

Nigeria and the Organization of Islamic Countries; 2004-2021

Oluwakorede Fadipe*

Abstract

The study examines the fluctuating scope of the Nigeria Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) from 2004 to 2020, a time of increased complexities both from within and beyond Nigeria. The study relied on secondary sources such as journals and newsletters and adopted a qualitative method for indepth analysis. The findings of the study suggest that while the relationships can be beneficial to Nigeria, Nigeria's political leaders must learn how to convey such an impression to its selective Christian community that it is not a ploy to convert Nigeria from secularism to an Islamic nation. Based on this, the study recommends that such scrutiny and skepticism towards Nigeria's membership should be enlightened to objectively evaluate the OIC's religious and socio-economic benefits, which Nigeria can take advantage of as a member.

Introduction

The period from 2004 to 2021 marked a critical juncture in Nigeria's membership within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), illuminating the country's intricate relationship with this intergovernmental organisation (Okolie et al., 2023). Nigeria's initial decision to join the OIC in 1986 sparked controversy due to its religious diversity, with a substantial Christian population alongside a significant Muslim community (Faseke, 2019). However, during these years, Nigeria's role within the OIC evolved in response to changing domestic and international dynamics. This opening statement will delve into Nigeria's key developments and challenges during its OIC membership from 2004 to 2021, shedding light on the complexities of balancing its commitment to the organisation with its diverse religious landscape (Salama, Wiener, 2022).

By 2004, Nigeria re-engaged with the OIC more actively and substantively (Nagel, 2022). This reinvigorated involvement was characterised by a desire to harness the benefits of cooperation with predominantly Muslim nations while concurrently addressing the concerns of its non-Muslim citizens (Romero et al., 2022). Throughout this period, Nigeria sought to balance its participation in the OIC and its commitment to maintaining religious harmony at home (Hamzaoui, 2022). This endeavour was not without its challenges, as it required careful

* Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti;
fadeipekorede88@gmail.com

diplomacy and domestic policy measures to ensure that membership in the OIC did not inadvertently marginalise any religious or ethnic group within the country (Murphy, 2012).

Furthermore, from 2004 to 2021, Nigeria navigated a complex foreign policy landscape on the international stage. As a member of the OIC, Nigeria was tasked with addressing global issues of concern to the Muslim world while maintaining its commitment to broader international partnerships (Kayaoglu, 2019). This included advocating for the rights and interests of Muslim-majority nations in various international forums, all while preserving its ties with non-OIC nations and organisations (Dalillah, 2021). Nigeria's membership in the OIC during this period thus serves as a microcosm of the broader challenges faced by countries straddling diverse cultural, religious, and diplomatic spheres in our increasingly interconnected world.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), comprising fifty-seven member states predominantly populated by Muslims, stands as a prominent international organisation with a fundamental mission: to serve as the collective voice and protector of the global Islamic community, known as the Ummah (Petersen, 2012). Since its inception in 1969, the OIC has been pivotal in promoting international peace and harmony among its member states.

However, this organisation's roots can be traced back to the early 20th century, when Islamic states began their efforts to unify the Islamic world under a single international organisation, with initial attempts dating back to 1924.

For decades, the Islamic world sought avenues to strengthen its unity and cooperation on the global stage (Niblock, 2021). The formation of the OIC in 1969 marked a significant milestone in these efforts. The organisation's primary objectives include addressing its member states' political, economic, cultural, and social concerns while advocating for Muslims' rights and interests worldwide (Mandeville, 2016). Throughout its history, the OIC has worked diligently to foster solidarity among Muslim-majority nations and enhance their collective influence in international affairs, making it a vital platform for Muslim states to collaborate and address common challenges (Abushanab, 2023).

Since its establishment, the OIC has evolved in response to changing global dynamics, including geopolitical shifts, conflicts, and humanitarian crises (Barakat et al., 2020). It has played a crucial role in mediating disputes, providing humanitarian assistance, and addressing religious freedom and cultural diversity issues. The OIC's mission to promote cooperation, understanding, and peace among its member states continues to shape its engagement with the broader international community, making it a significant player in the quest for global stability and harmony (Malik et al., 2023).

The decision by Nigeria to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1986, despite the internal tensions it created, underscores the complex dynamics of foreign policymaking in the country (Forti & Singh, 2019). Nigeria's diverse religious and cultural landscape, consisting of both Muslim-majority northern states and predominantly Christian southern states, made membership in an Islamic organisation a contentious issue. However, this scenario reveals the enduring authority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the president

in shaping foreign policy. Despite the potency of public opinion, these institutions played pivotal roles in determining Nigeria's international engagements (Kugiel, 2017).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs served as a critical advisory body, offering expertise on diplomatic matters, analysing international relations, and aligning Nigeria's foreign policy with its national interests. It acted as a bridge between public sentiment and pragmatic foreign policy decisions. In the case of Nigeria's OIC membership, the Ministry would have assessed the potential benefits, such as improved economic and diplomatic ties, and weighed them against the domestic tensions they might generate (Terzi, 2016). While public opinion exerted pressure, it was ultimately the Ministry's responsibility to provide well-informed recommendations to the president.

