



## **The Role of Islam in Good Governance in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Nigeria as a giant of African countries has been in great problem militating against good governance. Despite the number of years of being in democratic era, the system of governance remains unbearable. Of such problems is high level of corruption. Islam one of the religions being practiced in the country provides divine roles in stabilizing the good governance. Islam as a total way of life has been introduced into Nigeria as far back as 7th century, accompanied by its provisions for good governance. System of administration of Prophet Muhammad and models from his successors are analyzed to enrich our submissions on the role of religion, especially Islam, in serving as catalyst for good governance. This paper employs narrative and evaluative methods. In its findings, the paper discovers that most of constituted authorities' mis-use their powers which results to failure in good governance while maintaining that religious thought is an ideal tool in stabilizing good governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Governance, Militating, Corruption, Unbearable, Catalyst.

### **1. Introduction**

Nigeria, ever since independence has never been in order of good governance in line with Islam. According to the teaching of Islam provision of good health care delivery, house for the citizenry, food security, security of life and prosperity: productivity and gainful employment etc. are what the Prophet Muhammad has declared as the benefit of the good governance.<sup>1</sup> Allah says

“There is not an animal (That lives) on the earth, Nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their lord in the end.” (Q6 v 38).

In a good governance according to Salahudeen who quoted Prophet Muhammad: “The Imam (or the government) is guardian of his people and responsible for them (i.e., the head of the state is the guardian of him who has nobody to support him”. The principle of accountability and probity is mandatory on a good leader in Islam as well as consultation.<sup>2</sup> Qur’an says:

“Those who hearken to their / lord and established regular prayer, who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation”. (42:38)

For instance, when Muhammad arrived in madinah in 622, local tribal mainly the Banu Aus and Banu Khazraj, had been feuding for several decades. Muhammad addressed thus by establishing the constitution of madinah document which regulated interactions between the different factions, to which the respective parties agreed. This was a different role for him, as he had remained only a religious figure during his time in Makkah. The result was the eventual formation of a united community in Madinah, as well as the political supremacy of Muhammad. The source of diplomatic experience of Prophet Muhammad was the Qur’an<sup>3</sup>. It is important that ability of Muhammad with divine appointment as a good leader in Islam implies his being the most worthy and most eminent among the Makkans.<sup>4</sup> The charter recognized the prophet as the socio – political head of the common wealth of Madinah. The religious teacher thus became a politician and statesmen. He gave law to the land that did not know any other law except that of



‘might is right’. He brought peace and order to the place that presented a picture of perpetual confusion.<sup>5</sup>  
Allah says:

“It is part of the mercy of God that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh – hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (Their fault) and ask for (God’s) forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast Taken a decision, put thy trust in God; for God loves those who put their trust (in Him)”. (Q3 v159)

From the above verse, the good qualities of the prophet of Islam in good governance are shown:

The prophet introduced a political order based on the principles of equality of all. The prophet was a great democrat. The commonwealth of Islam he established at Madinah was based on the democratic ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>6</sup> The prophet appears as an ideal character and ideal man. He was an embodiment of all virtues: trust- worthiness, sincerity, kindness, affection, generosity and great charm of mind and heart.<sup>7</sup> According to prophetic saying quoted by Salahudeen

“Every leader will be brought before Allah in chains; it is the justice he has established that will unchain him”<sup>8</sup>

## **2. Islam**

Islam is one of the religious in Nigeria. The word religion is derived from the Latin word *religio* meaning bind together, tie up, tie fast. In other word religion is expected to vertically bind man to God and to equally horizontally bind man to his fellow man in pure fraternity and love.<sup>9</sup> Religion is a people’s way of life including both their traditions and social interaction. It is man’s integral attitude to life. From the dawn of his creation, man has never been divorced of religion; whatever kind it may be. Faith in a superior being directing his affairs, to whom, he turns in fear and hope, a being wiser and more powerful than himself this is the irrefutable record of human history.<sup>10</sup> Islam is an Abrahamic, monotheistic universal religion teaching that there is only one God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. The primary scriptures of Islam are the Qur’an, viewed by Muslims as the verbatim word of God. It is believed by Muslims that Islam is the complete and universal version of a primordial faith that was revealed many times before through prophets including Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (Hisa).<sup>11</sup>

