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## FULANI HEGEMONY AND NATIONAL UNITY IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF ABUJA 1989 DECLARATION

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### Abstract

*The foundations of a true federalism are based on the concerns for the unity and integrity of a culturally diverse nation like Nigeria. Unfortunately, the greed for power, power tussle, influence of colonialism, etc have really affected Nigerian federalism, and her leadership, which has paved a way for Fulani hegemony thereby disrupting the national unity of Nigeria. This study elucidated on Fulani hegemony and national unity in Nigeria with a focus on Abuja Declaration of 1989, which is enforcing the islamisation of Nigeria. Furthermore, it sought to find out the extent to which Fulani hegemony affect the national unity of Nigeria; and the extent to which the Abuja Declaration of 1989 affect the national unity of Nigeria. This study adopted the Religious Majoritarian Approach Model as propounded by Miller (2016). The findings of this study were that Fulani hegemony to a large extent affect the national unity of Nigeria; and the Abuja Declaration of 1989 to a large extent affect the national unity of Nigeria. This study recommends that the imposition of religious beliefs on every other in Nigeria should be aborted since Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation.*

**Keywords:** Fulani, Fulani Hegemony, National Unity, Abuja Declaration of 1989

### Introduction

Nigeria is a nation that comprises of many nations, interests, agendas and goals. Thus, continuous ethnic and regional struggle for the seat of the Presidency has remained a continuous issue within the Country's Federal arrangement. It is worthy of note that the system of governance in every nation, go a long way in aiding that nation in the actualization of her goals, especially unity in

diversity for a nation that is multiform like Nigeria. Thus, the choice for a federal system of government is often made where there are diverse cultures and national heritages. The choice for the adoption of a Federal system of government by Nigeria is obviously as a result of preserving these diverse heritages under sub-national governments termed the Federating units with

reasonable and substantial autonomy; however subject to higher authority called the Central or Federal Government to articulate these diverse heritages for their common good within their operating sphere of jurisdictions as spelt out by the relevant extant laws (Edokwe, 2021).

Nigeria having been a heterogeneous nation chose a Federal system of governance. Thus, causing the major ethnic groups in Nigeria to fight for relevance politically and economically within the Federal arrangement. Forceful integration of various nations in order to form the Nigeria nation compounded the woes of the country. Hence, the present cry for the restructuring of the country. The Northern Nigeria, which is presently made up of nineteen states with the inclusion of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Abuja), became structurally advantaged to benefit from the nation at the highest authority of political power more than other ethnic groups; and the Northern Nigeria's independent heroes seems to be aware and never pretentious regarding that. The assertions of Sir Ahmadu Bello regarding this clarifies this conclusion:

This new nation called Nigeria has to be a domain of our great grandfather - Othman Dan fodio. We must never allow any change of power from the North. We must manipulate the minorities in the North as willing tools and vehemently conquer the South. And never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future (The Patriot Newspaper, October 12 1960).

It is worthy of note that the above statement from Sir Ahmadu Bello was according to him the counsel and declaration made by Othman Dan Fodio. It is also worthy of note that majority of the northern leaders in every administration of Nigeria over the years, have been actively executing this order in one way or another. Thus it is trite to state that the hegemony in Nigeria has absolutely nothing to do with the northern region of Nigeria but everything to do with Islam, which is a religion being brought in, nurtured and practiced by the Fulanis in Nigeria. Hence, the Fulani Hegemony and not northern hegemony (Edokwe, 2021).

Meanwhile, Schenoni (2019) defines Hegemony as the political, economic, and military predominance of one state or region over other states or regions within a state. Thus, in essence, it suffices that in Nigeria, the Fulanis have not only declared themselves the rulers of the nation, but also have strategically worked tirelessly since the colonial era till present to actualize this. Thereby, ruthlessly waging both political and economic wars against the other ethnic groups in Nigeria, more especially the southerners. This has inadvertently, widened the gap between the north and the south; moreso, the gap between the Fulanis and other tribes in the northern Nigeria. Nigerian unity became a mirage that cannot be attained.

