



## **Relevance Of IBN Khaldūn’s Political Theories as A Recipe to Nigerian Political Logjam**

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### **Abstract**

Islam does not stop at religious activities alone but include governance. Allah created human beings for the purpose of worship. Therefore, their entire daily activities should be considered act of worship. Islam does not separate politics from religion and consider both as the same entity. Because, it is Allah Who creates for worship also give authority and power to whom He wishes. Governance in Islam is based on the Shari’ah-divine law from Allah- Who is the Sovereign of the universe and knows the best form of governance for mankind. Thus, many Muslim political thinkers had laid down political theories. One of these theories is Ibn Khaldūn’s Political Theory which is examined in this paper to serve as a recipe to Nigerian political crisis. Ibn Khaldūn’s history was discussed briefly. It also undertakes an analysis of political theory of Ibn Khaldūn. In furtherance of this study, some Nigerian political logjams are identified. More so, the application of Ibn Khaldūn’s political theory to Nigerian political crises, also examines. Empirical research method including historical and analytical approaches is adopted in this paper. Finding shows that this theory was propounded in the classical age but till suitable in the modern time. It is recommended in this paper that if some Ibn Khaldūn’s political theories are applied it will be of an immense advantage to Nigerian Politics.

Keywords: Politics, Theory, Shari’ah, Sunnah, Caliph

### **1. Introduction**

Islam as a religion does not take care of spiritual aspect alone, but includes the moral relationship and political administration of society. Allah created human beings for the purpose of worship. Therefore, their entire daily activities should be considered act of worship. Islam does not separate politics from religion and consider both as the same entity. Because, it is Allah Who creates for worship also give authority and power to whom He wishes. Governance in Islam is based on the *Shari’ah*-divine law from Allah- Who is the Sovereign of the universe and knows the best form of governance for mankind. He says:

ومن لم يحكم بما أنزل الله فأولئك هم الكافرون

And those whosoever does not  
judge by what Allah has revealed,  
such are disbelievers. (Q: 6:44)

Absence of good governance and pan city of visionary leadership have brought the economy to its knees. With comatose education sector, Nigerian youth have taken to brigandage and cultism. The hospitals are public mortuaries and life expectancy is at its lowest ebb. Corruption has become pandemic<sup>i</sup>. The current trend in Nigeria is to de-emphasis religion or even to excise it from political spectrum, so that politics can be free of every spiritual attachment. By this misadventure, the Nigerian intelligentsia hopes to gain freedom from unwarranted interference in the governance of this country. In the process of actualizing this utopian dream, the leadership of this country have rebelled against divine authority on one hand, and one the other, they have promoted human deification and serfdom a glaring example is the recently concluded election return in Ekiti State<sup>ii</sup>. The resident electoral commissioner in the state, a 74-year-old



Mrs. A. Adebayo noticed that there were unauthenticated results among the result brought to her for endorsement and declaration, she declines to accept them because, according to her, “Christian conscience” was pricking her. She then tendered her resignation but was rejected. Nevertheless, she later did what she said her “Christian conscience” would not allow her to do in the first instance. Perhaps, she was warned not to mix religion with politics and so she ate her vomits and announced the rigged election result<sup>iii</sup>. Had she been to be a true believer in God, whose conscience is divine and pure in nature, she would not have yielded to satanic overtime, God conscience knows for sure that no matter the threat and intimidation that would be even up to the termination of life, the life in the Hereafter will be rosy and pleasant. This is the teaching of true divine religion<sup>iv</sup>.

This trend is not only dangerous but criminal and over stepping the divine boundaries out of sheer greed, extortion and ungratefulness to the Supreme Being, Almighty God. It is unfortunate that this negative development thriving globally more often than not, in areas where religion has been relegated to mere ritualistic observances and ceremonies so as not to be able to play any functional role in the politico-economic life of the people. The cumulative effect of this intransigence and apathy towards religion is what brings Nigeria into serious political woes that always plague it<sup>v</sup>. Since all the system of government-republic, parliamentary, federalism etc. that Nigeria had practiced from independent today had failed, it needs to look for a survivor and alternative system that will enable her to go out of this mess.

Islam as a religion which has provided solution to all problems as well as left nothing untouched in all human endeavor.

Allah says:

ونزلنا عليك الكتاب تبياناً لكل شيء...

And We have sent down to  
you the Book as an exposition  
to everything... (Q 16:89)

It is not true for those who say that there is no religion in politics and that there is no politics in religion. This deceit was once tried but failed in some attempted *Fatwa*. Ibn Khaldun said that religion must be politicized or religion is meant to be politicized. This statement does not mean that religion should be put in the service of politics. But all political activities should reflect divine design/plan for mankind<sup>vi</sup>.