However, changes in Nigeria's political landscape have shifted the balance of power within foreign policymaking. Presidents have increasingly asserted their authority, taking a more direct role in shaping and implementing specific foreign policy options. This transformation allows the president to make decisions that may isolate the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on some issues related to Nigeria's OIC membership (Rogers & Safiyanu, 2023). This evolution highlights the dynamic nature of foreign policymaking in Nigeria and the complex interplay between public sentiment, institutional advice, and presidential authority (Asha, 2023).

The protest against President Muhammadu Buhari's participation in the OIC Summit 2019 reflects the ongoing debate within Nigeria over its membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Nigeria, as a multi-religious and constitutionally secular country, has faced criticism and scrutiny for its involvement in an organisation predominantly composed of Muslim-majority nations (Zanfrini, 2020). However, it is essential to analyse the impacts and benefits that have resulted from Nigeria's OIC membership since 1986 to understand that the move was not aimed at imposing Islam as the nation's official religion. Nigeria's OIC participation has strengthened diplomatic and economic ties with various member states (Oladimeji, 2022). This engagement has facilitated cooperation on trade, investment, and development assistance issues. It is important to note that these relationships extend beyond religious lines and have contributed to Nigeria's overall foreign policy objectives.

In addition, membership in the OIC has enabled Nigeria to play a more active role in international affairs, particularly in addressing global challenges like poverty alleviation, climate change, and conflict resolution (March & Failler, 2022). By participating in OIC initiatives and conferences, Nigeria has had opportunities to contribute to the development of Islamic nations and engage in dialogue on issues of mutual concern.

Also, it is crucial to emphasise that Nigeria's membership in the OIC has not resulted in the imposition of Islam as the nation's official religion (Davis et al., 2023). The Nigerian government has consistently maintained its commitment to secularism and religious freedom, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their faith, enjoy equal rights and protection under the law. While there have been concerns and controversies related to Nigeria's OIC membership, it is essential to differentiate between diplomatic engagement and the imposition of religious beliefs (Ottuh et al., 2023).

Despite being a predominantly Muslim country, Nigeria's relationship with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has been a subject of discussion and debate. This study aims to analyse the trajectory of Nigeria's participation in the OIC from 2004 to 2020 and examine the various factors that have influenced its engagement with the organisation. The problem lies in understanding Nigeria's evolving stance towards the OIC during this period and its implications on its domestic policies, international relations, and religious dynamics. By examining Nigeria's engagement with the OIC over the years, this research seeks to contribute to the existing literature on Nigeria's foreign policy and shed light on the complexities surrounding its relationship with Islamic organisations.

The period from 2004 to 2020 witnessed a complex and dynamic relationship between Nigeria, a multi-religious and constitutionally secular nation, and the Organization Membership of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), an international organisation predominantly composed of Muslim-majority countries (Anyia, 2017). This study seeks to investigate the multifaceted challenges and opportunities during this period, examining the implications of Nigeria's involvement with the OIC and its impact on the country's domestic, diplomatic, and economic landscape. Some commentators believe that Nigeria's membership in the OIC seemed incongruent with its secular constitution, and several critical research questions emerged: One central issue is how Nigeria reconciled its commitment to secularism with its active participation in the OIC, an organisation explicitly rooted in Islamic principles (Al Olaimy, 2019). The study aims to unpack the motivations behind Nigeria's sustained membership in the OIC, investigating whether this engagement aligned with its secular constitution and whether it reflects a broader shift in Nigeria's religious landscape (Lubchenco & Haugan, 2023). Nigeria's involvement with the OIC between 2004 and 2020 may have influenced domestic politics, inter-religious relations, and safeguarding religious freedoms. Researchers will explore whether Nigeria's participation in the OIC led to shifts in political power, changes in public opinion, or tensions related to religious diversity and co-existence within the country. This study aims to investigate the tangible economic and diplomatic outcomes of Nigeria's OIC membership during the specified period (Aitah, 2020). It will analyse how Nigeria's engagement with the OIC influenced its foreign policy decisions, trade relations, and international standing and whether discernible benefits or challenges were tied to this engagement. In addition to the Nigerian case, the research will conduct a comparative analysis with other secular nations that have maintained OIC membership (Usman et al., 2022).

This research will contribute valuable insights into the global implications of such relationships by examining how different countries navigate the balance between secularism, international engagement, and religious diversity. Finally, the findings of this research study will have practical implications for Nigeria's future foreign policy decisions and other secular nations considering involvement with religiously oriented international organisations. Understanding the experiences and consequences of Nigeria's engagement with the OIC from 2004 to 2020 will offer valuable lessons for policymakers seeking to balance domestic secularism with international cooperation in an increasingly interconnected world (Watts, 2013).

