# Islamic Perspectives of Ethical Governance as a Panacea for Underdevelopment and Consequent Conflicts in Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23145706

## Abstract

Today's world is not at peace. Human security is at its lowest ebb as crisIs pervades different climes. Many scholars have blamed the rampaging global problems on the general loss of ethical values, inept leadership and poor followership. The Nigerian conflict and security situation is linked to bad governance. Over time, poor governance has resulted in endemic challenges that have necessitated regular clamour for a new value orientation. This discourse is intended to provoke thought and awaken our sensibilities regarding what the social contract dictates with respect to Islamic ethical governance provisions as measures of good governance in a vibrant political culture. The paper contributes to contemporary sociopolitical discourse on poor governance and offers a potentially valuable moral-philosophical intervention in addressing laxities. Relating this discourse to the Islamic perspective provides values like kindness, probity, transparency and sanctity of humanity as indices of good governance. Given the various injunctions in the Holy Quran and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad, the paper argues that mitigating governance deficits threatening Nigeria and staving off looming implosion requires embracing Islamic tenets of good governance that are entrenched in godliness, sympathy, and empathy. The paper, thus, proposes a conceptual model of humanity firmly grounded in the Qur'anic principle of accountability (*amanah*).

Keywords: crises; ethical governance; leadership; social contract; under-development

## Introduction

Today, the world faces multifaceted, multidimensional crises. Some are new, while others are a frightening resurgence of past crises. Those challenges include hunger, climate change, diseases, societal polarization, armed conflicts, and widespread insecurity. The world's top current risks are energy, food, inflation, and the overall cost of living.[1] Worried by the enormity of the challenges, Falola pointed to general loss of societal values, inept leadership and poor followership as causes of underdevelopment in many countries.[2] Thus, the regular clamour for a new value orientation has been at the forefront of public discourse.

Verifiable indices of development in the real world have proven that sound ethical practices are veritable tools for good governance.[3] These indices include infrastructure, human capital development, educational and health facilities, and employment opportunities. Others include security, a fair justice system and inclusive administration. These good indices of development are conspicuous in Europe and some Arab countries.[4] The development matrices in these countries adequately meet Millennium Development Goals (MDGs and are seamlessly keying into Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conversely, a lack of ethics in governance negatively impacts service delivery and public trust in government in most African countries, resulting in underdevelopment. In short, unethical behaviours in governance have always impeded human

development matrices. Poor governance in Nigeria has resulted in endemic challenges, as captured by the following data from some local and international sources:

- About 88 million Nigerians live in extreme poverty.[5]
- There was a 37.7% unemployment rate as of 2022 and 40.6% projected rate in 2023 (KPMG).[6]
- 133 million (63% of the population) are multidimensionally poor (NBS).[7]
- Nigeria's out-of-school children now 20m, northern states lead.[8]
- Life expectancy in 2023 was put at 55.75.[9]
- Mental health: 50 million Nigerians are mentally ill.[10]
- Rate of marital dissolution is 29.5 per 1000.[11]
- Nigeria's inflation rate rises to 22.04%.[12]

Thus, a culture of good governance is an important component of public discourse. It is, therefore, necessary to provoke discussions to launch changes towards embracing social contract theory postulates, which are anchored on ethics and morality for a vibrant political culture. Thus, this paper offers a valuable moral-philosophical intervention in addressing corruption and leadership deficit through the lens of Islamic teachings. The main objective of this paper is to bring to the fore specific injunctions of the Holy Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, which preach humanity and transparency. The paper is further discussed under the following themes: conceptual clarification, theoretical discourse, foundation of ethical governance in Nigeria, prophetic perspective of ethical governance, ethical values in Islam, governance in Islam, basic functions of government according to Islam, examples from noble Imams on good governance, and conclusion.

## Conceptual Discourse

Ethics can be defined as the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles underlying the behaviour of individuals in society and providing a rationale for moral judgments on what is good or bad, right or wrong, just or unjust, kind or cruel, etc.[13] At the personal level, ethics is the code of conduct that governs an individual's entire life in conformity with societal norms. Personal ethics are cultivated from childhood and influenced by family, education, religion, friends, and environment.[14] Examples of personal ethics include integrity, honesty, kindness, humility, hard work, selflessness, discipline, passion, compassion, fairness, and timeliness. The combination of these values in an individual defines their character. In Yoruba culture, a person with high ethical standards is classified as 'Omoluabi.[15] Ethics is therefore standard moral behaviour generally accepted in a society.

