The Stance of Islam on Good Governance and National Development

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Article History	Abstract
	This paper examined and addressed the issue of national development from Islamic perspectives. In doing this, it was considered necessary to adopt the methods of descriptive phenomenology and the two main approaches to phenomenology, descriptive and interpretive. The comparative phenomenology will give us the nature of the work. It was also deemed necessary to review and appraise the place of religion in national development. The efforts of the religious scholars in this regard were critically discussed. The study specifically established that national development is a primary responsibility of those in authority. It also established that the level of development of any society is very much dependent on the leadership's will, vision, and determination, given the number of problems discussed and their relationship with those in powers. *Keywords: Islamic Religion, Nation and Development.*

Introduction

Two principal terms are central to this discussion: 'national' and 'development.' The additional terms, 'religion' and 'politics,' serve as influential forces that shape the intentions of the people within the context of this paper. At a surface level, 'national' is the primary functional word in the title, and when considered as a noun, it refers to 'nation.' This paper focuses on Nigeria as a nation and its people. For clarity, the term 'nation' will be examined in this section, while the remaining terms will be addressed subsequently. According to Encarta Dictionary (2010), the term 'nation' shares its Greek root with 'ethnic' (ethnos), which etymologically refers to people of a particular origin or culture who "share national, racial, linguistic, or religious heritage, whether or not they reside in their country of origin," or "a group or groups in society with distinctive cultural traits," or an interest group that "belong to or are associated with the traditional culture of a social group." Whether Nigeria is perceived as a nation or a nation-state, as many scholars suggest, these definitions describe Nigeria as a collective of people. The country has one central language, English, and its population includes Muslims, Christians, and members of Indigenous Religions residing throughout its borders. Nigerians often speak each other's languages, understand each other's cultures, and intermarry.

The final definitions essentially characterize Nigeria as a unified people in diversity **(Chibuzo, 2018).**

According to Nwanguma (2020), Nigeria is not only unified as a nation-state but also ranks highly in terms of endowments across various spheres of life. Authorities note that Nigeria possesses nearly all the natural resources found in other attractive nations. In terms of human resources, the country has a significant number of talented individuals and experts in almost every field globally. Bill Clinton, former President of the United States, recently remarked that Nigeria should surpass America and other world powers, given the number of Nigerian experts worldwide. Additionally, Nigeria reportedly has more mosques and churches than many nations identified as Muslim or Christian, despite being officially secular. However, despite the presence of numerous experts, abundant mineral and natural resources, and extensive religious institutions, the nation continues to experience significant hardship and adversity. Nigeria is consistently ranked among the world's poorest and most corrupt countries. In this context, the present topic is examined (Chibuzo, 2018).

National Development and the Role of Religion

There are as many definitions of religion as there are scholars in the field. Due to the diversity of these

definitions, Ukoma (2004) observes that it is difficult to delineate clear boundaries for what constitutes religion. For the purpose of this discussion, religion is defined as Encarta (2009) describes it: people's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of a deity or deities, as well as divine involvement in the universe and human life (Microsoft Encarta). Additionally, religion can be understood as humanity's spontaneous response to external forces. This section seeks to address whether religion plays a role in national development, challenging the notion that religious life is entirely separate from societal life, which some equate with 'worldliness.' Although religious scholars have not reached consensus on a single definition, for the purposes of this paper, religion may be considered as humanity's effort to satisfy emotional needs by establishing and maintaining harmonious relationships with the transcendent and with fellow human beings (Nwanguma, 2020). Research indicates that all forms of religion, including Indigenous beliefs, Islam, and Christianity, have at various times contributed significantly to societal well-being. According to Falola and Olupona (1991),

> In the pre-colonial Nigeria, religion played a major role in everyday thought and action. Practitioners were concerned with the problems of life and much of the rituals aimed at improving peoples earthly, lot by placating the deities or spirits capable of causing misfortunes, the people were also accustomed to involving divine aid in achieving such ends as health, fertility and prosperity. Religious beliefs and practices were, therefore inseparable from the economic and socio-political life of the People (p 153).

