CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPANDED SHARIA: THE NORTHERN UMMAH AND THE FOURTH REPUBLIC

Ahmed Sani, the governor of Nigeria's Northern Zamfara State, was fresh in office (October 1999) when he generated major political stirrings in Nigerian politics by signing two items of legislation into law: the first established new lower sharia courts and the second changed the jurisdiction of the Sharia Court of Appeal. Associated with this, Sani enacted into law a Penal Code that was integrated into sharia in January 2000. Several weeks later, the Zamfara State's government transferred the administration of sharia courts from the state chief justice to the grand qadi, who by this very official act was empowered to preside over a transformed Sharia Court of Appeal. These executive actions enjoyed overwhelming endorsement from the state legislature, and for the first time in Nigeria's postcolonial history, sharia courts gained authority over civil and criminal cases in a state located in the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In his announcement declaring the arrival of expanded sharia to the State House of Assembly, Sani insisted that this historic development established a new dawn not only for Zamfara State but for all Nigerian Muslims, affirming emirate Nigeria's reformist tradition going back to the Sokoto Caliphate.[1] To consolidate

the policy, Sani enlisted the support of emirs and ulamas.[2] However, Paul Lubeck tells us that Zamfara did not draw direct moral authority from the Sokoto Jihad, nor did the policy initially have the rousing endorsement of the Hausa-Fulani political class:

> Zamfara was a renegade community, for its rulers had rejected the iconic Islamic eighteenth-century [and nineteenth-century] reform movement of Usman dan Fodio. For a number of reasons, "playing the sharia card," according to informed observers whom I interviewed, was a radical departure from the long-standing preferences of more established northern politicians, who specialize in constructing multi-ethnic coalitions to hold federal political power and control the distribution of petro-rents.[3]

Three months after Zamfara's announcement, the governor of another Northern state, Niger, announced that he, too, would sign into law a bill for expanded sharia.[4] Over the next two years, nine more Northern state governors followed suit: Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe, Bornu, Bauchi, Kebbi, and Gombe. In addition, the governor of Kaduna State signed a more limited version of expanded sharia. Among Northern majority-Muslim states, only the Adamawa and Nasarawa governments did not embrace expanded sharia. Again, Lubeck provides a perspective on the conditions of extreme uncertainty that made the expansion of sharia so attractive to the masses of Northern Nigerian Muslims:

> There is no doubt that for the youths participating in the Muslim sphere in the eighties, the spectacular failure of Nigerian oligarchic rule confirmed what their cultural nationalist and anti-imperialist instincts told them was true. For these cohorts, the obvious failure of Western-imposed institutions to meet their material and spiritual needs confirmed that they should recommit themselves to *tajdid* [renewal] in order to implement sharia as an alternative path to realizing Muslim self-determination.[5]

These complicated questions with their implications for the configuration of state power throughout the country necessitates a discussion of the context in which Islamic law was vigorously contested at the beginning of Nigeria's Fourth Republic in 1999. These contestations over the meaning of sharia among contending ethno-religious and ethno-regional political classes and the constituencies they claim to represent in Nigeria's troubled nation-state also warrant a careful analysis of the legal and political implications of sharia reforms for Nigerian citizens, especially since the attainment of independence in 1960.

We will recall that Muslim and customary laws have been supplanted by common law since the imposition of colonial rule at the beginning of the twentieth century. Islamic scholar Syed Khalid Rashid contends that over time this colonial policy not only undermined sharia's legitimacy under colonial rule, but also established the framework for the marginalization of Islamic law in the postcolonial era.[6] Additionally, various military regimes had used the area court system to further supplant Islamic law in Northern communities. Finally, we will also recall that the drafters of the 1979 Constitution had overcome the pressures from the Hausa-Fulani political class to establish federal and state sharia courts of appeal during Nigeria's second transition to civil-democratic government.[7] By the 1990s, opposition to the area court system had gained momentum, especially among Northern Muslim leaders. Detractors of the area court system charged that these courts lacked due process.[8] The area courts' bureaucracies were said to suffer from a host of administrative problems: by many accounts the courts were notoriously corrupt, with no systematic records of court decisions. Furthermore, relations between Islamic judges and Western-trained legal experts were often strained. The former considered the latter ignorant of local custom and overly bureaucratic, while the latter considered the former uninformed about basic legal principles. Many cases in these courts were decided ex parte (with only one party present), usually not in exigent circumstances. In many cases, judges used oaths to decide the case when a full trial was necessary.[9] Often, in Northern states, judges were Muslim clerics even though the courts administered many cases that did not possess any religious components. Beyond these structural problems, the area courts were poorly staffed—most of the legal assistants and court clerks were untrained.[10] Nevertheless, these courts adjudicated most of the cases involving Nigeria's poor, an arrangement perceived as legitimate because their authority was considered to reflect local custom and tradition. In short, informality made the area courts more accessible but also impeded justice and due process.

With such grossly inefficient administration of the area courts—and the Islamic and customary courts—outspoken sharia advocates seized on the democratic opening that followed military rule to press their case for legal reform. To most Northern Muslim critics of the prevailing system, however, the more pressing concerns went beyond the failures of the area courts; they complained that Islamic law needed greater representation within Nigeria's judiciary system. Islamic scholar Abdulmumini Adebayo Oba, for example, captures this sentiment when he called for the professionalization of Islamic courts and questioned the

constitutional requirements that insist on Maliki *madhab* (school of thought) law as essential qualification for sharia judges. He demanded greater representation of sharia experts in the Nigerian judiciary and insisted on the separation of sharia from customary law to meet the religious needs of Muslims, including those from Southern and Middle Belt states. Similarly, Rashid suggested that sharia should be paramount in civil matters and that its appeals process should be specific to Islamic law.[11]

Particularly contentious were the sharia courts of appeal, first established by British colonial authorities as the Muslim Court of Appeal during the reforms of the decolonization process in the 1950s. Although they were superior courts of record, they hardly engaged the Constitution and were widely ignored by legal professionals trained under the common-law system. Other Muslim scholars proposed an overhaul of the Judicial Service Commission to reflect equality among competing legal systems.[12] For most reformers, autonomy and parity among the three legal systems was essential for any efficient and just legal reform.[13]

In failing to increase the scope of Islamic or customary law, the 1999 Constitution did little to address these problems. Indeed, as with previous constitutions, the Nigerian legal system remained decidedly under the authority of the common-law courts. New courts that were established at Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory in Abuja also affirmed the authority of the common-law courts. At the national level, a federal high court has broad jurisdiction on matters pertaining to the federation or between particular states. Appeals from this court or any of the superior state courts go to the Federal Court of Appeal, as do decisions from constitutional tribunals and any ad hoc commissions established by acts of the National Assembly. Finally, in addition to its role as the ultimate appellate bench, the Supreme Court is granted original jurisdiction on all cases pertaining to the existence of legal rights and any further remit bestowed by acts of the National Assembly (not including criminal matters).

