

Representation of Islam and *Shari'ah* by Nigerian Print Media An Analysis

Perwakilan Islam dan *Shari'ah* oleh Media Cetak di Nigeria

Tijani Ahmad Ashimi*

Abstract

Islam is one of the major religions in contemporary Nigeria. Muslims are numerically dominant in the north and have a strong presence in the south-west. This paper addresses the issue of the negative way Islam and *Shari'ah* are represented in Nigerian print media in general, and in some Nigerian newspapers in particular. It studies whether and how these negative representations are fuelling religious conflict and disharmony. It considers whether there is any ground for the popular belief that some of the Nigerian newspapers are deliberately showing Islam and *Shari'ah* in a negative light as part of a strategy to undermine national harmony. And, finally, it extends some suggestions as to what the Nigerian print media could do to strengthen and enhance religious tolerance, peace, harmony and unity in Nigerian society.

Keywords: Islam, *Shari'ah*, Nigeria, Print Media, Religious Tolerance

Abstrak

Islam adalah salah satu agama yang utama di kontemporari Nigeria, ia menguasai di bahagian utara dan memegang bilangan yang tinggi di bahagian selatan-barat di negara ini. Media cetak secara umumnya dan khususnya beberapa akhbar Nigeria diketahui telah menambahburukkan konflik agama dan keharmonian di Nigeria. Akhbar-akhbar Nigeria menggambarkan *shari'ah* Islam dengan begitu negatif. Artikel ini cuba untuk menyerlahkan, pertamanya, bagaimana beberapa akhbar Nigeria dengan sengajanya cuba untuk mensabotaj keharmonian negara, dan kedua, untuk menghulurkan cadangan untuk media cetak Nigeria yang boleh digunakan untuk mengukuhkan dan meningkatkan toleransi agama, keamanan, keharmonian dan perpaduan bagi masyarakat Nigeria.

Kata Kunci: Islam, *Shari'ah*, Nigeria, Media Cetak, Toleransi Agama

Introduction

Nigeria is considered as the most populous country in Africa. The population is about 160,000,000 inhabitants. Islam and Christianity are dominant religions. As regards the number of Christians and Muslims in

* Assistant Professor, Department of General Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Nigeria according to Nura Ahmad, the most reliable percentage recognized by the outside world based on the 1963 census, (this is the most reliable census) 47% of Nigerians were Muslims and 35% were Christians. The balance since 1963 is unlikely to have shifted in favor of Christianity. On the contrary, the percentage of Muslims is likely to have increased¹. According to the Europe World Year Book, Nigeria is also considered multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. There are more than 250 ethnic groups throughout the country with various tribes. These ethnics profess Islam, Christianity or African traditional religion². Media in Nigeria play a very crucial role in disseminating notions about Islam and Christianity. The current conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria have been fueled by the Nigerian Media. This article will explore and examine what, how and why the media in Nigeria depict Islam and Muslims negatively.

General Overview of Islam in Nigeria

The post independent years in Nigeria were for the Muslims not only the period of liberating themselves from the yoke of the colonial masters but also the period of restoring Islam to its pristine position. According to the US Department of State Human Rights Report in 1998, about half of the population of Nigeria is Muslim, about 40% Christian, and about 10% practices traditional indigenous religions or no religion³.

Mervyn opines that today the Islamic identity in modern Nigeria had other important results that showed in recent political and social realities⁴. Although, Christianity started to compete with Islam in Nigeria, especially in the middle belt, Islam is spreading from north to south and it is very difficult today to separate Islam from Nigerian politics. Islam has become a necessary attribute for full acceptance in northern business

¹ Nura, Ahmad. Et. Al. *Islām in Africa: Proceeding of Islām in Africa Conference*, (Ibadan: Adeyemi Press, 1993), p. 252.

² The Europa World Year Book vol. II (Europa Publication Limited, 2000), p. 134.

³ <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/nationprofiles/Nigeria/status.html>

⁴ Mervyn. H. *The Sword of Truth*. The life and Times of the Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio, (Illinois: Northwestern University press, 1994), P. 5.

and political circles. P.B Clarke remarks that Islam in Nigeria represents the major, but not the only, binding force available to forge a northern identity and create the communal loyalty to the "North"⁵. For instance, the northernization policy introduced by premier of Northern Nigeria Sir Ahmadu Bello was motivated principally by economic, political, and religious interests.