Traditional African societies have historically emphasized nation-building and development through shared moral codes and practices, which foster harmony and contribute to societal welfare (Kanu, 2009). These codes of behavior, established for both individuals and communities (p. 83), are often cited as the foundation of the so-called "good old days" in Africa, when adherence to moral codes and customs was the norm and economic activities continued unimpeded. Political and social leaders frequently consulted religious scholars before making decisions. Religion and social justice serve as essential instruments for coordinated capacity and infrastructural development, grounded in principles of equity. These structures prioritize the creation of harmonious societies over social stratification. National development is a multifaceted concept encompassing infrastructural, social, political, educational, economic, and other life-enhancing values within a given environment (Amarachi, 2020). According to Kanu (2004), similar moral codes are present in the

Qur'an, guiding and protecting Muslim adherents, who believe that success or failure is determined by obedience to the laws of Allah.

> "**G**od has promised to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that He will surely grant them inheritance in the land, as He did for those before them. He will establish their religion, the one He has chosen for them, and transform their state from fear to one of security and peace: 'They will worship Me alone and not associate anything with Me.' Those who reject faith after this are considered rebellious and wicked" (Q24:55).

Religion serves to guide individuals in perceiving the world as a place of testing, aligning with the perspective that Allah intends. Although the world is to be developed for human enjoyment, this enjoyment is temporary. Religion emphasizes justice, recognizing the equality of all human beings and the principle that all individuals are accountable to Allah for their actions on Earth. Beyond a set of beliefs and rituals, religion functions as an ethical code of conduct, guiding members of society and fostering positive contributions to societal advancement and preservation. According to Hejun (2011), religion plays a unique role in assisting governments to build harmonious societies. Throughout history, religions have become integral to global traditions, thought, and culture. Islam, in particular, is founded on the belief in the oneness of Allah as the sole deity worthy of worship and in Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as the final prophet and messenger to humanity. Additionally, Islam requires belief in the angels of Allah, the revealed books, the Last Day (Day of Judgment), and predestination, whether good or bad (Adam, 2007). Islam prescribes acts of worship such as Salat, fasting, almsgiving, and pilgrimage. However, Islamic teachings hold that worship extends beyond these fundamentals; the entirety of a person's lifestyle is considered worship if conducted in accordance with Islamic law.

> "It is not righteousness that ye turn your face towards East or West. But righteousness to belief in God and the last Day and the Angels and the Book and the messengers to spend of your…" (Q2:177).

According to Ali (1975), the verse emphasizes a warning against disbelief rooted in materialism and provides a detailed description of the righteous and God-fearing individual. Such a person should comply with statutory regulations while maintaining a steadfast commitment to the love of God and fellow human beings. Ali identifies four key principles: (1) faith should be true and sincere; (2) faith must be demonstrated through charitable actions toward others; (3) individuals should be responsible citizens who support social organization; and (4) one's soul

must remain firm and unshaken in all circumstances. These principles are interconnected, though each can also be considered independently.

Islamic Principles of Governance and Development

In Islam, all aspects of life are regarded as acts of Ibadah (worship) when conducted in accordance with Islamic teachings. The political dimension, including governance, is explicitly addressed by Islam, which outlines principles for the operation of political systems (Adam, 2007). These principles constitute the foundation for good governance and are essential for achieving national development.

The Inseparability of State and Religion

Religion serves as the foundation, while the state acts as the guardian; without a foundation, ruin ensues, and without protection, loss is inevitable. Consequently, leadership is essential for safeguarding religion; in its absence, both religious and worldly affairs deteriorate (Aisha & Sishy, 2011). Nazmi (N.D. 157) notes a consensus among the Ummah regarding the necessity of leadership, as its absence leads to widespread conflict, insecurity, and the destruction of livelihoods.