## **3. Definition of Governance**

Governance is the process or the power, of governing, governance or administration. It comprises all of the processes of governing-

Whether under taken by the government of a state, by a market or by a network over a social system (Family, tribe, formal or informal organization, a territory or across territories) and whether through the laws norms, power or language or an organized society.<sup>12</sup>

Governance from the word “*Governer*” means the act or process of governing. It may mean the whole state or Empire including the cabinet the legislature, the courts, the civil service, the armed forces and religions body and so on. It is “the act, manner or power of government”. There are several ways in which a society is governed and the depends largely on the ideology or culture of that society. The dominant systems of governance in the world today are democracy, communism and socialism. The one that is overtaking every nation is democratically rule of government. Generally, all the three existing religions in Nigeria i.e., Traditional religion, Christian Religion and Islam Religion adhere to the partisan involvement



of religion in the government.<sup>13</sup> Islam does not favor a particular system. Islamic political system has three main principles the first is Tawhid which is the belief in the oneness and supremacy of Allah, who is the only creator Nourisher and Ruler over everything in existence. The second principle is Risalah which is the belief in the prophethood and messengership of the best prophet of Allah, Muhammad (SAW). Both are appearing in the kalimatu ash shahadah “Ash hadu an la Ilaha ila Allaha wa ash hadu anna Muhammad rasulu llahi ‘abuduhu wa rasuluhu” one cannot believe in the first principle above and reject the second because Holy Qur’an cannot be followed or understood without referring to the theoretical and practically interpretations of Qur’an by the holy prophet. The third principle is Khilafah, which is the representation of Allah on earth by mankind Adam is addressed in the Qur’an as the vicegerent or representative of Allah on earth.<sup>14</sup> “Behold, thy lord said to the angels: “I will create a vicegerent on earth” ... (Q2:30)

### **3.1 Good and Bad Governance**

Good governance is the process that maintain political ideology and structure that would guarantee justice, peace, security, stability rapid economic growth and development and also in enduring democracy. Scholars assert that religion has always maintain peace and harmony in human society by upholding moral character while the extent to which political leaders, that is, those charged with the responsibilities of governing are morally upright and truly religious will determine the quality of governance.<sup>15</sup> According to Adamolekun as reiterated by clement religion is a changing factor in the spiritual, political and social life of any society. Since, it is relevant to the development of every facet of human life, it can serve as a spring board for the inculcation and improvement of ethical values, which are fundamental to political development productivity and nation building.<sup>16</sup> Good governance is the desired thing and the will of God. The law in the Holy Qur’an is made for the good of humankind.<sup>17</sup> Good governance provides for proper ownership, use control and management of natural and public resource. It asserts that administration of justice is applied to all regardless of social status, creed, gender or race. It can be in existence when institutions charged with the responsibility of governing carry out its duties in a manner that is devoid of abuse and corruption and having due regard for the rule of law.<sup>18</sup>

Bad governance is a denial of the purpose for which God instituted governing authorities in every society. Bad and wicked governments should be corrected and opposed, respectively. The religions must oppose bad governance because it affects the community of believers. Bad governance could be dictatorial, corrupt, unjust, oppressive etc. An example of bad governance in the Holy Qur’an is that of Firiawn (Pharao).<sup>19</sup> Allah says:

“And remember, we rescued you from pharaoh’s people, who afflicted you with the worst of penalties, who slew your male children and saved alive your females: In that was a momentous trial from your lord”. (Q7:141).

One of the examples of bad governance was that of dictatorial leadership of General Abacha.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.2 Factors that militating against good governance in Nigeria**

#### **3.2.1 Corruption**

Corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire illicit benefit. Corruption may include many activities including bribery and embezzlement, though it may also involve practices that are legal in many countries. Political corruption occurs when an office – holder or other governmental employee acts in an official capacity for personal gain. According to Stephen political corruption is the illegitimate use of public power to benefit a private interest.<sup>21</sup>

Examples of recent corruption between the regime of President Jonathan and current president Buhari



New allegations of corruption that have begun to emerge since the departure of President Jonathan on May 29, 2015, including:

1. 2.2 billion illegally withdrawn from excess crude oil Accounts which is 1 billion supposedly approved by president Jonathan to fund his reelection campaign without the knowledge of the National Economic Council made up of state governors and the president and vice president
2. NEITI discovered & 11.6 billion was missing from Nigeria from Nigeria LNG company divided payments.
3. 60 million barrels of oil valued at & 13.7 billion was stolen under the watch of the national oil company, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, from 2009 to 2012
4. NEITI indicates losses due to crude swaps due to subsidy and domestic crude allocation from 2005 to 2012 indicated that & 11.63 billion had been paid to the NNPC but that “that is no evidence of the money being remitted to the federation account”
5. Diversion of 60% of s 1 billion foreign loan obtained from the Chinese by the Ministry of finance
6. Massive scam in weapon and defense procurements and misuse of 3 trillion-naira defense budget since 2011 under the guise of fighting Boko Haram
7. Diversion of S2.2 million vaccination medicine fund, by Ministry of Health
8. Diversion of Ebola fight fund up to 1.9 billion naira
9. NIMASA fraud under investigation by EFCC, inclusive of accusation of funding P D P and buying a small piece of land for 13 billion naira
10. Ministry of finance led by Okonjo Iweala hurried payment of S 2.2 billion to health ministry contraction in disputed invoices
11. NDDC scams and multifarious scams including 2.7-billion-naira worth of contracts that does not confirm to the public procurement Act
12. Police service commission scam investigated by ICPC that revealed misappropriation of over 150 million naira related to election related trainings. ICPC made refund recommendation but many analysts indicated prosecution was more appropriate

### 3.2.2 *Muhammad Buhari administration (2015 -2019)*

In 2016, the senate ad – hoc committee on ‘mounting humanitarian crisis in the North East’ led by senator Shehu Sani indicted the then secretary to the Government of the Federation appointed by Muhammad Buhari, Mr Baba chir Lawal in a N200 million contract Scandal for the clearing of “Invasive plant species” in Yobe state by Rholavision Nigeria Limited: a company he owns

On October 30, 2017, President Buhari sacked Lawal based on the report of a three – man panel led by vice – President Yemi Osinbajo that investigated him and one other.

According to the senate through its committee on public accounts, 85 government parastatals under the present government under the leadership of Muhammad Buhari are yet to submit their report since the inception of this government

The flag bearer of the corruption fight in Nigeria, the EFCC has responded to the senate committee on public accounts claim on the non-submission of her account report by the motitution and 84 others. The Economic and crimes commission denied the report issued by the committee claiming it was not true.<sup>22</sup>

Harmful Effects of Corruption for National Development Allah says in the Holy Qur’an:

“And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly property” (Q2:188)



In this regards Aisha B. Lemu liken bribery and corruption in the country with a disease that weaken and disable the body, the result of which as she said would be:

- a) Poor people lose their right because they have no money to give bribe, thus the gap between rich and poor is widened
- b) Honest people losses their rights because they refused to give money bribe to the corrupt officials
- c) People gets into habits of refusing to do their official duties they are paid for without additional bribe giving to them.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Lack of Probity*

The word probity means honesty. When honesty is reversible, it is militating against good governance. Allah says in the holy Qur'an:

“O ye who believe! Why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it, in the sight of God that ye say that which ye do not.”

### 3.2.4 *Unaccountability*

Accountability is the process of being responsible for the effect of one's actions. The situation whereby accountability is lack, the condition will become so pathetic and chaotic.<sup>24</sup>

Allah says in the holy Qur'an

Truly: Hell is as a place of ambush  
For the transgressors a place of destination;  
They will dwell there in for ages  
Nothing cool shall they taste  
Therein, nor any drink,  
Save a boiling fluid, And a fluid, dark, murky  
Intensely cold,  
A fitting re compensate (for them)  
For that they used not to fear any account (for their deeds) (Q78:21-27)

## 4. **The Role of Islam on Good Governance**

The best example of good governance in Islam can be emulated from prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) as it was confirmed by Almighty Allah where He says:

“Ye have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in God and the final Day, And who engages much in the praise of God” (Qur'an 33:21)

However, the source of Islamic political system is the Qur'an and Hadith that could be traced to Qur'an when Allah says:

“We made for you a law so follow it, and not the fancies of those who have no knowledge”