Conceptual Clarification

Religion

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviours and practices, morals, worldviews, texts, sanctified places, prophecies, ethics, or organisations that relate humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements. Considering that religion deals with behaviours and personal morals, some argue that it should not be factored into the operations of international organisations or linked with such tools as trade, economy, culture, politics, and environmental issues. Having realised the imperative sensitivity towards local value systems, promoting developmental efforts, and protecting religious freedom and interactions, religious organisations like the OIC are progressively influencing policymaking.

Many studies indicated that international organisations perform valuable functions in the global system. They offer provision for cooperation in areas in which cooperation is advantageous for any of their member states. They also provide multiple channels of communication between states. They offer numerous and continued points of contact and are essential when support is needed in times of conflict. The increase in global divisions and conflict has provided some justification for arguing that the growing trend of international organisations has also increased diversity-centred issues.

Like other organisations, the OIC is significant to many countries, including those whose constitutions are secular, which are not Islamic states yet have a sizeable Muslim population. The OIC listens to Muslim community matters, including pilgrim matters in Saudi Arabia. The need for diversity support is just one of the many relevant magnetic attractions to which countries like Nigeria were susceptible when seeking membership.

This section of the research presents a conceptual review of the applicable literature used in the study. Understanding the key terms, such as religion and international organisation, and the challenges and prospects of religion in international relations among states in the global system is essential.

Concept of Religion

Conceptualising religion is problematic as scholars from various perspectives have different perceptions of the term. Therefore, Beckford (2003) opined that ‘it is conceptually problematic to come up with a single universal definition of religion’ as it is almost as old as time. Its many dimensions change as the ever-constant nature of change”. Mapadimeng (2009) states, “There are clear-cut disagreements on the subject matter at the definitional level.” Haralambos and Holborn (2008) outlined two definitions that are grouped into functional and substantive approaches. According to Talcott Parsons (1952), a religion based on its perceived functional traits should be defined as “... a set of beliefs, practices, and institutions which men have evolved in various societies, so far as they can be understood, as responses to those aspects of their life and situations which are believed not in the empirical instrumental sense to be

rationally understandable and controllable, and to which they attach a significance which includes some reference to a supernatural order” (Parsons, 1952).

Obilor (2002) defined religion as “the whole complexes of attitudes, conviction, and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with reality and not excluding the created order.” Gilbert (1980) stated that “religion describes any system of values, norms, and related symbols and rituals, arising from an attempt by individuals and social groups to affect certain ends, whether in this world or any future world by means wholly or partly supernatural.” The metaphysical perspective of religion is aptly captured in the definition of Odumuyiwa (2006). He defined religion as “man’s effective desire to be in right relationship with a sacred transcendental order, controlling human destiny and events, either a prescribed system of rituals or belief.” Omoregbe (1993) defined religion as essentially a relationship, “a link established by the human person and the divine person believed to exist.”

Odumuyiwa (2006) also stated that religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands. It can be deduced from the definitions above that religion conveys the features of a supernatural being, the belief in that being, and a feeling of awe and mystery in response to the command of that supernatural being. The writer, therefore, defined religion as our “absolute acknowledgement of dependence on the supernatural being who sets and controls the entire affairs of life and the universe, hence attracting our reverence and obedience.” This dimension may have influenced the emotional power of the adherents of religion. This is exemplified in the actions of some religious adherents who often feel their actions are for God, whereas these activities may be against God (Adejuwon, 2023).

International Organizations

According to Armstrong, D. Lorna L. and John R. (2004), an international organisation has been defined “as a form of co-operation of sovereign states based on multilateral international organisations and comprising a relatively stable range of participants. The fundamental feature is the existence of permanent organs, with definite competencies and powers acting to carry out common aims”.

International organisations can also be defined as “a process of organising the growing complexity of international relations. They are the institutions that represent the phase of that process. They are also the expressions of and contributors to the process and the significant factors in contemporary world affairs” (McCormick, 1999).

Akinboye and Ferdinand (2009) defined international organisations as accommodating the world community. Pearson and Rochester (1984) defined global organisations as “inter-governmental organisations in global terms, draw their members from every region.

Hughes (1994) states that universal or international organisations draw members worldwide. The United Nations is essentially universal, although some institutions fail to represent some parts of the world (Hughes, 1994).

In the view of Ray (1992), international organisations are: “organisations with a wider scope, primarily the United Nations and related organisations, whose membership is open to all states and whose ostensible goal is to serve the interests of the entire community of states.”

Palmer and Perkins (1969) perceived international organisations as “any cooperative arrangement instituted among states by agreement to perform mutually advantageous functions implemented through periodic meetings and staff activities.” This definition implies that international organisations could be public service institutions, a distinctively modern aspect of world politics. For Duverger (1972), a global organisation is seen as the process of organising international relations. The scholar states that it represents a form of an international institution, which is a formal system of rules and objectives. This rationalised administrative instrument is technically and materially organised with its constitution, local chapters, physical equipment, machines, emblems, letterheads, stationery, a staff, an administrative hierarchy, and so on”.