As is evident from this system, Islamic and customary laws were highly circumscribed. Not only are the customary and sharia courts of appeal limited to personal law; they also can be appealed to the Federal Court of Appeal and ultimately the Supreme Court, which are both based on common law. Equally relevant to ensuing contestations, all common-law justices are required to have specific legal training and must be accredited, but judges of Islamic law only need "a recognized qualification in Islamic law from an institution acceptable to the National Judiciary Council."[14] The long-contested issue of English provisions being superior to those of sharia was thus firmly upheld in the 1999 Constitution, which creates a regulatory system anchored in common law. Consequently, when the Northern Muslim political class and Islamic

clerics insisted on expanded sharia in the early years of the Fourth Republic, that posed a thorny constitutional problem. With Nigeria's entrenched ethno-religious structure, the insistence on expanded sharia exposed the contradictions between Islamic law and Nigeria's Western-derived Constitution. The analyses that follow will further underscore specific aspects of the constitutional challenges posed by expanded sharia to the Nigerian state in the early years of the Fourth Republic.

ISLAMIC LAW AND COMMON LAW

In the Northern Provinces during the colonial era, Oba identifies two phases of the evolution of Islamic law that contributed to the erosion of sharia in postcolonial Nigerian society. First, in the early years of colonial rule, he contends that British authorities embraced Islamic law as a necessity but limited its scope by classifying it as customary, steadily allowing common law to dominate its authority.[15] With the growing presence of Southern Christian immigrants and foreign immigrants (European and Lebanese) in the Northern Provinces by the 1930s,[16] common law rapidly gained supremacy over Islamic law. During this period, Islamic courts were also subjected to the oversight of British administrators. Most contentious was the restriction of sharia's jurisdiction to personal law.[17] Firmly established by the period of decolonization, the Repugnancy Clause established by British administrators in the early years of colonial rule was reviled by conservative Muslim clerics and emirs as the hallmark of colonial intrusion.[18]

Conceived during decolonization and the early decades of independence, the second phase effectively witnessed the formal subjugation of Islamic and customary law to the jurisdiction of common-law courts,[19] reflecting a profusion of cases where common, customary, and Islamic law conflicted with each other as well as with competing legal interpretations. Islamic law was increasingly flexible, despite claims of its divine origin by Muslim clerics, while customary law was so ill-defined that it could be shoehorned into competing juridical systems. With the exception of conflicts between Islamic law and common law in criminal cases, Islamic law often was adaptive to local conditions on personal cases where it retained jurisdiction. Consequently, as Nigerian society evolved in the postcolonial era, the three legal systems converged, diverged, and overlapped in various ways. By the time of the 1990s democratic transition, local people were choosing their preferred bench based on their identification with a particular religious or cultural group, and to many, the country appeared headed toward a mixed legal system.[20] Emerging from this legal blend, however, was a perception by a vocal voice in the Northern Muslim political class of

an unjustifiable preference for common law in Nigeria's legal system. These advocates of sharia contend that common law is not normatively neutral because it is derived from Christian traditions.[21]

SECULARISM, MULTIRELIGIOSITY, AND STATE RELIGION

A second cause of conflict revolved around Nigeria's multireligious identity versus the constitutional principle of secularism, which prohibits state religion. While the former calls for a state structure that embraces a diversity of faiths, the latter asserts a complete absence of religious influence in state affairs. Christian opponents of sharia have long complained about sharia's endorsement of state religion, though they resisted attempts to strip state funding for churches and Christian schools.[22] By the time the sharia crisis exploded on the national scene in 1999, sharia advocates had latched onto the distinction, extending their argument for sharia from federal and state governments' undeniable support for Nigeria's two world religions. For example, at a Kwara State College of Islamic Studies seminar, sharia advocates concluded that religious and civil liberties do not come from man and thus cannot be bound by human law; as all rights are divinely granted, they can only be divinely governed. As Adegbite observes, "To the Muslims, the notion [of secularism] is anti-God, and we reject it totally and irrevocably. We are wholly committed to the sovereignty of Allah to whom we submit without reservation. That is Islam."[23] Or as Gumi had argued a decade before, in his autobiography:

> The roots of our instability lie deep in the concept of secularism, which eats away at the very cords which should bind us together as a nation. By divorcing our government from God we are at once encouraging selfishness and unfounded ambitions. The current system does not acknowledge God, which is why we lack direction. . . . Secularism, therefore, as the policy of operating government outside God's control, is alien to civilized human existence. We cannot expect to succeed in our affairs without abiding by the wishes of God, in spirit and in form.[24]

Furthermore, advocates of sharia felt it hypocritical for Christian opponents of Islamic law to claim that the Nigerian Constitution should be based on unassailable secularity. To these sharia advocates, the Nigerian state has never been secular, having its foundation in common law that is derived from Christian traditions.[25] Their insistence on expanded Islamic law would simply bring sharia on equal footing with common law, as both have religious moorings that need to be balanced for Nigerian jurisprudence to be acceptable to Muslims. Thus, sharia activists contended that since historically the government

had favored Christian traditions and institutions (for example, through the Christian origins of common law and by subsidizing Christian missionary schools), the sharia policies of the twelve Northern states simply rectify the imbalance of many decades.[26] As a result of this history, Southern, Middle Belt, and Northern-minority Christians consistently have enjoyed significant advantages in Nigerian constitutional evolution, from which they project the myth of Western secularism that blocks Muslim religious and social aspirations.[27] In short, advocates of expanded sharia presented secularism as Western-derived, in direct conflict with Islam, and at its core fundamentally a political theology.[28]

The claims of sharia advocates seemed substantially bolstered in the numerous provisions of the Constitution providing for a Sharia Court of Appeal.[29] If it were simply the religious nature of sharia that was unconstitutional, sharia advocates argued, then how could the same document concede so much authority to Islamic law within the jurisdiction of the state governments? They further contend that the mere provision against state religion[30] did not guarantee secularity, or the absence of religion in government.[31] On this, Adegbite argued that expanded sharia did not amount to declaring a state religion because secular courts still existed in Northern sharia states.[32]

