

The Change Agenda of ‘Umar Bn ‘Abdul-Aziz as a Model for Fighting Corruption in Nigeria

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Abstract

With the exit of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and the emergence of the Umayyad caliphate thereafter, Islamic history recorded another great caliph whose tenure demonstrated a practical Islamic model of leadership and public trust. He was ‘Umar ibn Abdul ‘Aziz (717-720 CE). His tenure created a sort of assurance that all hopes are not after all lost in attaining good governance in the 21st century if the Umayyads as worldly as they could produce such a leader at that time, and that political leaders could borrow a leaf from the administrative style of this sage, especially in the area of checking corruption which has become a cankerworm in the fabric of the national life. It is on this basis that this paper considers the leadership style of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-Azīz with a view to encouraging political leaders in Nigeria to emulate it for good governance to be attained. Historical research and analytical methods are used for this purpose. It was, however, discovered that a virtuous leader may achieve little in the face of faulty political system, and so, for corruption to be effectively checked, both the leader and the political system need to be in harmony. This is because a good driver may not effectively and safely drive a faulty car, just as a good car can hardly been driven to the expected destination in the hand of inexperienced driver. The paper concludes by giving a number of recommendations to Muslim electorates and Nigerian citizens in general.

Keywords: Agenda, ‘Umar Bn ‘Abdul-Aziz, Corruption, Nigeria

Introduction

The problem of Nigeria leadership is succinctly summarised by Durosinmi in the following statements:

Nigerians and THIR leaders fail to see Nigeria as a project. Rather, Nigeria to most people, is like a big round cake, which as long as you can use a knife; you can slice off your portion of this cake, sometimes, large enough to go

*round your circle of friends and acquaintances. In fact, it is a party with fairly no rules, reckless generosity and prodigal accountability.*¹

Unconscious of history, some uninformed Muslims erroneously believe that Islam has nothing to do with politics and so, Muslims should not participate in it. Little did those who hold this belief know that Islam is a way of life that encompasses the totality of the life of man in all spheres. The Prophet had come to demonstrate the practicability and unseparability of religion from politics to the conviction of his friends and foes. He left an enduring legacy of sound management of public affairs and high standard of unique character and sterling leadership qualities. Although he did not leave a clear cut method of choosing a leader before his death, that has been considered his spirit of democratic dispensation thereby leaving the *Ummah* to use their discretion to have a leader of their choice based on the guidelines and qualities he left. This spirit was strictly followed by his immediate successors, namely Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and Ali.

The periods of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs were memorable, as they did not deviate from the guidelines given by the Prophet. However, with the expansion of Islam beyond Arabian Peninsula and acceptance of the religion by some unscrupulous elements as well as recapitulation of spirit of ethnicity which intoxicated ‘Uthman the third caliph to favour his kinsmen at the expense of others, the wall of brotherhood and togetherness broke and so the spirit of disunity, hatred and marginalization set in. The Muslims were then overtaken by their pre-Islamic primitive and barbaric way of life when feud, raids and irregular warfare were the order of the day. This, consequently, led to the assassination of ‘Uthman and the tough time ‘Ali, his successor, had. The death of ‘Uthman shook the unity of the Muslims. The Banu Umayyah and Banu Hashim were sharply divided into two rival hostile camps. It also introduced bitterness between the Madinite Ansar and the Makkan Umayyad. The assassination of ‘Uthman was followed by generations of civil wars in Islam and this consequently led to the death of his successor, Ali. The death of ‘Ali eventually culminated in the emergence of the Umayyad caliphate, a period when religion was not only technically elbowed out of politics, but was relegated to the lowest ebb, hence the era of secularisation of caliphate set in. Not minding the secularisation of the caliphate by the Umayyad caliphs, the

¹ Lateefat, M. Durosinmi, “Muslim Women and Children in the Nigerian Project”. A paper presented at the Round Table marking the 30th Anniversary of the Islamic Welfare Foundation, held at Kwara Hotels, Ilorin on 1st May 2014, 23.

