



Politics and Islam: Any Correlation in Nigeria Polity?

R.S. Adeleke

Department of Islamic Studies, Adeyemi Federal University of Education, Ondo, Nigeria.
sanrasheed2@gmail.com

Abstract

Politics, an act of controlling, directing and managing the affairs of a society is an essential of humanity. Not only this, it is also an organization of life through which the affairs of a society are perfectly governed. However, Islam examines politics as an institution and as well an organization of human life. This is a core reason why it is expressed as not only a religion but also a way of life. Its political principal cuts across all spheres of administration, intellectually, economically, socially and politically. Meanwhile, it (Islam) is perceived especially the non-Muslims as the faith that merely addresses spiritual life of Muslims. This work thereby focuses on the impacts of Islam on the concept of state and politics in Islam and Nigeria as a nation. The paper will address some issues on the interplay between Islam and politics with reference to the nation's politics such as: Does Islam examine politics? What types of politics does Islam preach? what is the involvement of Muslims in politics? What are the set objectives of Muslims for participating in Nigerian politics? These are parts of the research questions that the work will address. Both the primary and secondary data will be adopted for effective analysis. Needs for Muslims' participation in Nigerian politics are of paramount important in this political dispensation.

Keywords: Islamic politics, theocracy, Nigeria governance, Nigerian democracy.

1. Politics and Islam

The system of politics in Islamic is theocracy. Generally, theocracy is a system of governance by divine guidance or official laws that are divinely guided (Encyclopedia, 2018). In this regard, the political leaders are also religious leaders or clergies. The constitution of a theocratic society is enshrined in the divine law. The practices can be democratic, monarchical, oligarchy or communist but its rule of law will base on the guidance of divine injunction of the religion of such a nation (Encyclopedia, 2018). This is what will make it different from practicing the same types of government that are guided by common or man-made constitutions.

In Islamic governance, theocracy is strictly based with the divine guidance as examined in the Shariah (Muhammad, 1997 and Muhammad, 1990). It is divine in the principle and practice. The code of conducts is therefore spelt out in the primary as well as the secondary sources of the *Shariah*. As adumbrated above, Qur'an itself as the primary scripture analyses the modality of administration and politics. Many references from the Book demonstrate the best form of governance in order to build a virile society. Politics in the context of the Qur'an starts from the selection of a leader as the representative of a community. A political leader is viewed as an administrator on whom every other leader depends. Therefore, such a leader should be chosen on merit and not on another irreligious criterion. The sources of Islamic constitution are inimitable and unchangeable. They are to be strictly abided by the leaders and the governed. Not only this, the Hadith which is also the replica of the first scripture analyses the mode of governance in accordance with the practice of the religion in details. The hadith plays the roles of analyzing how the Islamic theocratic government was played by the prophet. It illustrates the political history of Islam as the need of a dynamic society. In addition, the political era of the caliphate was also expressed by the hadith. This comprises the practices of governance during the eras of Abubakr (632 – 634 A.D.), Umar in al-Khattab (634 – 644 A.D.), 'Uthman Ibn Affan (644 – 656 A.D.) and 'Ali ibn abi Talib (656 – 661 A.D.). Their eras followed the norms and values of governance as divinely taught by the prophet (Muhammad, 1990).



In addition to the afore mentioned concept of Islamic political system, other features of Islamic theocratic administration include but are not limited to equality before the law, constitution of the *Shura* body, Al-Adl (Justice), accountability before the people and the community (Maqsood, 1989). Other aspects include transparency, representation of the needs of the masses, directing the affairs of the society by commanding people (on what is lawful and forbidden what is unlawful) and *al-Muamalat* (intra and inter personal and faith relationships). The practices of all these concepts are emphasized in the religion as the core needs to establish an egalitarian society. Each of these concepts is cursorily explained below:

Representation of the needs of the masses. Theocracy in Islam starts from the representation of the needs of every citizen in the society in governance. The people at the helm of affairs are either elected or selected based on the decision of a society. This representation is termed *Shura*. It denotes the people in authority or at the regional, local, state or federal helm of affairs that are representing the interest of the masses. This is where the whole of Islamic system of governance emanates. Other appointees are thus nominated by this body for the smooth running of the affairs of the nation. The *shura* had been in Islam since the prophetic era and it was equally practiced by the *Sahabah* and those that succeeded them in administration till this era. Emphasis is laid in many portions of the Qur'an on the significance of *Shura* as what distinguished Islamic theocracy from other forms of governance. Such verse includes

Consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when
you have to take a decision put the trust in Allah.
For Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).
(Quran 3:159).