Although Islam does not prescribe any specific system of political administration, there are certain district principles and features of political administration that are prescribed in the Qur’an and Sunnah which are binding on Muslims whatever political system they may device<sup>vii</sup>. Religion and politics have relationship in Islam, they are intertwined. It is already known that Islam is a complete system of life which encompasses all what human beings need to be comfortable and politics is very much important in the life of human being. Just as Islam teaches us how to say *Salah*, observe *Sawm*, pay *Zakah* and undertake *Hajj*, so it teaches us how to run a state with good policy and governance<sup>viii</sup>.

Based on the above, the Islamic scholars have strived and searched for political theories in the Qur’an and Sunnah that would make the life and affair of those who adopt it to be better standard. Therefore, relevance of Ibn Khaldun’s political theory, its application to the Nigeria political crises will be examined, as well as providing suggestions and recommendations.



## 2. Short Biographical Note of IBN Khaldun

Abu Zayd<sup>ix</sup> Abdulrahman bn Muhammad bn Muhammad bn Ibrahim bn Abdulrahman was born in the year 1332 in a village called Tuis the present Tunisia. He had traced his ancestry through another genealogy as supplied by the Ibn Hazem using his grandfather who was the first to enter Andulisia back to Wail bn Hajar one of the oldest trade Yemenite. Thus, it shown that Ibn Khaldun was Arab origin<sup>x</sup>.

Ibn Khaldun began his education career with his father. He received traditional Islamic education at early age and memorized Qur'an whole hearted at tender age through the supervision of his father. He was known as a prominent theologian, scholar in Arabic Grammar, Arabic Literature, Islamic Jurisprudence, Hadith, Sufism, Poetry and Specialist in the field of Maliki School of thought. He combined Islamic science with philosophy which included metaphysics logic mathematics as well as politics<sup>xi</sup>.

He continued his formal education until 18 years; his education was interrupted by a combination of natural and human disasters-invasion of Andalusia and North Africa by crusaders<sup>xii</sup>.

Ibn Khaldun used his stay in Fez to continue his education. Fez at that time was capital of Morocco and scholars were centered therein who fled from North Africa and Andalusia<sup>xiii</sup>. He thrived in his new position as political officer; thus, he became the highest rank politician. He was considered wider political power and influential in North Africa public life while he was still in his early twenties. He continued to serve Sultan Abu Inan until he was accused felony and jailed. In 1358, after the death of the Sultan, Ibn Khaldun was released and he returned to political life. He was later appointed as Judge (Qadi) at the age of twenty-eight on account of his experience in Maliki jurisprudence. However, he found his new appointment dreary, awkward and repetitive; thus, he moved to Granada in 1362 and was highly received and welcomed<sup>xiv</sup>.

Ibn Khaldun was forty-five years when he started reflecting on history and the Barber states and engaged in writing his Kitab al-Ibar<sup>xv</sup>. He was a great writer of his time as well as author of many books. He could not be compared with anyone of the Middle Ages. In the *Muqaddimah* to his Universal History, he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any time or place. In his chosen field of intellectual activity, he appeared to have been inspired by no predecessor<sup>xvi</sup>. His seven-volume Universal History is a monumental study of world civilization. It is considered as the major historical work of Middle Ages<sup>xvii</sup>.

In 1401 he returned to Cairo where he spent 4 years before his death in 1406 at the age of seventy-four and was buried in the Sufi cemetery on the outskirts of Cairo<sup>xviii</sup>. Ibn Khaldun had contributed tremendously to humanity through his study.

## 3. IBN Khaldun's Political Theory

Like many other Muslim political thinkers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Mawardi, Al-Ghazali etc. Ibn Khaldun produced a number of political theories. This is contained in his famous book, *Muqaddimah* which was considered the first work dealing with the philosophy of history, social sciences, Islamic theology and the natural science. It is in the first part of the book he formulated his theory of human community in which he identified man as political by nature. He opined that religion must be politicized or religion is meant to be politicized. This statement does not mean that religion should be put in the service of politics. But all political activities should reflect divine design/plan for mankind<sup>xix</sup>. In affirming his political thought, he said that caliphate is the substitute for the companion of *Shari'ah* (Prophet Muhammad) to protect the religion and exercise political leadership of the world with religion<sup>xx</sup>. Ibn Khaldun sees man



as a political being whose reliance on one another necessitates the need for political power against all forms of dangers including injustice<sup>xxi</sup>.