This definition shows clearly that “an international institution has a wider applicability and encompasses the notion of a system of relations which do not necessarily manifest themselves as regularised international relations, as is the case in international organisations with formal and material existence” (Archer, 1992).

International organisations can be classified according to membership aims, functions, and structures. An organisation may be universal, regional, or pluralistic. Apart from the OIC, other examples of international organisations are the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical frameworks can be applied to analyse Nigeria’s relationship with the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) from 2004 to 2020: constructivism and regional integration theory.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, “Religion is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods.” Many people view religion as a faith-based reward; it satisfies an individual’s mode of worship, gives freedom of association, and permits room for interaction with others of the same faith (Monsma, 2011). People worship in groups and interact and conform to the common doctrine. The adopted doctrine becomes part of their way of life, thus determining the nature of their societal and global association.

Constructivism Theory

This theoretical framework focuses on how social norms, ideas, and identities shape state behaviour. It can be used to understand Nigeria’s engagement with the OIC based on its domestic politics, religious identity, and regional dynamics. Constructivism can help explore how Nigeria’s involvement with the OIC has been influenced by its perception of Islamic solidarity, pan-Africanism, and balancing relations with different regional and global actors. Applying Constructivism theory to the relationship between Nigeria and the Organization of

Islamic Cooperation (OIC) between 2004 and 2020 can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of their interactions and the evolving nature of their engagement. According to Constructivism, states' behaviour is shaped by their perceptions of the world and the social norms and ideas prevalent in international society. Applying this theory to Nigeria's relationship with the OIC, we can analyse how Nigeria's perception of its Islamic identity and understanding of Islamic norms influenced its engagement with the organisation during this period.

Theory of Fields

Another important theoretical concept in analysing Nigeria's membership in an Islamic organisation is the idea of "fields." This consists of various social and institutional arenas where people express and reproduce their dispositions and compete to distribute different kinds of capital (Gaventa, 2003). A field is a network, structure, or set of relationships that may be intellectual, religious, educational, cultural, etc. (Navarro, 2006). People experience power differently, depending on their field at a given moment (Gaventa, 2003). Context and environment are vital influences on habitus.

Bourdieu (1990) accounted for the tensions and contradictions that arise when people encounter and are challenged by different contexts. His theory can be used to explain how people can resist power and domination in one field yet express complicity in another (Moncrieffe, 2006)

Fields help to explain the belief system (religions) in individuals and the state's decision-making. Nigeria's membership in the OIC emanates from the desires of the Nigerian political elites (Muslim leaders) to promote global Muslim solidarity.

In situating these theoretical concepts in this study, especially Nigeria's socialisation with the global world, the activities of the missionaries, and the jihad during the pre-colonial era, religion has become a significant decider in interactions with the international system. For instance, Nigeria's membership in the OIC, a religious organisation, was partly due to the desire of the political leaders to socialise with and annex the numerous benefits, primarily as it affects the Muslim population in the country and attracts support that may accrue from such relations (Lubchenco et al.; P. M., 2023).

This study focused on four major fields: political, religious, economic, and capital. This study also depicts the debate about how the political field tried to claim hegemony over the religious field. Babangida demonstrated this when he led the government and used his political power to introduce the country into the OIC, a religious field, according to Bourdieu. This study also brings light to how all the fields interact. Nigeria's membership in the OIC reaps benefits from the economic field; however, the political field also reaps benefits from the capital field (Aitah, E. 2020). The religious field played a positive influence on the people who were supporters of membership in the OIC. These pro-OIC people are assets in the capital field for those in the political field seeking positions and advocacy. When Nigeria began to reap economic assistance and development from the OIC, and as more Nigerian civilians

changed their views on Nigeria's membership in the OIC, the financial field further impacted and expanded the capital field (Faseke et al., 2019). As the capital field expanded, the political field's assets also grew in numbers. In this study, although the OIC's core field is the religious field, being an organisation that stems from religious roots, the positive impact of the OIC in Nigeria is mainly demonstrated in the economic fields.

This theory synchronises views from field participants and secondary information on the reasons for challenges and possible benefits of Nigeria's membership in the OIC (Schüler, M. 2022). This enables validating or invalidating data collected from the two primary sources, thus allowing a logical conclusion.

The field theory was used to analyse various viewpoints on religion's position in Nigeria's membership in the OIC. This theory ascertains whether enrolling Nigeria into the OIC was to promote Muslim solidarity (Aitah, E. 2020). This research is also unique in its approach. Though much literature is available on religion in Nigeria, and separately on the study and evaluation of the OIC, this research is one of the first to correlate the interaction between the two. This research is also one of the first to develop further how the interaction between these two subjects simultaneously affected the areas of religion, politics, economics, and capital in Nigeria.

Factors that Propelled Nigeria's Membership of the OIC

The primary research question guiding this study is: What factors influenced Nigeria's decision to join the OIC despite its multi-religious and secular constitution?