The prophet who was the first to practice the *shura* as exemplified in the Qur'an laid down certain conditions for electing or selecting those that will be at the helms of political, economic, educational as well as social affairs of a nation. Ample knowledge of the religion should be the first of qualities for putting people at control of governance (Muhammad, 1990 and Muhammad, 1997). This should be followed with *Taqwa* (Piety) and ample knowledge of the Islamic jurisdiction. Thus, the most qualified people in the administration of *Shura* are the scholars who are well versed in the applications of the *Shariah*. All these and others will serve as guiding factors on their representation of the affairs of the people through which the society will be sane and free of corrupt practices that are pervasive in the present era especially in the area of the study, Nigeria.

Equality before the law. Every individual under the Islamic governance is of equal status though the some are put in the positions of authority. This principle implies the provision for the needs of the entire people under the law. Such rights include the economic, political and civic rights. These rights do not only cater for Muslims only in the nation, it as well provides the same rights for non-Muslims and non-indigenes that are referred to as *Dhimmis*. All these rights are enjoyed without discrimination of belief, race or origin. This is a reason why Islamic theocracy respects the public opinion as the corner stone of good administration.

Al-Adl (Justice) is highly emphasized in Islamic theocracy. Justice is defined as the core needs of a dynamic administration. It is viewed in the *Shariah* as the act of placing things in their rightful place (Wikipedia, 2018). This implies the act of doing what is right in the right time at the right manner for the benefits of the masses in general. Justice in this system is very close to equality to the rights and duties of an individual. This concept encompasses political, economic, socio, educational and occupational justice. Through this, it is the duty of the governance to provide all the needs and wants of every people in the state without favor to other at the detriment of another. Emphasis is laid on the concept of justice in the Islamic code of conduct. These include:



“O you who believe, be upright for God, and (be) bearers of witness with justice... and do not let the hatred of people deviate you from justice (*‘adl*). Be just, this is closest to piety (Quran 5:8). O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, and your relatives, or whether it is against the rich or the poor... (Quran 4:135)

Accountability before the people and the community. The position of authority is a test in Islamic political thought. Hence, the religion makes it clear to anybody that holds the mantle of leadership to do it with fear and be accountable to the governed and the Lord. This is a reason why pious persons are to be nominated, elected or selected as the members of the *Shura* panel. By and large, piety should be established as the important principle of Islamic administration. Every member of authority is obliged to perform their roles and duties for the growth, development and advancement of the society. Not only this, the religion as well obliges official in different parastatals to be accountable to the public in accordance with the dictates of the *Shariah*. It is on this accountability that the prophetic tradition emphasis that every administrator is accountable to his subjects.

All of you are administrators and you shall all be accountable (to the Lord) on your administration. A man is an administrator of his household and he is accountable for them; and a woman is in charge of the household and her children and she is accountable for them; and a servant is guardian of his master’s property, every one of you is accountable for his subjects (Muhammad, 2005)

Islam advocates for transparency in governance as the bed-rock for development. It makes it incumbent on the leader to be sincere to the subjects. This includes sincerity on allocation of public resources to the people on equal distribution. Rationale behind transparency is that the government is the representative of the masses and all the natural resources as well as the revenue generated in the society are entrusted into the government. Hence, the onus puts on him should be maintained and used in accordance with guidance of the *Shariah*. If this is done, the whole community will be at peace and every member will enjoy the dividends of good governance.

It is duty of government to command people on what is lawful and forbidden what is unlawful for them. Islam views a society as a community of intermingling of people of different ideologies. By the nature of individual, man is created with different ideas. There are people of good motives and that of illicit acts. Hence, the duty bond on the government to advocate for good conduct in the society. This could be achieved by setting up sub-committees among the *Shura* to look into the mechanisms of sensitizing the people on the need to be of good conduct from time to time. This is a core reason why the *Shura* members must be constituted by people of high integrity as the Qur’an analyses: “*And there should be a group amongst you who invite towards good, order for acknowledged virtues, forbid from sin and these it is that are the successful ones*” (Quran 3:104). Virtue of commanding good act and forbidden the evil are demonstrated in a number of the Qur’an verses such as the chapter 5 verse 2:

... help you one another on virtue, righteousness
and piety and do not help one another on evil
acts and transgression against Allah’s will



Also, the principle is reiterated in the chapter 16 verse 90 as follows:

Verily, Allah commands you to do justice and be kind in the society. And He forbids for you all evil deeds, mischievous acts and oppression...Allah admonishes you that you may be heedful.