Trust and Accountability in Leadership

Trust and accountability encompass the responsibility leaders hold toward the organizations or communities they serve. Leaders are required to fulfill their social obligations and strive to realize them fully. Trust in leadership is closely associated with accountability, which entails holding public officials responsible for their actions. This principle is vital for securing public confidence, thereby maintaining political and social order, which is indispensable for development. A leader's commitment to the public interest, personal integrity, honesty, fairness, justice, and, most importantly, fear of Allah, provides strong motivation to act in ways that foster rational development. Conversely, leaders who lack moral responsibility and fear of God often become corrupt or dictatorial (Adamu, 2007). In this context, Allah states: (Q28:77)

Delegation of Authority in Islamic Governance

Muslim scholars assert that effective governance requires the delegation of authority to individuals capable of fulfilling their duties and directing others to perform specific tasks. This delegation is achieved through shura, involving respected and influential members of society (Nazmi NS:161). Officials must recognize the limits and potential dangers of their responsibilities; thus, they are expected to act justly and avoid oppression. According to the traditions of the Prophet, those most beloved and closest to Allah are just rulers, while oppressive rulers are the most distant.

Justice as a Foundational Principle

Justice is fundamentally connected to the Islamic creed. Within Islam, leadership is required to be based on justice, equity, and fairness. Effective leadership entails maintaining a balanced relationship between leaders and followers, as emphasized in the Qur'an (Q5:18; Q25:67-68, 72-73). Leaders are responsible for preventing injustice and oppression, including those committed by their officials, as they are held accountable for such actions. Furthermore, leaders must ensure that personal desires or anger do not override their intellect and religious obligations.

Righteousness in Leadership

Righteousness signifies the moral standing and conduct expected of a leader. Leaders who are conscious of this strive to fulfill all responsibilities without neglecting any member of the community, as indicated in the Qur'an (Q2:177). Adherence to these principles results in an administration that is inclusive, just, and free from personal bias. Belief in Allah and the Last Day cultivates a sense of accountability and awareness of ultimate judgment.

Equality before the Law in Islamic Governance

Equality constitutes a foundational principle of the Islamic political system, encompassing legal rights, liberties, responsibilities, and public duties without discrimination. While the law acknowledges individual differences and circumstances, it prohibits discrimination based on status, nobility, or tribe, as stated in the Qur'an (Q4:13). The Prophet declared, "O people, indeed your lord, may be exalted and praised is one, and indeed your father (Adam) is one. Indeed, there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, and indeed no superiority of a red man over a black man except through Taqwa (fear of God)." In alignment with this principle, the first Caliph (RA) asserted, "And the weak among you shall be strong in my eyes until I secure his right and the strong shall be weak in my eyes until I wrest the right from him." This approach prevents aristocracy and ensures authentic freedom and equality before the law, placing both the noble and the common on equal footing.

Transparency requires leaders to fulfill their responsibilities with the awareness that they may be publicly held accountable for their actions. This principle creates an environment in which leaders can be constructively challenged by those they serve. The first Caliph (RA) stated, "I have been given authority over you, but I am not the best of you; if I do well, help me, and if I do all, then put me right." Transparency requires the establishment of open, institutionalized leadership systems, the elimination of corruption, and the assurance of fairness and adherence to the rule of law. It is essential for eradicating corruption and promoting accountability within

any administration. These principles constitute the foundation of national development as outlined in Islamic guidance. In Islam, leadership is regarded as a trust (*Amanah*), and leaders are expected to fulfill their responsibilities to the best of their abilities. Failure to do so results in accountability before Allah on the Day of Judgment. Effective leaders must demonstrate strong communication skills, motivate and mobilize individuals, and inspire the pursuit of higher and noble objectives. The establishment and defense of the state require leaders to exhibit personal sacrifice, courage, and the capacity to maintain collective focus on shared goals.

The Relationship between National Development and Politics

To understand the relationship between national development and politics, it is necessary to define politics. Ogunsanwo (2007) describes politics as "one involving activities aimed at ensuring that someone emerges vested with authority to allocate values or resources between competing interests and groups, which of course will include the person concerned" (p. 4). Similarly, Dzurgba (2008) approaches the definition as both an activity and a process, stating:

Politics is an activity consisting of a series of actions, collectively referred to as a process. A political process constitutes a political system, defined as a system of interactions. This system provides a platform for planning, organizing, coordinating, controlling, and managing orderly interactions among individuals and social groups (p. 1). These definitions suggest that politics serves functions such as adaptation, integration, allocation of human and material resources, conflict resolution, and the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation. According to Ogunsanwo's definition, politics involves activities that ensure individuals are vested with the authority to allocate values or resources. Consequently, attention should be directed toward those who hold political office, namely individuals empowered by law or constitution in any branch of government to oversee the well-being of people within their jurisdictions (Chibuzo, 2018).

