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## **The application of Islamic concept of accountability in leadership: A means for sustainable development in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The Islamic political principles are used as benchmark for gauging good governance, these are sovereignty, justice equality before the law and most importantly accountability which formed the focus of this paper. The concept of accountability in Islamic Political Precepts was examined with the adoption of both historical and analytical methods. The historical methods helps in reviewing Prophet Muhammad's narrative, the paper while adopting analytical method examines how adherence to accountability as one of the Islamic Political Principles will serve as panacea to leadership menace, it will also enhance sustainable development and our nation Nigeria will be in peace and harmony. Through the findings, it was discovered that despite the guided constitution and the Divine Injunctions laid down for the leaders, there are shortcomings in their government. The study concluded that accountability is a panacea to good governance and its implementation will result in the expected goals which is justice, and sustainable development.

**Keywords:** islam, leadership, accountability, justice, sustainable development

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### **Introduction**

Nigeria, classified as being the Giant of Africa bears the rate abstractly due to negligence of accountability in governance from our leaders and this constituted to its rate to remain underdeveloped. The objective of most of the leaders is to achieve the mandate goals, but failed to believe that no one can attain any post without the knowledge of the divine (Allah) and any leader who fail to have it at the back of his mind that believing in sovereignty and implementation of accountability is the best option for a leader to descend well.

There are political principles in Islam guided a leader to succeed in the governance. These include: sovereignty of Allah, justice, equality. As the Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) stated it that everyone is a leader in one way or the other and shall be questioned to account for his or her deeds (Doi 88). It also stated in the Glorious Qur'an that:

So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it (Qur'an, Surat Az-Zalzala 99:7-8) <sup>[15]</sup>.

The justice Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) plays and accountability style he adopts among Muslims, Christians and the Jews in Madinah made his reign to succeed and everyone live in peace and harmony; it also enhanced orderliness, stability and great development in the state. if the Prophet's style is followed accordingly as Allah the Almighty have mentioned him as an exemplary leader worthy of emulation, Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an;

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the

Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often (Qur'an, Surat al-Ahzaab 33:21) <sup>[15]</sup>.

If our leaders can be accountability for their deeds and accept any criticism there will be growth and the sustainable development clamoring for shall be attained. It is against this background that this paper looks at the broad definition of leadership and accountability from both Western and Islamic perspectives, Prophet Muhammad's implementation of accountability, leaders and their shortcomings, and the way forward towards enhancement of sustainable development hindered by negligence of accountability in leadership.

### **Notion of leadership**

Many attempts have been made to define leadership as a concept. Trevisani defines leadership as holistic spectrum that can arise from higher level of physical power, need to display power and control others from superiority, ability to generate fear or group protector (Trevisani 2017) <sup>[13]</sup>. Similarly, Akanni in his own definition defines leadership as an act that causes others to act or respond in sheared direction, the principle dynamic force that motivates and co-ordinates the organization in accomplishment off its objective and act of influencing people by persuasion or example to follow a line of action (Akanni 2010-1) <sup>[14]</sup>. Samuwilu, defines leadership as a process whereby a person influences individuals and groups within an organization (Samuwilu 2016) <sup>[8]</sup>. Also Sam in his own view defines leadership as passionate work, a responsibility all about integrity (Sam 2017) <sup>[26]</sup>

### **Leadership in Islam**

Leadership in Islamic view is a sacred position that can solve the

problem of humanity and guide them to the eternal betterment of here and hereafter. Leadership in Islam is guiding the followers and the humanity from the brink of destruction to the way of Allah living preference on human welfare. Islam possesses Leadership as a psychological contract between a leader and his follower to treat the objects fairly and with justice. The focus of leadership in Islam is on doing well. The priority of leader in Islamic realm is accountability that will be at the back of his mind that at the end of his reign or life, he will surely report back to the Supreme Being (Allah). The Noble Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) even referred to a leader as servant of his object (in caring for their welfare and treating them with justice) and as a shepherd that would be asked to account on the Day of Judgment on how he directs the flocks (Doi 1982)<sup>[3]</sup>

### Model leader

Leadership is a great quality of human nature. Every organization or group of people need a good leader in order to gain the desired success. All leaders supposed to be exemplary and envious ones. Leaders should lead aright; have a listening ears and choose a life of accountability (Fuad 2017)<sup>[23]</sup>. Allah the Almighty says about Prophet Muhammad as of the best leader worth emulated.

There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often (Qur'an, Surat al-Ahzaab 33:21)<sup>[15]</sup>.