Ethical governance is principle-based, rather than rule-based. It is a style of administration which infuses high standards of moral values and behaviour in the process, policies and practices of institutions, organizations or government.[16] It is the application of an effective moral compass to determine the right thing to do in any given situa-

tion in the process of policy formulation and implementation. It enables individuals to place group and societal interests above themselves to achieve rational, efficient, effective, and predictable performance. Major principles include:

- Integrity that involves steadfastly applying high moral values when no one is watching.
- Honesty that entails truthfulness and transparency.
- Competence that ensures that opinions and decisions are based on knowledge, experience, and facts.
- The rule of law demands compliance with all relevant legal, regulatory, and other necessary standards.
- Compassion, which means treating all with respect and kindness, as well as engaging stakeholders
- Sustainability that protects the wider social, economic, political, and environmental spheres.
- Genuine leadership that operates with a social conscience.

Morals and ethics both deal with distinguishing between right and wrong behaviours. Morals are internal to a person, while ethics are rules developed by others as expectations in a given society.[17] Thus, ethical governance is seen as a standard of public conduct by both leadership and followership that is measured through good governance outcomes.

## Theoretical Discourse

Social contract theory proponents include Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Rousseau, whose writings emphasized the brutish nature of man and the need for society to make rules to guide individual excesses through consensus. In his discourse on civil government, Hobbes posited that men enter into a social contract as a means of creating a state with common agency for the interpretation and execution of the law of nature.[18] Hobbes's social contract theory, as fine-tuned in 1762, was explained from the necessity of the state to curb man's egoistic nature, feeling of self-sufficiency, and contentment at the expense of others. It is assumed that before the advent of the state, man lived a life of self-happiness driven by impulse and not reason.

The theory deals with the origin of the state as a collective enterprise actualized through the aggregation of collective interests and agreements. The substance of this theory is that the state is the result of an agreement entered into by men who originally had no governmental organization. In the first period, there was no government and no law, and the people lived in a raw state of nature. After some time, they decided to set up a state. That they did by means of a contract. In Leviathan, Hobbes (1651) averred that the individual gives up all his rights in expectation of the right of defence and self-preservation to a common sovereign.

The social contract creates a commonwealth and a sovereign. Thus, individuals surrender some but not all their rights. Locke (1969), however, does not conceive of a sovereign state. His government is limited to the performance of its duties. The inherent right of man to life, liberty and property represents a limitation on government. Locke conceives of popular and not legal sovereignty.[19] Thus, sovereignty resides in the "general will" of the people and the government. This is formally documented in the constitution of an independent country.

Critics have queried the legality of social contract theory, as some states have declared non-justiciability of some principles of the constitution. For example, the provision of some services in Chapter Two of the Nigerian Constitution has been declared non-justiciable by the Supreme Court of Nigeria. The social contract theory is also punctured based on its perception of the state as an artificial contrivance rather than a natural process of growth.

Whatever criticism has been advanced against the theory does not remove the fact that a state holds allegiance to the people and vice versa. The social contract postulate does not remove the supreme power from the people who trust their liberties in the hands of a few leaders. Therefore, leaders owe the citizens the obligation to protect and guarantee their security in all ramifications. In the same vein, citizens must obey the sovereign and pay taxes and fulfil other obligations to the state. More importantly, the theory emphasizes the need for social order by removing, through law, certain inherent constraints and providing roadmaps for morality. Hobbes and Locke both share a vision of the social contract theory as an instrument for political stability.[20]

In the modern political context, promises made by politicians through their agendas and manifestos during electioneering are put in the realm of the social contract. In the same light, civic duties of the electorate in ensuring the realisation of the objectives of the state are also viewed as a contractual obligation to leadership. Thus, this theory is apposite in explaining the nexus between leadership and followership in ensuring good governance that will reduce underdevelopment, insecurity, and conflicts, which have plagued Nigeria in the last few years. The Inability of successive administrations in Nigeria is perceived by many as resulting from a lack of godliness in handling the affairs of the state. Nigerian leaders and followers are said to be religious but not godly.