International organisations like the Common Wealth and the United Nations were among the factors that influenced Nigerian leaders when forming the country's foreign policy back in May 1960. However, the significant impact of economic considerations on foreign policy development shaped Nigeria's stance. As nation-states often link trade policies with foreign policy and political objectives, their economic and military might sometimes measure the power of nation-states. Economic systems are believed to be influenced by political systems, and hence, they are closely related. One of the works that explore this interplay is 'S. E. Joan' from 1977. Obioma argues that Nigeria's foreign policy was driven by the urgent need to establish a healthy society based on a self-reliant national economy. Nigeria had been under a capitalist colonial system for several decades. It gained independence as a sovereign nation-state at a time when national economic capacity was a significant determinant of political power. The Nigerian leaders, therefore, opted for external policies that would enhance rather than hinder economic cooperation and collaboration with the world's wealthier nations, underscoring the importance of economic factors in shaping international relations.

Nigeria has a significant Muslim population, with Islam being the second-largest religion in the country. By maintaining membership in the OIC, Nigeria can actively participate in the global Muslim community, demonstrating solidarity with other Muslim-majority nations.

This gives Nigeria a voice in international affairs, particularly issues affecting Muslim communities worldwide.

Nigeria, a nation with a diverse religious landscape, has experienced tensions and conflicts between its Christian and Muslim communities. Joining the OIC allows Nigeria to forge stronger relationships and cooperation with other Muslim nations, creating an atmosphere that encourages open dialogue and mitigates inter-religious tensions. Through the OIC, Nigeria has a platform to address and resolve domestic and international Muslim issues, potentially safeguarding the rights and interests of its Muslim citizens.

Being a member of the OIC enables Nigeria to cultivate and sustain diplomatic ties with other nations with a Muslim majority. Nigeria can foster bilateral relationships, create networks, and forge alliances with other member states through active engagement in OIC events such as meetings, conferences, and summits. This can be advantageous in achieving Nigeria's foreign policy objectives, bolster regional influence, and enhance cooperation on trade, development, and regional security.

The OIC provides support and development assistance to member countries, particularly those with economic and infrastructure needs. As a member, Nigeria benefits from access to OIC programs and initiatives that can contribute to its socio-economic development. OIC assistance could include funding infrastructure projects, healthcare, education, and poverty alleviation efforts, benefiting Nigeria's overall progress and development.

Impact of Nigeria's Membership of the OIC

To what extent has Nigeria's participation in the OIC affected its secular identity and constitutional commitment to religious freedom?

Nigeria has a diverse population comprising Muslims, Christians, and followers of traditional religions. The country's constitution guarantees religious freedom and provides for a secular state. However, some argue that Nigeria's participation in the OIC may have influenced its secular identity and constitutional commitment to religious liberty in specific ways.

Critics have raised concerns that Nigeria's involvement with the OIC could have contributed to the perception that the country has a Muslim identity, potentially undermining its secular nature. The OIC is primarily made up of Muslim-majority nations, and Nigeria's membership could have given the impression of religious bias towards Islam. This could have exacerbated tensions and heightened religious division within the country.

Additionally, some contend that Nigeria's membership in the OIC has resulted in the prioritisation of Islamic interests at the expense of protecting religious freedom for all citizens. Critics suggest that the government may have been swayed by the OIC's Islamic agenda, leading to policies that give preference to Islam over other faiths. For instance, there have been cases where laws or rulings perceived as favouring Muslim interests, such as the creation of Sharia courts in certain states, have sparked apprehension about religious bias.

However, it is essential to note that Nigeria's constitution continues to uphold religious freedom, and the country has made efforts to maintain a balance between different religious groups. Nigeria has also participated in international organisations and forums that promote religious freedom, such as the United Nations.

Nigeria's intricate religious landscape and multifaceted internal dynamics make pinpointing the OIC's participation as the sole cause of alterations in secular identity and religious freedom challenging. Several other factors shaped Nigeria's secularism and religious liberty stance, including political dynamics, internal conflicts, and societal shifts.

In conclusion, Nigeria's participation in the OIC between 2004 and 2020 had some impact on its secular identity and constitutional commitment to religious freedom. While concerns over a potential shift towards a Muslim identity and prioritisation of Islamic interests have been raised, Nigeria's constitution still upholds religious freedom, and the country has made efforts to maintain a balance among different religious groups. It is necessary to consider other factors that have influenced Nigeria's secular identity and religious freedom during this period.

Continuing Debate of Nigeria's Membership of the OIC

Before colonialism, Islam had already heavily influenced the northern region of Nigeria for several years. Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, many in the north sought to reconnect with their Islamic roots and establish connections with fellow believers worldwide. The government of the Northern Region had established ties with Islamic regimes in North Africa and the Middle East, with the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, among those responsible for exploring the creation of a permanent forum for frequent interactions among Islamic governments (Olukoshi, 1990, p. 493; Oded 1987).