Umayyads recorded a great ruler who was the son of a granddaughter of the second Caliph Umar. He was Umar bn Abdul-Azīz popularly called Umar II. His emergence as a caliph demonstrates the fact that all hope is not lost for Nigerians in the fight against corruption, and that conscious leadership can still be produced; and there is hope for good governance if actually a lesson is taken from the administration of the personality of Umar II.

Who was ‘Umar bn ‘Abdul-Azīz?

He was the son of ‘Abdul-‘Azīz, the Governor of Egypt and his mother was the granddaughter of the Caliph ‘Umar. He was born in 63AH (682CE) in Halwan, a village of Egypt. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul-‘Azīz memorized the Quran at a young age after which his father sent him to Madinah to learn *Adab* from his mother’s uncle, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar. He studied with Ubaydullah ibn Abdullah. He remained in Madinah till his father’s death in 704CE when he was summoned by his uncle Caliph Abdul Malik to Damascus and was married to his daughter Fatimah.² He was appointed the governor of Madinah in 706 CE by Caliph Walid. He later became the governor of the entire Hijaz region when his territory was extended to Tā’if.³ Before taking this appointment, Umar laid down three conditions which were approved by Caliph Walid. They were:

- i. to deal with people with truth and justice and not to oppress or deprive anyone his right to the *Baytul Māl*;
- ii. that he would be allowed to perform hajj at the beginning of the year; and
- iii. that he would be permitted to make donations to the people of Madinah.⁴

When he was governor, he formed an advisory council of ten eminent jurists and notable people and carried out the administration with their consultation. He also saddled these jurists with the task of overseeing his workers and to report any of them who violate the laid down rules. Not this alone, he did not see himself a sacred cow. Hence, he ordered the jurists to also watch over his steps and actions. He addressed them further:

*Rulers usually appoint people to watch over their subjects. I appoint you a watcher over me and my behaviour. If you find me at fault in a word or action, guide me and stop me from doing it.*⁵

² The life and contributions of Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz in www.islamiccentre.org accessed on 20/9/2015.

³ A. Muhammad As-Sallabi, *The Rightly-Guided Caliph and Great Reviver, ‘Umar bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz: Indicators of Renewal and Guided Reformation on the Prophetic Path*. (Riyadh: Darussalam, undated), 77.

⁴ As-Sallabi.

He strove to erase the signs of ravages committed in the Holy cities of Islam under Yazid and Abdul Malik. He repaired and enlarged the mosque of the Prophet and beautified the holy cities with public structures. He constructed the roads leading to Madinah to the admiration and commendation of his boss Caliph Walid who marvelled at the advancements that he brought to the Holy city within a short period.

It should be noted that there was a big contrast between the government of ‘Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz and his colleague in Iraq – Hajjaj ibn Yusuf. While ‘Umar attempted to correct the injustice of the Umayyad, Hajjaj was dealing ruthlessly with the opponents of the Umayyad house. He was too harsh to the Iraqis because he believed they were people given to hypocrisy and schism to the extent that he spared not even the innocent ones amongst them. He was so severe that it was said that about 50,000 men and 30,000 women died in prisons during his tenure and she was among the women who died in prisons, 16,000 of them were stripped naked.⁶ In addition to the great number of people he killed on the battle-fields, he was said to have executed 120,000 people. The maladministration, antics of threatening and insults of highest degree of Hajjaj on Iraqis made them flee the province to other areas. A large number of refugees from Iraq who were groaning under the oppression of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf therefore left for ‘Umar’s territory. This angered Al-Hajjaj and so pressed al-Walid to remove him. Since Hajjaj was instrumental to the appointment of al-Walid to the caliphate, and for the fact that he gave his daughter, Jariyah, in marriage to a son of al-Walid I named Mansur,⁷ Al-Walid bowed to Hajjaj’s pressure and so dismissed Umar from his post. It was, however, Walid’s brother Sulaiman (715-717) who reigned after Walid who ignored his own brothers and son when it came to appointing his successor and instead nominated ‘Umar who reluctantly accepted the position.⁸

The Leadership Responsibility of ‘Umar bn ‘Abdul- ‘Azīz

Attempt is made in this section to discuss the numerous steps taken by ‘Umar ibn Abdul-‘Azīz to correct the anomalies of his predecessors with a view to putting in place a system of government that was acceptable to all citizens regardless of their religious, ethnic affiliations and economic background. However, it should be mentioned that ‘Umar did not see his

⁵ As-Sallabi, 78.