Islam in Nigerian society includes daily and annual ritual obligations, the pilgrimage to *Makkah*, *Sharī'ah* or Islamic law, and an established view of politics, family life, communal order, and appropriate modes of personal conduct in all situations. Every Muslim knows how to pray and perform necessary obligation in accordance with Islamic rules and regulations. Public adjudication (by local leaders with the help of religious experts, or Alkali courts) provided widespread knowledge of the basic tenets of the *Sharī'ah*, Sunni particularly. The school of law developed by Mālik bin Anas, the jurist from Madīnah, is particularly a dominant school in Nigeria. Interestingly, every Muslim settlement has at least set aside one place for communal prayers. In the larger settlements, mosques are well attended, especially on Fridays when not only the local administrator but, also the government officers participate in the congregational prayer.

An Overview of the Meaning of *Shariah*

The *Sharī'ah* is very important in Islam. According to Seyyed Hussein Nasr, it is essentially the divine law which includes not only universal moral principles but also details of how man should conduct his life and deal with his neighbors and with God; it includes all aspects of human life and contains in its tenets the guidance for a Muslim to conduct his life in harmony with the divine will⁶. There is no aspect of human life that the *Sharī'ah* does not touch. The *Sharī'ah* is both law and guidance, deriving its rules and regulations from revelation, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (tradition) of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). Ahmad Ibrahim defines the word *Sharī'ah* as the name given to the whole system of

⁵ Clark P. B & Ian Linden, *Islam in Modern Nigeria* (Munchen, 1984), p. 42.

⁶ Sayyed Husain Muhammad Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (Kuala Lumpur: Foundation for Traditional Studies, 1987), p. 72.

the law of Islam, the totality of Allah's commandments⁷. The Sharī'ah is thus the law that has been revealed to mankind; and it includes Allah's commands concerning dos or don'ts. Each one of such commands is called *Hukm* (pl. *aḥkām*).

Sayyid Quṭb says: "the *Shariah* is an Arabic word meaning the path to be followed. Literally, it means the way to a watering place. It is the path not only leading to Allah the Most High, but the path believed by all Muslims as the path shown by Allah, the Creator Himself through His Last Messenger Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)"⁸.

This implies that in Islam only Allah alone is the sovereign and it is He Who has the right to ordain the path for the mankind.

The Sharī'ah in Nigerian Context

Anderson claims that the Sharī'ah was applied more widely in the Northern Provinces of Nigeria than in any part of the British Empire⁹. He further argues that some scholars believed that Sokoto Caliphate was next in rank after Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan¹⁰.

The *Jihād* of Uthman Dan Fodio that set up the Sokoto Caliphate had brought virtually all the tribes of the Northern Nigeria under the influence of Islam with the introduction of the Sharī'ah as the legal system. By the 18th century the Sharī'ah had spread all over the Hausa states and all the kings were Muslims. When Uthman Dan Fodio was elected as the Caliph of the Muslim *Ummah*, it was clearly stated and understood that his job was to uphold the Islamic constitution based on the Qur'an and *Sunnah*.

Historically, Islam preceded any foreign religion in Nigeria including Christianity. The observation of Anderson concerning the Sharī'ah in Nigeria means that the Sharī'ah is not a new law, but It has been in existence before the advent of the colonial masters. Though, it was more in-

⁷ Ahmad Ibrahim. *Islamic law in Malaysia* (Malaysian sociological Research Institution, 1975), p. 2.

⁸ Sayyid Quṭb; *Hadha al-Din* (U.S.A: I.I.F.S.O. publication, undated), p. 19.

⁹ Anderson, J.N. *Islamic Law in Africa*, (Oxford Press, 1964), p. 171.

¹⁰ Beita, Y. *Legal Pluralism in Northern Nigeria* (Buffalo: University Press, 1974), p. 55.

fluent in the northern part, its effectiveness in Nigeria was more than any other imported laws.