Within the context of Nigerian national politics, Christians have long expressed concerns about the possibility of Muslim domination in political power. This apprehension is rooted in the fear that such control could result in the imposition of Islamic Sharia law on non-Muslims, a concern that has existed since colonial times. On the other hand, Muslims - particularly those from Northern Nigeria - have sought to combat what they perceive as pervasive Westernization and have occasionally sought refuge in strict religious practices.

Nigeria's membership in the OIC sparked division along religious lines, with Christians and Muslims holding differing views on its compatibility with the nation's secular status. While Christians called for the country's withdrawal, citing the constitutional definition of Nigeria as a secular state, Muslims argued that joining the OIC did not violate this principle as Islam was not being adopted as the official religion. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), led by Archbishop Okogie, advocated for Nigeria's complete and unconditional withdrawal from the organisation.

Okogie stated that if a section of the Islamic community had joined, there would be no issue, but for Nigeria as a whole, he held the President accountable. Okogie believed that the

President alone did not represent the entirety of Nigeria (Okojie, 1986, pp. 12–14). In contrast, the umbrella organisation of the Muslim community, Jama'atu Nasir Islam (JNI), argued that the call for withdrawal was a result of Christian insensitivity towards Muslim issues. The JNI believed that if Nigeria withdrew from the OIC, it would also need to sever diplomatic relations with the Vatican (Jama'atu et al., 1986).

Other debaters who did not share the extreme views of the CAN took a more concrete approach to defending their positions. For instance, those who supported Nigeria's association with the OIC argued that Christians had exaggerated the negative implications of the organisation. They pointed out that Christian heads of state from countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, Gabon, Kenya, Cameroun, Sierra Leone, and the Benin Republic were members of the OIC. This group emphasised that the OIC was not religious but structured similarly to the United Nations. They also highlighted the positive financial implications, such as monetary and technical assistance and the low-interest loans provided by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

Multi-ethnic and multi-religious coalitions of successive rulers have mismanaged national resources and misruled, causing impoverishment and lack of opportunities for the majority of Nigerians. As a result, the masses have been susceptible to religious rhetoric that blames members of other religious communities and proposals for religious reform as a solution to society's issues. Though genuine, this quest for a religious utopia has been misplaced and has given some political gladiators a reason to seek legitimacy through politicised appeals to piety and religious fervour.

The study's findings on Nigeria and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) allow the following conclusions to be drawn.

Increased Engagement: Nigeria's involvement with the OIC has seen a noticeable increase during this period. The country has actively participated in various OIC meetings, conferences, and initiatives, indicating its commitment to engage with the organisation and leverage its resources and platforms.

Economic Cooperation: Nigeria's membership in the OIC has facilitated economic cooperation between Nigeria and other member countries, particularly concerning trade, investment, and development assistance. The OIC offers platforms for Nigerian businesses and entrepreneurs to enhance their economic ties with OIC member nations.

Strengthened Ties with Muslim Countries: The OIC has significantly enhanced Nigeria's diplomatic relations with Muslim-majority countries. Through its participation in OIC meetings and activities, Nigeria has forged closer ties and collaborations with countries sharing similar cultural, religious, and economic interests.

Promoting Muslim Interests: Nigeria's OIC membership has allowed it to advocate for Muslim interests both domestically and internationally. The country has utilised its platform within the OIC to address issues related to Muslim communities, promote Islamic values, and seek support for initiatives aligned with these interests.

Islamic Solidarity: Nigeria's engagement with the OIC has helped foster a sense of Islamic solidarity among its Muslim population. Increased involvement in OIC activities and representation in the organisation has allowed Nigerian Muslims to feel connected to the broader Muslim world and gain support for their religious and cultural rights.

In summary, Chapter 4 proposes that Nigeria's affiliation with the OIC between 2004 and 2021 has yielded favourable outcomes, such as economic collaboration, diplomatic ties, and championing of Muslim causes. Nonetheless, it underscores the importance of prudently navigating possible obstacles to guarantee optimal leverage of OIC resources and platforms.

Recommendations

Given the above conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations: There is a need to re-orientate the critics against Nigeria's membership in the OIC to objectively evaluate the OIC's religious and socio-economic ideologies to grasp the rationale behind Nigeria's involvement in the organisation. Nigeria's membership in the OIC should be viewed from the perspective of international relations with economic interest as its basis.

The government of Nigeria should endeavour to be open and transparent in its local and foreign policy implementation, especially as it concerns significant issues like the OIC, to avoid chaos and division among the multi-ethnic and multi-religious citizenry. In line with this, there is a need for the government and its policymakers to educate the public on the nature and benefits of such policy implementation before taking steps to execute such policies or programs. Any activity that concerns Nigerians should be of paramount importance to the Nigerian Government, especially if the promotion of national interest and the principle of national protection as enshrined in the foreign policy objectives are to be followed and understood. This is to ensure the safety of its citizens and promote the national interest.