Nevertheless, opponents of sharia underscored the importance of secularity in the constitution, insisting the new laws violated section 10 of the 1999 Constitution. Harnischfeger provides the typical refrain: "Muslims' call for autonomy flies in the face of Nigeria's moderately secular tradition. . . . The Constitution does not allow elevating any religion to a state religion. Yet this principle is violated when governors in the North use state authority to Islamize public life."[33] This position flowed in part from the OIC debacle of the 1980s and the conflict over whether joining an Islamic organization, such as the Islamic Bank, amounted to declaring a state religion, as well as the 1978 and 1989 Constituent Assembly debates wherein pro-sharia advocates purportedly refused to differentiate between secularism as godlessness and secularism as religious neutrality.[34] Furthermore, many detractors of sharia argued that state resources would be directed to enforcing a religious code, which amounted to funding Islam.[35] Sharia proponents countered that these critics ignored the fact that the state was already heavily subsidizing and funding religious institutions, especially schools, pilgrimages, and other interests.[36]

Constitutional scholars, judges, and politicians in the end relied on specific circumstances to decide constitutional meaning.[37] Both "secular" and "religious" states are not the simple products of various stages of modernization; rather, they are stages in ongoing processes of state formation, overlapping with people's aspirations and struggles.[38] According to Islamic scholar Sanusi

Lamido Sanusi (who was installed as emir of Kano in 2014), the concept of justice that is held by progressive Muslims has been connected to Western scholarship since the Enlightenment, and the interpretations conferred on Islam represent a hermeneutical process of finding meanings in the Qur'an and the hadith.[39]

STATES' RIGHTS

The third constitutional issue involves the question of whether state governments have the powers to create, modify, and abolish courts in their spheres of influence. When Mamuda Aliyu Shinkafi, deputy governor of Zamfara State, defended sharia's legality, he noted that "any law that is enacted by the House of Assembly is constitutional."[40] While this is at best a curious constitutional pronouncement, more common was the narrower claim that, as Adegbite argued, states have the right to control their laws and their courts.[41] Importantly, Northern states retained the Sharia Court of Appeal and extended its jurisdiction. Exercised through these reforms, expanded sharia appeared to have exceeded constitutional guarantee by claiming authority over criminal cases.[42]

Southern, Middle Belt, and Northern-minority anti-sharia analysts found room to contest these changes by the Northern sharia states. Distinguished lawyers Rotimi Williams and Ben Nwabueze contended that Islamic and customary-law provisions in the Constitution are subject to the federal Penal Code, making a statewide shift to sharia illegal. Nwabueze further argued that, by the rules of statutory construction (the Constitution was written after the Penal Code), the application of a uniform federal Penal Code is necessary.[43] Nevertheless, constitutional scholars such as E. Essien argued that changes by the Northern states were in line with provisions of the Constitution: only an amendment to the Constitution can *take away* from the jurisdiction of a state's Sharia Court of Appeal, but any state can legislate to *add* to its original jurisdiction. More problematic, however, was the legal limbo in which high courts' jurisdiction was left hanging with the new role of expanded sharia in civil and criminal cases.[44]

WRITTEN LAW

Islamic law is essentially derived from the holy texts in Arabic about the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. According to doctrine, these texts should not be translated from Arabic into any other language. Despite defending sharia's constitutionality, Justice Bello (former chief justice of the supreme court) had noted that the challenges of translating Islamic law from Arabic pose a serious problem for the constitutional requirement to codify Nigerian criminal laws.[45] On this measure, opponents of expanded sharia argued that

Islamic law is not compatible with chapter IV, section 36 (12) of the Constitution, which states that "a person shall not be convicted of a criminal offense unless that offense is defined and the penalty therefore is prescribed in a written law," and in this subsection, a written law refers to an act of the National Assembly or a law of a state, any subsidiary legislation, or instrument under the provisions of a law.[46] Many sharia activists rejected this argument because, as they see it, sharia has endured over a thousand years of textual interpretation and scholarly debates.[47]

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

The relevant constitutional provision on freedom of religion is found in chapter IV, section 38 (1) of the Constitution: "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his or her religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance."[48] Many sharia activists read this provision to mean that the constitution gave Muslims access to all that Islam entails, including the requirement that Muslims be governed by sharia; in this reading, section 38 validates the constitutionality of expanded Islamic law. The speaker of the Plateau State House of Assembly, while denying that his state would implement Islamic law, argued that the "core Muslim North" had a right to sharia inherent in its Muslim identity.[49]

Along the same lines,[50] anti-sharia analysts argue that just as the Constitution grants freedom of religion, it also ensures freedom *from* religion, protecting citizens from state-sanctioned expanded sharia.[51] Defense lawyers in Kaduna and Niger states would make this case on behalf of their non-Muslim clients who were being prosecuted under sharia.[52] Advocates for sharia have argued that religious orthodoxy necessitated sharia, but legislators had made alterations to the law that seemingly violated their faith, making the new legislation no more "holy" than the previous. For instance, in many states, the sharia Penal Code was not written de novo but, rather, adapted from the old Northern Nigerian Code, itself a colonial compromise.[53]

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Particularly objectionable to opponents of expanded sharia was the concern that the twelve Northern states' expanded Islamic law abrogated constitutionally guaranteed civil and human rights of Nigerian citizens. These critics contend that the Northern states' sharia courts, in contrast to prevailing practices in common-law courts, contravene established norms of justice and lacked

procedural standards. Consequently, they conclude that expanded Islamic laws are in violation of constitutional provisions protective of citizens' rights and due process.[54]

Anti-sharia analyst Simeon Nwobi's argument encapsulates the sentiments of most of these critics. He identifies three areas where strict application of sharia in criminal and civil cases contravened the civil and human rights guaranteed by the Nigerian Constitution. First, sharia's prohibition of commercial activities on products deemed *haram* (forbidden), such as alcohol, abrogates the constitutional rights of citizens to participate freely in the country's national economy.[55] Second, Nwobi claims that expanded sharia restricted Nigerians from moving freely within the country because it limits the social activities of people under its jurisdiction.[56] Finally, Nwobi judges that sharia prohibits conversion from Islam to any other religion, contradicting the Constitution.[57] The ban on "apostasy," while formally absent from the letter of Islamic law in most of the twelve Northern states, would be considered an essential rule once expanded sharia was instituted.[58] Anti-sharia advocates Masih and Salam further argued that preaching Christianity (and other religions) would be outlawed under sharia, which violates the "freedom to manifest and propagate [any] religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, and observance," as would expanded sharia's abrogation of Christian education, a right guaranteed by the Constitution.[59] With these queries, *less* Islamic law was required for sharia to be constitutionally acceptable.[60]

