

Islam, Morality, Politics and Issues of National Integration in Nigeria

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Abstract

The post civil war life of Nigeria as heterogeneous state is being confronted with agitations from different ethno-religious groups over their marginalization and unfair distribution of the nation's resources. This agitation had resulted in persistent calls for disunity and disintegration of Nigeria as a sovereign state. However, the inability of the previous administrations at the centre to finally address the issues has become a major concern to Nigerians who has been blaming the nation's political leaders for their immorality and insincerity towards addressing persistent national questions because of their selfish and ethnic considerations. This is contrary to the doctrine of Islam which enjoins those in position of authorities to be equitable and just in the cause of performing their responsibility as entrust on them by the followers irrespective of their political, religious and ethnic affiliations.

Introduction

Islam, according to literature, is a voluntary total submission or surrender to the will of God Almighty. It is derived from the root word "salam," meaning peace. Islam is a natural way of life that encourages one to give due attention to ones relationship with God in our daily engagements. Islam teaches that it is through doing good deeds in the cause of our day to day activities that can signal a good conduct and an acceptable morality in the character of a believer and this will serve as a guide in seeking the pleasure of God which can make souls find true happiness and peace in the society.

In practice, Islam is all encompassing and touches every aspect of human endeavour. It has its root in knowledge as exemplified by the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in the Qur'an (Q96:1-5) which emphasized the importance of knowledge as a guide to daily activities of believers. The Qur'an, a divine book of Islam, is an encyclopedia that gives information on many concepts and subjects including morality, politics and national

integration. It is an embodiment of diverse nature of the world and comprehensive tool for good governance cum national development of the state (Musawa, 2014).

As observed further by Pedroni (1999), upholding the Qur'anic principles in its entirety together the teachings of the noble Prophet can make it possible for a prosperous society with harmony and rancor-free relationship among the citizens irrespective of their religious and ethnic affiliations. Ali (2016) believed that good morality of a leader can engender good politics and good politics can promote good governance while good governance in turns serves as a foundation for national integration. Therefore, good morality can assist the policy makers to be equitable in the cause of administering the state in homogenous society like Nigeria.

Nigeria, being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society suffers from conflicts and disintegrations among Nigerians. According to Yola (2011), the deficiency in morality of political leaders at all levels of government to judiciously address some contentious issues related to uneven distribution of resources, domination of minority by majority groups, injustice, bad governance and persistent economic hardship and other related matters underlying socio-political and economic crises that triggered ethnic diversity and identity crisis confronting Nigeria.

With regards to the above position as observed by Yola (2011), this social disharmony has resulted to recurring violence activities of ethnic militias and has been threatening peace, unity and general stability of Nigeria as a sovereign state. This is in contrary to the philosophy of Islam that values the sincerity of those in position of leadership to be equitable in the cause of administration of the state. The recurring ethnic and identity crises facing contemporary Nigeria as a sovereign state could be traced to lack of good moral conduct and insincerity of some of the nation's political leaders in all spheres of decisions organs of government to consider the national interests against their parochial, social- political and ethnic considerations which have been hampering the attainment of peace and national integration in Nigeria.

It is as a result of this and among others, that this paper examined the principle of Islam on morality, politics and promotion of national integration in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data,

theoretical mode of analysis was adopted to argue that the persistent threats of disintegration in Nigeria would eventually be curtailed if Nigeria's political leaders could strictly adhere to the doctrine of Islam that emphasize on morality and good conduct in decision making irrespective of socio, political and religious affiliations of the citizens in the country.

Conceptual Issues Islam and Morality

Islam is a monotheistic religion that teaches that there is only one God and that Muhammad is a messenger of God. It is the fastest growing major religion in the world which teaches that God is merciful, all-powerful, and unique, who guides mankind through prophet, revealed scriptures and natural signs. The primary scriptures of Islam are the Qur'an viewed by Muslims as the word of God, and the teachings and normative example i.e the Sunnah which is composed of accounts called hadith of Muhammad (SAW).

According to Ambali (2003), Muslims believe 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. However, the Quran which Muslims consider as unaltered and final revelation of God, teaches morality and righteousness in all the daily engagements of the people with reward in paradise, while hell awaits the unrighteous in the day of the Judgment (Diggi, 2016).