References

- Abushanab, F. G. (2023). *A Muslim Realist: Strategies, Methods, and Approaches from Türkiye's Experience*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Adam, A. (2015). *Understanding the Role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Human Rights*. Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for Human Rights.
- Adetayo, O. (2016). Islamic Bank's Offer to Nigeria Excites Buhari. *Punch*. February 25. Available online: <http://www.punchng.com/islamic-bank-offer-to-nigeria-excites-buhari/> (accessed on 24 March 2024).
- Analysing the role of OIC - Modern Diplomacy*
- Adisa, O. (2019). Why are some older persons economically vulnerable and others not? The role of socio-demographic factors and economic resources in the Nigerian context. *Ageing International*, 44(2), 202–222.
- Agboola, O. T., Solanke, S. O., & Kekeghe, S. E. (2023). Alter-Narrativity and Ecofeminism in the Mythical Account of Sogidi Lake in Awe, Oyo, Nigeria. *Green Letters*, 1-13.
- Ahmed, H. (2014). Islamic banking and Shari'ah compliance: a product development perspective. *Journal of Islamic finance.*, 3(2), 15–29.

- Aitah, E. (2020). Nigeria's Membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Origin, Nature, and Impact.
- Aitah, E. (2020). Nigeria's Membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Origin, Nature, and Impact.
- Aitah, E. (2020). Nigeria's Membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Origin, Nature, and Impact.
- Aitah, E. (2020). Nigeria's Membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: Origin, Nature, and Impact. <https://doi.org/10.25148/etd.FIDC008981> Organization Islamic Corporation. (2020). www.oic-oci.org; retrieved on 19th-Feb, 2020.
- Akinyemi, B. (2018). *Nigerian minister of external affairs, 1985–1987*; Interview with Babajimi Faseke. Lagos, Nigeria, August 17.
- Al Olaimy, L. (2019). *Compassionate Counterterrorism: The Power of Inclusion in Fighting Fundamentalism*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Alden, C., & Aran, A. (2016). *Foreign policy analysis: new approaches*. Taylor & Francis.
- Anyia, A. (2017). Muslim organisation and the mobilisations for Sharia law in northern Nigeria: The JNI and the NSCIA. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 52(1), 82–102.
- Barakat, S., Milton, S., & Elkahout, G. (2020). The impact of the Gulf crisis on Qatar's humanitarian sector. *Disasters*, 44(1), 63–84.
- Bennett A. LeRoy, James K. Oliver, *International Organizations; Issues and Principles*, Upper Saddle River, NJ; Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Bercovitch, J., & Kadayifci-Orellana, S. A. (2009). Religion and mediation: The role of faith-based actors in international conflict resolution. *International Negotiation*, 14(1), 175–204.
- Chandler, D. (2000). *Bosnia: Faking democracy after Dayton*. Pluto Press.
- Chen, J. Y., & Sun, P. (2020). Temporal arbitrage, fragmented rush, and opportunistic behaviours: The labour politics of time in the platform economy. *New Media & Society*, 22(9), 1561–1579.
- Dalillah, N. I. (2021). The Role of OIC in Tackle Discrimination against Uighur Muslims by the Chinese Government in Xinjiang. *Insigha: Journal of International Relations*, 8(2), 117–131.
- Driessen, M. D. (2023). *The Global Politics of Interreligious Dialogue: Religious Change, Citizenship, and Solidarity in the Middle East*. Oxford University Press.
- Eme, O. I., & Ibietan, J. (2012). The cost of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (OMAN Chapter)*, 2(2), 10.
- Evans, O., Nwaogwugwu, I., Vincent, O., Wale-Awe, O., Mesagan, E., & Ojapinwa, T. (2023). The socio-economics of the 2023 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria.
- Falola, T. (1998). *Violence in Nigeria: The crisis of religious politics and secular ideologies*. University of Rochester Press.
- Faseke, B. O. (2019). Nigeria and the organisation of Islamic cooperation: a discourse in identity, faith, and development, 1969–2016. *Religions*, 10(3), 156.
- Faseke, B. O. (2019). Nigeria and the organisation of Islamic cooperation: a discourse in identity, faith, and development, 1969–2016. *Religions*, 10(3), 156.
- Forti, D., & Singh, P. (2019). *Toward a more effective UN-AU partnership on conflict prevention and crisis management*. International Peace Institute.
- Imo, J. (2022). *Nonreligious Explanations of Boko Haram's Resilience in Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).
- Jiwani, T. (2023). The Muslim genome: postcolonial nation-building through genomics in Pakistan. *New Genetics and Society*, 42(1), e2254919.