The history of Nigeria affirms that by the time Muslim leaders in Nigeria adopted the Sharī'ah law as part of their state-run legal system, the precedent for using the system had already been set in the area that would become northern Nigeria, as the Islamic code of life had been practiced there for centuries until the region came under British rule in the early 20th century. According to Doi, the British allowed the use of the Sharī'ah in Nigeria, but did not permit the enforcement of amputations or executions as punishments¹¹. Yet, in the post independent era or in the modern Nigeria, some of Nigerian leaders suppressed the use of the Sharī'ah penalties, fearing they would inflame tensions between Muslims in the north and Christians in the south. Nigerian military leaders and the secular media have always been in favor of establishing secular courts based on British common law.

Media in Nigeria

Nigerian media is one of the most vibrant in Africa. There are more than a hundred national and local newspapers and publications. They include well-respected dailies, popular tabloids and publications, championing the interest of respective ethnic groups. In Nigeria there is press freedom and which can be defined according to random house dictionary Eribo Festus as the right to publish newspapers, magazines and other printed matters without governmental restriction. As such, press freedom is the availability of a free marketplace of ideas and information for all citizenry without fear, favor, intimidation or obstacles¹². In this regard, press freedom does not imply using abusive word or information to harm other parties; it denotes freedom of expression, conveying fruitful messages and information to audience without any hesitation, obstacles and barriers. Mytton observes that:

¹¹ Abdur-Rahman. I. Doi..*Islam in Nigeria* (Gaskiya Corporation Ltd, Zaria, 1984), p. 205.

¹² Eribo, F. & Jong-Ebot, W., *Press freedom and Communication in Africa*, Africa (World Press, Asmara: 1997), p. 52.

“The Constitution of Nigeria guarantees freedom of expression including the *freedom* to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference or censorship of the government. It also defends the right for anyone to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions”¹³.

Many print media in Nigeria operate in Nigeria with strong logo and motto aiming at serving the interest of all citizens, and disseminating the true idea to all, without any discrimination of ethnicity, race, gender or religion. The mottos of some prominent newspaper in contemporary Nigeria are: “Conscience nurtured by truth” (The Guardian); “To live in truth is to serve” (The Comet); and “The pursuit of truth and reason” (This Day).

Since 1914 Nigeria has witnessed three types of governments, colonial, military and civilian. The military governments have mostly implemented policies restraining freedom of press and disorganized media function. As a result many journalists have been harassed, detained and jailed, hence the mottos and logos violated. Some journalists have neglected media ethics and turn to portray Islam negatively.

Newspapers	Year of establishment	Ownership	Circulation	Location
Daily Times	1925	Independent	400.000	Lagos
The Guardian	1983	Independent	80.000	Lagos
National Concord	1980	Independent	200.000	Lagos
New Nigeria	1965	Government	80.000	Kaduna
Nigeria Standard	1972	Government	100.000	Lagos
Nigeria Tribune	1949	Independent	109.000	Ibadan
This Day	1995	Independent	110.000	Lagos

The Following is the list of the most famous Newspapers in Nigeria¹⁴.

Portrayal of Islam and Sharī‘ah by Print Media in Nigeria

¹³ Mytton, G. *Mass Communication in Africa* (London: 1983), p. 119.

¹⁴ Eropa World Year Book, Vol. 2, 43rd edition, 2002, Europa publication Limited

The portrayal of Islam by print media with particular reference to the issue of Shari‘ah in Nigeria deserves the attention of both academicians and intellectuals. It is known that media is active nowadays and is capable to shape the perception of people toward any religion or belief system. According to Ahmad Adam, the media have a powerful role to play in engendering peace¹⁵. Media in modern Nigeria (either local or international) have played a vital role in instigating religious tensions particularly between Muslims and Christians.

It is essential to know that most of the Nigerian media, print or electronics are highly controlled by non-Muslims. The message of media is usually determined by religious identity of editor or journalist in charge. Concerning the biased attitude of some Nigerian newspapers toward religions Salahuddin observes that:

“One significant feature of early Nigerian newspapers was that they devoted much time and energy to reporting information about Christian affairs. The attention was superfluous and so frequent that one wonders whether the papers were essentially established to promote Christianity. The papers gave extensive coverage to affairs affecting Christians, such as building of churches, celebration of Christian festivals, arrival of missionaries, meeting of churches, services and ordinations.. Missionary activities also received much publicity and attracted editorial comment. The newspapers also propagated the presumption that Christianity was the best, highest and noblest civilization and that only Christianity could elevate mankind”¹⁶

On November 22, 2000 and in the holy month of Ramada the world’s attention focused on Nigeria where Miss World pageant was to take place.

