



## THE ROLE OF ISLAM ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

*It is essential for both Islamic and political science scholars to be examining the ideas and institutions in relation to their environmental background, social realities, political and religious situation. It is therefore necessary to relate these concerns to the contemporary system of ideas and institutions prevailing in our societies. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to examine Islam and democratic governance in Nigeria. To properly contextualize the paper, the paper takes off by presenting three notable objectives: to examine the relationship between Islam and democratic governance; to evaluate the role played by Islamic scholars in democratic governance in Nigeria and to identify the challenges confronting Muslim political leaders in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance. The study adopts secondary source of data collection as method of obtaining relevance information. The study adopted democratic theory as the foundation upon which the study's discussions were based. The study revealed that there exist strong relationship between Islam democratic governance. The paper also revealed several role played by Islamic scholars in democratic governance in Nigeria over the years. The paper identified the contemporary challenges confronted by Muslim political leaders in advancing the course of Islam in politics and governance in Nigeria. The paper*



*concludes by providing possible solutions to the challenges confronting the Muslim political leaders in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance.*

**Key Words:** *Contemporary, Democracy, Governance, Islam, Politics.*

### **Introduction**

It is the duty of scholars and students of political science to be examining the ideas and institutions in relation to their environmental background, social realities and political and religious relations. In this respect, to take a cursory look at the role Islamic religion can play in the development of Nigeria's democratic dispensation becomes a worthy academic exercise. Islam as a religion has some role to lay in the development of democracy. These role could be better played during the democratization process.

It is evident as reiterated by Manzooruddin (2007) that those historians, the traditionalists and the medieval jurists of early Islam have elaborated the theory of Caliphate System of governance (*Khilafah*) as a pivotal concept of Islamic political thought. The leaders of the great political reform movements of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries considered the revitalization of the *Khilafah* essential for the political resurgence of Islam in the modern age. Similarly, the foremost religio-political movements e.g. the *Ikhwanul Muslim* in Egypt and other Arab World in the Arab world and the *Jama'at-t-Islami* in Pakistan based their political ideology in one form or another on the medieval concept of *Khilafah*.

Society and government exist primarily to protect and secure their members. In both philosophical and moral point of views, the existence of religion, particularly Islam, borne out of the desire to protect human race through the promotion of justice, equity and fairness. As asserted by reputable contemporary scholars of political science like Monshipouri (1995) and Bello-Imam (2004), democracy, among all forms of governments stands unique and the only form of government that can achieve all the aspirations and desires of man .Although, Islam does not prescribe any specific system of political administration, there are certain distinct principles and features of political administration that are prescribed in the Quran and *Sunnah* which are binding on Muslims whatever political system they may devise. The Muslim Society as defined by Islam is a unique society that is unlike other societies known to mankind throughout history.



This is because it is a society that was formed by the dictates of law emanated from Allah, the Supreme Being.

*Shariah* (Islamic law) is a guiding principle of governance. Consequently, Islamic tenets not only govern spirituality and religious practice, but also guide practices of law, business, taxation, and government. Similarly, in modern democracy, constitution is a principle of rule that protects, and guides the actions of government and the governed in a given society so as to promote justice, fairness and equity in the realization of human needs. The above perception shows that Islamic leaders and scholars have role to play in the administration of the affairs of any given society. In Nigeria right from colonial period till the present Fourth Republic, Islam, through Islamic scholars has greatly involved in politics, democratization process and governance.

It is against this backdrop that this paper specifically attempts to examine the role of Islam within the context of democratic governance in the present Nigeria's democratic dispensation. Consequently, the paper takes off by presenting a brief introduction; presents the concept of Islam, democracy and governance. It subsequently highlights what is considered as the role of Islam in democratic governance in contemporary Nigeria's political system. Furthermore, the paper articulates the contemporary challenges confronting Muslim political leaders in advancing the course of Islam in politics and governance in Nigeria.