⁶ Z.I. Oseni, *Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf Al-Thaqafi: A Formidable Umayyad Viceroy in Iraq*, (Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 2012), 151.

⁷ Oseni, 137.

⁸ A. Rahim, *Islamic History*, (Lagos: Islamic Publications Bureau, 1983), 146.

position as a caliph a means of amassing wealth and enriching himself. Rather, the position was a trust from Allah to which he would render account on the Day of Reckoning. This explains why he used to attend to every bit of his citizens' needs spending all his days on their affairs and as well praying fervently to Allah for him to achieve success in this endeavour. He was said to have confessed to his wife Fatimah the enormity of his office saying:

I find that I have been put in charge of the affairs of this Ummah, its black and its red. I then remember the poor and starving, the lost and bewildered, the subdued captives, those who have little money and many children, and I see the same happening in the furthest outskirts of the land. I know that Allah will question me about them and that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) will confront me concerning them. Hence, I fear that Allah will not accept any excuses from me in relation to them and no argument will support me with the Messenger of Allah (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).⁹

Instituting the Rule of Law and Due Process

Before the death of Caliph Sulaimān ibn ‘Abdul Mālik, he prepared a will which in he nominated ‘Umar to succeed him to the caliphate after his death. When the will was read out after his demise, ‘Umar objected to this as he was not prepared for the task and to him, his nomination did not follow normal process. He was however persuaded to take up the appointment to avoid discord and leadership tussle in the *Ummah*. With this, he reluctantly accepted the offer.¹⁰ ‘Umar was a lover of democracy. He demonstrated this upon his appointment by his predecessor and even against his will. When he was asked to give his inaugural speech, he attempted to put things right when he said:

“O people! I have been burdened with the responsibilities of the caliphate against my own will and without your consent. I thereby remove the oath of allegiance to me that is on your necks so that you are at liberty to elect anyone whom you like.”

With this speech, the audience cried out in support of him and so he had no option than to accept the offer. Upon this, he made his agenda known to his people, saying:

⁹ As-Sallabi, 392.

¹⁰ Jalalud-Din As-Suyyuti, *Tarikhul- Khulafa* (Cairo: Darul-Fajr lil-turath al-Qairah, 2004/1425AH), 183.

O people! Whoever wants to associate with us, he may do so in five things otherwise let him not come near us: He raises the need of whoever is incapable of raising it to us himself; he helps us to do good through his efforts; he acts in accordance with the good that we lead him to; he does not cheat anyone in our community; and he does not get involved in what does not concern him.....This Ummah is neither divided over its Lord, the Majestic, nor its Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), nor its Book, while it does differ on the Dinar and Dirham (units of currency; money). By Allah, I will not give to anyone who is untrue and I will not deprive anyone who is true....¹¹

Blocking all Financial Leakages

One of the most grievous mistakes committed by ‘Umar’s predecessors, was financial mismanagement and illegal accumulation of wealth. To check this, ‘Umar took necessary measures to ensure that assets were rightfully channelled back to the *Baytul-Mal*. In the first instance, ‘Umar presented himself as a leader worthy of emulation by his people. In order to erase the long standing practice of illegal extortion of his predecessors and their agents, he decided to discard what he owned as landed property and other possessions and deposited them into the public treasury. He also ordered his wife to return the jewellery she had received from her father Caliph Abdul Malik and this was deposited in the *Baytu-Mal*.¹²

With his appointment, ‘Umar made the office of the caliph less attractive by denying his relatives what they used to receive and also requesting their return to the land that had been acquired illegally by them. Unsatisfied with this development, his relatives were aggrieved. He replied: ‘I have not denied them any right or anything that is theirs, nor have I taken from them any right or anything which is theirs.’¹³ To avoid looting of public funds by those in charge, ‘Umar increased the wages of his officials while his family was not given this opportunity on the basis that he did not deny them of any of their rights and was not ready to give them anything other than their rights.