Morality as argued by Waziri (2014), is the ability to observe and do what is right and do away with what is wrong. It is about human actions and thoughts. It is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are improper. Morality can be a body of principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture and it could be derived from a standard that a person believes should be universal which is synonymous with "goodness" or "rightness".

Morality in Islam is a comprehensive term that includes righteousness, good character, and the body of moral qualities and virtues prescribed in Islamic religious texts. The underlying idea of Islamic morality is that of love for God and its creatures. The idea is that mankind will acquire and follow the body of moral qualities in order to seek God's pleasure and to treat fellow human beings in the best possible manner in our dealings with one another in the society (Waziri, 2014).

The teaching on morality and moral conduct constitutes the basic principle of Islam, and the moral themes form a large part of it. The Qur'an and the Hadith serve as the primary source for moral conduct of peoples by adopting a morally good character and showing kindness to the people, justice and equity in dealing with one another and showing kindness to people, and charity to the poor including the helpless member of the society. Islam also emphasizes forgiveness, respect to parents and elders, fulfillment of promises, being kind to people and to animals, being patient in adversaries, maintaining justice and being honest in nature and in the administration of the people under our leadership both at formal and informal levels (Ambali, 2003).

Islamic tradition therefore holds that moral qualities and good actions elevate the status of leaders and followers in the society. It encourage them to be sincere with one another in the cause of state administration which if favourably embraced in the art of governance could ease the incessant social crises and disintegration threats facing post-independence Nigeria.

Morality and Politics: The Islamic Perspectives

Politics as “the process of who gets what, when and how” has been postulated by Laswell (1936). Politics evolves on morality of the policy makers and it is the process through which political power is attained for the betterment of the people through the rule of law in achieving the common good and satisfies the needs and aspirations of the peoples in the society. It is the process of making decisions that is applicable to the citizens irrespective of their political or ethnic considerations.

However, political ethics (also known as political morality or public ethics) is the practice of making moral judgments about political actions and political agents in the state. According to Thomas (1993), political ethics covers two areas. The first is the ethics of process (or the ethics of office), which deals with public officials and the methods they use in performing their responsibilities to the people. The second area is the ethics of policy (or ethics and public policy).

It concerns the judgments about policies and laws of the government on the society. Therefore, morality and politics are two inseparable worlds that refer to the framework that enables politicians to possess good characters; good conducts and have less of a right of

privacy than the ordinary citizens and who have no right to use their public offices for personal and sectional gains (Thomas, 1993).

In Islam, the leadership selection is very important in human gathering. The Prophet of Allah (SAW) advises that if you are three; elect a leader so that Shaytan will not lead the gathering. Therefore, electing a leader is to give value to the person elected as well as the electorates who voted them into office so that the trust of being just to the people irrespective of their beliefs and thoughts can be positively considered as a guide towards day to day administration of the society. Yola (2011), posits further that the purpose of life is the essence of politics. Hence, the purpose of social existence is to worship God, and the essence of social existence where two or more people interact with one another is politics.

For societal cooperation and solidarity, Islam advocates a state whose essence is to establish, maintain and develop good virtues and eradicate evils in all ramifications. Islam doctrine maintains that the state policy and politics should be based on justice, truth and modesty. It does not compromise standard under any circumstances and discourages falsehood, tyranny and injustice in the name of politics but gives precedence to truth, honesty and justice over material consideration. To Diggi (2016), the moral message of Islam to politicians is to fulfill all pledges, contracts and obligations to the society and the state at large while holding public office.

The politicians are to exercise state power and authority for the establishment of justice, equity and harmony and to see political office as a public trust emanated from God Almighty that can be used to promote good governance with moral consciousness of political actors. Diggi (2016), believed that politics cannot be regarded as a dirty game, but in most cases those who engage in it are morally bankrupt. Therefore, man's role in politics is not for only struggle for power, glory or personal interest, but it is a moral struggle to establish a peaceful state and create a conducive environment for the observance of moral ideas.

Morality and politics are therefore inseparable. This is because, morality presumed uprightness of political leaders and possession of good attributes that can promote justice and fairness in the administration of the state. If political power is in the hand of morally conscious leaders, political activities would be at its best and would establish truth, justice,

equity in the way the government affairs could be piloted, conversely, if it fails to attract morally conscious people, politics would establish falsehood, injustice, corruption, embezzlement and tyranny in the state.