Whatever the limits of the Fourth Republic's judicial framework, it was clear that Islamic reformers' wishes were not integrated into the prevailing Nigerian legal system. It was in this context that prominent Hausa-Fulani politicians and Muslim clerics pushed for reforms within their respective states. This led to expanded sharia policies instituted by the twelve Northern states.[61] To understand the impact of these reform policies in the Northern states, it is necessary to situate the push for sharia in Islamic thought and the construction of the Northern Nigerian ummah.

Islamic Thought and the Ummah

The extent to which Islamic thought impacted the sharia crisis is reflected in interpretations of scriptural texts and the variety of doctrines that have shaped Northern Nigerian Muslim identity over several centuries. Although religious clerics are not granted any special authority under Islamic doctrine, they are entrusted with interpreting legal texts through case studies, a practice known as *fiqh*.[62] Fiqh was codified by Imam al-Shafi'i in the eighth and ninth centuries.[63]

This "science of Islamic law" is divided into *usul* (the methodology of law, its sources, and scope) and *furu* (the study of substantive branches of law).[64] Fiqh is applied to the corpus of Islamic jurisprudential texts, and divided among primary and secondary sources. The first primary source is the Qur'an; it is composed of the text itself (with 114 *surah*, or chapters), legal commentary on the Qur'an (referred to as *tafsir*, carried out only by those who have attained advanced knowledge of the Qur'an), and the *sunnah* (documentation of the life of the Prophet, transmitted orally until Caliph Umar Ibn al-Aziz instructed scholars to write it down). As it varies in reliability, the *sunnah* is further split into *Sahih* (if the sources are trustworthy) and *Da'if (*if not), with accordingly different legal weight applied. The second primary source is the hadith, the record of the Prophet's and his companions' sayings and actions.[65] Secondary sources are essentially composed of legal interpretations, known as *ra'i* if by an individual and *ijma* if made by consensus—with the latter weighted more heavily. Other secondary sources include *istishab*, or legal presumption, such as of innocence or lawfulness of those activities not expressly forbidden. More controversial secondary sources are public interest (Malikis refer to this as *al-Masalih Mursalah*); earlier religious law from recognized prophets such as Moses and Jesus (*Shar min Qblana*); acts of Madinah people, since they lived with the Prophet (*Amal Ahl al-Madinah*); and local customs (*urf*).[66] Should this body of legal doctrine fail the scholar, *fiqh* dictates that he makes a *qiyas*, an analogical deduction based on available evidence for a legal problem to which no solution can be found in the texts.[67] Decisions must always follow five concerns: belief, moralities, devotions, transactions, and punishments. All acts are classified into one of five categories: obligatory, recommended, indifferent, prohibited, or distasteful.[68]

Islamic jurisprudence is informally divided between a divine half and a human half, the latter of which can change over time.[69] Thus, claims that Islamic law is universal and unchanging do not contradict assertions that it can be adapted to local circumstances. In this respect, the principle that shapes sharia is similar to that of common law, for which (until recently) divine law ruled and positive (human) law supplemented a legal baseline derived from Christianity. The major distinction between Islamic law and common law lies in the fact that the latter has sucked up its divine component.[70] However, this balance leaves room for disagreement over interpretation of the corpus, partly arising from differences in scholars' intellects, legal abilities, and readings of linguistic derivations.[71] As a whole, sharia forms a uniform, all-encompassing legal system: "Law, religious ethics, and morality form an integral part of the

same normative process,"[72] therefore Islamic law is a necessary component of Islamic society.

Islamic law cases proceed with the presentation of the relevant parties in the case, followed by the oath, the presentation of the witnesses (if the accused denies the charges, witnesses are brought in and cross-examined), and eventually the rendition of judgment.[73] Depending on the case, two males, a male and two females, or two females are needed for witness testimony to prove guilt. Each must be of a certain "quality" with respect to gender, adherence to Islam, and age. With regard to judgment, specific sentences are not always provided for; instead sharia relies on judicial discretion.[74] Appeals are heard by the justice from the original decision, as opposed to the Western practice of a second judge (or panel of judges) reviewing the case.[75] The most serious criminal acts are classified as *hudud* offenses, of which there are eight: *zina* (adultery), *qadhf* (slander), *sariqa* (theft), *hirabah* (armed robbery), *shurb al-khamr* (consumption of alcohol), *jinayat* (homicide), *riddah* (apostasy and blasphemy), and *baghye* (rebellion). All have fixed penalties, and all but the last two were implemented in Northern Nigeria following the imposition of expanded sharia.[76]

Among contending Northern Nigerian Muslim groups, the reformism that shaped the agitation for sharia came out of the Izala movement. Providing the movement's dominant theological perspective since the 1980s, Izala had mobilized a new generation of Northern Muslims to articulate new Islamic legal tradition that challenged Nigeria's constitutional and political reform. Consequently, Lubeck argues that Nigeria's sharia movement was

> driven by a new generation of Islamic reformers who while drawing upon eclectic sources, are largely inspired by neo-Salafi legal models and discourses originating in the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia. The latter should be distinguished from the Salafi reformers of the nineteenth century, like Mohammed Abduh and Rashid Rida. Neo-Salafi doctrines privilege the Qur'an and Sunna of the Prophet, respect the companions of the Prophet, and reject subsequent innovations such as Sufism and Muslim modernist reasoning (*ijtihad*) for the public good (*maslahah*). While neo-Salafi reasoning relies heavily on Hanbali doctrines, it is important to emphasize that when scriptural legal movements travel through global networks and are applied by reformers living in large, complex societies, like those of Northern Nigeria, they become intermingled with each other. Therefore, while sharia reform was empowered by neo-Salafis, Nigeria's legal system remained largely Maliki because the existing sharia

judges adjudicating personal and family law were trained in the Maliki, not the Hanbali tradition.[77]