### **Problem of study**

The role play by the Islamic scholars in democratic politics in Nigeria is controversial and deserves thorough assessment. This is because Challenges faced by the Muslim political leaders in advancing Islamic interest are enormous.

### **Objectives**

**The objectives of the study include to :**

- i. evaluate the roles, play by Islamic scholars in democratic governance and the influence of democratic government on Islam in Nigeria's Fourth Republic
- ii. identify some of the challenges confronting Muslim political leaders in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the roles played by Islamic scholars in democratic governance and the influence of democratic government on Islam in Nigeria's Fourth Republic?



- ii. What are the challenges confronted by Muslim political leaders in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance?

### **Methodology**

This research adopts the secondary and observation methods in collecting information for the study.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on the word of God as revealed in Mecca to Prophet Muhammed (SWA) during the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. Islam etymologically derives from the Arabic word *Salaam* or *Salaama* in which means peace, surrender, submission. According to Ozigboh (1988), the word, Islam means submission to Allah the Almighty, the Creator and Lord of all creation, with the entire soul and body, by obedience to what He commanded and prohibited in His revealed Law, by compliance and willful yielding of one's desire to His Will and Judgments, and acceptance of all that Allah has predestined for man on earth (Dawood, 1978). Allah is the Most Beneficent and Merciful who knows all man's rightful needs, who enjoins all that is good and warns against all that is evil. Thus, His revealed Law is perfectly suited to the universal needs, rights and responsibilities of man.

Islam is a comprehensive and universal religion for all races and classes of people. It is not inclined to serve a specific category or group of people but specially aimed to address the needs of all humanity with its moral, spiritual, social, legal, political and economic systems. Its moral purity and clarity and simplicity in a strict monotheistic creed and faith, and comprehensive prohibition of all forms of criminality, oppression and injustice appeals to all classes and categories of people, regardless of race, culture, education, social and economic status. According to Quran 60 vs 7-9, the aim of Islam is to establish the ideal human society and brotherhood. Islam spreads benevolence and the divine guidance among men for their salvation. Part of its mission is to establish justice at all times and at all levels, to maintain amicable relations even with potential enemies as long as there are no open acts of hostilities, and to promote peace whenever possible.

On the concept of democracy, there exists a troubling state of confusion on the precise meaning of the term. It seem that varying experiences and claims of democracies by countries have complicated the situation, making it a difficult task to adequately articulate what it is. Theoretical literature on the subject of democracy focuses on two models, classical and procedural (Tiruneh, 2004). The former assumes that self-rule and political equality are achievable for citizens.



Idealistically, the system serves the common good and interest. The later, procedural democracy (also called liberal or representative democracy), associated with modern states, assumes that political and civil liberties are fundamental rights that must be present in modern democracies (Gastil, 1991).

Schumpeter (1975) notes that “Democracy is a political method, that is, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at particular legislative administrative decisions for the citizens to control their leaders through election as the principle of the game. Democracy is a political form of government in which governing power is derived from the people. It is a government of the people, and the rule of the majority. It is a government in which the supreme power is vested on the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free and fair elections. Even though, there is no universally accepted definition of democracy, equality and freedom have been identified as important characteristics of democracy. These principles are reflected in all citizens as being equal before the law and having equal access to power. In a representative democracy as practiced in Nigeria, every vote count, and every vote has equal weight. Democracy includes equality of all citizens, freedom and common rights, and obligations. Democracy whether implemented by a presidential system or a parliamentary system, provides for a peaceful change of leaders subject to the will of the people. It ensures that government is conducted with the best interest of the people involved, usually leading to more rights and liberties. It restrains the power of the elected leaders and prevents authoritarianism and dictatorship.

Huntington (1991) divides contemporary definitions of democracy into three main families – those based on the “sources of authority for government”, “the purposes served by government”, or “the procedures for constituting the government” The first seems straightforward, for democracy literally means “rule by the people”. But nearly every country now claims to be a democratic state. In that broad sense, including many that no one would regard as democratic in practice. The second approach is much more useful here, which has to do with (“human wellbeing”).The purposes of government become matters of considerable dispute. (Indeed, the opportunity to engage in such disputes is a hallmark of democratic politics). The third strategy – to define democracy in terms of the way the government is constituted. The three families of democracy postulated by Huntington are very much relevant with the principle of Islam.

