



Institution of Religion to Good Governance in Nigeria: Islam as a Major Vehicle

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Abstract

'Of no doubt is the standard way religion called for which shows the capacity built by the religion as a complete way of life. The religion plays an important role in all aspects of human life, practices as well as in their behavior. The religion of Islam well perfected by Almighty Allah explains that nothing is left behind of discussion in its holy book Al-Qur'an and this shows that Islam has a set of goals and values encompassing all aspects of human life including economics, social and political. This paper seeks to examine the interrelationship between the economic and political contents of the Islamic ways of life. This is to determine whether Islamic political system could provide good governance with the Islamic democratic orientation, good government, Islamic welfare state, Islamic law and order, social and economic justice, international relations and national defense were all examined. Findings are that Islamic political system entrenches good governance and a welfare state. It also shows that religion is the major vehicle to establish a good government for the betterment of the populace.

Keywords: Islam, Good governance, Welfare state, Political system, Religion, Arabic language

1. Introduction

Islam as a religion is equally a way of life (Abdul: 1976)¹. Its studies cover all aspects of life and even beyond. Islam, discusses everything atom to matter, materials, spiritual and temporal. It composes a set of goal and values encompassing all aspects of human life including social, economic and political. At this juncture, it is to realize that the above mentioned all aspects of life are interdependent and the Islamic way of life is consistent as a whole, its goals and values in one field determine the goals and values of other field as well.

Therefore, the Islamic way of life being goal- oriented is inconceivable without an organized community governed in accordance with the tenets of Islam.it is worth of mentioned that nothing is life untouched by Islam through the injunctions and teachings of holy Qur'an, because holy Qur'an centered its teaching on past, present and the forthcoming events in the life of beings.

The Qur'an unequivocally condemns disorder and anarchy (Q2:205) and the Prophet (SAW) stressed the need for organization and authority in Muslim society that in the midst of two, three people there must be a leader i.e., an Imam. Umar, the second Caliph, emphasized that there could not be an organized society without an Imam and that there could be no Imam without obedience (Abu Al- Hassan, 1960). The jurists including Imam Shafi'I and others were of the same opinion that the teaching of Islam with respect to authority and organization has continually influenced all Muslim political thinking.

Advocating for good governance in this society would be difficult to achieve without a value and goal - oriented state. In this regard, State is seen by Islam as only an effort to realize the spiritual in human organization. Thus, the State is viewed according to Azeez, 2010² as an instrument for the realization of the ultimate goals, both spiritual and material, of the Islam society. However, the authority exercised by the State is not absolute. It is a trust from God and is to be exercised in accordance with terms of the trust as



laid down in the Shariah (Qur'an). Two of the most important terms of this trust are that the State should be democratic and welfare-oriented.

In this perspective, language of the immediate environment plays an important role as a means of conveying and interpreting the message as stated in the Qur'an that we have not sent a Prophet except with the tongue of their people (Q12: 4)

2. Political Practice in Nigeria

Nigeria Politics is seen as personally based politics where people want to exercise authority and want to exercise authority and dictate what happens in parties. The godfathers serve as major element aiming at to acquiring more wealth and protecting their investments, arrogating power to themselves as well as bringing the power into their hand for proper control.

Eziano is of the view that in Nigeria politics, there is no strong leadership and decision taking is so slow. It can take months so we are having many crises and controversies all over. Party members are taking each other to court, up to supreme court level.³

The situation to political practices in Nigeria is not encouraged where politician who acquires power aimed at dealing with them opponents and to solve their personal problems.

Hoffmann is of the opinion that Nigeria's democracy has been fragile and fluctuating since independence. Successive governments have struggled to create a sense of national unity in a complex country whose borders were drawn by British Colonists.⁴ Buttressing his view, he says that Nigeria democracy is severely weakened by the civil war and centralization of power during the military era.

It is obvious that the Nigeria politics is full of crises Azeez and Oyediji (2008)⁵ are of the idea stated by Yau (1987)⁶ that the political crises which had happened in this country had shown clearly that both military and civilians' regimes have failed since Nigeria got its independence in October 1960. There had been coups and counter coups. Military regime is clearly not distinguishable from the civilian regimes in terms of competence, honesty and rationalistic ethics. They are very much alike in terms of corruption and incompetence.

As a blessed country endowed with more blessing of both natural and human resources, majority of the people of this country are suffering in silence, no access to basic necessities of life. On the contrary. The rich and political leaders lie and enjoy extravagant life. The habit and behavior of Nigeria politics based on love of money, greediness, self-centered and unpatriotic act against one's country.