Problems Associated With Developmental Programs in Nigeria

The problems that plague developmental plans in Nigeria can be better summarized as follows:

a. Political Issues or Conflicts
b. Religious Issues or Conflicts

Political Issues or Conflicts

Political issues and conflicts represent significant obstacles to national development in Nigeria. These challenges manifest in various forms. God-fatherism, as described by Dzurgba (2010), is among "the great sources of crisis in Nigeria today." Individuals with substantial political power or wealth often ensure that their preferred candidates win elections. Dzurgba further explains that the actions of a god-son, whether as a counselor, chairman, legislator, governor, or president, must receive approval from the god-father. This relationship remains stable until the god-son begins to fulfill official duties and realizes that responsibilities to voters may conflict with the interests of the god-father. At this juncture, disagreements arise, frequently escalating into intense conflict (p. 17).

Such scenarios have occurred in several states during Nigeria's democratic era, resulting in significant setbacks to developmental activities. Teachers experienced delayed salaries, frequent strikes disrupted schools, and infrastructure such as roads received minimal attention. Furthermore, when politicians perceive electoral injustice, Ojo Uwa Igbe (2013) notes that they often resort to public unrest rather than seeking legal redress, believing the courts will not deliver justice. This tendency is considered a primary factor behind Boko Haram activities in Northern Nigeria, which have resulted in numerous fatalities and substantial economic disruption. Properties valued at billions of Naira have been destroyed. Additionally, inconsistency in developmental programs, particularly when new leaders from different political parties replace their predecessors, poses a serious challenge.

Frequently, new administrations abandon the initiatives of their predecessors, disregarding the potential consequences for the populace. Additionally, ethnicity constitutes a major source of political conflict, impeding nation-building and development. Dzurgba (2010: 17) asserts that ethnic groups in Nigeria prioritize loyalty to their own interests over national unity and patriotism. As a result, political actors often pursue presidential ambitions as if the office were an extension of ethnic interests. This lack of national allegiance fosters ethnic clashes, particularly during elections and in the functioning of state and federal legislatures.

Chibouk (2020) notes that these issues have persisted since the late 1960s, serving as the primary cause of the Nigerian Civil War during that period. Similar dynamics contributed to the Odua People's Congress (OPC) crisis in the 1990s and continue to fuel Boko Haram activities in the North. Such persistent conflicts undermine peace and stability, making national development extremely challenging, if not unattainable.

Religious Issues or Conflicts

The term 'religious issues or conflicts' is used here to reflect the interconnectedness of these concepts. Most issues lead

to conflicts, and conflicts themselves become significant issues. Dzurgba (2010) identifies several sources and causes of religious conflict. Fundamentalists, fanatics, and bigots contribute to religious discord. Fundamentalists insist on literal adherence to scriptures without considering context, fanatics hold extreme and potentially dangerous religious views, and bigots maintain rigid opinions, refusing to consider alternative perspectives (p. 15).

According to Dzurgba, individuals in these categories are often willing to sacrifice their lives for their religious beliefs. Militant religious organizations that perpetrate violence and destruction frequently emerge from such groups, acting under the conviction that they are defending their faith, scriptures, doctrines, and practices. In addition to fundamentalists, fanatics, and bigots, Dzurgba (2010) also identifies conservatives, dogmatists, and intolerant individuals as contributors to religious conflict.

These persons also exhibit aggressive behavior in relation to religious matters; conservatives reject change and new ideas, while dogmatists impose their beliefs on others. Intolerants are the people who are not willing to accept the ways of thinking and behavior that are different from their own (p. 20).