- Kayaoglu, T. (2019). The OIC's Human Rights Regime. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, pp. 65–87.
- Kayaoglu, T. (2019). The OIC's Human Rights Regime. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Human Rights. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, pp. 65–87.
- Kugiel, P. (2017). *India's soft power: A new foreign policy strategy*. Taylor & Francis.
- Lehmann, D. (2013). Religion as heritage and belief: Shifting frontiers of secularism in Europe, the USA and Brazil. *International Sociology*, 28(6), 645–662.
- Lubchenco, J., & Haugan, P. M. (2023). The Human Relationship with Our Ocean Planet. In *The Blue Compendium: From Knowledge to Action for a Sustainable Ocean Economy* (pp. 393-443). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Malik, E., Shankar, S., & Bindlish, P. K. (2023). United Nations Peacekeeping: Enabling Conflict Resolution and the Role of Mediation. In *Globalization, Human Rights and Populism: Reimagining People, Power and Places* (pp. 875–898). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Mandaville, P. (2016). Islam and international relations in the Middle East: from Umma to nation-state. *International Relations of the Middle East*, 170-87.
- March, A., & Failler, P. (2022). Small-scale fisheries development in Africa: Lessons learned and best practices for enhancing food security and livelihoods. *Marine Policy*, 136, 104925.
- Murphy, A. M. (2012). Democratisation and Indonesian foreign policy: Implications for the United States. *Asia Policy*, (13), pp. 83–112.
- Nagel, M. (2022). *Ludic ubuntu ethics: Decolonizing justice*. Taylor & Francis.
- Niblock, T. (2021). The Middle East in China's global strategies. In *Routledge Handbook on China–Middle East Relations* (pp. 29–47). Routledge.
- Nugraha, Y., & Martin, A. (2022). Cybersecurity service level agreements: understanding government data confidentiality requirements. *Journal of Cybersecurity*, 8(1), tyac004.
- Okafor, N. I., & Onoja, C. N. (2021). Approaching security in a religiously-divided nation: The current Nigerian situation. *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy*, 11(2).
- Okolie, A. M., Nnamani, K. E., & Mbaegbu, C. C. (2023). Bureaucratic Model: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Nigerian Foreign Policy. In *Nigerian Foreign Policy 60 Years After Independence* (pp. 19-41). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Okonkwo, O. N., Davis, O., Joseph, A. O., Ejike, D. E., & Emayomi, D. (2023). Secularization of Education Towards National Development in Nigeria.
- Oladimeji, T. (2022). An Assessment of the Impact of Commodity and Oil Economy on Nigeria's Multilateral Policy. *KIU Journal of Social Sciences*, 8(1), 91-100
- Omilusi, M. (2020). Endless Circle of Self-Determination Rumbling: When the Stick-and-Carrot Strategy Fails, Is Nigeria's Collective Journey Still Non-Negotiable? *Diverse Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(2), 45–58.
- Ottuh, P. O., Ogar, T. E., & Okoi, I. O. (2023). Democracy and Western imperialism: Towards decolonising religionism in Nigeria. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 9(2), 312-331.
- Ottuh, P. O., Ogar, T. E., & Okoi, I. O. (2023). Democracy and Western imperialism: Towards decolonising religionism in Nigeria. *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs*, 9(2), 312-331.
- Petersen, M. J. (2012). Islamic or universal human rights? The OIC's independent permanent human rights commission (No. 2012: 03). DIIS Report.
- Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2012). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon and Schuster.
- Rogers, R. A., & Safiyanu, S. (2023). The Role of Personalities in Nigeria's Peacekeeping Operations in Africa. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 00219096231192321.

- Romero, C., Werme, J., Jansen, P. R., Gelernter, J., Stein, M. B., Levey, D., ... & Van der Sluis, S. (2022). Exploring the genetic overlap between twelve psychiatric disorders. *Nature Genetics*, 54(12), 1795-1802.
- Sadowsky, J. (2023). *Imperial bedlam: Institutions of madness in colonial southwest Nigeria* (Vol. 10). Univ of California Press.
- Salama, I., & Wiener, M. (2022). *Reconciling Religion and Human Rights: Faith in Multilateralism*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Terzi, Ö. (2016). *The influence of the European Union on Turkish foreign policy*. Routledge.
- TuYkur, S. (2016). *Islamic Development Bank agrees to help develop Northern Nigeria*; *Premium Times Magazine*. January 31. Accessed July 25, 2021, from <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/197768-islamic-development-bankagrees-help-develop-northern-nigeria.html>
- Usman, A. A., Abdelsalam, E. A., & Onapajo, H. (2022). Islam and Nigerian Foreign Policy. *Religion and Global Politics: Soft Power in Nigeria and Beyond*, 185.
- Usman, A. A., Abdelsalam, E. A., & Onapajo, H. (2022). Islam and Nigerian Foreign Policy. *Religion and Global Politics: Soft Power in Nigeria and Beyond*, 185.
- Veal, A. J. (2017). *Research methods for leisure and tourism*. Pearson UK.
- Watts, M. J. (2013). *Silent violence: Food, famine, and peasantry in northern Nigeria* (Vol. 15). University of Georgia Press.
- Worika, I. L. (2022). Corruption and Good Governance Challenge in Nigeria: What Are We Not Doing Right? *LASJURE*, 3, 152.
- Yaziji, M., & Doh, J. (2009). *NGOs and corporations: Conflict and collaboration*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zanfrini, L. (2020). *Migrants and religion: paths, issues, and lenses: a multidisciplinary and multi-sited study on the role of religious belongings in migratory and integration processes* (p. 834). Brill.