With such a well-defined jurisprudential tradition, the expanded sharia codes introduced by Nigeria's Northern state governments in 1999 and 2000 followed a fairly uniform format. Kaduna State's Penal Code provides a standard example of such reform. The new code acknowledges that only Muslims (and non-Muslims who consent) are subject to Islamic law, extending its jurisdiction to those who commit a sharia offense outside Kaduna when they reenter the state. Years are counted by both Islamic and Gregorian calendars, oaths must be in Allah's name, and several Arabic terms are defined. A list of possible punishments, such as caning and amputation, are outlined. With regard to doctrine, punishments are divided into four categories: hudud, diyya, qisas, and ta'zir. As would be expected from expanded sharia, corporal punishment and judicial discretion are elevated, while probation and fines are less common and degrees of punishment are less graduated.[78] In addition to this textual grounding, the philosophical disposition of Muslim clerics tied jurisprudence to the word of Allah. This barred any expedient revision of Islamic law, much less its replacement with an alien common-law jurisprudence.

To Muslim reformers, these changes were essential. The adoption of expanded sharia, one advocate of Islamic law claims, was "the essential foundation of the just Islamic society . . . one that follows the revelations and words of God."[79] When the Bauchi State government announced its expanded sharia policy, the governor reasoned that the decision was taken simply in fidelity to Islam.[80] A typical editorial of the Northern-centered *New Nigerian* reiterated that the law governing Muslims "cannot be adapted, altered, or dropped capriciously but must be followed absolutely."[81] It followed that any contradiction within the constitution that restricted access to expanded sharia on civil and criminal cases for Northern Muslims was prima facie invalid.

Similarly, as Murray Last argues, ideas inherent to emirate society have always pushed Muslim leaders to advocate for sharia in local communities. Because Islam is as much a civilization as a religion, it experienced various transformations as it spread across Sudanic Africa over many centuries. Since the imposition of colonial rule, its doctrines have acted as a buffer against Western conceptions of modernity and other global intrusions.[82] Moreover, "the sense of closure," Last argues, "is central to Islamic culture. Not only is the interior of a house strictly private . . . so too, in a sense, is the territory of the *jama'a* [Muslim faithful]. Not for nothing is the land of the Muslim *ummah* [Muslim polity] called *dar al-Islam*, the 'house' of Islam." The push to expand Islamic

law in 1999 and 2000 represented "a way of keeping 'strangers' in their place, reminding them that [a community such as] Kano is not theirs and reasserting the right of Muslim dominance in a Muslim city."[83] Thus, sharia is an attempt to reestablish the *dar al-Islam* and assert Northern Nigeria's membership in a global Muslim community. In Last's words:

> *Shari'a* and *hisba* are proof to the wider *ummah* that "we Muslims" in Northern Nigeria are serious members of the *ummah*; that "we" are not to be pigeon-holed by foreigners simply as "Nigerians" and associated with doubtful dealings. It proves, too, that "we" are not aligned with the USA against "our" Muslim brothers and sisters in Iraq, Iran, or indeed Afghanistan. But while I argue that we should interpret *hisba* and the *shari'a* as aspects of this reaffirmation of a Muslim citizenship, I would argue also that it is not about cancelling Nigerian citizenship; it is just an attempt to develop and articulate a second nationality.[84]

He adds, "Putting things right in the *Jama'a* will lead Allah to aid the *Jama'a* significantly, albeit in His own time. Calling the *Jama'a* to order is thus a serious political act." Muslims from emirate society cite as an example of Allah's aid the end of Christian colonial rule in 1960 and the removal of various corrupt postcolonial regimes.[85] From the start, the imposition of expanded sharia was a reassertion of Northern Muslim identity; sharia thus became the unifying regional framework for the enunciation of a vision that connected the noble past articulated in the Sokoto Jihad with the future of a Northern Muslim community. Consequently, Brandon Kendhammer contends,

> As elites and ordinary citizens argued about what it meant to be a Muslim in a democratic society and about how Islamic injunctions might shape state policy, a discourse emerged connecting sharia implementation to broader, pan-Nigerian ways of talking about democracy. This discourse drew on symbols and images from Northern Nigeria's Muslim past, but also represented new and evolving coalitions of religious and political interests.[86]

These critical issues were vividly reflected in a landmark national conference on sharia sponsored by JNI in February 2000 and presided over by distinguished Nigerians, including Justice Mohammed Bello, former chief justice of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; a renowned academic, Professor Abubakar Mustapha, vice chancellor of the University of Maiduguri; and the Rev. Dr. Matthew Hassan Kukah, a prominent Northern Nigerian theologian and later Catholic bishop of Sokoto.[87] Offering incisive interventions in his keynote address, Justice Bello traced the course of Islamic law in Northern

Nigeria through two centuries and identified distinct stages of its evolution in the region following Usman dan Fodio's jihad in the early nineteenth century: the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate involved an expansive emirate system governed by Islamic law that lasted through the better part of the nineteenth century; Islamic law endured the imposition of the early colonial administrative system in the Northern Nigerian Protectorate. Thus, as the colonial system evolved, emirate rulers—emirs, alkalis, and ulamas—served both as agents of the British authorities and as embodiments of prevailing Islamic legal order. While acknowledging that the modern legal system eroded Islamic law, Justice Bello insisted that "with the exception of matters within the exclusive jurisdictions of Federal and State High Courts, [Northern Nigeria's] mode and conduct of life has always been governed by sharia."[88]

Given his reputation as Northern Nigeria's preeminent common-law jurist, many pro-sharia activists conveniently interpreted Justice Bello's nuanced endorsement of Islamic law as an unqualified support for sharia in Northern communities.[89] In regional newspapers, sharia advocates insist that Islamic law has long governed the public life of Northern Muslims. Expressing a popular Northern pro-sharia perspective, the emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Sulu Gambari, in the northern Yoruba region, on the southern fringe of the Caliphate, thought it unreasonable for "Christians to demand secularity in a region [the Hausa-Fulani emirate] long ruled by Islamic law."[90] While pledging support for Obasanjo's federal government, Northern ulamas noted that sharia "has been in existence in Nigeria, regulating the lives of Muslims in various states of the country for centuries."[91] One prominent pro-sharia commentator described the Northern states' insistence on expanded sharia as the modern manifestation of the Sokoto Jihad, and a critical step in defining the essence of the Northern Nigerian *ummah*.[92] Even high-ranking federal government officials from Northern states in the Obasanjo administration, though generally ambivalent on expanded sharia, supported their Northern Muslim compatriots. For example, in a BBC interview, Nigerian foreign minister Sule Lamido, an influential Hausa-Fulani Muslim, defended the sharia policies of the Northern states.[93]

For Muslim proponents of sharia, this restoration of the ummah required the reframing of expanded sharia to challenge the erosion of Islamic law since decolonization. At independence, the final "reconciliation" of Islamic law and common law had come in the Penal Code, which was embraced by the sardauna's NPC regional government, under the tutelage of outgoing British colonial officers. This public support for Islamic law not only challenges this alien legacy, but also situates Northern states in their proper place as legitimate Muslim communities.