3. Islamic Political Orientation

The religion of Islam as stated in the holy Qur'an makes everything vested in God Almighty. References are made to in many verses of Holy Qur'an that the Holy Qur'an serves as the constitution of any Islamic government. The holy Qur'an state as follows:

- If it not His to create and to govern (7:54)
- Sovereignty is for none but God (12:40)
- Follow the revelation sent to you from your Lord and follow not as friends or protectors other than Him (7:3)
- And consult them in all affairs (3:15)⁷



With this, the Islamic political system calls for consultative measure within the framework of a government makes possible a representative government.⁸

The Islamic political orientations call for peace and resolution of conflict for good governance. Islam serves to bring peace to the world by urging its adherents to proclaim the message of Islam peacefully to all people. Inviting people into Dar- Salam i.e., abode of peace. Muslim must live peacefully in the society as this was demonstrated by prophet Muhammad (SAW)

As a means of resolving conflicts among the politicians and the society, Qur'an has guided as a means of resolving issues through investigation. Qur'an says

“if a sinner comes to you with any news ascertain the truth least you harm people unwittingly, and after wards become full of repentance for what you have done Qur'an” (Q49:6)⁹

4. Islam And Eradication of Political Crises

Since the political aspects of Islam are derived from Qur'an, hadith literature and Sunnah, the history of Islam and elements of political movements as would be highlighted here shows the importance attached to the eradication of political crises even beyond Islamic State.

Good governance entails the supremacy of the law i.e., constitution, the rule of law, welfare and economic justice, intentional relations and national defense. To maintain a well and developed society Islam focus on Islamic welfare State and proper sustainable development with respect to economy and betterment of the society. Therefore, Islam eradicate crises with possible provisions.

A. Eradication of Poverty and Create Conditions for Employment

This is done through proper management and utilization of economic resources. Utilizing these resources will enhance the welfare of everybody in the community.

B. Maintenance of Law and Order

The importance of this universally recognized function of Islam in politics and cannot be overemphasized. The level of degree of law and order in any society and extent of security of life and property are one of the prime determinants of growth and stability of an economy and the inner happiness of individuals. The prophet of Islam, in his farewell pilgrimage forcefully enunciated a number of principles to the socio- political economic system of Islam, he said “Your lives and your properties are as sacred as this day of Haj”. He further says “whatever a Muslim possesses is unlawful for another Muslim, his wealth and property and his life¹⁰

Iqbal (1954) was of the opinion that the role of Islamic State is to safeguard the life and property of all individual within its boundaries. This is in line with the saying of the Prophet (SAW) that a woman travelling alone from Hirah to Ka'abah feel so secured that she has fear of none but God.¹¹

C. Value Money and Warns Against Defrauding.

For good governance to be established, Islam pared was for stability in valuing money/ wealth and against defrauding. This is important for social justice in all measure of value. The book of Islam (Al-Qur'an) affirms this by saying:

*“And give full measure and weight with justice (Q 6:152)
“So give full measure weight without defrauding men in their belongings
and do not corrupt the world after its reform (Q7:85)*



D. Islam Warns Muslims Against Single- Minded Concentration on Materials Acquisitions.

As a vehicle to political stability and good governance. Islam warns against single-minded concentrations which has been the major goal of politicians and made them ignoring spiritual content of life. Islam does not against acquisition of both spiritual and material aspects of life that may serve as source of mutual happiness.

All human effort whether for “material”, “social”, “educational” or “scientific” goals is spiritual in character as long as it conforms to the value system of Islam. Working hard for the material well- being of one’s own self, family, and society is a spiritual value (Umar, M Chapra, 1990).

E. Eradication Of Scandal and Slander and Provision of Investigation

As part of major crises among politician, scandal and slander of all kinds which eventually spread and destroy the society. The religion of Islam provides way to treat misunderstanding by making investigation before a definite stand is taken by an individual or those in authority. This is containing in Qur’an where it speaks further that if anyone disputes in any matter after (full) knowledge hath come to you; say: “*come let us gather together...*” as also in 64th verse of the same chapter 3 of the holy Qur’an that there should be a call for dialogue in case of misunderstanding instead of slandering.

F. Social And Economic Justice

The teaching of Islam considers mankind as one family, all members of this family are equal before God and before the law revealed by Him. The rich and the poor high and low or the white and the black, there is no discrimination due to race, position or color. Islam calls for justice and good character, service to the religion and service to humanity.

The holy Qur’an urges Muslims to be just to others Q26:183 says “*Withhold not what is justly to others*”, the prophet (SAW) also said: “*certainly, God does not look at your wealth; He looks at your hearts and your deeds*”.

Therefore, this would bring to fulfilment a society which is like a single family where wealth is equally distributed and where the needs of society are not as the social security system would be instituted in the society apart from crises.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Good governance is grouped by the God Almighty and there is no any scripture revealed books that deny this. But Islam is considered as a complete way of life that left no stone unturned in the life of man, as man has never been left alone to wander round on land without being given the ultimate Guidance. Islamic political system has all the ingredients of modern democracy and ever surpasses what the world’s leading democratic state could offer.

Good governance is instituted from true Islamic welfare state which based on its values and guided by its goals. Islam is therefore a major vehicle and an asset to good governance and urges the politician to adopts its teachings and doctrines as their guide and path to follow.

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