Successive governments and officials over the years have emphasized the importance of unity as a panacea for development. Unfortunately, despite the proclamations of these leaders, Nigerian national unity is far-fetched. One of the leaders of Nigeria, while sourcing for measures to curb the menace of disunity in Nigeria asserted in one of his speeches that Nigeria is only a geographical enclave which was instituted by the diabolical amalgamation of 1914; this amalgamation will continuously be the greatest pain the British government caused the southern Nigeria (Nze, 2017); and this issue has continued to torment the Nigerian unity till date.

In addition to the Amalgamation of 1914, the Fulanis having declared themselves the owners of Nigeria have managed to

forcefully slaughter their way into proclaiming Nigeria as a Muslim nation. A nation that comprised of various religions, eventually became certified Islamic nation and a member of the Organization of the Islamic Countries (OIC), without considering the intents of the other various religions present and represented in the nation. Thus, by this one step of the Fulanis, the basic agenda of the nation Nigeria became the intents of the Abuja Declaration of 1989. Another renowned leader of Nigeria, who had over the years clamoured for "One Nigeria" - General Gowon, in one of his maiden speech to the nation when he took over the pinnacle of Nigerian leadership, after the assassination of General JFU Aguiyi Ironsi said that the unity cannot be found or that it has been so badly shaken for a long time despite having considered the political, economic, as well as social, aspects of the nation. Having noted these, it suffices to state that Nigerian unity, right from the onset, has had a very flawed foundation. This forms the bedrock of this study, which sought to explore the Fulani hegemony and national unity of Nigeria.

## Statement of Problem

Nigeria came into being as a result of the British amalgamation of Northern and Southern colonial territories in 1914. This amalgamation became the resultant effects of the intents of the Brits who wanted a country stretching from the desert to the Atlantic Coast. Northern Nigeria could not pay its way while southern Nigeria generated more than enough revenue for its administrative expenses. The amalgamation brought about the many years of rivalry, bitterness and enmity between the two regions. Thus, making the two regions in opposition with one another. The Northern part of Nigeria became occupied by the teachings of Islam; and also the center of the Islamic Empire called the Sokoto Caliphate; who look up to every Muslim over the world, especially the Middle East, for affinity, solidarity and sociopolitical model. The South is largely Christian and highly influenced by the sociopolitical pattern of the West and traditional African societies. This was the beginning of an unwarranted foundation of our federalism (Oluwasanmi, 2023). The foundations of a true federalism should be based on the concerns for the unity and integrity of a culturally diverse nation like Nigeria.

Nigeria's historical experience is a sharp contrast to the important foundations of federalism. Nigeria's situation is a disruptive and disintegrative sectarian forces coupled with political rancor and instability prevailing since independence. The lopsided power sharing arrangement between the federal government (occupied by the Fulanis) and the states, fuels precipitation and intensification of ethnic conflicts. The politics of ethnicity has remarkably retarded our national development and has remained the sole engine that drives our modern history. The unjust monopoly of power and resources by the central government has galvanized the federating states to advocate for restructuring of the federal system. Obviously, this is as a result of the fact that they have more to gain when this happens. But on the other hand, the Northerners have never favored restructuring. This is in contradiction with the idea of the federating states because the affirmed monopoly of power and resources by the central government, revolves around the northerners as a result, giving them a perpetual hold on power and resources at the center.

Therefore, against this backdrop, it suffices that this study be made to unravel the root cause of these issues bothering on national unity of Nigeria.

## Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study is to explore Fulani hegemony and national unity in Nigeria.

The specific objectives are;

1. To find out the extent to which Fulani hegemony affect the national unity of Nigeria.
2. To find out the extent to which the Abuja Declaration of 1989 affect the national unity of Nigeria.