Days before the pageants, amidst criticisms by Islamic groups that the pageant promotes promiscuity, a Nigerian newspaper (**This Day, La-**

¹⁵ Adam, Ahmad. *Islam in the Media*. (Alpha Brain Creativity Press. Pretoria, South Africa, 2007), p. 123.

¹⁶Salahudeen, Y. *The American Journal of Islamic Social Science*. Vol. 6, No 2 (American Technology Library Association, Chicago, 1989), p. 322.

gos) published an article in which the writer (Isoma Daniel)¹⁷ suggested that Islam's Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.) would have approved the pageant and would have chosen a wife amongst the contestants. Such provocative message can easily trigger the conflict between various religious groups. The unethical statement of the unscrupulous journalist had resulted in the loss of many lives and properties.

On 19th May 2000 **The Guardian, Lagos** published an article with headline: "*Sharī'ah* has been Implemented to take money from the Arab world" in which the following observation was made:

"There had been many write ups in the press that the northern governors are bent on implementing *Sharī'ah* because they will benefit from petro- Dollars from the Arab World". One, Eddy Idobogbe wrote in news magazine of 20th May 2000 "Governors promoting the *Sharī'ah* law in Nigeria and their states particularly are traitors. They are thinking of certain benefits that will accrue to their personal pockets from external sponsors rather than the interest of their people".

It may not easily be denied that some Muslim governors have their personal hidden agenda behind the introduction of *Sharī'ah*, but the fact remains that over the past few years most of the Nigerian leaders consciously tried to promote stronger ties between Nigeria and Saudi Arabia at a governmental level. According to Doi:

"It is believed that Saudi Arabia has responded favorably by sending large sums of money for the promotion of Islam, large amount of Islamic literature have been circulating freely in Nigeria; mosques and Muslim schools have been built and scholarships awarded by Saudi funds; and Muslim teachers have been recruited and supported with funds from Saudi Arabia"¹⁸

It is true, that there is relationship between Nigerian Muslim leaders and other Muslim governments for the promotion of Islam. To

¹⁷ Ms Daniel who studied journalism and politics at the University of Central Lancashire in the U.K, only graduated in June 2001 before returning to Nigeria and working at the This Day newspaper. The new journalism graduate, a Christian in her mid- 20s said of the beauty contest that the Prophet Muhammad would not have complained about the pageant and indeed, may have chosen to marry one of the beauty queens

¹⁸ Doi, Islam in Nigeria, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

achieve this objective, Saudi Arabia has built many schools, mosques, and deputed to Nigeria and other African nations Muslim intellectuals and Arabic teachers mainly for the sake of Islam. Despite this kind of support from Saudi Arabia for the cause of Islam in Nigeria, there is no evidence which can reveal that Saudi Arabia had ever made the Sharī'ah introduction or implementation in Nigeria a prerequisite for support or for the relationship between the two countries and the two governments.

There does not seem any correlation between the Sharī'ah implementation in Nigeria and dollars. There is no state in the world, which can impose its system of law upon other states. Every sovereign state is free to introduce its law, which it believes is good for its people and ensures their welfare.

According to the article published in **Nigeria Tribune, Ibadan** on Friday 14 July 2000 under the title "National Youth Service Corps (Nysc) and *Sharī'ah*", which observes that:

"The fabric of Nigeria's federation is under stress. For about a week now, different political groups have been advocating for a change in the tradition of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to postgraduates of universities and polytechnics, or any part of the country for a mandatory one-year service. As the call up period for the exercise drew nearer, prospective youth corps members, their parents and different political groups, drew attention of the distraction the *Sharī'ah* regime in some northern states creates for the NYSC".

NYSC stands for National Youth Service Corps. It was founded in 1973. Its aim is to unify Nigerians through the process of interaction. Coming from the fratricidal civil war of 1967-1970, the military government of general *Yakubu Gowon* (the first military president in the country after the independence) was encouraged by the intellectual current of the time which had argued that interaction among individuals of different ethnic background would break the wall of disunity and assist to create a new generation imbued with an inclusive, not exclusive, vision of the Nigerian state.