Meanwhile, governance is also described as an act of controlling the affairs of the nation by making decisions and executing them on behalf of the citizens. It is the activity of governing a country or controlling a company or the way in which a country is governed or a company or



institution is controlled (Olayiwola, 2013). Governance as a term is broader than the concept of government even though it has the same etymological roots with the latter term. Actually, the term, governance and government are derived from the word “to govern”. Government, according to the *New Collins dictionary* is defined as the group of people who govern a country or state, while governance according to the same dictionary is regarded as “the action, manner or system of government. Governance also encompasses the processes for carrying out the activities of government.

According to UNDP (1990), governance can be said to be good governance provided it is committed to and capable of effectively addressing the allocation and management of resources to respond to collective problems. The concept of governance is usually preferred with the adjectival word; “good”. Why do we have to qualify it? Is it necessary and what is the implication of qualifying governance? Basically, it has to be so qualified because history has shown that the end as well as the means of attaining that end are not generally shared or understood in the same manner by all.

Democratic governance represents the exercise of the state power with the consent of the people either directly or indirectly through their elected representatives. Within democratic governance, there is provision for state institutions to express the will of the state and ultimately for the supremacy of that expression on all basic questions of socio-economic direction and policy (Bello-imam, 2004). Appadorai (1975) listed some of the factors that are indispensable prerequisites under democratic governance, which include: Economic equality, fraternal feeling and political liberty within a defined territory. The institutional expression within democratic governance in contemporary times are equal rights for all normal adults to vote and to stand as candidates for election; periodic election; equal eligibility for executive and judicial office (provided the essential qualifications for the performance of the assigned duties are satisfied); and freedom of speech, publication and association. Right of speech, publication and association are integral to democratic governance because these rights make possible free discussion and the continuous participation of the citizenry in government, all the times and not only at the time of general election.

Roberts and Edward(1991) have most aptly elucidated the features of democratic governance in contemporary times. According to them, democratic governance entails popular participation, absolute respect for the rule of law; a general guarantee of fundamental freedoms which lubricate popular participation; periodic, competitive, free and fair elections with the vote of every citizen counting equally; respect for majority rule as well as the readiness of minority to acquiesce in the



decision of the majority; accountability, guarantee of separation of powers in practice, transparency and responsiveness in governance and opportunity for change of government and any leadership found wanting.

### **The Role of Islam in Democratic Governance in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a secular state, yet, religion has become increasingly important in the country's democratic system as a result of the political liberalization associated with the return to civilian rule in 1999 and the degree of autonomy accorded to state governments in federal state. In the opinion of Bello-imam (2004) at the central level in Nigeria, the rise of religion associated with the introduction of *Shari'ah* law in twelve northern states since 1999, has led to a broad debate about the country's constitution, which guarantees religious freedom and prohibit adoption of a state religion.

On historical perspective, Adeleye, Last, Naniya and Sokoto (1983) cited by Haruna (2009) are of the view that the ascendancy of Islamic scholars in the public sphere has been evolving over several centuries in the history of Muslim communities of present-day Nigeria. Two major historical events could be explained to justify this opinion: The nineteenth century Usman Dan Fodio Jihad and the twentieth century British conquest of the Sokoto Caliphate, Borno and their neighbours, are particularly relevant for understanding the roles of the Islamic scholars in society. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a section of the Islamic scholars under the leadership of Usman Dan Fodio waged a Jihad aimed at reforming the society in Hausa land. The Jihad resulted in the establishment of an Islamic state later known as the Sokoto Caliphate.