## Conceptual Clarification

### Hegemony

Hegemony is the exercising of power, authority or dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas. Tracing the basis of this assertion, Rosamond (n.d) opines that hegemon, which is a term associated with hegemony, denotes the personality, group, association, union, class, state, etc., that wields hegemonic power or spread hegemonic or subjugative ideas. Hegemony was derived from the Greek word *hegemonia*, which means "dominance over", and was also used to describe relations between city-states.

The concept 'hegemony' is variedly defined by different scholars depending on their orientation and background. In their various views, Snidal (1985) and Lake (1993) who are theorists of hegemonic stability, believed that leadership could be either benevolent or coercive. In furtherance, they stated that the determinant factors responsible for distinguishing benevolent and coercive leadership is based on the level at which costs and benefits of togetherness is shared among members (Gambo, Puldu & Kums, 2022). Hegemony is the political, economic, and military predominance of one state over other states (Schenoni, 2019; Mearshimer, 2001). These predominance factors could be regional or global. For example, in Ancient Greece (8th c. BC – AD 6th c.), hegemony was manifest when the state (hegemon city) politically and militarily dominated other city-states (Chernow & Vallasi, 1994).

Over 2 centuries ago, hegemony was perceived as the "sociocultural dominance by one group within a society or milieu" and/or "a group which exerts unwarranted influence within a particular society". Considering the scholarship on imperialism, it was discovered that the exercise of hegemonic order, entails the imposition and dictation of both the internal politics and the societal features of the subjugated states that are found inside the hegemonic enclave, either by an internally, sponsored government or by an externally, installed government. The term hegemonism could also be referred to as the practice of hegemony over another nation. This also refers to as the imposition of a nation's political order on another. Bullock and Trombley (1999) defines it as "the geopolitical and the cultural predominance of one country over other countries", e.g. the European colonialism of Africa, Asia, and Latin America hegemony, is a typical example of this concept.

### National Unity

National unity is the desire of the citizens of a country to promote peace and stability (common interest) in the country. Ojo (2009) defines national unity as the concept of bringing together different categories of people in a society with the intents to make it harmonious, based upon law and order governing that very society; with the members of this society being perceived as equitably harmonious. Onifade (2012) described national unity as a communal relationship among people within the same political

conclave. He further explained that it is a state of mind or resolution to be cohesive, act together, and be committed to mutual programmes. In this manner, members of the social system develop a consistent increasing number of contacts, fluid cooperation, consensus agreements and a good relatable community. National unity brings about the introduction of various initiatives that are put in place by a state, or its representative, that is guided by respect for and observation of the unique traditions and cultural background of the different ethnic groups within the same polity with the intention of bringing about the harmony all interests through dialogue.

From the above definitions, it could be deduced that national unity is only made manifest when ethnic groups within a polity unite themselves by agreeing to reach consensus, social structure and function in society which bring about social order. National unity institutes the pursuit of oneness in a nation, despite the various multiple forms of people inside a nation; such as where people with multi-culture, multilingualism, and multi-religion are discovered within the same enclave. It stimulates good relationships that encourage shared purpose, identity, nationhood, unity, and patriotism among the citizens of a country (Ejiroghene, 2021). It boosts the overall strength of a nation and helps in the rapid development of the various regions of a nation. For every nation that wants to succeed and be progressive, national unity must be the first and foremost consideration and this makes it a crucial matter for every nation.

National unity is synonymous to terms like national cohesion, integration and nation building. However, all of these terms are used to depict a point of convergence among different group of people in a society; especially, a multi-society. It is obvious that one thing that is unavoidable in a society in this present time of globalization, is "multiformity" and this is made manifest with reference to multi-lingual, multi-culture, multi-value, multi-ethics and so on. Therefore, the different measures taken to curb or deal with multiformity within a society up to the point of uniformity is best way of instituting national unity.