National Integration

The term national integration is a philosophical thought of patriotic citizen of the state irrespective of socio, political, religious and ethnic affiliations of the citizens. According to Baldev (2017), national integration is the process of combing all people of the country together irrespective of their ethnic, social, religions and political consideration into a single whole and undivided country. It is a particular sentiment that binds together all people in one common bond, no matter what their religion, ethnic and historical background is all about such that the nation becomes strong and organized.

National integration is also a process of which citizens of a country are conscious of their common identity and regard themselves as one irrespective of differences in class, ethnicity, religion, and other differences that may exist between them. National integration as observed further by Baldev (2017), holds the people of various religions and culture together and the citizens accept what is in the larger interest of the country rather than individual's interest.

From Islamic perspectives, Ali (2016), argued that national integration is a relationship of cohesiveness and cooperation among the citizens of a nation based on the principles of the divine vicegerent vision which highlights the value of man's rights and clarifies his position in the universe as the first master. Ali (2016) further maintained that everything in the universe is in use of his service in order to achieve the greater objectives for which he was created, namely the worship and the glorification of Allah. Islamic administration of justice seriously fosters national unity and integration which in turn, aid national development as justified in Qur'ans (Al-Nisai: 2).

Notwithstanding, the differences in opinions and beliefs, all the people of a nation are full of mutual love, integration and brotherhood. National integration, thus, is a sentiment which reflects solidarity or patriotism among the people belonging to a nation. It fosters a common identity amongst the citizens of a country which makes them feel that they are all one, thus

making the nation strong and organized. It holds the people together and remains in mutual harmony with each other towards the promotion of the state objectives (David, 2013).

Issues of National Integration in Nigeria: A critical Appraisal

Since the inception of Nigeria as an independent state, both past and present leaders have made serious efforts to propagate policies and programmes that are geared towards national integration. Despite such well-intended and unity-oriented programmes and policies, Nigeria's unity has continued to be plagued and threatened by embedded socio-cultural, religious and political dichotomies. The efforts of successive administrations towards formulating sustainable policy for national integration since 1970, after the civil war, has become a dilemma because of lost of political will, ethnicity, corruption and the insincerity of the leaders in power. Nigerians have sought to build a stable multi-ethnic nation, but, the nation-building process has been largely complicated by Nigeria's tremendous ethnic diversity and uneven distribution of resources (Onifade & Imhonopi, 2014).

Imasuen (2007), observes that the geographical expression called Nigeria has striven without success to bring together the diverse ethnic nationalities into a single nation. For instance, at independence in 1960, the first indigenous leadership of Nigeria headed by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as President and Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as Prime Minister was a marriage of inconvenience which was sealed because of the alliances between Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Sir Ahamadu Bello, the Premier of Northern Region and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe of National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) against the Action Group (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Premier of Western Region.

The first republic alliance brought distrust and suspicion among the major ethnic groups that led to the military coup d'état of Jan 15 1966, which, though unsuccessful, brought about the killing of many politicians, most of whom were of Hausa extraction. The coup was perceived by many Northerners as an attempt by the Igbo people of the East to dominate the federation. This engendered a successful counter coup led by Northern soldiers six months later and ultimately resulted in a thirty-month civil war which left the nation, especially the Eastern part of Nigeria war-torn and devastated.

At the end of the civil war, General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian from the middle belt, who was the then Head of State, however declared that there was no victor, no vanquished after Aburi peace accord between the Nigeria troops and the Biafran. He went ahead to later implement a programme of reconstruction, reconciliation and rehabilitation which did not bridge disintegration threats in Nigeria (Imasuen, 2007).

Several efforts at national integration have since then been made towards promoting unity and proper integration in Nigeria. Those efforts include application of federal character principle, boundary adjustment policies, and revenue allocation formulas as well as the introduction of one year compulsory service for Nigerian graduates. For relevance sake, one of such efforts at nation building and integration stand shoulder high above the others, and its effective formulation became a mirage.

However, the effective implementation of the programmes has been impeded by the immoral attitude of some politicians and political leaders which instead of working for the country's unity had placed self agenda, ethnicity and religious interests above the national interests. Rather than integrating into a cohesive community with a common sense of national identity, they have made citizens of Nigeria to return to primordial affiliation of ethnic and religious affiliations that is hampering the actualization of national integration objective in the country (Ojo, 2015).