As a social being each and man has to lead his life through a mutual relationship with others, no one succeeds in isolation. Islam gives detailed principles guideline and direction to lead in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an;

So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him] (Qur'an, Surat Aal-Imran 3:159).

When the Prophet migrated to Madina he was a political leader of a state government by the precepts of Islam, which demanded that clear laws of governance be laid out to ensure harmony and stability in a society which once had been distressed by decades of war, one which must ensure that the peaceful co-existence of Muslims, Jews, Christians and Polytheists (Aliyu 66).

Balqis the Queen of Saba as told in the (Glorious Qur'an Surat An-Naml, verses 32-44) was a woman who led her people well, just and administered them with intelligence and wisdom saving her people from a war that was destructive and made decision by 'Shura' consulting them. Alas, the story ended with the acceptance of Islam. She led her people towards the goodness of the world and the hereafter. Leaders like her are much more capable and qualified also deserved to be emulated with the political acumen and wise administration (Al-Haqq 2011)<sup>[20]</sup>. Leading by example is for a leader to be a visioner that will bear the objects' challenges, we need good leaders not only managers (Njokwu 2017)<sup>[27]</sup>.

### Conception of accountability

In leadership roles, accountability is the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for action products, decision, and policies including the administration, governance and implementation with the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences (Wiki 2017)<sup>[13]</sup> Accountability is a responsibility for what someone do and acceptance of criticism (Pearson 2010)<sup>[29]</sup>

### Accountability in Islam (Mas'uliyah)

Accountability means a mechanism based in which public officers are checked with a view to preventing them from misappropriating the resources put under their care. On the Day of judgement all people entrusted with one responsibility or the other will be called to account for their stewardship by Allah.

Then We will surely question those to whom [a message] was sent, and we will surely question the messengers. Then we will surely relate [their deeds] to them with knowledge, and We were not [at all] absent (Qur'an, Surat Al-A'raaf 7:6-7).

The fact that the use of the senses (eyes, ear, mouth) given to man will be accounted for, makes accountability easy, Allah says; And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned (Qur'an, Surat Al-Israa 17:36).

The concept of accountability is very important in Islam that leaders who believe in the Day of Judgement as one of the six articles of faith and control to the Islamic concept of accountability will be conscious of Allah in all aspect of their life knowing that they will be asked about their decision (Wiki 2012)<sup>[30]</sup>. The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said it in his tradition that we are all shepherd and would be ask to account on the Day of Judgement for our flocks (Doi 1982)<sup>[3]</sup> A Muslim leader is not appointed as a tyrant over his people but as a guardian responsible for the welfare: He will be called to account on the Day of Judgement for how he discharged that responsibility. According to Abu Sa'id, the Prophet said.

Verily, the most beloved in the sight of Allah on the Day of resurrection, and the nearest to Allah is respect of seat will be the just leader; and verily the most hated of men in the sight of Allah on the Day of resurrection and the most severely punished, and the furthest from Him in respect of seat, will be the tyrannical leader (Tirmidhi)

Almighty Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an;

And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful (Qur'an, Surat Al-An'An'aam 6:156).

Therefore a Muslim ruler or leader should fully conscious that he is undergoing a trial and that his power for good and evil is being monitored and recorded against the day when he will account before his sovereign Lord for how he exercised that power.

### **Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in Madinah**

Going through the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), leadership duties were performed by him when he participated in the building of the Madinah Mosque. He was reported to have said: The leader of the community is their servant (Prophetic Tradition). On a just ruler (leader), the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was quoted saying:

The just will be placed in columns of light in the presence of Allah. They will be those who act justly in the decision, their families and affairs committed to them (Khan 261).

Origin of Islam as political movement are to be found in the life and times of Islam's Prophet (Muhammad and his successors. In 622 CE, in recognition of his claims to Prophet-hood Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was invited to rule the city of Madinah. At the time the local Arab tribes Aus and Khazraj dominated the city and were in constant conflict. Madinans saw in Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) an impartial outsider who could resolve the conflict. Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and his followers thus moved to Madinah, where he drafted the Medinah Charter. This documents made him the ruler and recognized him as the Prophet of Allah. The laws he established during his rule, based on the revelation of the Qur'an and doing of Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) (*Sunnah*) are considered by Muslims as Shari'ah or Islamic law (which took cognizance of accountability as important aspect of Islamic political principles). Muhammad gained a widespread following and his rule expanded and spread through the Arabian Peninsula through a combination of diplomacy and military constants (Wiki 2015)<sup>[18]</sup>