Caplan (2019) in his own view sees National unity as a political ideology, which could be measured by the extent of the unification of the collective interests of a group of people, who came together in agreement to be part of a particular geographical area as a unit, in submission to governance and action on behalf of all. Echem, Pokubo, and Ejuh (2018) clarifies the importance of national unity to the advancement of any meaningful nation; having reiterated how important national unity is to a developing nation. Thus, it suffices that for any meaningful society, especially developing nation, to advance and flourish, it must pursue and embrace national unity. The idea behind national unity is simply uniformity, oneness without minding the differences among the set people who came together to form a group. This could also mean unity in multiplicity (Alabi, Zabairu & Onuoha, 2019). Ambali (2019) further stated that National unity is the bricks and caprice of any meaningful development a nation could actualise because it revolves around a society who are collectively in pursuit of one in spite of the difference in terms of political affiliation, religion, tribe, culture and every other peculiarity that alienated people from one another. Thus, it is trite that every nation, despite how heterogeneous it is, should strive for national unity in order to actualize their utmost development plans. It suffices to state that the promotion of national unity should be the most paramount aims of a heterogeneous community like Nigeria.

### **Factors that Promote National Unity**

- There must be peace in the country
- There must be a well-established security in the country
- The government in power must be good and effective
- There must be strong economy
- Constant public enlightenment programmes that will promote national unity must be made available.
- The different ethnic groups must agree to come together and promote unity (common interest) and not ethnic interest/differences.
- There must be absolute respect for rule of law and constitutionalism by the people and government.
- All Citizens must develop the spirit of patriotism to their government and country.
- There must be religious tolerance
- There must be promotion of discipline and the reward for hard work.

### **Characteristics of a United Society**

- There must be social cohesion and cooperation.
- All interest are geared towards the societal goals and objectives.
- There must be an established and uninterrupted peace and stability
- Leaders with political will must be installed
- The people within the society must be law abiding
- There must be peace, progress and development

### **Benefits of National Unity**

- National unity promote hard work of citizens to service/duties
- There will be economic development and foreign investment.
- It will promote social, economic and political development.
- A united nation would have adequate security for its citizens (there will be protection of lives and property)
- It promotes fundamental human rights and the promotion of rule of law

## **Abuja Declaration of 1989**

Abuja Declaration is the specific resolutions made during a conference of the African countries of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1989. A conference organised by the OIC, which was as at then termed the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation conference and it agreed to institute a body called Islam in Africa Organisation (IAO) (Wijsen, 2007). The Islamic organization - Islam in Africa Organisation (IAO) is an initiative of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which was later reformed as Organization. The Secretary-General of the IAO was Dr. Usman Muhamad Bugaje. The organisation was founded on 28 November 1989 in Abuja, Nigeria, with the aim to win, possess and occupy the whole of Africa for Islam. The statutes and goals are ratified in 1991 and with this, marks her formal definitive founding. The founding-communiqué is also called the Abuja Declaration

Starting point for the conference was the fact that Africa is the only continent with an Islamic majority and therefore Africa should become completely Islamic. The plan contains a lot of points that are also common for Christian missionary organisations as relief and economic progression.

### **Declaration**

The declaration that was made at the conference was that Muslims should unite, having one cause, which is to dip the Quran in the Atlantic Ocean, conquering the entire Africa. The curricula at "various educational establishments" should reflect and conform to Muslim ideals, women education should be addressed, Arabic should be taught in schools, and Muslims should support one another economically in the areas where they are situated worldwide.

It was noted in the conference that in Africa, Muslims have been robbed of being governed under sharia law, which has condemned most of them as criminals in secular states; thus, the need to viciously fight to reinstate it (Wijsen, 2007). The Islam in Africa was formally established in July 1991 in Abuja, with its stated objectives as;

To ensure that at the entire member nations, only Muslims are elected to all political positions. To extinguish all non-Muslim religions in member nations in all its forms and ramifications.

"To ensure that all western forms of legal and judicial systems have gone extinct and exchanged with the sharia in all member nations before the next "Islam in Africa conference."

