

EXPLORING ISLAMIC POLITICAL VALUES FOR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION AND INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

With the coming of politics before Nigeria got her independence, inter-ethnic rivalry was generated, Selfishness, change in attitude, exploitation of ethno-cultural differences and the greed for leadership or political victory threatened national unity at the upper level. The leaders were at war with one another. This struggle between one faction and another continued until after Nigeria got her independence in 1960. But, the struggle resumed after independence. Which led to political tension, crisis and chaos. The situation has become aggravated and uptill the present moment Nigeria is yet to be free from one political problem or the other, threatening her unity. Thus, the paper examines these political problems and highlights some Islamic political values such as liberty, justice and accountability, among others, which if implemented will help tremendously in political reconciliation and integration In Nigeria such as liberty, justice and accountability among others.

Introduction

Imperialism and its agents made the maximum effort to establish the idea that Islam has nothing to do with politics or state. This forced agents of the West to attempt to stop and prevent that dawn from coming, or the sun from rising, and force the cycle of history back again to the age of imperialism, to raise their voices again with "No Politics in Religion , and No Religion in Politics!". However, Islam governs the total life with its legislation and guidance straight from birth until death. It applies before birth and after death as there are legal rules concerning the fetus and the dead as well. Across his life, Islam directs the Muslim in his personal, family, social, and political life, starting with manners for relieving oneself and ending with topics of the caliphate, war and peace relationships.

The Islam that was revealed in the Glorious Qur'an and *Sunnah*, known to the whole *Ummah*, the early Muslims and their followers, is an integrated one that defies

and rejects partitioning. It is the spiritual Islam, moral, ideological, educational, social, economic and political Islam. It is all these, because it has in all these fields, objectives, rules and direction as well (AL-Qaradawi, 1998).

Conceptualization

Shafiris (1988:413) sees the word 'Political' as the processes by which people gain and use power in social settings, whether the setting is the city, a factory or office, or the family. While defining value Otonti Nduka (2006:197) opines that the term value may be used to refer to desires, interests, goals, ideals, approvals/disapprovals, preferences and standards. Quoting Clive Bell, he further posited that a sense of values and the enthronement of reason are the present qualities of high civilization. Importantly, in civilized societies; for instance, moral values and beliefs are generally accorded a higher order of importance, at least in theory, than others,

since to act on moral principles is to act on principles one considers to be of over-riding importance.

Integration on the other hand refers to equal access for all. It is the process of opening a group, community, place or organisation to all, regardless of race ethnicity and social class. While reconciliation is ending of conflict or renewing of friendly relationship between disputing people or groups.

Islam is a religion which involves conscious and total submission to the wills of Allah and also requires its followers to maintain peace with their creator, and among themselves. Islam as a religion has also generated a complex phenomenon comprising such key elements of human existence as culture, law, politics, intellectuality traditional values etc. (Umar,1989)

Nigeria in Retrospect

Nigeria, the most populous country on the African continent, came into being in its present form in 1914 when the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated by Sir Frederick Lugard (Crowder, 1978).

Sixteen years earlier, Flora Shaw, who later married Lugard, first suggested in an article that the several British protectorates on the Niger be known collectively as Nigeria. On 1st October 1960, despite many difficulties focusing mainly on the differences among its various component groups, Nigeria became a sovereign federation and has survived despite a protracted (conflict) civil war (Crowder, 1978).

With the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by the British Government in 1914, Nigeria came into being for administrative convenience divided between a Muslim North and

Christian South. This development create our present framework. Nigeria today is a multi-ethnic society that consists of about 300 ethnic groups with diverse cultural background and religious beliefs. There is no doubt that Nigeria is a colonial creation. Meziobi contented that from 1947, the multi-ethnic and religious composition of Nigeria has continued to be the bane of Nigeria's national unity and development. He further stressed that whatever is done or anticipated in Nigeria, particularly at government level has ethnic/ religious undertone.

Many opinion leaders see the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates by Lord Fredrick Lugard as a big blunder on the part of the colonial masters for the fact that both the Southern and the Northern people are not compatible in terms of cultural background and religious beliefs (Okediji, 2006).

Nigeria in recent times has suffered from a large number of conflicts. The conflicts are of different types, intensity and duration. They include communal conflicts, political conflicts, economic conflicts and religious conflicts among others (Oloruntimehin, 2002).

Some Challenges Facing Nigeria Polity

There is no doubt that in the period of transition from military to civil rule, and in the current civilian to civilian transition, political space has opened up, largely on account of spirited and strenuous struggles conducted by popular forces in the civil society. But, the socio-economic conditions of that majority of the people have not changed for the better. The gap in the income inequalities has widened and the perceptions of group marginalization have intensified. Thus, the liberalized atmosphere and opened up political space are being effectively

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utilized to articulate grievances and contest perceptions of marginalization at both the individual and group levels.