¹¹ As-Sallabi, 108-109.

¹² Rahim,

¹³ www.islamiccentre.org accessed on 12/9/2015.

He further nullified the tradition of taking gifts which had become a normal practice by his predecessors especially on the occasion of the Christian Coptic New Year (Navruz) and festivals related to Persian celebrations. He therefore forbade taking of gifts believing that it amounted to bribery.

To be prudent in his administration, ‘Umar also refused to accept the regal carriage in form of horses and camels that was brought to him upon his assumption of duty as it used to be given to any new caliph. He was contented with the mule he was using before assuming office as a caliph, hence, he ordered his security men to send all the materials including the furniture and other regalia of office to the public treasury. It is also on record that the Umayyad caliphs used to have mansions and large estates on assumption of office to boost their position of authority. This was equally given to ‘Umar on assumption of office, but rather than turning them to his personal property, he converted the estates to the property of the government, let them out to the people and so becoming a source of revenue generation for the government.¹⁴ When he was asked to move to the official residence of the Caliph, he observed that it was still occupied by the family of his predecessor and so preferred to stay in his personal house until they vacated it.¹⁵

To avoid extravagant spending of the state, ‘Umar ordered that any of his officials should neither use fanciful pen nor write on scrolls or even prolong their messages. He once addressed Abi Bakr bin Muhammad bin Hazm al-Ansari, the Governor of Madinah in a letter to him saying: “In your reply to me, keep your message succinct and to the point, tighten up your lines and only use up one page, as Muslims there is no need of long-worded messages that exhaust the funds of their *Bayt al-Mal*.”¹⁶

‘Umar proved to the world that materialism was a bane to effective leadership and that a leader could provide all necessary amenities for his people if such a leader had the love of his people in mind. ‘Umar II demonstrated his love for welfarism of his people that he ordered distribution of zakat to debtors not minding the possession of such a debtor. To him, a Muslim “should have a house to dwell in, a servant to assist him in his effort, a horse on whose back

¹⁴ M. Al-Khudari Bik, *Muhadaratu tarikhil- Umamil-Islamiyyah – Ad-Dawlatul-Umawiyah*; (Bairut: Darul-Kitabil-cArabi, 2006), 399.

¹⁵ www.islamiccentre.org accessed on 12/9/2015.

¹⁶ As-Sallabi, 667.

he could fight his enemy and furniture in his house.” He therefore ordered Al-Laith to settle the debt of such a debtor from zakat fund.¹⁷

Restoring the Past Glory of ‘Ali and his Lineage

Apart from returning to their rightful owners the properties confiscated by the Umayyads, the sense of justice of ‘Umar made him to restore back the past glory of ‘Ali and his lineage. He restored to the family the property of Fadak that was appropriated by Marwan during the caliphate of ‘Uthman.¹⁸ To give them a sense of belonging, he appointed them to important posts and gave them the confidence of belonging to the family of the Prophet. He once addressed Fatimah bint ‘Ali bin Abi Talib: “O daughter of ‘Ali! By Allah, there is no family on the face of the earth that is more beloved to me than your family. You are more beloved to me than my own family.” He also abolished the long standing Umayyad and Khawarij custom of cursing Ali ibn Abi Talib at the end of Friday sermons and ordered the content of the Qur’anic 16:90 to be recited instead.