"To ensure the appointment of only Muslims into strategic national and international posts of member nations" (Bugaje, 1994).

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the Religious Majoritarian Approach Model according to Miller (2016), which states that "[a] majority is entitled to ensure that the appearance of public space reflects its own cultural values, so that where those values reflect a Christian heritage, it can insist that Christian buildings and symbols should remain hegemonic" (Miller 2016a, p. 448). The objective of RMA is to support the structuring of religion–state institutions in lieu of the religious preferences of the majorities in democratic countries.

The RMA approach was described as having four main features:

1. A particular religion receives some form of public support from the state;
2. the religion that receives this public support is well-defined;
3. members of the supported religion enjoy some advantage that is not shared by all citizens;
4. the supported religion is seen as an essential part of the state.

The RMA model presents two main justifications: That it is grounded in the shared understandings of the majority of citizens, and that it reflects well established traditions.

## **Application of the Theory**

In Nigeria, it is no longer new stories that the British government politically granted the north the glory of a higher population density due to land mass. With this, they have schemed the Fulani leadership, who are in agreement and relationship with them, to become a hegemon in Nigeria. This invariably, made the northerners the majority over the southerners in everything.

Following the tenets of the RMA approach, it is obvious that the members of the supported religion which is Islam, enjoy some advantage that is not shared by all citizens. They never stopped at this but have gone ahead to register and declare Nigeria – a

heterogeneous nation, Islamic country. With this came violent reactions from both sides of the coin being that the Fulanis, enforce the sovereignty of Islamic religion and their hegemony on others violently, while others resist violently. With this, lots of clans, ethnic groups, etc have sought for a way to secede from Nigeria. This has affected the national unity of Nigeria.

## Effect of Fulani Hegemony on National Unity of Nigeria

There is never a nation whose civil society relaxes and enjoy the trauma and disdain of second class citizenry. Hegemony, has created a gap between the acclaimed hegemonies and the followers or citizens who feel aggrieved and pressured, thereby counteracting the hegemonic rulership. Thus, it suffices that civil society is the primary site for counter-hegemonic project to illustrate that state's hegemonic structure could be resisted and contested. Gramsci provides a useful framework to understand state-society relations. Gramsci urges that hegemony has no longer been able to brainwash people since they are not passive receivers of hegemonic ideals. People are capable to revolt, think critically, and explore their deep-seated belief, hence moving from a mere acceptance of preconditioned ideas. According to Gramsci, state hegemony may be resisted in the context of a civil society which serves as an arena where contest could take place outside the sphere of the state's control (Ghazali, 2019).

Civil society could be defined as "an autonomous, self-organised public and multiple forms of civic initiative which are enabled largely by democratic space guaranteed by a constitution" (Martinez, 2004, p. 27). It provides a means to influence public policy, production and employment. Drawing from Gramsci, Ramasamy (2004) explains that civil society could be perceived as a site of inequality and contestation between the forces of hegemony and counter-hegemony. The contestation is described in terms of the state's struggle to dominate popular values, norms, and ideas from other actors. Since it is possible that civil society could cause radical social transformations (Landau, 2008), then hegemony should be constructed and reconstructed over civil society in order to manufacture consent for political domination. Thus, in the quest for this, it suffices that struggle for political domination in a given society through the civil society, generate lots of catastrophe which usually come in form of violence. In the event of this, lots of political adversaries are created.

According to Guan (2004) "the composite structure of, and the interactions between diverse colonial histories, ethnicities, religions, cultures, economic development, and state regimes of countries in Southeast Asia lead to the formation of the antagonist civil society". Guan (2004) in his own observation and understanding explained civil society as he has perceived it during the 1970s, as a threat to the state because it was being used as a means of self-organisation for citizens in Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos. Andrew Willford (2007) illustrates a counter-hegemony sentiment in his book which focuses on the revival of Tamil, Hindu ethnic minority as an unwavering and defensive response to the increasingly popular Islamic hegemony in Malaysia. Willford presents how the economic and political marginalisation of the Indian in Malaysia led some sections of its community to revive religiously against the dominant Islamisation programme. For example, through ecstatic religious rituals such as a Thaipusam celebration, they ensured their Tamil identity was best asserted. Within the domain of culture, the minority group

displayed their symbolic rejection towards state and elite Islamic ideologies.