The government of the State of Oshun recently declared a one-day public holiday in recognition of the first day of the Islamic calendar. In a conservative and myopic reaction to the declaration, the Punch newspaper of Tuesday, 20th November, 2012, page 18, poured vitriolic attacks on the state government for taking this patriotic and much belated action. The Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) takes the Punch editorial with a pinch of salt. Though they are not unaware of the crusader and anti-Islam character of the Punch from its inception, they are shocked that this newspaper can descend so low.

The Punch is simply acting on the script of some fanatical Christian leaders and groups who see nothing good in Muslims and who are determined to keep the current asymmetrical system in the country without allowing any room for Muslims. They are aware of the existence of many level-headed and moderate Christians who are prepared to co-exist peacefully with Muslims. The Punch has chosen to silence moderate Christian groups and try to remain the major megaphone for champions of Islamophobia.

On November 20th 2012, **Osun Defender** newspaper published an article against the public Holiday that was declared by the governor of Osun State in conjunction with Al-Hijrah (Beginning of the Islamic Lunar Year)

A national newspaper's editorial of Tuesday 20th November, 2012 titled 'Aregbesola's Strange Holiday In Osun' in reference to the Hijrah holiday declared by the Osun State Governor, Engineer Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola, smacked of deliberate hypocrisy designed to rubbish the good work and intention of the governor as well as paint him as a religious bigot whose main aim is to promote Islam using the apparatus of office. This apparently is not the first time a section of the media had unsuccessfully attempted to do so to satisfy the whims and caprices of their sponsors.

The same newspaper which prides itself as the most widely read in Nigeria preferred to remain silent when Chief Olusegun Obasanjo declared May 29th a public holiday for the celebration of his second ascension into power in 1999. Was the newspaper not in business when South West states declared their own Democracy Day holiday for June 12th?

What do we call the aforementioned declarations: regional or personal politics? Neither Obasanjo nor the south west governors were accused of promoting personal or regional politics then and certainly till now. Other states of the federation have declared public holidays within their territories which have suited their socio-cultural structure. There has not been any protest from anywhere, including Aregbesola and the Osun state government.

Nigerian press is the most vibrant in West Africa with nearly twenty dailies. In the case of the Sharī'ah in Nigeria, various newspapers had different perceptions and reportage about the Sharī'ah. Some papers described the Sharī'ah in the country as a plan by Muslims to get material benefits from the Arab World, whereas some report it as negation to the United Nations conventions, and some are moderate in their reportage.

This fact is that in Nigeria most of the reporters and journalists are not well grounded in knowledge and issues they are reporting. All in all, the coverage or reportage of newspaper should be vigilant, careful and sensitive in terms of beliefs and religions. It should not be biased in its report, and reporters should be well knowledgeable about the subject matter they are reporting and they should avoid any personal opinion and exaggeration. In this regard, Jack Shaheen argued that reporters should report events honestly and produce factual and accurate news¹⁹.

According to Ibrahim Ado, **The Guardian** and **This Day** newspapers are the most influential Christian papers in Nigeria²⁰. They are both anti- Sharī'ah in their coverage, with the former being more subtle in this strategy than the latter.

Factors behind Negative Portrayal of Islam and Shariah in Nigeria

There are three main factors for the biased approach of the Nigerian media towards Islam and Muslims in Nigeria: religious social

¹⁹ Jack. S, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Popular Culture*(George Town University Press.1997), p. 8

²⁰ Ibrahim, Ado. Kwara, *The Sharī'ah and the Press in Nigeria*.(University of Kano, 2002), p. 61.

reality in Nigeria with reference to Christianity and Islam, blind imitation of Western media, and political competition between Muslims and Christians.

1-Religious Social Reality in Nigeria with Reference to Christianity and Islam

Several religions in Nigeria coexist, helping to accentuate regional and ethnic distinctions. All religions represented in Nigeria are practiced in every major city. But Islam dominated in the north and held strong numbers in the South Western part of the country. Protestantism and local syncretic Christianity are also evident in Yoruba areas, while Catholicism predominates in the Ibo and nearby areas. Both Protestantism and Catholicism dominated in the Ibibio, Annang, and the Efik lands. According to John, the 1963 census, which is considered as the most reliable census, indicated that 47 percent of Nigerians were Muslims, 35 percent Christians, and 18 percent members of local indigenous congregations²¹. If accurate, this indicated a sharp increase in the number of Christians (up 13 percent); a slight decline among those professing indigenous beliefs, compared with 20 percent in 1953; and only a modest (4percent) rise of Muslims.

