

2018 CONFERENCE ON ISLAM IN NIGERIA (COIN)

Main theme: Islamic theocracy and modernism: Issues and challenges.

Title: Islamic theocracy in practice

Objective

To review the atavistic conception of Islamic theocracy with a view to generating its variations that are capable of universal application.

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ABSTRACT

Theocracy is a form of government in which a deity is the source from which all authority derives. Nigeria and the whole world have been a peace place if the ruler's intention to rule is to serve people, guide and manage them harmoniously as Islamic theocracy applies. This paper focuses on the Islamic theocracy in practice using analytical method in dealing with meaning and concept of of theocracy, issues surrounding practicing Islamic theocracy, advantages of Islamic theocracy in contemporary, worth of Islamic theocracy over other theocracies, merit and demerit of Islamic theocracy. It is later discovered that putting Islamic theocracy into practice is the best option with the principle and guidelines using the Qur'an and the Sunnah. There will be peace, harmony and total tranquility in any nation that practice it.

The paper conclude and came up with recommendations that practicing Islamic theocracy is the best.

Keywords: Theocracy, Islamic theocracy, deity, issues, contemporary.

INTRODUCTION

Theocracy is a government that has accepted the authority of a particular religion in managing the society and the field of politics. Therefore a theocracy does not require people or rulers to be religious, rather it means the principles and the purpose of the government must be based on religion¹. The term refers to a government operated by religious authorities who claim unlimited power in the name of God or supernatural forces. Many government leaders, including some in the United States, invoke God and claim to be inspired by God or to obey the will of God. This does not make a government a theocracy at least in practice by itself. A government is a theocracy when its lawmakers actually believe that leaders are governed by the Will of God and laws are written and enforced that are predicted on this belief².

As for the Islamic theocracy, the phrase of 'Islamic Government' implies that Islam has determined the framework and general policies of the government or at least its basic and objectives. Therefore, the concept of theocracy can be defined as an organization that all its pillars are based on Islam.

Theocracy as a concept

The word theocracy originated from the Greek theokratia. The component of word are theo 'god' and kratic 'to rule', hence rule by god or government by god³. Theocracy is a form of government in which a deity is the source from which all authority derives⁴.

Theocracy according to Oxford Dictionary is a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or a god⁵. Catholic encyclopedia describe theocracy as a form of civil government in which God Himself is recognized as the head⁶.

Merriam – Webster defines theocracy as government that has accepted the authority of a particular religion in managing the society and the field of politics. Therefore, a theocracy does not require people or rulers to be religious, rather it means the principle and the purpose of the government must be based on religion⁷.

- **Islamic Theocracy**

The phrase of ‘Islamic government’ implies that Islam has determined the framework and general policies of the government or at least its basics and objectives.

Therefore, the concept of the theocracy can be defined as an ‘organization’ that all its pillars are based on Islam. The ruler's perception of the concept of government influences their actions and behaviours. If their perception of government is to dominate people and employ them in order to achieve the objectives and interest of their ruler, they will act accordingly. But if the ruler's intention to rule is to serve people, guide and manage them, they will pursue these objectives and their actions will be aimed at serving, guiding and managing⁸.

Law in the theocracy of the Islam is intended to serve people's spiritual and material interests, and that its rulings are intended to bring benefit to people and to protect them from harm, whether immediate or delayed. These human interests are not explicitly identified by any text in the Qur'an or the Sunnah but are generally agreed upon, based on circumstances that arise in human society. Islamic law does not specify all human interests in detail, nor does it spell out all of the rulings required to preserve such interest, which are not only numerous, but also multifaceted and increasing in number by the day. Therefore, in addition to its detailed rulings, Islamic law has laid down

general rulings, universal principles all inclusive aims from which an untold number of ruling related to newly arising situations and circumstances may be derived. Everything that is good, beneficial, right, fair and charitable is called for by the law of Islam, either as a recommended practice (mandub), or as a requirement (Wajib) depending on the degree of its importance or necessity⁹.

Islam has its own structural political thought which consisted of worship and leadership, politics and stewardship, legislation and state as well as spirituality and Jihad¹⁰.

- Principles of government in Islamic theocracy.

The Islamic Political System is based on some functional principles. These are:

1. Sovereignty of Allah

Sovereignty means the source of power in Islam, Allah is the source of all powers and laws. It is Him (Allah) who knows what is good and what is bad for people.

2. Khulafah of mankind (vicegerancy of man)

Man is the vicegerent, the agent or the representative of Allah on earth. Allah is the sovereign and man His representative.

Man should do as Allah commands him to do. But he has a choice to either obey or disobey Allah and because of this freedom of choice, he will be tested on the day of judgement. In the political sense, Khulafah means that human beings should implement the will of Allah on earth as His deputy or agent. As Allah's agent, human beings will carry out the

Will of Allah on His behalf as a trust. Khilafah is a trust. An agent is always expected to behave as his master wants him to behave.

3. Legislation by Shura (Consultation).

Islam teaches us to run a government, to make legislation and decision by the process of Shura. Shura means “to take decision by consultation and participation”. This is an important part of the Islamic political system. There is no scope for despotism in Islam.

4. Accountability of government

The Islamic political system means the ruler and the government responsible firstly to God and then to the people. A ruler is a servant of the people of Islam. The responsibility of the ruler is heavier than the ruled. An ordinary citizen of an Islamic state has the right to ask any question or any matter to the ruler and the government.

5. Independence of judiciary.

In the Islamic Political system, the judiciary is independent of the executive. The head of the state or any government ministers could be called to the court if necessary. They would be treated no differently from other citizen. The ruler and the government has no right to interfere in the system justice.

6. Equality before the law.

The Islamic political system ensures equality for all citizens before the law. It does not recognize any discrimination on the basis of language, colour, territory, sex or descent.

- **Issues surrounding practicing Islamic theocracy**

In Islam, the community established by the Prophet Muhammad (C.570-632) in Medina (622-632) was a theocracy in which Muhammad (S.A.W) served as both temporal and spiritual leader. The communities established by Muhammad's affair-in-law and successor, AbuBakr (C.573-634), the first Caliph, were also based on theocratic government. The largest and best known theocracies in history were the Umayyad Caliphate (the first Islamic dynasty, 661-750) and the early Abbasid Caliphate (the second major Muslim dynasty, 750 – 1258), in which state and religion were closely intertwined; the Byzantine Empire (Fourth – fifteen centuries), in which emperor was the head of the Church; and the Papal States (Stati Pontificii) during the middle ages, in which the Pope was the ruler in a civil as well as a spiritual sense¹².

Yemen like most of the other mentioned countries is also based on theocratic government with Islamic Sharia law dictating the executive legislative, legislative and judicial branches of government. Recently Yemen has also been going through a period of intense political turmoil wherein conflict between several different political groups have led to a civil war type of situation in the country. The main force in the fight involve the zaidishia rebels (or Houthis) against the loyalist of the displaced president of Yemen Abdrabbah Mansour Hadi.

In Sudan, the theocratic rule of the Sudanese government and the establishment

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