Meanwhile, Bersih, a consolidation of 84 non-governmental organisations, has mobilised support from people using mainly the Internet for information dissemination (Radue, 2012). Bersih actualized this having drawn supporters from diverse social classes and groups to express their discontent and challenge the political hegemony. It has spoken on behalf of Malaysians who want a clear and transparent leadership in Malaysia, particularly with regards to elections. The movement has exposed many abnormalities in government's actions. Bersih has assisted in the increase of political awareness among the public and sparked active involvements from the middle age groups of urban population to shape Malaysia's political landscape. In short, the growing contestation from the civil society which is organised in the form of institutions has posed challenges. The Malaysian state has been in a constant struggle with civil society groups. It is imperative to hold that opposing views in the form of unrelenting grievances and injustices of the voices from below has worked to the disadvantage of the long-established hegemony.

In Nigeria, the issue of civil-society against political hegemony has gotten to a very dire situation that has cost lots of lives and properties through violence. The outrageous Fulani hegemonic rulership over other tribes and ethnic groups, has really aroused a lot of criticisms, devastating reactions, and clamour for breakup, which is hitting on Nigerian national unity greatly. With the rise of Fulani hegemony, other major tribes in Nigeria such as Igbos and Yorubas, even the Hausas, have also risen in contrast and rejection of this situation, thereby causing a lot of hitches which has affected Nigerian unity through the clamour for secession.

Historically, the hegemon of the British brought about colonialism that had robbed the citizens of various clans, in the then Niger area, of their rights to inclusive leadership and citizenship. Then after the amalgamation of 1914, the British, having imparted the Fulanis the divide and rule strategy, coerced and imposed Fulanis on other tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The civil revolution of the 1966 – 1970, was as a result of the revolt against Fulani hegemony. The imposition of divide and rule system of leadership of the Fulanis on the other tribes and ethnic groups, have really generated a lot of attention, criticisms and violent reactions that has culminated presently into attempts of revolts by other nationalities.

The 1989 Islamic conference had also come with its own troubles that had to do with hegemonic characteristics depicting the imposition of the Fulanis on Nigerians. This resolution of Islamists to Islamise Africa and Nigeria the most critical factor, has dealt a heavy blow on the national unity of Nigeria. It was too daring for the Fulanis to convene a conference that is geared towards Islamising Africa in Abuja Nigeria without the fear of being attacked or repelled. This is to show the extent of hegemonic influence of the Fulanis over other tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria. This could be seen symbolically from what Buhari did at his Inauguration Day on May 29, 2019, after his second term election as President of Nigeria, by carrying a Sharia law bag in taking oath of office. It was meant to show the whole world, especially, the Muslim world, that indeed, Nigeria has been declared an Islamic State, and the government of Buhari is here to accomplish that goal forever (Obiorji, 2022).

## Effect of Abuja Declaration of 1989 on National Unity of Nigeria

The Islamisation of Nigeria has dealt a heavy blow on Nigeria as a heterogeneous nation. The Abuja Declaration of 1989 strategically, mopped out the rules and strategies for the actualization of this feat. It is trite to note that since this convention (Abuja Declaration of 1989), every Islamic or Fulani-led leadership in Nigeria has followed this formidable plan thereby hampering the national unity of Nigeria having generated violent reactions against it. The symbolic act of President Buhari during his second term swearing-in ceremony was the cap of it all. President Buhari, having showcased the sharia bag during the swearing-in ceremony, communicated to the entire world that Nigeria - a heterogeneous nation, has become an Islamic enclave. This action without doubt aroused lots of criticisms that spurred the zeal for violence and readiness for battle, from the other regions, religions, ethnic groups, clans, etc in Nigeria, having known that this dastardly act has gone not without the consciousness for violent enforcement from the Fulanis.