Dismissal of Unjust Governors and Commanders

To establish an enviable government that would be cherished by his friends and foes, Umar decided to dismiss some corrupt governors and commanders from his cabinet. He therefore dismissed Khalid bin ar-Rayyan who was the chief security officer of Caliph Sulaiman bin Abdul-Malik and the executor of anyone that his boss ordered him to kill. He therefore replaced him with ‘Amr bin Muhajir al-Ansari. He also dismissed ‘Usamah bin Zayd at-Tanukhi who was in charge of the *Kharaj* (Board of Revenue) in Egypt. The man was accused of brutality and excessive penalization of people; hence he was not only dismissed by ‘Umar but also imprisoned.¹⁹

‘Umar was so careful in his appointment of people into offices that he did not give a position to anyone who did not deserve it. To appoint anyone to work with him, ‘Umar put such a person into a test. And based on this, he decided to appoint or not to appoint the person.

¹⁷ I. Shehita, Shawki, “Limitations on the Use of Zakah Funds in Financing Socioeconomic Infrastructure.” A paper presented at the First Seminar on Management of Zakah in Modern Muslim Society held in Karachi, Pakistan, April 22 – May 2, 1985. 9.

¹⁸ Rahim, 148.

¹⁹ As-Sallabi, 150.

Religious Equality

‘Umar did not discriminate on the basis of religion. He accorded the Christians and Jews who accepted Islam the same treatment he gave to the Muslims. He once declared: “If a Christian, Jew or Zoroastrian among the people of al-Jazirah (Upper Mesopotamia) embraces Islam from today onwards. Then let him share the domain of the Muslims and differentiate the domain that he was previously in, for he is entitled to the same as the Muslims, just as what is upon them is also upon him...”²⁰

Apart from reducing the taxes in favour of the Christians of Najran, Umar also compensated the Church of St. John which was made a mosque during the tenure of Walid by releasing to the Christians of Damascus the right to retain the permanent possession of the Church of St. Thomas which was not theirs by right.²¹

He abolished *jizya* tax for converts to Islam who were former *Dhimmis*, who used to be taxed even after they had converted under other Umayyad rulers. In addition, ‘Umar ruled that any *Dhimmi* (non-Muslim residing in the Muslim state) who had reached old age and could not get anybody to take care of him should be given a stipend from the *Baytul Mal*. He was a lover of non-Muslims to the extent that he used to visit and eat with the People of the Book (the Christians and the Jews).

Lapses in the Nigerian Political Leadership as Bane to Effective Anti-Corruption Jihad

It will amount to colossal waste of space and time if our energy is dissipated on the concept of leadership in this piece. We, however, agree with the assertion that leadership is closely related with power in the Nigerian context, whereas power has the tendency of imposing one’s will upon the behaviour of other persons.²² In the same vein, one agrees with Tukur who identifies leadership values to have included justice and impartiality, ease and kindness, humility and modesty, moderation and asceticism, integrity, honesty and service to community.²³ These qualities seem to be lacking in most of the Nigerian leaders as it would be explicated in this section.

²⁰ As-Sallabi, 162

²¹ Rahim, 148.

²² J.K. Galbraith, *The Anatomy of Power* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984) 480.

²³ M. Tukur, *Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: The Relevance of Values*, (London: HudaHuda/Hodder and Stoughton, 1999), 21-28.

Despite the abundant human and natural resources of Nigeria as a nation, the leadership has not been able to liberate her citizens from abject poverty and unemployment. Soon after the attainment of her independence in 1960, the political situation of Nigeria began to crumble. The spirit of materialism made them to consume the nation's resources and therefore draws its citizens to penury, joblessness and all sorts of criminal tendencies. The alarming rate of corruption at all strata of life of the people made all efforts at making remarkable progress in the country unattainable. This is aptly captured by Keeper when he writes:

It is not exaggeration of the tragic events of the country since independence, to say that all efforts to establish a just and efficient administration have been frustrated by corruption. The evil exists in every facet of our society. You bribe to get your child into a school, you pay to secure a job and you also continue to pay in some cases to retain it. You pay 10 percent of every contract obtained, you dash the tax officer to avoid paying taxes, you pay the hospital doctor and nurse to get proper attention, and you pay the policemen to evade arrest, this catalogue of shame can continue with an end.²⁴