There has been growth in the Christ Apostolic Church (the first Aladura Movement in Nigeria) and the Aladura Church, an indigenous Christian sect that was especially strong in the Yoruba areas, whereas evangelical churches in general, spill over into adjacent and southern areas of the middle belt. In general the country should be seen as having a predominantly Muslim north, a mixed Christian and Muslim Southwest. This fact, in turn motivated the Nigerian media to develop an interest in portraying the religious affairs of the country with bias, unfair approach and without considering code of ethics of media. The issue of the Shari'ah and continuous negative portrayal of Islam in post independent Nigeria is glaring example that proves the prejudiced attitude of Nigerian media. It is rare to encounter negative portrayal of other religions by Nigerian media.

²¹ John, E. J. *Journal of Religion in Africa*. (Leiden: 1996), vol. xxvi No.6, p. 64.

2-Blind Imitation of Western Media in Reporting on Islam and the Sharī'ah

Herman and Chomsky provided one of the best models of deconstructing the media technique that could be seen in both Nigerian and Western media. They identified five filters to trace specific agenda.

The first filter is the commercial basis of the dominant news organization. In this case the interest of the owners is protected. Any issue that threatens their survival and financial gain is not fairly treated. Anything that promotes their interest is highlighted beyond reasonable proportion. Islam is a threat to the neo-conservatives in America and the West because of their interests in military industrial complex, commodities (particularly oil) and usury-based banking. All these three are closely related in a complex network that rules the world. There is no conspiracy theory about it. And in fact high caliber intellectuals of Jewish origin are now actively engaged in this area.

The second filter relates to the influence of advertising. Newspapers take into consideration the advertisers' interests. Advertising policy of the media involves both their commercial and political interests. That is why preference is given to the wording and content of advertisement that might not be in conflict with their political interests.

The third filter according to Herman and Chomsky is reliance on government and corporate expert sources. They argue that there is a symbiotic relationship between journalists and these sources because they provide reliable flow of raw material of news, thereby allowing news organization to expend their resources more efficiently.

The fourth filter according to Herman and Chomsky is the role of flak or negative responses to media content as a means of disciplining news organizations. They include complaints and punitive actions through letters, telegram, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches and bills before congress to be made by individuals and powerful influential groups and lobbies.

The final filter is the political control mechanism. For example, due the terrorist scare today, most Muslims and Muslim countries are now targets of negative coverage.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model²² could fit into the Nigerian media where most of the practitioners are purveyors of propaganda and could not be regarded as journalists. But it would be safer to accept Stuart Allen's suggestion of the need to problematize, in conceptual terms, the operational practices in and through which news values help the news worker to justify the selection of types of events as newsworthy at the expense of alternative ones. This is necessary because among other reasons there is the similarity of coverage amongst various media and with the filter methodology there is the possibility of a kind of conspiracy theory.

Allen²³ drew factors affecting unspoken rules or codes that are applied by most news organizations. They are conflict, relevance, timeliness, simplification, personalization, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations, reference to elite persons, cultural specificity and negativity. It is therefore very clear that media operations are complex and are tied to the society. It would certainly be very difficult to expect the dominant Western media to appropriately represent Islam within the current context of geopolitical reality and the alliances of the neo-conservative political class and those who control the world economy.

Similarly in Nigeria the Southern news media cannot be expected to properly represent Islam. If there is more openness and space for discussion as provided by some institutions such as the British Council, it could certainly influence relations between both societies (Western and Islamic) and make the discourse more fruitful in the long term. In fact, Al-Jazeera is the outcome of similar discourses in the past that called for more Arab media and openness and certainly it is now more Western than CNN if Western means openness and providing more time for discussion and not tailoring the opinion of the audience.

²² Edward. H & Noam. C, Propaganda Model: A Critical Approach to Analyzing Mass Media Behavior (Blackwell Publishing Ltd: 2010), P. 31.