It is imperative to note that the conflictual nature of Islamic jurisprudence is noted from the fact that fundamentalist groups/individuals in Islamic states promote a medieval form of religious laws and ethics that cast the period before renaissance into a dark side of history as they give radical interpretations to Sharia and uphold same as superior to the secular state. It is this belief and practice that have inspired terrorist groups in Nigeria and most part of the world. This indeed is attacking Nigeria unity/union. Without putting into consideration the implications of this step to the hard earned Nigerian union, some Muslims, who by chance or fate sat on the seat of leadership in Nigeria have made calculated efforts overtime to Islamize Nigeria through a number of programs (Odey, 2000: p. 27). The first attempt was made by General Ibrahim Babangida in January 8, 1986, when he sent official delegation to Organization of Islamic Conference [OIC] with the intent of registering the country as a member, however with its public notice hell was let loose in every part of the country (Eme, 2012: pp. 191-203).

The foremost renowned religious crisis in Nigeria took place in December 1980 when the Maitastine sect struck, killing up to 4, 177 persons and tremendous number of property destroyed. 1000 members of the group were arrested during the riot and two years later, precisely on October 1, 1982, President Shehu Shagari ordered their release with the notion and order of State Pardon (Odey, 2000: p. 21). Within a month, the group attacked once again; this time, in Maiduguri. It is then trite to state that President Shehu Shagari's actions towards this menace were seen as one of Government's covert attempts to Islamize Nigeria, having granted state pardon and the set-up of a special advisory Board on Islamic Affairs (Eme, 2012: pp. 191-203).

According to Odey (2000), "To supplant Christianity in the country and make room for Islam, Babangida embarked upon a rabid elimination process of Christians in key positions in his administration". By the year 2000, 12 states of the federation, all in the North, had adopted the sharia. The idea was not to promote law and order and reduce the incidence of crime and social vices "NO... What they were pursuing was the agenda to Islamize Nigeria. By implication, the imposition of sharia as the main legal system for the country overtly means the denying of non-Muslims their fundamental freedom" (Eme, 2012: pp. 191-203). In view of this,

Suberu (2001, p. 19) states that the strengthening of the sharia and its expansion to criminal aspects in 12 northern states of the then Nigeria, became one of the most turbulent cases of public policies in the contemporary history of Nigeria. The Sharia controversy caused Muslim populations to believe that its pursuit was revealed by God, against the southerners, middle Belt, and northern Christians, who were afraid that the sharia movement will violate their rights and reduce them to second class citizens. It suffices to state that the fear of the non-Muslim population in Nigeria has brought about the increase in the activities of the maitastine, Izala and MSS Movements (Ibrahim, 1989, pp. 62-82) and most recently, the Boko Haram suicide bombers in the north east of the country, who asserts that western education and their influence is sinful and a violation on divine law/rule [the sharia].

They are therefore fighting to ensure that the roots of western education are uprooted and sent back to Europe and America where they came from. Secondly, the members of the sect tell us that they are not pleased with the secular status of Nigeria. They want Nigeria to become a religious state, where the tenets of Islam, particularly the Sharia would reign supreme. To achieve their aim, they wish to begin with the twelve states in the north, where the rule of sharia has virtually taken the place of the nation's constitution. Thirdly, they believe that anybody who is not a Muslim is an eye-sore to God. He is an infidel and should be converted or killed (Odey, 2012, pp. 48-75).