### **Leaders and their Deficiency**

It is not true that those who enter the politics have gone to promote the interest of people, but rather, they were in to promote their individual selfish interest. This is the more reason why they have not been able to achieve anything successfully. Even Muslims among them have not been able to achieve anything for Islam. The argument that it is only by getting involved in the secular politics that change can be effected is it is apologetic and defeatist. There is no precedence in history where the Muslims have been able to effect any change in secular politics by joining it. Therefore, any Islamic change have taken root in Islamic ideology (where accountability) would be implemented) and coordinated by Islamic activities as their priority). This should be our focus. The question now arise that if we are not to participate in the secular politics that goes on in the country (where justice and fair play is lacked), what then shall be our role? The answer to this poser is simple. Our role should be the role of the Prophets who are sent for change. The status quo from that of *kufri* (unbelief) to Islam (Alhaqq 2011)<sup>[20]</sup>.

Nigeria, really has never had it so bad. Everything appears to be in the negative education, health, communication, housing, employment and above all governance because leaders are not living the life of accountability. Where do we go from here? This is the apparent question on the life of most Nigerians as a reaction

to the seeming unending situation they have found themselves where justice and fair play has lost from the leaders (Bameyi 2014)<sup>[2]</sup>.

Aside from religious conflicts, it is worthy to examine other social ills constituting menace to national security and development. Gabriel asserts that: The political climate and economic institution save connected with myriads of social evils such as maladministration, injustice, corruption gerrymandering, lack of accountability and improper political education on the part of electorates and political appointments (Gabriel 704). On a documentary program (NTA TUESDAY LIVE) Tim Adepoju viewed that: Many things wrong with our leadership style, looking at the way Western world do is different with us (Tim 2017).

Apparently, in the western world their leaders are ready to accept criticism and ready to analyses their stewardship. The story is different Nigeria because our leaders are not ready to give any room for justice and fair play and it is constituting a setback for sustainable development. Their aim is "after all, if I have achieved my selfish goals from any leadership style of injustice, there is no need for second or third term, it is the dull student that repeat a class twice or thrice" even some of them control us during their first term luring us to vote for them for second term where they will show us their other side. Cyril Stober, the anchor of the documentary program mentioned that: The leaders failed because there is social injustice like people believed that when they committed certain crime or offence they have their people on top to wave their cases and punish the innocent people (Cyril Stober).

Olatunji Ololade is right when he said: Talk is cheap really and Nigerians love to talk a good game. That is why everyone literate, semi-literate and illiterate, display flawless capacities to decipher and summarize the political and socio-economic problems afflicting Nigeria, just for the fun of it for the benefit of applause (Olatunji, 2016). Bye and large, to be candid, deficiency of most of our leaders emanated from their negligence of accountability. They bark but not bite justly. They bite more than what they can chew in the name of campaign and when they get to the throne, they forget that they are like a shop-keeper who will later account for the sales to his master.

### **Nigeria and Sustainable Development: A Lesson**

Sustainable development is development which meets present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs (WCED 1987). According to Coomer (1979), sustainable society is one that lives within the self-perpetuating limits of its environment. That society recognizes the limits of growth and looks for alternative ways of growing. It focuses on improving the quality of life of the earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. (IISD, 2007).

By this, one would understand that there is no agreed definition of 'sustainable development'. For, it is an emerging concept attempting to assimilate the dynamism of a process of change that cannot ignore local concerns, needs, and interests. Being relatively new, it *evolves* as we learn to grasp its wider implications for different aspects of our lives. The key question here is: what it is that we want to sustain. One comes across three broad answers to the question in the literature.

According to Zubair Hasan, (2006) Sustainability implies:

1. Maintaining the long-run rate of economic growth.
2. Achieving inter-generational equity in the use of the natural resources.
3. Restricting as far as possible the increase in pollution for maintaining the present quality of environment.

Therefore, the importance of sustainable development is to consider to the future generation without compromising the ability of their needs. Hence, resources must be preserved and protected from pollution, waste, and exploitation in order to pass it on in good shape to the next generation (UPEACE, 2012).

### Islam and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is not a new concept to Muslims. The *Qur'an* and the *Hadith* provide the framework for the spiritual and physical welfare of humanity. There are over five hundred verses in the *Qur'an* giving Muslims guidance on matters relating to the environment and how to deal with it, and there are numerous examples from the Prophet Mohammed's life (PBUH) and his sayings, which provide a model for justice and equity (Hassan and Cajee, 2002) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Sustainable development from an Islamic perspective is a development that seeks to establish a balance between the environment, economy and social dimensions. It means the balanced of consumer welfare, economic efficiency, achievement of ecological balance in the framework of evolutionary knowledge-based, and socially interactive model defining the social justice, (Aburounia and Sexton, ND).