To shed more light on the level of corruption at the ministry level in Nigeria, Oladosu narrated the story of an innocent Nigerian who was awarded a contract to supply certain goods in a Ministry. The man was told by an officer that he did not need to purchase any of the items but to only carry away some cartons in the office and return them after two weeks, with the condition of he would be paid $\frac{1}{3}$ of the total amount of the contract while the remaining $\frac{2}{3}$ would be for the office.²⁵

The seriousness and determination of Muhammadu Buhari's administration to retrieve the looted money of the nation from the few hands of some unpatriotic leaders seem to have been yielding some fruitful results. In just a year of his administration (from May 2015-May 2016), the Buhari administration made cash recoveries from Jonathan's administration totaling seventy eight billion, three hundred and twenty five million, three hundred and fifty four thousand, six hundred and thirty one naira and eighty-two kobo (₦78,325,354,631.82); One

²⁴ D. G keeper, "Systemic Corruption in Nigeria: A Threat to Sustainable Development." Proceedings of the 1st International Technology, Education and Environment Conference (c) African Society for Scientific Research (ASSR) Co-Published By: Human Resource Management Academic Research Society 172.

²⁵ A.G.A.S Oladosu, "Curbing Corrupt Practices Through Religion: The Islamic Approach" in A. Arikewuyo & I. Ahmed (eds) *Curbing Corrupt Practices Through Religion*. (Proceedings of a one-day seminar organised by the Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies (CAILS) in collaboration with the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, Abuja, 2005) 61-78.

hundred and eighty five million, one hundred and nineteen thousand, five hundred and eighty four dollars, sixty one cents (\$185,119,584.61); Three million, five hundred and eight thousand, three hundred and fifty five pounds and 46 pence (3,508,355.46); and Eleven thousand, two hundred and fifty Euros (11,250 Euros). However, it is astonishing that despite these cash recoveries, Nigerians have not felt the impacts in their socio-economic lives. Many state governments find it difficult to pay salaries of their workers, while many workers have been forced out of their jobs by some state governments to reduce the cost of monthly salaries. In addition, Nigerians are experiencing untold hardship due to hike in pump price of oil products which has made prices of food and other materials to rise geometrically.

Another lapse in the political leadership in Nigeria is the way the rule of law is taken by politicians. Raheem observes some lapses in the constitution of the country, namely, those who made the law have their own vested interests while the constitution itself has loopholes which are created to give room for manipulation; those in charge of enforcing the law, or interpreting and applying it, are deeply sunk in materialism and so have little consideration for being accountable to God.²⁶ A demonstration of the lapse in the Nigerian constitution is the immunity clause in the constitution under which many governors hide to perpetrate all sorts of corruption with impunity. The government of the people by the people and for the people popularly called democracy therefore becomes an avenue for political office holders to cheat the electorates soon after they are elected to offices. Mere traffic rules are violated by many politicians, while it becomes extremely difficult for the masses to see them, as they become non-accessible to them. In addition, some state governors who are crying of their inability to pay the minimum wage of their workers and, therefore, call for slashing the salaries, have not deemed it fit to cut down their own monthly salaries and allowances. While those in power looted public funds, they resorted to the poor masses for taxes of different magnitudes all in the name of looking inward to internally generated revenues to substitute for shortfalls in oil prices.

Another serious bane to effective change agenda of President Muhammad Buhari in Nigeria is the outrageous cost of governance particularly the exorbitant salaries of top Nigerian politicians. Before his exit from service as the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria,

²⁶ B.R. Raheem, "Toward Inculcating Islamic Political Ideals in Nigerian Democratic Leadership" in Ade P. Dopamu et.al (eds) *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*, (Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR), 2004) 243-247.