The concept of *al-Muamalat* (intra and inter personal and faith relationships) is highly enjoined in Islamic theocracy. The society is viewed in this context as the organization of people of various tribes, religions, colors and any other factors that distinguish a man from a race to another. The *Shariah* examines the organization of the society as it comprises people of different origins. It for instance says; O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted (Quran 49:13). Irrespective of these differences Islam still enjoins them to live together as one community for the progress of the society.

In the same vein, man is defined as the gregarious animal. An animal is always in the midst of other animals for interaction. As a result of this, Islamic theocracy saddles the government the responsibility of integrating people together for peace and mutual progress of the society. These responsibilities cut across any society either Islamic or Muslim one. An Islamic society adopts Islamic system of administration to run all her affairs. It is a society that comprises virtually only Muslims. However, a Muslim society comprises Muslims and people of other religions but Muslims are of higher population. Such a society adopts Islamic system of administration that caters for the rights of not only the Muslims but the entire inhabitants with justice. The similitude of this type of state is Nigeria.

2. Solving Nigerian Political Problems with Islamic Governance

Tracing the history of democracy in Nigeria calls for critical reflection. The nation has been operating the system since her republic till this moment why the nation is still classified as an under-developing country till this era. This calls for the questions of “when will the nation metamorphose to be more advanced? why does it need to be more developed? and how will the development take place in the country?”. This segment therefore surveys these questions and proffer solutions to them.

It is high time the Nigeria’s democracy is substituted for not mere theocracy but the Islamic theocracy as a modality to combat the incessant challenges of the country if adopted. Tracing the nation’s democratic system of governance since the inception, it is characterized with a number of problems that the nation embattles till this century (Amaka, 2018). It is obvious that corruption is not new in the problems that are militating against the development of Nigeria. It has become endemic to the extent that both the government and officials are full of corrupt practices. The level is aggravated beyond the imagination of those that first initiated it. In the nation’s history. Corruption occurred in the first era of civilian rule. The solution to curb such menace led to the military intervention in the polity. Surprisingly, the intervention did not solve the problem; instead, it also joined in the misappropriation of the resources and other public funds. However, the rebirth of democracy in the second era brought the brought hope of reviving the situation but the reverse is the case. The bane of corrupt practices is now so pervasive to the extent that the nation’s case is not what corruption is but who is not corrupt. Besides this, other challenges that crept into Nigeria’s democracy include incessant communal, political and religious conflicts, electoral malpractices, abuse of human rights, unemployment, economic recession, loss of innocent lives and properties, kidnapping and child trafficking (Oko, 2010). Others include injustice in the administration, insecurity, politics of self-interest, depriving the rights of citizens, low educational status, high increase on the tuition fees and poverty.



All these myriads of challenges are embedded in the form of political system of Nigeria. These tend to make her practice of democracy antithetical to the real concept of democracy in modern world

Eruption of conflicts is of high rate in the nation's politics. There is no region where there are no ethno-religious conflicts. Additions to these are political and communal conflicts. These tend to occur and re-occur in the community due to the nature of the politics on the parts of the leaders at the helm of affairs. Communal and religious conflicts do occur when a part or tribe perceives threat on her freedom as against what is enacted in the law of the country. The conflicts of these forms usually escalate to crisis and violence. The root causes of all these discords are traced to the organizational structure of Nigeria's system of administration especially where is tribe is placed superior to other. Election determines the fate of good governance in a democratic society. In the case of the nation, election serves as the dawn of unfair treatment to the people's rights. There has not been what could be sincerely referred to as a free and fair election in country till this era. Any incumbent administrator usually imposes his veto on the people. There cases of ballot snatching as well. What will a fraudulent election bring than bad governance? Though the constitution of the country recognizes rights of every individual without discrimination, but it was not true in practice. People especially of less privileged have been sentenced into imprisonment because protesting over their rights. Many had even been maimed and killed unjustly.