Sustainable development may also be seen from an Islamic perspective, as a multi-dimensional process that seeks to strike a balance between economic and social development on one side, and the environment on the other. It seeks for humans to use resources in the best possible way, accounting for the environment upon which those resources rely (Nouh, 2012) <sup>[7]</sup>.

The goals of sustainable development are along the lines of Islamic goals, which call for avoiding waste and the depletion of resources, environmental pollution, and promoting reforms and rationalization of natural resources.

However, from the Islamic view of points, sustainable development is seen human as a representative of Allah, The Almighty on the earth and provided with abundant resources to benefit himself without harming and being selfish in monopolizing them (Mehri, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>. This has now rooted and becomes the environmental attitude which has brought modern civilization to the brink of disaster. Many have, in one way or the other, are damaging the environment to serve their capricious interest by risking the interest of the future generation all in the name of science and technology. It is quite evident, that the depletion of natural resources and the deterioration of human-environment have let out technological change and is now unable to control the unruly spirit. Human Beings are Allah's favourite creation which has mind to think. In Islam, the interaction of human environment is directed by nation of human Being as *Khulafa* on the earth purposely with full of responsibility.

In Islam therefore, humanity are representatives of Allah on Earth (*Khulifa*), they are mere managers and not owners, beneficiaries and not disposers and destroyers. Islamic lifestyle means living in peace and harmony with all creatures, and being active in promoting harmony among individuals and social groups and the

environment and to establish social justice in order to ensure sustainable development (Mehri, 2016) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### The Need for Islamic Doctrines

When things are not right then, we need a change. When certain style of government is not meeting the demand of the subjects then a change is needed. When accountability is not taken cognizance of in a leadership then a change is needed, when accountability, justice, fair play are not taken as important tools to utilization of the wealth of the society towards a sustainable development of a nation, then there is need for Islamic principles, the principles that recognizes and concerns itself with;

1. The sovereignty of Allah as the sole power behind the system. Human being who rule in the system are His agents only.
2. The law of the Shari'ah as the only law working of application in the state in all its fact. Take the aspect of breastfeeding and weaning of the child for instance it was until Nigeria get back to emulate the Islamic style of breastfeeding and weaning of the child (where they introduced family planning, which Islam had already stipulated that things can be alright.
3. The purpose of the system is to establish the religion of Allah and maintain it.
4. Therefore, whatever is done in the system must reflect the wish of Allah whether in the socio-political or economic life of the citizens.

Muttagi Ismail (2013) Opines that, it seems that Allah has left it up to us to choose our leader in whatever way best suits the needs and customs of our current situation. However, the constitution is not a moral document, it is not a Qur'an or Bible. It does not dictate the relationship between people. It only dictates the relationship between the relationship between the government and the people. So if the people want to make something that was immoral and illegal before, moral and legal today (for example homosexuality) they simply choose the politicians who will do that and there is nothing in the constitution to block that from happening. In an Islamic nation, there is an easy way to prevent our morals from decaying in the same fashion. Simply make sure the document that governs the nation dictates morality as well as politics. Make the Glorious Qur'an your constitution.

The significance of Allah's sovereignty on the Islamic political system is that it makes the system;

1. An Islamic conscious person that put Allah at the forefront of whatever is done in the state.
2. Checks the arrogance of man so that he does not become a dictator and make the state his own personal property.
3. Free of enslavement of man by man through whatever means. All people are given equal opportunity.
4. Take care of the indigent, the needy and the orphan as against what obtains in a secular state like Nigeria where such class of citizen are left unattended to by the state.
5. Maintain justice is all aspects of life such as in social relations, economics pursuit, political quest and educational opportunities (Academia 2015) <sup>[31]</sup>.

Obviously, with this system of leadership (i.e. Islamic State) the concept of accountability will not be left out unutilized. With the

sole aim that (all things be actualized, because there will be report of stewardship to the Sole Being (Allah). This type of system is the best a nation can apply that will enhance justice, fair play, peace and sustainable development.

Lastly in a twist as a failure, if the Islamic principles is rejected or absent;

- The nation is doomed as a failure
- There will be insecurity, fraud and social decadence.
- There will be injustice and the weak will be oppressed.

### Way Forward to Sustainable Development

Justice and human brotherhood; are the bases of equal treatment and respect for individual, irrespective of their race, colour, age, sex or nationality. Equally importance as the requirement of peace and the well-being of human are security of life, property and honor individual freedom, education social solidarity, minimization of crime, and tension long term development of a society cannot be sustained if these requirements are missing in the society. (Chapra 2016)<sup>[15]</sup>.