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi raised an alarm on the rate at which the salaries of members of the National Assemblies, namely the Senators and members of the National House of Representatives were draining the purse of the nation as it gulped 25% of the nation's federal budget. This was buttressed by Nwabugo who made a comparison of what lawmakers of developed nations are earning and what those in Nigeria are earning. According to him, while a lawmaker in the United States of America earns \$15,080 (₦2.3 million) per month and \$174,000 per annum, his United Kingdom counterpart earns \$8,686 (₦1.3 million) monthly and about \$64,000 a year. However, in Nigeria, over ₦76 billion is spent annually on salaries, allowances and quarterly payments of federal legislators.²⁷ Not this alone, the nation's Ministers, Ambassadors, Personal Assistants and Special Advisers also have numerous allowances and huge salaries while civil servants are put at a minimum wage of ₦18,000 per month which many state governments could not even afford its payment. By implication, a common Nigerian public worker will spend 1,638 years to collect the annual salary of a Senator.²⁸

A giant stride in the change agenda of President Buhari is his rejection of a proposal to purchase five new bulletproof Mercedes S-600 (V222) cars valued at about ₦400 million. He saw no reason why he should be bought new vehicles when the ones he inherited from his predecessor were still in good shape.²⁹ As if guided by the spirit of 'Umar bn Abdul-Aziz, Buhari, in his wisdom, also decided to sell two jets in the Presidential fleet - a Falcon 7x and Hawker 4000. The sale of the air craft then reduced the number of planes on the presidential fleet to nine and consequently reduced the maintenance budget for the planes.³⁰ This spirit, no doubt, demonstrates the seriousness of the President to his Change Agenda. The question therefore is why has the Change Agenda of the present administration not been fruitful as that of Caliph 'Umar bn Abdul-Aziz? An answer to this is provided in the next paragraph.

From all indications, the nature of democratic governance seems to have been a major stumbling block to achieving the desired change. The system does not allow a serious and determined leader to put all hand on deck to check corruption which has pervaded all spheres

²⁷ Ogechukwu Nwabugo, Latest Outrageous Salaries of Top Nigerian Politicians Revealed in <http://buzznigeria.com> accessed on 19/10/2016.

²⁸ Nwabugo.

²⁹ Wale Odenusi, "Buhari Rejects Purchase of N400m bulletproof cars: in <http://dailypost.ng/2015/07/10> accessed on 19/10/2016.

³⁰ See Emmanuel Asiwe, "Two Nigerian Presidential jets up for sale" at <http://huhuonline.com/hunew/index.php/huhuonline-more-news/> accessed on 20/10/2016

of the nation's life. An attempt to enforce this may lead to impeachment of such a president or governor by the lawmakers. It is equally a system which does not allow only the virtuous ones to dominate the political scene. Therefore both the virtuous and non-virtuous need to pool their resources together to ensure that their party wins and once this is achieved through this means, it becomes impossible for a virtuous leader to deal with corrupt ones in his cabinet, especially those who used their resources to see him emerging victorious in the election. A conglomeration of the virtuous and the corrupt men which constitutes a political party therefore makes it difficult for a virtuous leader to operate virtuously to bring to book the corrupt ones. Just as it is difficult for ash to become charcoal, it is difficult for a serious-minded individual to change the attitude of thousands of people who have become addicted to corrupt practices of various magnitudes.

In addition to the above, democracy as a system of government does not give executive power to the president of the nation to have an overall say on the affairs of the nation, as each state under him are autonomous to a large extent. Not this alone, the legislatures have their own autonomy which at times does not allow the executive to have the final say on issues. Why the President was trying to cut down his administrative expenses, the legislatures were discussing how to purchase official cars that were to gulp billions of naira from the nation's purse. If not for the reactions of Nigerians, over N4 billion could have been spent on purchase of 108 cars for lawmakers. Even with that, thirty-six SUV cars were said to have been bought by the senators at the cost of ₦36.5 million each.³¹