The Ummah and the Common Good

In addition to articulating sharia as the essence of the ummah, powerful advocates of expanded sharia also packaged their support for sharia as the quest for the common good in emirate society. Ludwig observes that many Northern Muslim proponents of sharia defended the application of expanded Islamic law on the grounds that "the new laws have been enacted by democratically elected executive and legislative officials responding to the unquestionable desire of the vast majority of their constituents."[94] Governor Ahmed Sani of Zamfara State, a champion of expanded sharia, provides a good illustration of this line of argument. For Sani the democratic process was premised on implementing sharia because he had based his gubernatorial campaign on Islamic law. As opposition mounted against Zamfara's sharia policy, Sani replied: "When I was campaigning for this office, wherever I [went], I always start[ed] with '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the greatest) to show my commitment to the Islamic faith. . . . As part of my programme for the state, I promised the introduction of sharia."[95] Sani told us additionally that sharia is essential for the organization of a just Islamic society, and would serve as an effective response to the corruption that Western conception of modernization had imposed on Zamfara communities.[96] He was backed by the state's chief justice of the Sharia Court of Appeal and by the Speaker of the State House of Assembly; these officials were convinced that sharia represents the Zamfara people's mandate.[97]

In an editorial in the *New Nigerian*, Bello Alkali, a prominent pro-sharia commentator, argued that the Zamfara State governor and legislators were popularly elected and that their sharia policy was a reflection of democracy, not an abrogation of it. In addition, he insisted that "the overwhelming population of Zamfara State had told [Governor Sani] they want sharia to govern their lives if the Almighty makes him the Governor."[98] In summation, Alkali argued that sharia would help reverse the moral and social crises endemic in Zamfara's society; contrary to the position of Northern, Southern, and Middle Belt Christians, sharia, he contends, is in keeping with constitutional provisions on freedom of religion and state's rights. Another *New Nigerian* editorial opined that expanded sharia would affirm the right of Muslims to be governed by Islamic law, as dictated by the Qur'an, sunnah, and hadith. The editorial outlined the functions of qualified judges and called for the establishment of a police force to enforce the new Islamic law.[99]

The sharia-as-justification-for-democracy argument later was used by advocates of Islamic law in Bauchi State[100] to turn the Katsina State government's position toward sharia,[101] and in Kano to declare that if non-Muslims (only

2 percent of the population there) were against sharia, they should leave the state.[102] In Katsina State, Governor Umaru Yar 'adua, a confidant of President Obasanjo among PDP governors and later president of the federal republic, who earlier had been ambivalent about expanded sharia, reversed himself when he was confronted with sharia's popularity in his state.[103] In Kaduna State, with its substantial Christian population, the government established a statewide public opinion campaign,[104] which eventually led to sharia's enactment.[105] From the perspective of pro-sharia scholar Ibrahim Ado-Kurawa, Southern "secularists" and Christians were conspiring to crush the democratic aspirations of Northern Muslims.[106] Lateef Adegbite, the Yoruba secretary-general of the NSCIA, declared that since Northern Muslims had spoken through the democratic process, any opposition to sharia could only be seen as an attack on the popular will.[107] Consequently, for pro-sharia activists, Southern, Middle Belt, and Northern Christians' fierce opposition to sharia signifies intolerance and is antithetical to the democratic will.[108]

Supporters of the expanded sharia policies of the Northern states also argued that Islamic law represents a societal necessity. Beyond a straightforward binary of legal and illegal, sharia, they think, provides the only just legal system for mediating relations among Muslims. Many prominent emirate clerics had argued since decolonization in the 1950s that sharia's elimination from the Penal Code spelled the death knell of Usman dan Fodio's vision for the Sokoto Caliphate.[109] For its supporters, the extension of sharia beyond family cases thus represented a homogenizing force, eliminating the sectarianism that had plagued Northern communities since independence.[110] Furthermore, since the Constitution does not provide for social and economic rights, one prominent pro-sharia commentator pointed out that sharia's zakat tax levy on the wealthy would help reduce emirate society's grinding poverty.[111] Indeed, Lubeck observes that

> the poor members of the popular classes rallied around sharia because they hoped that the zakat tax on the affluent (2.5 percent of liable asset) would result in the redistribution of wealth. . . . In Kano, for example, approximately a million people turned out to celebrate the passing of sharia in 2000. The advantage of sharia, advocates argued, was that judgment would be swift, access improved, and citizen participation increased because Muslims already spoke the same language of sharia and understood its principles of justice, which was not true of Nigerian common law.[112]

Another pro-sharia commentator, Yakubu Yahaya Ibrahim, argued that expanded sharia would resolve the corruption inherent in the financial requirements of common law.[113] Of particular relevance to sharia is its critical role

in the Penal Code,[114] where its proponents contend that the new expanded Islamic law will effectively check society's countless social ills.[115]

As riots between Muslims and Christians over the implementation of sharia later engulfed some Northern communities, pro-sharia commentators conveniently argued that the orgy of violence was evidence that the Penal Code should be reflected in Northern states' sharia laws.[116] Responding to detractors who criticized the harsh penalties in Islamic law, Governor Sani noted, "Sharia [is] always aimed at deterring human beings from committing crimes rather than executing punishment."[117] Praising Zamfara State's policy, Bello Adamu Sakkwato, a sharia advocate, agreed with the governor: "Justice, fair dealings, economic development, peace, and tranquility in all ramifications will ensue in the state."[118] Bashir Sambo, a renowned emirate judge, continued the optimistic viewpoint that sharia can solve all of Nigeria's problems,[119] echoing the observation in the 1980s of Ibrahim K. R. Sulaiman, a prominent Northern Muslim legal analyst, that sharia is the bastion of morality against the corruption inherent in common law.[120]