The well-being of all the people living on earth irrespective of their race, colour, age, sex or nationality is the primary good of religion of Islam (Nasir 21). This paper provide the following as possible way forward to the leaders and entire masses of Nigeria to apply accountability in Islamic accordance and see how the justice and sustainable development we clamour for can be attained.

1. The problem we have today with our leaders arise from the absence of justice and fair play. Xenophobia attack pugnacity, political imbroglio, economic entanglement, socio-religious tension and the likes would be thing of the past if leaders should adopt the Islamic Political Principles, the components of sovereignty of Allah, living life of accountability, justice and equality before the law, believing in culture of value in taking welfare priority and true love for others as the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: You are not a true believer until you want for other fellow being exactly what you want for yourself. (Doi 96)
2. Nigeria just above 50years and have fought a civil war. We must understand that Nigeria cannot survive another civil war. Politician should not see the traditional institution as a threat but they should work with it to develop the country (Abubakr II)). Leaders should always lead exemplary life style worthy of emulation by their subject.
3. Leaders should accept criticism: "I don't see criticism as anything and I am not bothered whenever I am being criticized by the public. I know that some people would love me, so I do not let that disturb me. Trust me the criticism only makes me a better person, so when people say negative things about me, it makes me understand that I cannot be right every time. I thank Allah that I am now getting some things right" (Toyin 25). Though this assertion by Toyin, we can conclude that when our leaders accept criticism and listen to people to put things in place, everything will be all right.
4. Only through total submission to the Swill of Allah and by obedience to His law which Islamic religion connotes can one achieve true peace and enjoy lasting purity. What caused social injustice is gender discrimination. And emblem of

peace to sustain development in a nation is excellence leadership through implementation of accountability as decreed by Islamic political principles.

Philippines provide an instructive scenario for Nigeria during the era of President Marcos in the 70s through the 80s the President and his wife Imelda were both ruling at the same time. Madam and Oga could not be distinguished who actually was in charge. Then came this cleric known as cardinal sin of the Philippines Catholic Church. He never wanted the spoils of officer nor had a soft spot for President and Madam Marcos. He led the people's anti-government peaceful protest while other clerics believed he was embarking on a suicide mission and they chose to stay back and enjoy the cosy environment of their abode. Allah helping Marcos fled the country and a new era o be employed by all and sundry began in Philippines with Madam Aquino, the widow of the opposition leader, Benigno Aquino given the nod by the people to steer the affairs of the state. And this she did. Creditably, honestly and patriotically. Philippines is now better with a solid foundation by Mrs. Aquino which would not have been possible without the cardinal sin-led uprising and guidance, perhaps that country would even still have been reeling in crisis This is a lesson for leaders and cleric. Choosing to be closer to the power that be even if they are oppressors would not only bring the wrath of Allah in this world but the rage of the people which sooner than later, may wipe them away with their patrons (Bameyi II).

### Conclusion

Allah to whom belong authority, power, wealth, prosperity given portion of these to whomsoever He wills as His (vicegerent) who will later account for his stewardship and Allah to whom be all adoration will not be questioned by any man or Jinn (Q21:23) because all leaders and rulers are under His supreme power. Leadership in Islam is both a divine and public responsibility placed on the shoulders of selected servants of Allah. As such, Allah has commanded obedience to Him, taking cognizance of all political principles in Islam especially accountability. One should consider importance of these principle in giving equal treatment and justice to all and sundry instilling discipline and preserving human values, strengthening and developing human societies. It is fundamental right of every person to be given fair and equal treatment in accordance with the law. Weather rich or poor, powerful or weak he or she is to get a fair hearing and treatment this will bring about a sustainable development in a nation.

### Suggestion and recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the following suggestions and recommendations were proffered:

1. Leaders should by principles maintain neutrality in inter-religious affairs because Nigeria is a multi-religious society.
2. Families should inculcate social justice into their children.
3. In the current political dispensation Muslims can fully participate in politics as much as they can protect the tenets of Islam and integrity of Muslims.
4. The documents that governs the nation should dictate morality.
5. When choosing advisers to government either federal or state people of vast knowledge in Islam should be considered.

6. Leaders should treat their subject with kindness and live the life of accountability.
7. Anyone who Allah bestow power on should be grateful to Allah, should not be celebrating but rather sleepless to ensure people's welfare and satisfaction.
8. Fear of Allah and believing in accountability is the best option for leaders.

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