Despite this, it was revealed in November 2016 that the lawmakers insisted on purchase of cars worth N6.3 billion official cars of the lawmakers. Their argument was that they needed the cars for their official assignments which could not be carried out using public transports. This was in addition to ₦7 million (£23,536) and ₦8 million (£26,900) as car loan which they claimed was meant to purchase their personal cars whereas they needed official cars for their oversight functions.³² As if cars were the only problem of the lawmakers, and as if their monthly salaries could not cater for purchasing of cars by the lawmakers to serve the people who voted them in, the Ebonyi State government purchased twenty-two Toyota Land Cruisers

³¹ ³³ Henry Umoru, "We bought only 36 cars, not 108 – Senators" in www.vanguardng.com/2016/04/bought-36-cars/ accessed on 21/10/2016.

³² See www.nigeriawatch.com/news/8503 accessed on 21/10/2016.

which gulped ₦1.27 billion from the cover of the government for the state's lawmakers. The governor was courageous to have declared:

I was the person who put myself under pressure to go about the loan to purchase these cars and not the lawmakers. No matter how hungry we are, the House of Assembly remains the pride of a state. If they are called for meeting with lawmakers from other states, they must not alight from taxis.³³

The leaders'- centered welfare packages of the politicians could also be appreciated in the ₦200 million and ₦100 million worth housing projects approved as take-home gifts or entitlement by the lawmakers of Edo State for the immediate past governor and deputy governor of the state respectively. It is disheartening that most of the states which owe several months' salaries of their workers and several years of pensions of their retired workers could design fantastic salaries for their ex-governors who served for just four or eight years in addition to other take-home gifts. Most of such ex-governors are still serving at Senate or House of Representative levels and they still enjoy all the benefits of serving officers. In such a case, the wealth of the nation is being unjustly diverted to the purse of the leaders at the detriments of the workers and provision of essential amenities for the populace.

In addition to the above, inadequate planning on the part of the government is a bane to effective governance. This explains why those in authority in Nigeria have wasted the resources of the nation on frivolous projects that have no direct relevance to the masses. Rather than seeing the discovery of oil as an additional blessing for the nation, the opportunity was misused and misappropriated that the nation embarked on useless projects and paid no attention to other resources leaving them to rot away. One tends to ask the plan of the federal government on agriculture which is now seen as an alternative source of income for the nation. Importation of rice and other essential commodities have been banned by the Buhari administration and these are having untold hardship on the masses. But the question is what provision has the government made to substitute the commodities? How much quantity and quality of rice could be produced locally to alleviate the sufferings of the masses?

³³ See www.nigeriawatch.com/news/8503 accessed on 21/10/2016.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the above discussion so far, it can be conveniently said that all hope is not lost in Nigeria if the masses in Nigeria can do away with politics of bitterness and take to voting in candidates who are God conscious and not those moneybags who buy the conscience of the electorates with their money. In the same vein, politicians who don't have good records during their service at lower level of government should not be allowed to contest, talk less of winning election at higher level.

Furthermore, Government should be people oriented and not leaders' oriented. This could be done by bridging the wide gap between the political office holders and the masses. Political offices should be made less attractive by cutting down the benefits attached to them.

Corruption can be checked by diversification of the nation's resources. This will allow young graduates to have employment opportunities and so will not easily succumb to temptation of corruption. In the same vein, palliative measures should be made to alleviate the suffering of the masses. In fact, historical figures like 'Umar bn 'Abdul-Aziz should be taught in schools to serve as models for future leaders.

Finally, democracy as it is being practised in Nigeria is not the best form of government, as it hardly solves the nation's problem and hardly could the system fight corruption which is the greatest bane to the nation's development. A serious-minded leader can easily be retrenched by corrupt members of the parliaments who may feel threatened by the anti-corruption *jihād* of such a leader. One, based on this, realises that there should be check and balance in the government, but there should be decorum in the relationship between the lawmakers and the executive arms of the government. Corruption could be effectively fought only when the executives and the legislatives are on the same page in fighting it.