Also, the activities of ethnic militias' occasioned by insincerity, immorality and selfishness of political leaders since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rules promoted the disintegration movement in Nigeria. According to Carlisle (2013), the scenario of the ethnic militia and insurgency is tragic, spanning from the North, East, and South with the sole aim of disintegrating Nigeria. The emergence of various ethnic groupings clamouring for equity in the sharing of national resources have been attributed to the feeling of marginalization which the groups believe had been going for years without being addressed.

This is especially so in the Niger Delta region, where most of the oil resources of the country are located. The various nationalities within the region feel they have been short changed in the distributional resources and so resulted to the formation of different ethnic militias in

Niger Delta area to cause distractions and make the country ungovernable. This could also make all different ethnic groups work against each other.

Causes of Disintegration Threat in Nigeria

Oyelola (2014), identified the major causes of disintegration threat from various ethnic groups in Nigeria to include:

- **Unequal Distribution of Resources:** The unequal distribution of economic resources is one of the major reasons that the disintegration threat is overflowing in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta area where the nation's treasure is based. For several years, the Niger Delta region has been the source of Nigeria's Crude Oil wealth. But despite the enormous profits the nation as a whole has gathered from the sale of crude oil, the Niger Delta region experienced abject neglect. This region suffered from poor infrastructural development even though the continuous exploitation of its oil reserves brought devastation to its environment where the water became polluted and farming became difficult because of soil pollution. This inflamed the people of the region and caused them to act out, giving birth to the rise of militants who engaged in all kinds of activities ranging from kidnapping and bursting gas pipelines.
- **Marginalization of Certain Ethnic Groups:** Another issue that has brought about talks of Nigeria's disintegration is the issue of marginalization. When it comes to the issue of politics, the Igbos and the entire people of South East region feel marginalized as a result of the insincerity of Nigeria's political leaders since the country returned to democratic rules in 1999. That is, the Igbos feel that they have been side-lined or pushed to the corner in the administration of the country to the extent that the region is yet to produce a president in spite of the fact that Nigeria operates democratic system of government. This monopoly of power has created the impression that the production of the president is in the hands of the party chieftains majorly from the South West or the North which prefers to have her own clinching the nation's number one job. This typically injustice is devoid of good morality from Nigerian political stakeholders against the spirit of brotherhood preached by Islam.
- **Northern Oppression:** Northerners are no strangers to power in Nigeria. In fact, they seem to have a monopoly of power. Even when non-northerners were in power, they still hold major positions in government. This has engendered feelings of resentment from other ethnic group. The Yorubas being highly educated do not understand why the power

that comes so easily to the northerners seems to elude them. To be fair, being in power has made the northerners seemingly untouchable. Take for example the incessant killings in South East and South-Western communities by Fulani Herdsmen, the act which got no response from the government in power. This injustice has become major reasons that there seems to be a clamour for Nigeria's disintegration, especially as voiced by the so called proposed Igbo nation of Biafra.

- **Forced Relocation of Citizens:** The lack of good conduct and moral deficiencies of Nigerian leaders has led to inter-ethnic conflicts among different groups in Nigeria. The recent declaration by Arewa Youth of the Northern extraction which gave the people of Southern origin deadline, forced unexpected and hurried relocation of the people living in the Northern Nigeria to their home states. This action caused unnecessary hardship, especially in the form of losses of their amassed property in their states of occupations. They were forced to move their investments or abandon them because the safety of their lives could no longer be guaranteed, before the call for disintegration threats commenced.
- **Bad Governance:** The bad governance is a complete absence of good leadership and good governance in the country. It means lack of respect for the fundamental rights of citizens, maladministration and injustice in the cause of governance exercised by political office holders at all levels. There is no commitment to the public goods and promotion of ethnic equality by those in position of authority and this hopeless situation eventually led to the persistent agitations for national disintegration in Nigeria.

Islam, Morality and Politics: A source for National Integration

Nigeria as a multi-plural society, with many ethnicities, languages, religious pluralism and ethnic differences undermines the process of building a national integration. These divisions equally prevent or undermine the attempts by one group or religion to impose itself on the country. According to Falola (2009), Muslims have been accused of wanting to impose Islam on Nigeria while the mobilization by Southern Christians has suggested that there would be secession or warfare if such happens which may signals national integration.