The British colonizers extended their colony from south to the north and promised the northerners that their religion will in no way be interfered with. Thus, the European introduced an Indirect Rule system seeing the well-established caliphate system of administration orchestrated by Islam. The amalgamation of 1914 and the subsequent infidelity of Lord Lugard on the policy of non interference brought in religious sentiments into the body polity of Nigeria (Ebhomenlen and Ukpebor, 2013). These historical events have significant role played on the influence of Islam on politics in Nigeria. However, Nigeria's experience with Euro-American inspired concepts, ideas and institutions in the regulation and management of its public affairs has greatly reduced the influence of Islamic scholars in the body polity of the nation. Notwithstanding, right from the pre-independence till the present Nigeria's democratic system, Islam has been playing well recognized roles in the nation's body polity.



Other aspect in which Islam has played a critical role in democratic governance in Nigeria could be, on historical perspective explained through the involvement of Islam on the promotion and the peoples' acceptability of the first political party in the north, the Northern People Congress (NPC). The party overtly and covertly bears the touch of Islam. On this, Duddley (1968) affirmed that the NPC represented the consensus of the Muslim Society- the *Ijma*- and any iota of its rejection by any member of the society signified a sinful Islamic act. Also Kuka and Fasola (1996) noted that the NPC adopted 'one raised finger' as a symbol of the Unity of God of Islamic monotheistic faith and at the same time passed the message to its people that the 'two fingered V' – for victory symbol of its opponent in the south, was a sign of polytheism which Islam prohibits out rightly.

In another development, Islam was also explored as an instrument of demobilization and delegitimizing against the over bearing Islamic regime of the NPC dominated government in the region. This was the case of Northern Progressive Union (NEPU), a Muslim Yoruba minority political party of the North in Ilorin. On this note, Kukah and Falola (1996), revealed that the NEPU mobilized from the *Madrrasah* (Islamic Schools) to spread across its enclave and allied with the Nigeria Muslim Congress against the NPC and also pushed for the modernization of Islam as its own political agenda to win the people's votes. As noted by Ebhomienlen et' al (2013), a similar development occurred in the southern Nigeria, particularly in the South-West, having a large population of Muslims who formed the United Muslim Party (UMP) as a protest political party against the Christian- dominated Action Group (AG) ruling party in the region following grievances over the discrimination on the basis of religion. In Lagos particularly, the Muslims recorded a considerable large population, Islam stood as the rallying political point of the UMP with the motto: "All Muslims Are One".

In an effort to ensure the unity of the Nigerian Muslims and to close all existing gaps between differing Muslims in the North and South, Ebhomienlen et' al (2013) state that the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs was established. The council was founded in 1973 with Alhaji Sadiq Abubakar III, the Sultan of Sokoto as the President and the Shehu of Borno as the Deputy President. Its headquarter is located in Kaduna. The governing body of the council is made up of representatives from each state of the federation. This council is the only Muslim organization usually recognized to liaise with the Federal Government on Muslim affairs. The council unifies Muslim opinion on issues relating to legal and educational developments in the country.

Beginning from 1999, following the restoration of democracy in Nigeria, Islam through Islamic scholars has been actively participating in democratic politics and governance. In 2000, Zamfara



State Government introduced judicial reforms expanding the jurisdiction of *Shari'ah* thereby starting a wave that other state government had to follow. The pressure and demand for the restoration of full *Shari'ah* came from the masses. As soon as the *Shari'ah* was restored in Zamfara State, ordinary Muslims across the eleven Northern States agitated and pressure their elected representatives and governors via Islamic Scholars to emulate the steps taken by Governor Ahmed Sani Yariman Bakura of Zamfara state (Haruna, 2009).