Politicians strive to find relevance in the new political dispensation by championing and leading ethno-religious demands and protests and by manipulating ethno-religious, regional and communal identities. The masses, especially in urban areas, take out their anger with the hopeless socio-economic situation on their well-to-do neighbours in the settler community. Youth's anger arising from unfulfilled promises, shattered expectations, unemployment and poverty, find expression, often in the violent ethno-religious conflict, or in violent protests and criminal activities, such as armed robbery, cultism extortion and fraud. The atmosphere becomes perpetually tensed charged, even over-hearted and characterized by violence (Jega, 2007).

Corroborating the submission above, (Nduka, 2006) affirms it that should anyone be tempted to think that developmentally speaking, our political fortunes have assumed an upward trajectory since the inception of the third republic in 1999, he or she should study the local and international reports and judicial pronouncements on the rigging of the 2003 and 2004 General Elections, examining whether by the letter and spirit of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria we are operating a Federal or Unitary form of government and finally study recent comments by the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Muhammed Uwais, on the non-observance of court rulings by the executive arm of government, most especially the Presidency.

Hopefully, many believed that democracy was going to cure immediately all of Nigeria's ills, bring about security and stability, and re-launch the nation on the path of sustainability and socio-economic

developments, that will also correct some of the mistakes of 1914, which were compounded by reckless military rulers and which have further complicated the much talk about national question. Surprisingly, the hope is dashed instead of satisfying the yearning and aspirations of Nigerians, the past thirteen years of civil rule have been characterized by heightened incidence of poverty, ethno-religious conflicts and generalized insecurity, all of which serve as legitimate grounds for raising many pertinent questions.

Islamic Concept of Politics

Politics in Islamic ideology means a process of running, reforming or restructuring society through the institution of *'Amr* (command) and *Nahy* (prohibition.). Politics is therefore a process through which a group in the society is vested with the power and authority of command by establishing a just social order within an ideological frame of reference. It follows therefore that the substance politics as an Islamic concept hinges on all those things that constitute power and authority and its usage in the society with the limits set by the fact that There is no other god but Allah - the concept of Allah exclusive authority and ownership.

Politics in Islam also means a revolutionary process of ensuring complete eradication of *Zulm* (tyranny) and establishment of *Adl* (justice) by permanent liberation of man from tyranny, oppression, exploitation and subjugation by the fellow man both of whom are created by Allah. Politics also means the relationship of man with the state and man to man. (Al-Qaradawi, 1998:125-130).

The Islamic concept of sovereignty is simple. Allah is the creator of the universe. He is its real sustainer and ruler. It is His will that prevails in the cosmos all round. (Dauda

1997:22). The holy Qur'an throws more light on the issue by saying that sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. He is the omnipotent, the Qur'an says:

Surely, thy Lord is Doer of what He intends, Q 11: 10

He cannot be questioned as to what He does, Q21:23

Judgment is only Allah, Q12:40

He is Allah, besides whom there is no god, the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Grantor of Security, the Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of Greatness.(Q59:23).

Conversely, in modern political terminology, sovereignty means the highest power without limit for a ruler or over lordship. A sovereignty has the total right to enforce orders on all subjects of the state and the subjects are under an absolute obligation to obey them be it willingly or unwillingly. A situation where orders based on injustices are to be enforced lead to chaos and arson.

In the Nigeria context and as early discussed, the core political values have been debased. The polity has not promoted cohesion, love and integration. It has further fragmented the seemingly unity. Meanwhile, the democracy which the holy prophet and the four orthodox caliphs established is different in structure and outlook from that of the ancient Athenians, democracy which is based purely on human reason. It blends harmoniously the material and spiritual life of man for the spiritual and mortal elevation of mankind and for lasting happiness in this world and the hereafter.

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There is no doubt that democratic consolidation and sustainability in Nigeria are being threatened through ethno-religious, socio-political, socio-religious and religio-political conflicts and

problems. Thus, these Islamic political values are recommended to engender peace and unity in Nigeria.

Sovereignty: The concept of human sovereignty is completely absent in Islamic polity. "Authority belongs to Allah alone(Q12:40) (Q2:107).As a vice gerent of Allah, man has to conduct the affairs of the state as follows:

- i) That, all are equal before God
- ii) That, the exercise of power is a trust
- iii) That, power has to be exercised in accordance with the commandments of Allah and in His name;
- Iv) *That, every one vested with power is accountable for his actions.*

Liberty: In Islam there is no room for kingship dictatorship. There is close relationship between the ruler and the ruled. Everyone is free within the limits of Divine Law. Freedom of expression and Liberty of conscience are the corner-stones of Islamic polity and an ordinary citizen may differ from opinion of the highest authority.