With the popularity of Sani's sharia initiative in many Northern states, prominent regional personalities from all walks of life and of diverse ideological perspectives showed their support for sharia. Barrister Abdullahi Jalo, a prominent regional attorney, called on Governor Habu Hashidu of Gombe State to follow Zamfara's example and introduce sharia in order to rid "the state of crime, prostitution, and other vices";[121] a leading emirate potentate Adamu Shanono, Baraden Abakpa commended Governor Sani's foresight and courage, claiming that this policy would reverse the social decay that was endemic in emirate society.[122]

Tied to this argument was the belief that sharia is inherently just and is built upon extensive textual and case law for the protection of minority rights. The *National Concord,* founded by Moshood Abiola as a pro-NPN newspaper during the Second Republic, editorialized that true sharia would lead to religious tolerance,[123] while an opinion piece in the *New Nigerian* said that sharia in Kaduna State would, in fact, protect the religious beliefs of the state's substantial Christian population.[124] Indeed, Sani personally assured Christians in his state that their freedom of worship would be protected under sharia.[125] Again, Adegbite wrote that if properly administered, sharia would deter crime, foster public order, and promote social justice.[126] Many pro-sharia letters to the editor of the *New Nigerian* were confident that sharia would reverse the Western values that have corrupted the morality of emirate society.[127] In the run-up to the implementation of the new Islamic laws, the Speakers of the Houses of Assembly of Northern states met to coordinate prohibitions on alcohol, prostitution,

and gambling across their respective states.[128] When sharia came, many declared preemptively: "Peace and moral improvement had arrived."[129] Northern states immediately passed strict anti-vice measures such as the Zamfara State law that banned non-Muslim cultural resources, including videos, foreign films, and advertisements, all considered to have negative impact on Muslim youths.[130]

As pro-sharia commentators contended that expanded sharia is the panacea to the social problems in Northern communities, they also argued that the sharia revolution would encourage a renaissance in Islamic culture. This, they contend, would not only provide an effective response to the corrupting influence of Christian and secular education in Northern communities, but would also reverse the educational disparity between Northern and Southern states. Ado-Kurawa argued that Islamic education gave the Sokoto Caliphate its power, but colonial authorities elevated secular education and, even worse, missionary schooling in Northern communities.[131] Proponents of expanded sharia said the educational requirement inherent in the implementation of Islamic law would provide culturally relevant education for talakawa commoners and women.

These thoughts in part illustrate the context in which pro-sharia commentators imagined the significance of a revitalized sharia movement in the educational transformation of Northern states.[132] Indeed, the acerbic reaction of sharia's opponents to the reforms, its proponents contended, was simply an episode in secularist ignorance, particularly among anti-sharia Muslims, indicating the extent to which widespread educational reform was needed.[133] Most prominent was a campaign to establish an Islamic university as a center for advanced Islamic studies in Katsina.[134] So strong was the extent of local support in Katsina State that Katsina civil servants agreed to donate 5 percent of their annual salaries to fund its construction.[135]

With heavy emphasis on lionizing the precolonial Sokoto Caliphate, British colonial authorities, the previous allies of Hausa-Fulani Muslim rulers, were now denounced by sharia advocates as the destroyers of Islamic piety and the cause of Northern states' turn to the immorality seen in the West.[136] The return of Islamic law, which British colonialism destroyed would thus represent the revival of a noble Islamic heritage.[137] To sharia proponents, Western vice was the cause of social chaos and economic crisis.[138]

Sharia advocates also were aware that they needed to provide effective response to the strong Southern Christian opposition to sharia mounted through the powerful Lagos-Ibadan news media outlets, especially in the months after the launching of comprehensive sharia policies by Northern state governments. As a Yoruba, Lateef Adegbite, the NSCIA secretary-general, was well posi-

tioned to respond to the scathing attacks on sharia policies of the Northern states by the Southern intelligentsia. Interestingly, Adegbite emerged as one of the most articulate defenders of Northern sharia states, challenging the assault of Southern Christians against sharia.[139] In Zamfara State, where Sani particularly drew the rage of Southern Christians, Adegbite countered that the state's sharia policy was not only in keeping with the Constitution, but also would address the crisis of law and order.[140] Furthermore, in an opinion piece, Northern Muslim commentator Abdul Gaffar lashed out against Southern journalists—especially Yoruba journalists—for what he considered their bias against Muslims.[141]

Indeed, to confront what many Hausa-Fulani Muslim elites have long considered Southern and Middle Belt Christian propaganda against Islam, now manifested in the vitriolic campaign against sharia, the chairman of the Council of Ulama called on Muslims everywhere to defend their religion against its enemies. Similarly, at the announcement of his state's sharia policy, Kano State's governor called for a massive turnout for its inauguration—demonstrating to the country that sharia had widespread appeal among Northern Muslims.[142]

However, this overwhelming Northern Muslim support for expanded sharia was hardly a blind allegiance to the Hausa-Fulani political class. The erosion of the moral authority of the emirate political elite, especially under unpopular military regimes led by Northern generals, had left the masses of Northern Muslims disaffected with the Sokoto Caliphate's power structures.[143] Hausa-Fulani politicians and their emirs and Islamic clerics allies are good at preaching sharia, critics argued, but are an essential component of a national neopatrimonial system that can only be eradicated through fidelity to true Muslim values.[144] Moreover, while noting sharia's constitutionality, a group of "progressive" Northern Muslim analysts saw the mass campaign for expanded sharia as a distraction from the political and economic failings of the Nigerian political class.[145]