### 4.1 **Political Administration of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.)**

When the prophet migrated to Madinah, he assured the leadership of the new Muslim community which comprised Muslims and non-Muslims. In setting up the political system of Islam the prophet was guided by the requirements of Islam revealed to him by Allah. He therefore set up a state:



1. Where the law of Allah was supreme
2. Where consultation was done on issues that the Qur'an was not categorical
3. Where both Muslim and non – Muslim members of the state had equal rights for protection from the state
4. Where within the circle of the Muslim members of the state Islamic brotherhood was the binding force since all of them believed in a common course – to establish the religion of Allah on earth and to protect it
5. Where leaders realized that the responsibility placed on them was a trust from Allah whom they shall eventually be accountable to.<sup>25</sup>

The prophet Muhammad was the most powerful functionary of the world as both the spiritual and temporal head of the Muslims, the prophet lived a very simple and unostentatious life and thus left behind for the Muslims the best example of an ideal leader. He lived in the world and lived a firmly life, yet he had an ascetic life, illustrating in his own life the synthesis of the theory and practice of Islam and harmonizing of materialism with spiritualism. The great prophet did the humblest of works himself and illustrated the dignity of labor to his followers.

Nevertheless, here are the political administration of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) to be emulated as a role model of good governance in Islam:

**i. Shuura (consultation)**

Shuura means consultation and seeking for advice on how some issues could be handled. It is necessary in the Islamic political system because Allah commended the prophet to consult his sahabah in matters on which Qur'an and sunnah are not categorical.

“it is part of the mercy of God that thou dost deal gently with them. Wert thou severe or harsh – hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (Their faults) and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them' and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him). (Qur'an3:154)

A good leader in good governance should be able to consult the citizens who had ideas that could help the state to move forward.<sup>26</sup>

**ii. Adalah (equality before the law and justice)**

The political system founded by the prophet in Madinah was based on fair play. It is giving individuals and groups their due rights without discrimination. It gives assurance to the weak that he can get his right from the strong. This will make the poor and weak have confidence in the Islamic political system. This should be emulated by the Nigeria's leaders so as to record a good governance.<sup>27</sup>

“O ye who believe: stand out firmly for Allah as just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allah

Verily, Allah is well – acquainted with what you do. (Qur'an 5:8)

**iii. Mas'uliyah (Accountability)**

Mas'uliyah means a mechanism based on which public officers are checked with a view to preventing them from misappropriating the resources put under their care. It is important because it helps in protecting individuals and groups from the excesses of people in power. On the Day of judgement all



people entrusted with one responsibility or the other will be called to account for their stewardship by Allah.

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“Then surely, we shall question those (people) to whom it (the book) was sent and verily, we shall question the messengers. Then surely, we shall narrate unto them (their whole story with knowledge, and indeed we have not been absent”. (Qur’an 7:6-7)

The companions of the prophet did not deviate from such consultative principles even after the prophet. For instance, when Abu – Bakr was elected as the first caliph to administer the governance. He publicly announced the principle of the government as follows:

“You have (all) elected me your Khalifah (successor), though I am not better than you all. I need all your advice and your help (through consultation) Abubakr really followed this principle of consultation throughout his reign. Umar, Uthman and Ali followed the same principle during their various caliphates.<sup>29</sup> The successors maintain fair play as the bases of Islamic political system. This was reflected in their speeches on assumption of office. For example, the first caliph said that the weak is strong with him and the strong is weak from the strong. They maintained the fear of God in the art of governance as was done by the prophet. These are expected from our leaders in Nigeria so as to maintain and ascertain the good governance in our country.<sup>30</sup>

## 5. Recommendation

From discussion so far, one could see the role of Islam in good governance through the role model of the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his successors. The role models are identified and summarized as the recommendation.

1. Fear of God according to the teaching of Islam
2. Consultation as the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) did and his successors
3. Justice and equality before the law should be maintained
4. Fair Play

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to discuss governance, the factors that militating against good governance such as corruption, lack of probity and unaccountability. The good governance during the life of prophet Muhammad was mentioned together with the life time of his successors. The factors like fear of God, consultation, accountability as well as justice and equality before the law were also discussed.

Finally, Qur’an says

“Verily, Allah command justice and doing good and giving to those of kin (their dues) and he forbids filthy actions and inequity and transgressing. He admonishes you that you may remember”. (Q16:90)

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