Ethnic-cum-communal identities are strong in Nigeria and have complemented recurring social and communal differences among Nigerians even at the policy making level. Many nations have existed and flourished before the British imposition of colonial rule. While the nations have been amalgamated, the concept of a nation-state governed by European

institutions has been slow to either be widely accepted or be made to work. For one thing, the British themselves profited from the people's identification with their older nations, and the choice of federalism partly recognized the differences and kept them apart from one another.

Colonial rule consolidated ethnicities and the politics of division cum the persistent agitations for national disintegration witnessed in Nigeria. As a secular state, Islam has played a leading role in the socio-political life of Nigeria and has served as a source of unifying force and contributed in many ways to the nation's development, notably in providing the sources to organize politics and society, fostering community cohesion, and creating an ideology of change (Falola, 2009). The scholar averred further that Nigeria cannot be understood without Islam. The areas of intersection between Islam and politics are significant with the following reasons:

- **The Inability of Government to Enhance the Standard of Living of the Citizens:** The government's failure to promote development or enhance living standards has continued to make Islam an alternative ideology to organize change and seek better solutions to a myriad of problems confronting its existence as a united nation. For instance, all the contentious issues relating to the spirit of national integration would have been better managed if the Nigerian political leaders imbibed the tenancy of Islam that call for good morality, justice, equity and the sincerity of leaders while administering Nigeria as a sovereign state.
- **Islam as a Radical Religion and Political Ideology:** Islam has expressed itself as a radical religion and political ideology that can provide a framework for managing heterogenic nation like Nigeria. It has also provided sustainable ideology to different political parties and interest groups on how to manage each other in a rancor-free harmonious relationship through its adherences. The peace and unity preached by Islam can help politicians to come together as one and incorporates all regions and ethnic nationalities into one. It could also provide them better opportunity and alternative platform of gaining political power to further the interests of all Nigerians rather than a sectional interest that may likely derail the integration move in Nigeria.
- **Islamic Leaders and Organization as Agent of Social and Political Orientations:** Islamic leaders and Muslim organizations can serve as agent of social and political orientations to their adherences in government towards being morally upright while holding public office. They are consider very efficient and astute at building regional and

international solidarity networks to push their members to be morally guided as slated in the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Allah's messenger Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to do justice to all the peoples under their care irrespective of their ethnics and religious considerations. This may, in turn, be emulated by non Muslim leaders towards promoting unity and national integration. Therefore, Islam is the ideology that creates a semblance of unity and national integrations.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the post civil war issues in Nigeria that has resulted to disunity and persistent calls for national disintegration among different ethnic groups that made up Nigeria as a federation. As observed by the paper, the issues of disunity and persistent calls for disintegration in Nigeria is as a result of decadence of morality in the conduct of the nation's political leaders since independence. This immoral conducts as examined in the paper is contrary to the principle of Islam which enjoins those in position of authorities to be equitable and just in the cause of performing their responsibility as entrust on them by the people. The immoral conducts of the leaders has also influenced their decision making on the issues affecting generalities of Nigerians. This singular act has resulted to series of inter- ethnic conflicts and social crises among different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria.

This compelling reason for national disintegration is occasioned by the immorality of the nation's political leaders who see political office and position of authority as avenues to promote ethnic agenda, corruption, injustice and unequal treatment in the allocation of political offices and distribution of economic resources among different ethnic groups in Nigeria. This immoral act, to Islam is strictly against the principle of Qur'an which preaches morality and good conducts towards the promotion of peace, unity and harmonious relationship between the leaders and followers in the society.

The immoral act of political leaders have resulted in division among Nigerians along religious, ethnics and party affiliations which has resulted to disharmony, controversies, social conflicts, identity crises and the persistent agitations for disintegration movement in the polity since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. Except a miracle happens radically, Nigeria may not achieve the unity and national integration agenda proffered towards restructuring the country after the civil war experienced ended in early 1970s.

For the attainment of peace, harmony, and the actualization of the national integration policy of government in Nigeria, there is need for discipline, good morality, patriotism and dedication of Nigerian leaders towards formulation of policy that will promote the spirit of brotherhood among Nigerians. Above all, the inculcation of the teachings of the principles of Islam in the day to day activities of Nigeria's political leaders and the citizens towards promotion of unity and national integration in multi ethnic state is very necessary.

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