The emergence of modern Islamic scholars in contemporary Nigeria largely served as teachers, judges, preachers and Imams. Mahmud (2004) and Muazzam (2005) observe that the introduction and implementation of *Shari'ah* is not the handiwork of 'traditional' Islamic scholars but it was largely championed by a new generation of relatively younger and technocratic Islamists claiming to be representing the larger (but marginalised) Muslim majority. The strategies used to convince the political class to implement the *Shari'ah* included private contact and subtle pressure on the political class, open air lectures, media campaigns and in some cases protest and demonstrations. In the states where the *Shari'ah* has been implemented, the Islamic scholars are constructively and positively engaged in the process of governance in various ways. First, some Islamic scholars and Muslim activists are appointed as commissioners or Advisers and Special Assistants to the State Governors. Second, the Islamic scholars dominated the institutions and agencies charged with responsibility of managing and overseeing the *Shari'ah* implementation such as *Shari'ah* Commission, *Zakat* and *Hubs* Commission, *Hisbah* Board and the *Shari'ah* Implementation Committee (Haruna, 2009). The experience Islamic scholars gained in the struggle for the restoration and implementation of *Shari'ah* gradually resulted in their increasing involvement and active participation in the current democratic political process.

Secondly, it should be noted that at the inception of presidential democracy in Nigeria, the 1979 constitution made provision for the establishment of *Shari'ah* Court for those states which wished to establish them. In this respect, most of the northern states established *Shari'ah* Court and Islamic scholars were appointed as judges to hear cases and provide judgments in accordance with Islamic doctrine in a democratic government. This was repeated in all the constitutions that have emerged since then till the present 1999 Nigerian constitution. Therefore, in the 1999 constitution, *Shari'ah* Court is entrenched, established and Islamic scholars are appointed as judges and they are performing their functions in line with the doctrine of *Shari'ah* provided for in the Holy Quran. This is what led to some northern states to introduce judicial reforms expanding the jurisdiction of *Shari'ah* in the first tenure of political office holders in the Fourth Republic as mentioned above. This has assisted in curbing social vices that



are prevalent in the northern Nigeria. Prostitution, drinking of alcohol, corruption and other social vices were regulated

Thirdly, an attempt made by Islamic scholars to promote democratic system is the establishment of Muslim Pilgrimage Board at the Federal and in some of the Islamic states. Islamic scholars are appointed as governing members of the board. The country democratic governments at the centre, states and local governments sponsor Muslims who are members of their respective parties and who worked for the success of their elections to Saudi-Arabia to perform holy pilgrimage as one of the cardinal pillar of Islam. These people are also expected to pray for the success of their sponsor and sustenance of democracy in Nigeria. They also mobilize support for the government that sponsors them. This development is more pronounced in the Northern states where we have predominant Muslim population.

Furthermore, some state governors hired Islamic scholars to pray and perform rituals for their success in government, for them to be victorious in subsequent elections and for democratic sustenance in the country. For instance, in 2015 elections, there were several predictions of crisis by various political analysts, spiritualists and international commentators that the elections may lead to the collapse of the nation state. In this respect, leading Islamic scholars across the country expressed their opinions on the election, appealing to Nigerians against political violence by citing some verses of holy Quran that prohibits violence. This was done via sermons, preaching sessions, public lectures and seminars in mosques, schools and the media.

To corroborate this opinion, Haruna (2009) observes that during the 2003 General Elections, the *Ulama* in Kano state supported, and some of them openly campaign for Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau to become the Governor of Kano State under the platform of All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP). They supported Shekarau on the firm belief that under his leadership, the *Shari'ah* would be vigorously enforced in the state. When Shekarau became the Governor in 2003, the *Ulama* were deeply involved in the running of his government. For example, all the three major institutions responsible for the implementation of the *Shari'ah* in Kano are placed under the leadership of influential and respected *Ulama* namely: Sheikh Ibrahim Umar Kabo, former University lecturer as Chairman of Council of Ulama of Nigeria; Muhammed Sani Zahradeen, a professor of Islamic Studies and former Vice Chancellor of Bayero University as the Chairman of Zakat and Hubsu Commission; and Sheikh Yahaya Farouk Chedi, a lecturer in the Department of Arabic, Bayero University as the commander General of the Hisbah Board. More so, Governor Shekarau also established a Consultative Forum (*Shari'ah* Committee) largely composed of Islamic scholars that he consulted from time to time on policy matters.