Northern Muslim Coalition for Expanded Sharia

Despite the ambivalence of a small minority of Northern Muslims for expanded sharia, the sharia movement clearly had popular appeal among most Northern Muslims.[146] Sharia also had the support of notable figures in emirate society's small but influential group of radical intellectuals who had shaped the progressive traditions of populist socialist parties, notably NEPU (Northern Elements Progressive Union) and the PRP (People's Redemption Party), since decolonization. For a movement that Southern modernists generally

saw as atavistic, the sharia movement, at least initially, succeeded in unifying Northern Muslim public opinion of diverse ideological orientations around a common ethno-religious—Hausa-Fulani-Northern-Muslim—identity.[147] These disparate groups coalesced around a revived Northern People's Congress (NPC) in March 2000. Led by the sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, the revived NPC morphed into a renewed Arewa (Hausa for "Northern") Consultative Forum (ACF), a political association of emirate leaders (with a minority of junior partners from nonemirate Northern communities) committed to asserting Northern interests. In fact, the initial success of this pan-Northern ACF was not unconnected to Northern perception of a visceral Southern and Middle Belt Christian opposition to the sharia movement. This was particularly apparent in the Southern Christian-dominated national press corps. Thus, a Northern "manifesto" declared that the "pastime" of Southern Christians was "to ridicule, vilify and scandalize Islam and sharia."[148] Added to this was Northern Muslim leaders' feeling that despite their strong support for Obasanjo in the 1999 presidential election, an administration led by a self-proclaimed Yoruba born-again Christian failed to confer on Northern Muslims the recognition commensurate to their support for him.[149] In this context, the ACF unified Northern Muslims behind sharia and argued that Hausa-Fulani Muslims have a moral obligation to defend the Northern state governments' sharia policies against their Southern and Middle Belt Christian adversaries. The influence of this intersecting Northern Muslim identity will be seen in the evolution of the debate discussed below.

The major challenge before older-generation ACF leaders was to bring into the Northern Muslim fold disaffected Muslim youths, who had become increasingly restless since the political and economic crisis of the 1980s.[150] Confronted by an uncertain future, this younger generation of Northern Muslims had been attracted to Islamic reformist movements (especially neo-Salafi movements) such as Izala. Thus, the strong Southern and Middle Belt Christian opposition to sharia further radicalized educated Northern Muslim youths in the Arewa Peoples Congress, the de facto militant wing of the ACF under Brigadier General Sagir Mohammed. The group's militancy grew out of allegations of the "silence of the so-called elders over the massive massacre of Northerners in [the Yoruba cities of] Lagos and Ibadan. . . . The younger generation is losing confidence in the leadership of the older generation."[151]

Nevertheless, the environment created by these militant Hausa-Fulani Muslim youth movements gave greater coherence to the sharia riots that engulfed many Northern cities during the early years of the Fourth Republic. In Kaduna State, where the sharia riots were particularly violent, Northern Mus-

lim youths blocked some one hundred thousand Christian demonstrators against sharia, whose "otherwise peaceful protest" they "literally lit on fire."[152] When Southern and Middle Belt Christian students fled their Northern university campuses during the Kaduna riots in February 2000, their properties were looted by Muslim mobs.[153] Also, Hausa-Fulani Muslim youths targeted the Christian deputy governor, Stephen Shekari, for his earlier handling of the sharia riots as acting governor.[154] At a minor level, the sharia crisis spilled over into a few Yoruba communities, betraying the low-level rumblings of Yoruba Muslim activists against the decidedly anti-sharia opposition of Yoruba Christians. For example, months after the Kaduna sharia riots, Ijebu and Lagos (Yoruba) Muslim youths attacked Christians in their local communities.[155] Less violent but equally vociferous was the National Committee of Muslim Youth, which organized a rally titled "Iwo [an Oyo-Yoruba city] Land for Islam," which tried to instigate religious conflict in the city.[156] To be sure, riots incited by Christian youths also were reported in Northern, Southern, and Middle Belt communities during this period of religious and political turbulence.

Another crucial constituency was to be found among emirs and Muslim clerics, who were promptly co-opted into the newly established sharia courts. In exchange for the emirs' support for state policies, senior state officials rewarded them with state patronage.[157] For instance, Zamfara State's governor identified emirs and traditional chiefs as the first vector for the implementation of the government's sharia policy.[158]

Sharia advocates also drew inspiration from international supporters by linking Northern Nigeria's sharia reforms to a global history of Islamic law dating back centuries. These reformers justified the legal changes by pointing to global jurisprudential precedents. Thus, "the experiences of countries which practiced forms of sharia such as Sudan and Saudi Arabia were taken into account" in drafting legislation in the Northern states.[159] One editorial in the *National Concord* traced sharia from Prophet Muhammad, through early Islamic states in the Middle East, to precolonial Nigeria.[160] Partly as a result of widespread concerns that the extension of sharia into criminal cases would undermine the civil rights of religious minorities, sharia proponents drew on Algeria as a successful case of protections afforded to non-Muslims.[161] Ado-Kurawa, meanwhile, framed the reform effort as part of a global Islamist resurgence, comparing it to the Iranian Revolution of 1979. He called for a pan-Islamic movement to break free of Western domination, insisting on Muslims' triumphant victory and moral superiority.[162] Similarly, situating Nigeria in the Muslim world, another leading Muslim commentator, Syed Khalid Rashid, argues that Islamization is progress and Nigerians should abandon their irrational tendency to imitate the West.

Many pro-sharia intellectuals concur, noting that Western-oriented Nigerian Christians consistently associate Islam with backwardness. Many Northern Muslim commentators contend that Islam is under attack throughout the world and that Nigerian Muslims should seek solidarity in political linkages with fellow Muslims around the world. As John Paden notes, major Nigerian Muslim constituencies have international ties going back many centuries:

> Hausa-Fulani rulers are linked to Sudanic Africa; Sufi movements are strongly transnational (*tijani* are tied to Morocco and Senegal, *qadiri* to the Maghreb and Iraq); anti-innovation legalists are allied with Saudi Arabia; intellectual reformers have global educational contacts; anti-establishment syncretistic network with local groups in Niger, Chad and Cameroon; the Muslim Brotherhoods have supporters in Iran; and even urban youth and migrants have access to foreign radio.[163]

Consequently, the Zamfara State government made overtures to the broader Islamic world, and several Muslim countries pledged to train Zamfara's Islamic judges and provide resources for the state's sharia institutions.[164] Other Northern states also sought and received different forms of support from the Arab world. Several Northern Islamic judges received training in Saudi Arabia, while Iran, Libya, Mauritania, and Sudan lobbied the Nigerian federal government to promote sharia.[165] Such efforts were helped by the formalization of Nigeria's place in the global ummah through its membership in the OIC, going back to the 1980s. Running parallel was a less effective attempt by sharia activists to define Nigeria's anti-sharia movement as an extension of the West's assault on Islam.[166] After allegations of Christian-instigated violence in January 2000, Kwara State Muslims charged that weapons used during the riots were imported from groups seeking to destabilize Nigeria.[167] Such statements appear to have been intended to isolate the non-Muslim opponents of expanded sharia in Northern and Middle Belt states from international backers, especially from Western countries, a tactic that largely failed.