Ibn Khaldun however unique in his own political tracts in the sense that he sees ‘*Asabiyyah* (social solidarity or group feeling) as the root of royal power and authority, and it is most essential tool in establishing sustenance and fall of a political formation<sup>xxii</sup>. The term *Asabiyyah* according to him, refers to a group feeling or the bond of cohesion or what can be referred to as nationalism in modern political formation. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes that ‘*Asabiyyah* exists in all level of civilization, from nomadic to states and empires. Unlike Al-Mawardi, who sees *Bay’ah* (allegiance) as the establishment of state power<sup>xxiii</sup>. Ibn Khaldun considers ‘*Asabiyyah* (group feeling) as more important variable in establishing a political formation, then, *Bay’ah* (allegiance) follows after a state sovereignty has been established<sup>(26)</sup>. Ibn Khaldun goes further to say that when a government has been firmly established, it can dispense with group feeling. The reason for this is that, people find it difficult to submit to large dynastic power at the beginning, unless they are forced to submit by strong superiority. The new government is something strange and people are not familiar with it. But when the government has been firmly established and once royal authority has been passed on by successive dynasties, the beginnings are forgotten, people will defend their government on their behalf. By this time, the rulers will not need much group feeling to maintain their power. They will be obedience to the government as if it was divinely revealed book that cannot be change or opposed<sup>xxiv</sup>.

IBN Khaldun also sees that the best type of political system is caliphate. This view was also held by most of Muslim political thinkers, such as Al-Farabi<sup>xxv</sup>, Al-Ghazali<sup>xxvi</sup> etc., because in Islam, politics is not regarded as worldly affairs alone but rather as a religious duty. Any form of government that is devoid of Divine Light falls within the ambit of a rational regime. The society governed by a rational government such as kingdoms and empires, therefore, is uncivilized community or a pre-political state of society. According to him, a king cannot be a true successor of a prophet while, a caliph is<sup>xxvii</sup>.

The purpose of human beings is their religion, which leads them to happiness in the other world. Therefore, religious laws have their purpose to cause human being to follow such a course in all their dealings with God and their fellow men. The religion laws (*Shari’ah*) guide the government along the path of Allah, so that everything will be under the supervision of the religious laws (*Shari’ah*). Anything done by royal authority that is dictated by force is tyranny and injustice and considered reprehensible by the religion law (*Shari’ah*), as it is also considered reprehensive by requirements of political wisdom, Likewise, any dictates by consideration of policy or political decisions without supervision of the religious laws (*Shari’ah*) is also reprehensible, because it lacks divine light. The Law-Giver knows better than the mass itself, what is good for them so far as the affairs of this world. Allah says:

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ

Should not He Who has  
created know? And He is the  
Most Kind and Courteous.  
(Q 67:14)

It has become cleared that leadership in Islam is religious function. Thus, the Caliph is the vicerent of the religious and the political leadership of the world. A leader in Islam should be concerned with both things-religion and politics, in his capacity, he is commanded to transmit the duties imposed by Allah to the rules and to cause them to act in accordance with *Shari’ah* and with worldly political leadership as a person in charge of the public interests of human civilization. It should be known that the religious function of the religious law (*Shari’ah*) such as prayer, the office of judge, the office of mufti, the holy war,



providing security of life and property and market supervision (*Hisbah*), fall under the caliphate. The caliphate is a kind of great mainspring and comprehensive basis, and all these function fall under it, because of the wide scope of the caliphate, it active interest in all conditions of the Muslim Community, both religiously and worldly<sup>xxviii</sup>. Based on this, Ibn Khaldun defines government as an institution which prevents injustice other than such as it commits itself<sup>xxix</sup>.

Ibn Khaldun then says, Caliph must possess some qualities; firstly, he must be knowledgeable to execute the divine law (*Shari'ah*). Secondly, caliph probity is required because the caliphate is a religious institution and supervises all the other institutions. Thus, a caliph must be just. Thirdly, he should be competent to carry-out the prescription of *Shari'ah* such as punishments and to go to war. He also must know about group feelings and the fine point of diplomacy and strong enough to take political responsibilities as well as administering the public interest. Fourthly, he must be free of any incapability and capacitation's of carrying out his duties. Lastly, either caliph should come from Quraysh<sup>xxx</sup>. This last view was against the view of Al-Farabi<sup>xxxi</sup> and Ibn Sina<sup>xxxii</sup>, that anyone agreed upon by the Muslim community.