Justice: Islam stands for a just society and Qur'an has laid the greatest emphasis on justice, equity and fair dealing.

Fraternity: In *Suratul Hujirat*, the Qur'an lays great stress, "The believers are surely brothers" (49:10), the principle of egalitarianism is the foundation of Islamic body politic and its great strength. It is on this principle that the *Muhajir* and *Ansar*were united in a bound at Madina which was even stronger than blood relationship and enabled the Muslims to become a powerful nation.

Accountability: Authority or power to rule according to Islam is a trust –*Amanah*–of the people and not the birth right of anyone. The concept of trust brings in automatically the concept of accountability because a trustee appointed by the people has to render account to those by whom he is appointed (Ahmad, 1989).

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Interest of All: Islam emphasizes it that leaders should be bound to safeguard the interest of all, of the poor as of the rich and of minorities as of the majority community, this can be made possible only by promoting right conduct and suppressing injustice and corruption. This was the guiding principles of administration at the time of the prophet and the first four *Khalifas*.

Consultation (*Shura*): It is necessary to add here that the discretion of a ruler is subject to the condition of consultation. It is one of the attributes of Muslims that their affairs are settled by mutual consultation (Q42:38).

In surah 3:159, the prophet is particularly asked to seek counsel in all affairs, but on coming to a decision to rely on God. A concrete evidence can be drawn from the life of holy Prophet Muhammad in Madinah when he used his political acumen to integrate *Muhajirun* and *Ansar* on one hand together with *Al-Aws* and *al-Khazraj*.

Muhammad's thought was guided by one final objective, namely, the guarantee of freedom of religion and thought. It was for the sake of this freedom alone that fighting was permitted; also no injustice should befall anyone because of his faith or opinion.

The Muslims were either *Muhajirun* or *Ansar*; the unbelievers belonged to either *al-Aws* or *AL-Khazraj* and were committed to a long history of mutual hostility. As for the Muslims, Muhammad feared that, despite the strongest ties with which the new religion had bound them together, the old hatred and prejudice might some day break out a new between them. The unbelievers from *Aws* or *al-Khazraj*, were exhausted by the previous wars; they found themselves situated in the new configuration of society, between the Jews and the Muslims.

Meanwhile, Muhammad's great concern was to bring to his new home town (Madinah) a political and organizational unity hitherto unknown to *Hijaz*, though not to ancient Yaman. The first idea to occur to

him was that of reorganizing Muslim ranks so as to consolidate their unity and wipe out every possibility of resurgence of division and hostility. He asked the Muslims to fraternize with one another for the sake of God and to bind themselves together in pairs. Despite the *Muhajirun's* rapid increase in number, following the emigration of the Prophet, every one of them was now bound to a member of *al-Ansar* giving in a bound of mutual assistance. The Prophet's proclamation in this regard transferred that bound into one of blood and real fraternity. A new, genuine brotherhood arose which forged the Muslim ranks into an indivisible unity (Haykal, 1982).

After the demise of the holy Prophet Muhammad, Caliph 'Umar was the pioneer of modern civilization to form a state based upon the Islamic democratic system, the system which was incorporated in the West as late as 19th and 20th centuries. He was the greatest democratic administrator whose example is unparalleled not only in the history of Islam, but also in the history of modern civilization.

The constitution of Islamic caliphate during the time of caliph "Umar was based entirely on the Islamic democratic system. All matters were decided after consultation with '*shura*', - 'Umar had declared on various occasions that he should be obeyed as long as he was obeying Allah and Holy Prophet Muhammad. (Khan n.d,33-34). In his administration, 'Umar guaranteed freedom of opinion, divided Islamic state into various provinces, established judicial sections department of Education, police, public treasury, defense ministry and expansion of Islamic cities.

Conclusion

All the aforementioned Islamic political values were put into practice by the holy Prophet Muhammad. He received direct inspiration and revelation from God in his day to day activities on matters that

concern every aspect of life as a prophet and the head of state to the new city -state of Madinah. Within few years, he set up a model Islamic state based on morality, justice, equity, ethics, brotherhood and social cohesion. He practicalised the reality of Islam and demonstrated what type of society Islam wants to build and what type of ways of life and character it wants from its adherents.

Recommendations

This paper, therefore recommends that politics must be based on truth, honesty and justice while fraud, falsehood and injustice must not be tolerated for any reason

whatsoever. Human rights must not be violated and oppression and tyranny must not be permitted. Islamic brotherhood and fraternity must be promoted by the state. The leader and all his representatives must administer with God's instruction and the council elected by the people must be made up of learned men to legislate within the limits prescribed by the *Shari'ah*. Principle of accountability must be maintained. Equally, any corrupt leader must be prosecuted. Importantly, public opinion must be sought by the government on matters affecting the entire citizenry. If all these are faithfully implemented, Nigeria will be properly reconciled and integrated.

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