After the annulment of the June 12 1993 free and fair elections by Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, a Christian, became the leader of Nigeria in 1999 to avert a looming danger that threatened the unity of the country (Odey, 2012). Today, from the activities of Boko Haram, we are learning our lessons from hard facts and bitter happenings. The greater part of the mayhem that has been inflicted on the nation by the members of the Boko Haram sect is caused by an attempt to live by the legacy of defeat, domination and Islamization inherited from the founding fathers of Northern hegemony. Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria have produced dysfunctional effects on social integration and inter-group relations in Nigeria nation building process. Odey (2012) buttressing the above argues that "the nation is over heated up". He further reiterated the declaration of Chkwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu who reacted to the killings of many Igbos in Kaduna in February 2000 by some Muslim, having said that: "If the price of nationhood is regular blood-letting, then let us not be a nation"... he further explained stating that:

What I am saying here as I stand before you is that we are tired of being threatened. No religion has the monopoly of violence. If for instance, you tell me about the jihad, know that we had our crusades too, and you did 281008392666 not fare better

... The stage for the disintegration of Nigeria has long been set. The political, ethnic and religious atmosphere in the country has long been charged. The country itself has been sinking under the weight of the plethora of problems that have besieged it (48-75).

Presently, the introduction of the sharia in some states of the country promoted religious intolerance that is still being witnessed till date. Religious intolerance has manifested itself as a deliberate and violent move to stamp out what Muslims believe to be an error in their religious thought and practices. This error is the presence of other religions within Nigerian religious environment (Ani,

2012: pp. 156-172). Furthermore, Ani (2012, p. 156 - 172) also notes that, "it is the blind refusal to study and observe as well as respect the view and tenets of other religions that has caused serious crack on the foundation of Nigerian unity vis-à-vis nationhood. Thus, it suffices that Nigerian unity and its present togetherness, is a miracle that is inexplicable.

## Summary

This study explored Fulani hegemony in Nigeria and how it has affected the entire nation, more especially national unity of Nigeria. The study without doubt clarified the intricacies of the relationship the British had with the Fulanis from before the amalgamation of Nigeria and the subsequent rulership of Fulanis in Nigeria. It was vindicated that the form of leadership of the Fulanis, on the invasion of the north, attracted the British to them and paved way for the economic exploitation of the British over Nigeria the established hegemony of the Fulanis presently.

The study also exposed how the northern Nigeria was acclaimed the region with the highest population as against the southern region with their division of western and eastern region as characterized by the divide and rule system of the British over the south; thus, boosting the grounds of the northern region on the majority side of the nation. In lieu of this, the study elaborated how the RAM approach has been suitably implemented in the Fulani leadership over other ethnic groups, clans, etc in Nigeria. It was observed that a majority group has a way of enforcing their cultures, ethics, religion, etc on other minority groups within an enclave for domination.

With the aforementioned analysis of the RAM approach, it suffices that the Fulani hegemony in Nigeria, has gone a long way in Islamizing Nigeria through the imposition of the sharia law on Nigerians since the Abuja Declaration of 1989 by the Organisation of Islamic Countries. This has been going on all these years without the consideration of other religions present in Nigeria as a heterogeneous nation of Africa. All these, have really affected the national unity of Nigeria. Lots of criticisms by way of secession have sprung up in order to disintegrate Nigeria. It is trite to note that the Fulani Hegemony and the positions of the Islamic religion on the 1989 Abuja declaration has done more harm than good to the unity of Nigeria.

Having noted the aforementioned in this study, it is trite to conclude through the findings of study that:

1. Fulani hegemony to a large extent affect the national unity of Nigeria.
2. The Abuja Declaration of 1989 to a large extent affect the national unity of Nigeria.

These were arrived at after having considered the various literary contributions of this study towards Nigerian national unity as it relates with the Abuja Declaration of 1989 and the Fulani hegemony.

## Recommendations

This study recommends that

1. Regionalization of Nigeria should be adopted in order to pave way for every ethnic group, clan, etc to be able to contribute wholeheartedly to the success of national unity of Nigeria.
2. The imposition of religious beliefs on every other in Nigeria should be aborted since Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation.

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