In a similar development, in Kwara state, the Islamic scholars were divided in support of the two prominent governorship candidates in 2003- the incumbent Governor Muhammed Lawal and Bukola Saraki, the former Senate President. The Islamic Scholars used different media to publicly campaign for their preferred candidates. They did this through preaching, sermon sessions, and media and even through personal contacts. Some of them were compensated with political appointment when Bukola Saraki became the Governor of the state. For example, many Islamic scholars were appointed as members of Pilgrimage Board.

In subsequent elections in Nigeria, majority of Islamic scholars in Muslim dominated states usually, in their sermons, appealed to the Muslims electorate (men and women) to participate fully in the electoral process, from voter's registration to the actual voting. They argued that it is religious duty for every Muslim to ensure the election of good leaders and representatives for it is only through voting that Muslims would elect leaders to articulate and protect Muslims' interest. As narrated by Haruna (2009), when Dr. Ahmad Gumi spoke at length on the 2007 elections, calling on Muslim voters to come out *en masse* and exercise their civic duty by voting for candidates of their choice. He spoke further that Muslim voters should resist the use of money and intimidation during the election and defend their vote against electoral malpractices. He also reported that Dr, Gumi promised that his organization, the Izala Movement would be involved in election observation to prevent rigging and any electoral fraud during the April 2007 polls.

Fourthly, before the advent of British colonial rule in Nigeria, the Islamic scholars were the only group of people identified as educated elites with their knowledge in Islamic and Arabic education. In the report of Center for Democratic Research and Training (2005), the educational changes introduced by the British colonial authorities led to the emergence of modern Islamic scholars, in contrast to the traditional Islamic scholars educated in the old Quranic schools. The modern Islamic scholars are educated in the newly established Arabic and Islamic Schools, High Islamic Schools, Colleges and Universities. These sets of Islamic scholars serve as teachers, preachers and judges in the judicial arm of democratic government. The introduction of *Shari'ah* was the handiwork of these modern Islamic scholars. This is the level of Islamic Scholars participation in democratic governance across the Northern Muslim dominated states and some South- Western states in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

The present Fourth Republic democratic system approved the proliferation of tertiary institutions that could be established and managed by the private individual. Today, Nigeria could be proud



of hundreds of tertiary institutions established, control and managed by the private organizations. This has greatly assisted in reducing the crisis of admission experienced in Nigeria before. Secondly, the institutions provide wide range of employment opportunities for Nigerians.

Furthermore, during President Buhari first tenure, the Nigerian Senate for the second time refused to confirm Ibrahim Magu as the chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). This development led to the Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC) to strongly condemned Senate's action. The statement credited to MURIC in the social media is that: "It is victory for the monster called corruption. Nigeria Senate has shown that it is not fighting corruption but fight for the promotion of corruption. By rejecting a firebrand anti-graft boss, our senators have sent out a wrong signal to the international community". This action of the Muslim Rights Concern is strong indication of the Islamic role in democratic governance. It is not only action in support of good governance but also a step towards consolidation of democracy.

However, the study discovers that the Islamic scholars are also playing some negative role in the development of democratic system in Nigeria. Some of them specialize in performing rituals for successful manipulation of elections results in favour of their customers (politicians). They also perform rituals for the political office-holders to successfully siphon public treasury. They assist unpopular candidate to win election through rituals. They even organize special prayers for politicians to be free of atrocity committed against the popular wish.

### **Contemporary Challenges Confronted in advancing Islamic interest in Democratic governance in Nigeria**

Nigeria being a multi-religion, heterogeneous and secular society faced with a number of challenges in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance. Democratic governance requires proper organization and dynamic leadership. Organization within democratic governance is carried out by political parties, which are imperfect but are indispensable to the successful operation of democratic governance. The first challenges facing every practicing Muslim in Nigeria in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance is lack of proper knowledge and understanding of Islamic education. Because the Islamic religion is learnt in Arabic which is a foreign language in Nigeria, most Muslim are lazy and hence unwilling to learn Qur'an and *Hadith*. This makes most of the Muslim illiterates in the religion they profess. To this end, for them to align the principle of democracy and that of Islamic doctrine become difficult.