Such groups pose significant threats to societal development. The situation in northern Nigeria exemplifies this dynamic. Although many scholars, including Chibouk (2020), argue that the crises in the North are primarily political rather than religious, politicians have frequently manipulated uninformed youths to execute harmful actions under the pretense of religious motivation. Addressing and controlling these issues remains a critical challenge, which will be explored in the following section.

The Stand of Islam on Peace and Development in the Nation

Sani (2018) asserts that peace, social stability, and sustainable development are among the greatest blessings bestowed upon humanity. All human activities and endeavors are closely linked to the level of peace and stability present in a society, nation, or environment. Without peace, individuals cannot develop or prosper, and nations cannot achieve growth or sustained existence.

Without peace, neither individuals nor institutions can progress or attain a stable and prosperous existence. Only in peaceful societies can people achieve their highest objectives, including the worship of their Creator, Allah. The absence of peace leads to widespread misery and disorder, resulting in chaos and bloodshed that hinder societal progress and development across multiple dimensions. Consequently, fulfilling fundamental religious duties and obligations becomes extremely difficult or even impossible.

Insurgency and insurrectionist activities have wreaked a lot of havoc, wanton destruction, and mess in the majority of Muslim societies. Thousands of innocent lives of women, children, and dotards have been squandered, in addition to the loss of properties worth billions of naira. Muslim scholars have repeatedly condemned the untoward development and sought to chart a course and propose a panacea to bring the predicament to a halt (Sani, 2018). In the year 1412 A.H (1990), the Council of Senior Scholars in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (*Hai'at Kibar al-Ulama'*) in its 49th council meeting, issued a fatwa (legal ruling) in which it condemned all the killings, bloodshed, destruction, bomb explosion and the gale of *takfir* (excommunication) which surface in most Muslim nations. The body described these actions as criminal offences, which, according to the consensus of the Muslim Ummah, are *haram* (forbidden)

The Way Foreword

The reverse of all the voices explained above, and any other such things like unpatriotic acts, etc., will hasten national development. For instance, if those concerned can remove the so called Eliminating the negative factors discussed above, as well as other unpatriotic actions, would accelerate national development. For example, removing immunity clauses that protect the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN, formerly NEPA) or decentralizing its operations, as was done with Nigerian Telecommunications, could result in a more reliable electricity supply and significant improvements in industrialization. There will be accelerated economic development. In the same vein, if revenue were distributed evenly according to need, the economy would be better off. As is clear, the bulk of developmental needs in the states and local government areas are severely hindered by inadequate funding. If adequate funds could be allocated to them, rural and urban development would be encouraged, the mass movement of people, particularly youths, would drastically reduce, and the various vices experienced in rural areas would be reasonably controlled.

Similarly, improvements in political and religious conditions would make national development more attainable. Currently, insecurity restricts freedom of movement in certain regions, and religious gatherings such as Friday sermons and Sunday services are often attended with apprehension. Many individuals are compelled to leave their long-term residences due to political or religious tensions. Notably, some self-identified conservatives and fundamentalists in northern Nigeria, who oppose Western education and civilization, nonetheless utilize modern technologies such as phones and the internet and are proficient in English. These contradictions suggest that the

underlying issues are political rather than religious and should be addressed by relevant authorities.

Conclusion

Nigeria is notable not only for its vast land area and large population, but also for its significant endowment of natural resources and human capital. However, recent developments indicate that these endowments have not been fully reflected in the nation's developmental programs and processes. This shortfall is attributed to several challenges identified in this study. Chief among these is political inconsistency, particularly when leadership changes occur between parties, which is identified as a major impediment to national development. The study recommends reversing these detrimental practices, referred to as vices, that have hindered progress. Beyond the spiritual and moral guidance provided by religion, religious institutions have historically played a crucial role in initiating social and urban development programs in Nigeria. Historical records show that much of the early development and social transformation experienced by Africans, and Nigerians in particular, can be traced to the contributions of early missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These missionaries not only established schools and awarded scholarships, but also created skill acquisition centers where individuals who did not pursue academic paths could learn trades such as tailoring, soap making, and catering.

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