²³ Stuart Allan is a British dance music DJ who worked for Piccadilly Radio and Key 103 in Manchester in the 1980s and 1990s. His hip-hop, house music and hardcore techno shows were a significant influence on the local music scene at that time. Stuart Allan today is a major contributor to the UK hardcore scene.

Indeed, Nura remarked that, more than 80% of news transmitted by the world’s news media are supplied by the west’s big wire services, namely, the Associated Press (American), Reuters (British), Agency France Press (French) and United Press International (American)²⁴. Similarly, the electronic media are dominated by American Television, BBC, CNN, VOA and Radio France International. As such, most of the Nigerian press in particular and media in general highly depend on Western news media in their reporting. Hence, the portrayal of Islam by most of the Nigerian media is negative, unfair and dogmatic.

3-Political Competition between Muslims and Christians

Since the emergence of Nigeria, politics was dominated by northern people majority of whom are Muslims. As such, it is hard if not difficult nowadays to separate Islam from Nigerian Politics. This affiliation is strongly opposed by other religious communities in the country. Other religious communities justified their objection with the article 10 of the federal constitution and which argues that the country should not adopt any religion as a state religion. As a result, the country from 60s to present day has been engaging in religious crisis which in turn breeds political instability and invites attention of both local and International media for coverage. According to Rosalinda Hackett:

“There is plenty of how local conflicts get transformed into international issues by virtue of media coverage, especially if that coverage is particularly biased and provocative which often can be. It is important to note that the coverage may be determined by media ownership- i.e. Muslim or Christian. This incidents of ethnic and religious violence also get reported more internationally because Nigeria is seen by many as a barometer of what is going on in the rest of Africa, and because it represents an interesting case of a country which has moved from being renowned for its religious tolerance up to about 30 years

²⁴ Nura, A. *Op. Cit.*, p. 2.

ago to one known the world over for its interreligious tensions and conflict”²⁵.

It is an undeniable fact that political crisis in Nigeria always attracts attention of the world media particularly BBC and CNN respectively. For Instance, CNN news website on 3rd March 2000 flashes the headlines:

Nigeria Struggles with Ethnic, Religious Violence: Hundreds Died in Bloody Riot.

“Kano, Nigeria- Tens of thousands of Nigerians are trying to come to grips with the worst ethnic violence the country has seen in decades. Hundred people died in bloody religious riot in Kaduna last week after Christians staged a protest march over plans to introduce *Shari’ah* there. Hundreds more were killed in the largely Christian Southeast this week in a backlash against Muslims”.

Hell in Kaduna: Islam Kills Again

“Nigeria is rapidly becoming a new front in the Islamic crusade against the rest of the world. Kaduna is the Nigerian city, which became famous in 2000 when Islamic mobs caused the death of 2,000 people. This time 105 people have died for an even sillier reason: a Miss World pageant. That is, in a nutshell, the difference between Islam and the other religions of the world: total, absolute, murderous intolerance of any other viewpoint”.

Conclusion

Nigerian media, print as well electronic are biased against Islam and *Shari’ah*. They most of the time smear the image of Islam and *Shari’ah*. As a matter of fact, the Political crisis in Nigeria usually, revolves around the two monotheistic religions, Islam and Christianity, and any negative representation of any religion by local or International media results in conflict between the adherents of these religions. The issue of the introduction and implementation of the *Shari’ah* in Nigeria, the

²⁵ Rosalinda, H. *The Shari’ah Debate: Religion and Politics in Nigeria* (Oxford Press, 2002), p. 43.

Bauch incident in 1991 and the issue of Miss World pageant were the best example of negative role of media against Islam in Nigeria.

Nigerian Muslims should be able to provide a proper explanation of Sharī‘ah to non-Muslims. It is their responsibility to educate them that Sharī‘ah is to make the life easy, and not to create hardship; to forgive and not to punish; to pull people together by persuasion and conviction for self-development and purification, and not to scare others by coercion and force; and to appreciate and accommodate man’s moral weakness, and not to ignore it. Furthermore, it is the duty of Muslims to enlighten non-Muslims that the incorporation of the Sharī‘ah court into the constitution of Nigeria would help the nation to regain its moral consciousness, as the moral and social decadence in the society is attributed to existing patterns of the Western legal system. Above all, Muslims should enlighten non-Muslims that the Sharī‘ah would safeguard the interest of non-Muslims.