh Zakzaky, Kills Wife, Son, Mahmud Turi. Retrieved on accessed 21 July 2023)<http://leadership.ng/news/483106/army-shiite-showdown-army-arrests-sheikh-zakzakykills-wife-son-mahmud-turi>.

- [6] Long Term Strategy Group (2007, January). The Sunni-Shi'a Divide: Origin, Theology, and Geopolitics in the Past and Present. Retrieved 26/05/2023
https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading%20Room/Other/15-F-0940_DOC_05_CSBA-LTSG_Sunni-Shia_Divide_Origins_Theology_Geopolitics_200701.pdf.
- [7] Martin, B. (2013). The Politics of Gene Sharp. *Gandhi Quarterly*. 35(2)
- [8] Modica, K. L. (2015). A Path to Peace: Reconciling the Sunni-Shia Conflict in Iraq. Suracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects. 841.
https://surface.syr.edu/honor_capstone/841.
- [9] Mohammad, M. S. & Abdullahi, M. M. (2019). The Spread of Shia and its Activities in Nigeria. *Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*. Volume 4, No.1. Doi:<http://dxdoi.org/10.21580/jish.41.1755>.
- [10] Ochi, I. B. & Mark, K. C. (2021). Effect of the EndSARS Protest on the Nigerian Economy. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*. Volume 9, No. 3.
- [11] Okakwu, E. (2018, November 8). Death Toll in Shiites Abuja Killings up by 10-Group. Premium Times. Assessed 08/03/2023.
<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/294779-death-toll-in-shiites-abuja-killings-up-by-10-group.html?tztc=1>
- [12] Olu, T. (2021, August 19). Shi'ites 'Bask in Glory of Zakzaky's Release' Hold Procession in Abuja. The Whistler. Retrieved 27/08/2023.
<https://thewhistler.ng/shiites-bask-in-glory-of-zakzakys-release-hold-procession-in-abuja/>
- [13] Ottawa, M. & Hamzawy, A. (2011, January 28). Protest Movements and Political Change in the Arab World. Carnegie. Policy Outlook.
- [14] PEW Research Center (ND). Many Sunnis and Shi'as Worry about Religious Conflict. assessed 14/12/2022. www.pewresearch.org/religion.
- [15] Sadiq, L. & Ahmadu-Suka, M. (2021, July 29). El-Zakzaki's Long Walk to Freedom. Daily Trust. Assessed 23/03/2023.
<https://dailytrust.com/el-zakzakys-long-walk-to-freedom/>
- [16] Sergie, M. A. (2023, April 27). The Sunni-Shia Divide. Council on Foreign Relations. Assessed 23/05/2023. <https://www.cfr.org/article/sunni-shia-divide>.
- [17] World Bank. (2000). World development report 2000/01: attacking poverty. Oxford: Oxford University Press.