Ibn Khaldun also discusses the life span and the future of political authority<sup>xxxiii</sup>. No matter year a government spent, it will eventually fall and replaced by new government. Deterioration and disintegration set in as a result of lost group feeling which could be reference to nationalism in the modern politics. It was through group feelings that become an absolute master<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Another factor that contributes to the disintegration of government is luxury. The government started like a desert. It enriched itself and by exploiting its group feeling or social solidarity.

#### **4. Current Trends in Political Crises in Nigeria**

Why is it that after more than 60 years of independence, political crises are still frequent in occurrence on the land of Nigeria? The current spate of violence being experienced in Nigeria has no doubt led to loss of lives and property, costing the national both human and natural resources<sup>xxxv</sup>. The current situation in which Nigeria found herself could be linked to the previous crises.

The fourth of republic began with the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo on the 29th of May, 1999. The dispensation inherited the Niger-Delta militant crisis which arose in the early 1990s over tensions between the foreign oil companies and number of Niger-Delta minority ethnic groups who felt that they were being exploited particularly the Ogoni and Ijaw. Ethnic and Political unrest have continued throughout the 1990s and persisted as of 2007 despite the conversion of the democratic<sup>xxxvi</sup>. The current conflict is more complex, a crisis involving local patriots and freedom fighters<sup>xxxvii</sup>. It involves mainly Ijaw of Delta, Bayelsa and River States and could ordinarily be analyzed from their perspective to resistance to internal colonialism. The Niger-Delta is rich of oil and gas and the federal government had taken over the control. The Niger-Delta felt that despite the resources being exploited from their land yet it has been totally neglected of infra-structure amenities, thus, they agitate total control of the resources. The otherwise rightful agitation for an equitable deal from the Federal Government has been criminalized by kidnapping, illegal bunkering, fire arm business and hostage<sup>xxxviii</sup>. The militants are mainly those unemployed youths disengaged by political elite, who had used them as political thugs and general supporters at the 1999, 2003 and 2007 moment of elections to high offices at all three levels of government – the local government, state and the federal government.

In order to prevail this crisis, the federal government set up Joint Task Force (JTF) to checkmate the activities of the militant. Meanwhile hostages, especially oil workers consisting of Filipinos, Ukrainians



and Nigerians have regained their freedom through the activities of JTF. Large quantities of arm and ammunition, software document, military hardware etc. were also formed in many camps<sup>xxxix</sup>.

Election fraud and crisis has always been a mile stone for Nigeria to cross. Since voting commenced in the country in 1923, there has been one form of electoral crisis or the other due to alleged rigging and intimidations. The recent could be traced from 1999 when the country returns to full democracy. Then the 2003 and 2007 elections were far more worsen than the previous ones<sup>xi</sup>. The most recent one was that of 2011 post-election violence in two major states – Kaduna and Bauchi, due to the announcement of victory of President Jonathan over his opponent General Muhammadu Buhari<sup>xii</sup>. The crisis was characterized by loss of lives and property in the two states and the week that followed, Governorship election could not be held in both states<sup>xiii</sup>. Although before the election, the INEC had ensured and secured every tool in conducting free and fair election but there were many atrocities committed during the election which led to voting manipulation as well as legal battle at tribunal against those declared winner by INEC. It later led to dethronement by court, such as in the cases of Osun, Edo and Ekiti Governors<sup>xliii</sup>.

Another current crisis that is rocking Nigeria is the issue of Boko Haram. Oyo State Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria said: *the continuous burning of churches and killing of Christians in some parts of the country by Boko Haram sect is beyond religion*<sup>xliii</sup>. Because, both Muslims and Christians were killed by these insurgents. The main operative center of the sect is Bornu where 99.9% are Muslims, Yobe and Adamawa States.

Some see the emergency of this sect as a result of poverty, social inequality and injustices, unemployment, poor infrastructure amenities and poor leadership role in the country. Truly, the sect has been in existence before 2009 when crackdown was made on the members of the group. This later development into violence and shot-out between the sect and Nigerian Police in Maiduguri which led to the arrest and extra-judicial killing of the group leader Muhammad Yusuf. The activities of the group have effect on the social political and economic life of Nigerian. More than thousands had been killed in various attack by the group. Such as bombing of force Headquarter in Abuja, UN building in Abuja, attack of churches in some parts of the North, attach on security operatives etc.

Recently, the present government has launched task force as well as declaring State of Emergency in Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa where the activities and the camps of the group are very active. The present administration has also witness inter-tribes' crisis and the present political crisis in River State<sup>xliii</sup>.