Secondly, the urge to acquire materials-wealth among the Muslim young scholars in our contemporary Nigeria's democratic dispensation is a serious obstacle to advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance. Most of these young Muslim scholars are dishonest and insincere in what they preach and in what they do are antithetical to both the teachings of the Qura'an and *Hadith*. More so when some of our Muslim brothers and sisters find themselves in governmental positions, they often forget to pursue the cause of Islam. Instead, their concern is acquisition of wealth. The Islamic scholars who are to advise them against that illicit act serve as their spiritual godfather. Thus, the urge for materials has also heightened religiosity, especially in Islam, which in turn has enhanced and expanded the role and influence of Islamic scholars in democratic governance and adversely hinders the pursuit of the Islamic interest. Given their religious and knowledge and spiritual authority, the Islamic scholars are believed to possess power not available to ordinary people. Therefore, their prayers and charms are sought as sources of fortunes and blessings, and sometime mischief.

Thirdly, most of the modern Islamic scholars are fundamentalists. Some are badly indoctrinated by a *Sheikh* who has turned his back to the true interpretations of Holy Qura'an and Hadith. This has made them to be hostile and confrontational in their approach. Some of them feel that no aspect of democratic norms that is acceptable by Islamic doctrines and Islam and democracy are not compatible and should be totally rejected by all Muslims, and if possible, overthrow the secular state on the grounds that the system is simply not only un-Islamic but also anti-Islam. An example of this is the statement made by Ibrahim El-Zakzaky in 2007 cited by Haruna that "how can a Muslim be truly happy living in a state that has no respect for Islamic values (Haruna, 2009).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The study examined the role of Islam on democratic governance in Nigeria over time and most especially in the present Nigerian democratic dispensation. It is established that Islam has been playing significant roles in politics in Nigeria since colonial day. This trend also continued during and after independence. In the present Nigerian democratic governance, the finding also revealed that the introduction and implementation of *Shari'ah* in the twelve Northern states in the first and second tenure of elected public officers has entrenched the role of Islamic scholars on democratic governance. Some of them became members of the cabinet of state Governors. The Islamic scholars are identified with mobilizing support for their choice candidate. It is also observed in the study that some of the modern Islamic scholars served as teachers, interpreters in courts and as judges as key members of the judicial arm of government in a presidential democracy. Furthermore, under the present democratic system in Nigeria, *Shari'ah* Court is



entrenched in the constitution, established in the respective Islamic states and operates in line with Islamic doctrines and democratic principles. Most of those that work in these courts are those who are well grounded in Islamic knowledge. In contrast, the study also discovered that some of the Islamic scholars are playing negative role in the present Nigeria democratic governance. They served as spiritualists to most of the politicians by giving them spiritual power to manipulate the process of elections and governance.

The study identified some prominent challenges confronted in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance. These include: the urge for materials leading to Islamic scholars' involvement in rituals and prayer for corrupt political office holders in return for money. Secondly, lack of proper knowledge and understanding of Islamic education. Thirdly, some of the modern Islamic scholars are fanatical, indoctrinated by the selfish principle of their so-called *Shaikh*. They believe in the separation of democracy and Islam. They see democracy as anti-Islam. It is on this note that the study provides the following options as a way forward to addressing the challenges confronted in advancing Islamic interest in democratic governance:

Nigeria as a matter of fact should consider, as in the case of the entrenchment of *Shari'ah* Court in the constitution, other basic elements of Islamic doctrines that can meet the country's political, economic, social and cultural requirements in the practice of her democratic governance. However, other prominent unsuitable elements of democracy e.g. the bureaucratic machinery of party system and the method of conducting electioneering campaign, which provides opportunities for selfish, insincere and corrupt people, should be discarded.

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