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria is worrisome. There are many jobless graduates who are roaming round the streets. Some have become touts while most of them engage in petty businesses and motorcycle riders. The worst of all is that among them have joined bad gangs in order to find ends meet. The unemployment will continue to increase as the government does not create more job opportunities for the graduates. Instead of using the public funds to provide employment, they embezzle the fund. The resultants effect of this act is what constitutes educational challenge in the country. More so, Nigeria's economy ought to have been the best in Africa but its misappropriation by the leaders causes retrogression. Excess of this mismanagement led to economic meltdown and recession. Unlike other countries where economic recession may not exceed six months, Nigeria's case is different. The recession continues after three years. The reason behind this is nothing but unending corruption and mismanagement of the resources that are meant to solve the economic problem.

The only bed-rock of good governance is justice. It is a guiding principle that will be directing the governance to cater for the rights of every inhabitant accordingly. Loss of justice in the nation tends to be the factor that leads to deprivation of the civil rights of people. Not only this, it causes the politics of self-centeredness. Hence, democracy in Nigeria serves as an avenue to be quickly rich by disappointing the elected. By the nature of Nigeria's polity, education is meant to be free. It was made free in the first republic of the nation irrespective of corruption. The present administration has tactically succeeded on high levy of school fees without providing a qualitative education. Through these factors, it is obvious that the philosophy of democracy as postulated by the western world is completely different from its practice in Nigeria. Hence, this is the era of changing the system in order to eradicate all these challenges by substituting the system for theocracy. (If adopted).

3. Can Nigeria adopt the Islamic Political system?

Though Nigeria as whole is neither an Islamic state nor a secular country, it is referred to as a Muslim nation. It is on this note that its system of governance can also adopt theocracy as a mechanism to revive the glory of the country and solution to her myriad of challenges. In this Islamic governance, the code of conduct is divine and unchangeable. It caters for the needs of the masses and allows implementation of public opinions. People's participation in the polity are highly respected. This is well expressed on the principle of *Shura*.



As the divine polity, its adoption will put an end to incessant oppression of people, communal, political and religious conflicts, electoral malpractices, abuse of human rights, unemployment, economic recession, loss of innocent lives and properties, kidnapping and child trafficking. Others include injustice in the administration, insecurity, politics of self-interest, depriving the rights of citizens, low educational status, high increase on the tuition fees and poverty. In addition to these, there will be unity under divine guidance in the nation. These merits will facilitate the growth, advancement and sustainable development of the nation.

4. Recommendations

For actualization of good governance in Nigeria, the following recommendations are suggested:

- The government should provide for the needs of the masses and do justice.
- Having practiced democracy for many years without positive effect on the nation, Islamic theocratic system of governance is suggested as the solution to all forms of Nigeria's challenges.

References

- Abdullah, O.N., (1986). Encyclopedia of Seerah. London: Seerah foundation.
- Anyang N. (1988), Political Instability and the Prospects of Democracy in Africa. Africa Development, Amaka (2018), The Real Problem with Nigeria's Democracy. In CPPA Research, Governance & Political Economy. Assessed online 15th October, 2018.
- Diamond, L., (2004), What is Democracy" University for Humanistic Studies London: Routledge.
- Encyclopedia Britannica, (2018), Theocracy. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.
- Joseph A. R, Democracy and Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and fall of the 2nd Republic, London, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Jean, H. (2018), Democracy in Nigeria. Published by the Council on Foreign Relations
- Maqsood, J. (1988), Political Thought of Islam. Islamic Research Foundation International, Inc.
- Muhammad, B.I. (1997) Al-fiqh al wadiah 2. Cairo: Darul manar.
- Muhammad, M, K. (2005). Sahih Muslim Trans Riyadh. Darusalam.
- Muhammad, A.A. (1990), Management and Administration in Islam. Saudi Arabia: KingFahd University of Petroleum.
- Okon, O. (2010), Key Problems for Democracy in Nigeria: Credible Elections, Corruption, Security, Governance, and Political Parties. Scholarly publisher of academic research.
- Wikipedia, (2018), Democracy. Retrieved on 11th October, 2018.
- www.merriam-webster.com "Definition of Democracy". www.merriam-webster.com. Retrieved 5 July 2018.
- Wikipedia (2018), Federal Republic of Nigeria, Retrieved on 11th October, 2018.
- www.google.com (2015),"Nigerian Constitution". Nigeria Law. Retrieved 17 July 2015.
- Wikipedia, (2018), Political aspects of Islam