## **5. Application of Ibn Khaldun's Political Theory to Nigerian Political Crisis**

The situation of politics in present Nigeria is detesting. Each ethnic group is fighting for its own smaller group rather for the whole country. For each ethnic group to come together, identifying and giving respect to their differences and fight against social inequality, marginalization, insecurity, and cultural alienation that affect expected growth in term of socio-economic, political and religious affairs. Eventually, these would lead to national integration and development as well as forming a broad national government.

Nigeria as a multi-faith national having Islam and Christianity as major religions. The two believe in the existence of God and His supremacy over all creatures, therefore, the claim that government should be built on God-fearing and the politicians should be those that are consciousness of God and the day of accountability. The religious leaders are thereby charged with a responsibility of correcting those in authority of the state. They are to command the right and forbid the wrong.



Islam came to the rescue of world at the period when the world civilization was disintegrating and decaying<sup>xlvi</sup>. Its teachings and values provide alternative socio-religious, economic and political system of life which remains relevant till present time. The political system in Islam proposes is derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah and legacy of pious predecessors. Therefore, discussing politics from Islamic perception would provide better opportunity as substitute to frustrating present world order<sup>xlvii</sup>.

However, many exegeses of Qur'an and commentaries of Sunnah as well as Muslim political thinkers have made valuable and laudable contributions to the political thought of Islam which have made it compactable and fit into our contemporary societies, one of such brilliant scholars was Abdurahman bn Khaldun who remains, till present, a political theorist and guide to the world at large<sup>xlviii</sup>.

It is interesting to note that although Ibn Khaldun died in the 15th century, and his political ideas which were derived from Islamic principles are relevant to Nigeria, the fact that cannot be denied. Nigeria is a multi-faith country comprising of Muslims with 49%, Christian with 49% and others 2%<sup>xlix</sup>.

One of the most important things that Ibn Khaldun opined was the concept of '*Asabiyyah* (group feeling) called 'nationalism' in modern politics. Nationalism is defined as "an act of political consciousness or state of mind primarily concerned with achieving the independence of the country from foreign rule"<sup>1</sup>. Thus, nationalism unifies every ethnic group to fight for the internal course of their national.

It is pertinent to stress that the sterling qualities which Ibn Khaldun envisaged for the leaders to have been necessary for everyone who is entrusted with the responsible of administering the affair of the people. The objectives are to get rid of corrupt and inept administration, ensure good governance, which would be accountable and responsible for welfarism of their subjects. When leaders lack most of those qualities and arrogantly deny realities in a brazen way through the state-controlled media and fail to provide adequate security of life and property, then such a state could hardly get prosperity of life.

However, the political view of Ibn Khaldun such as '*Asabiyyah* (nationalism), caliphate, qualities of a caliph and the life span of a dynasty are relevant to Nigerian politics as they were to Ibn Khaldun's 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century society, especially his emphasis on God fearing government and moral attitudes of the leaders, honesty, accountability and good leadership is worthy of emulation., If Nigerian leaders conduct themselves according to his political thoughts, the society will surely change for better.

It is worthy of emulating the qualities of leadership highlighted by Ibn Khaldun by Nigerian politicians. The probity of the leaders is essential in the political will of good governance. Being knowledgeable of what governance is, as well as what is meant by good governance. Political office holders must be just in implementing the federal character in sharing the public offices. The leader's competency should be advocated for. Being competent means one discharging and delivering his duties according to the lay down rules. All the manifestoes and political promises must be fulfilled.

It is important to notice that no government can reign forever and it had never happened in the history of the world. Ibn Khaldun opines that every regime has its end. Therefore, the current regime should ensure that it establishes good governance and fulfill political promises. When the current government becoming less popular because of losing the support of the ruled, deterioration and disintegration set in as a result of lost group feeling which could be referred to nationalism in the modern politics.



## 6. Conclusion

In this study, brief history of Ibn Khaldun was discussed. More so, the Ibn Khaldun's political theory and its application to Nigerian political crises were examined. Furthermore, the relevance of Ibn Khaldun's political theory to a multi-faith country like Nigeria was also studied. Moreover, the justifications of the study and its significance for good governance in Nigeria.

It is recommended in this paper that it is necessary that all the ethnic groups should come together for the development of the country. The government should not limit public functions to its party members as well as religious members alone but rather appoint among the professionals. Leadership is one of the major crises. Failure to produce credible as well as responsible leadership remains unresolved problem.

Henceforth, utilizing the political treaties of Ibn Khaldun would be of advantage to Nigeria to have alternative political system as it is banking system. Therefore, if the suggestions are applied to the issues affecting Nigerian politics, the problem will be ameliorated if not eradicated

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