## The Foundation for Ethical Governance in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution

The desire to operate ethical governance in the Nigerian state is expressed in Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), and is summarised in the provisions below:

i. The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice.[21]
ii. Security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.[22]
iii. National integration shall be actively encouraged.[23]
iv. The state social order is founded on ideals of freedom, equality and justice.[24]
v. Every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities.[25]
vi. Sanctity of human person shall be recognised and human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced.[26]
vii. Governmental actions shall be humane.[27]
viii. The National ethics shall be discipline, integrity, dignity of labour, social justice, religious tolerance, self-reliance and patriotism.[28]

In most empirical studies, the general indices point to low performance, insecurity, hunger, conflict, inhuman treatment, and a general trust gap persists. For instance, it is affirmed that, measured against Nigerian Constitutional provisions, public office holders' performances show dismal failure.[29] Then, what does Islam say about ethical governance?

## Basic Functions of Government According to Islam

In Islam, the responsibility of the government is to establish a society wherein people are able to fulfil their physical, mental and spiritual potentials in peace and security. Let us look at some basic functions as enjoined in Islam in relation to constitutional provisions discussed above.

**Protection of life:**

The killing of innocent souls is strictly forbidden in Islam. Killing a single innocent person (of any religion or creed) is tantamount to killing the entire humanity. The state must intervene to protect the lives of the people and establish a system of fair retribution for unlawful killings. "Kill not your children for fear of want. Nor take life which God had made sacred except for just cause."[30]

In order to ensure peace and security in society, the state must intervene for the protection of life, property, honour and dignity of the people, and also for their protection from exploitation or victimisation by one another. The state must provide basic healthcare facilities for the physical and mental well-being of the people. The incessant killings of innocent souls by armed robbers, kidnappers, bandits and insurgents point to the dismal failure of government and the generality of Nigerians. Unfortunately, efforts made by successive administrations to combat these social ills have been largely reactive and ameliorative. Most parts of Nigeria remain vulnerable to insecurity, violent conflict and reckless impunity that threaten human lives.

**Protection of property:**

Islam strictly forbids acquiring any wealth or property by illegal means. The state must enforce punishments upon those who acquire wealth by stealing, robbery or corruption. Failure of States to enforce high disciplinary measures on thieves of either private property or state wealth has led to impunity and proliferation of crimes in Nigeria.[31] The provision of the Qur'an that states that: "The hand of a thief should be cut off for stealing a quarter of a dinar."[32]

Paying back criminals with commensurate punishments of Islam is capable of sanitising the Nigerian decadent society. Public office holders and contractors' recklessness in looting public funds can then be checked or avoided totally.

**Justice and Equality:**

Justice is an important aspect of an Islamic political system. The Quran makes it clear that the key task of all the Messengers of Allah and the objective of giving them the Book of Divine laws was to establish justice. A look at these verses underneath is apposite here, revealing thus:

> We have already sent our messengers with clear evidence and sent them down with them the scripture and balance that the people may maintain their affairs in justice.[33]

> Justice must be meted out in all fairness, even if the decision goes against one's own self, parents, relatives, the poor or the rich.[34]

Equality before the law is a cornerstone of Islamic Polity. In an Islamic State, everyone is equal before the law– the rich, the poor, the self, the opponent, the loved ones or the

enem.[35] The Quran combines the concept of justice as "giving what is due" (adl) with the concept of care. This involves "giving more than what is due" or "taking less than what is owed to you." For example, you do justice if you pay agreed-upon wages that are due to a worker whose services you hired. But if you feel that the amount of wages would not be enough for him to make both ends meet, and so you give him more than what is due or agreed-upon, that is care. One's life remains beautifully balanced as long as one"s earnings match one"s needs. When the needs exceed the earnings, then his balance or beauty of life is disturbed. Similarly, if some people in a society have too much and others have too little, the economic balance of the society is disturbed. To keep up the balance is also an aspect of justice.

The Quran enjoins doing good to or taking care of parents, family and relatives, orphans, widows and those who are left alone in the society, the disabled, those who have lost their jobs, those whose business have stalled, those whose income fails to meet their needs, the near neighbours and the farther neighbours, the colleagues or companions at the side, the needy, the wayfarer, beggars, the homeless, servants, subordinates, workers, and wives. In an Islamic State, not only does everyone get what is due him or her, but anyone in a deprived and disadvantaged position is taken care of, including orphans, widows, the disabled, the jobless, and the homeless.

## Ethical Values in the Qur'an

Scholars have identified the basis of the Islamic ethical system. The Islamic ethical system includes, among others, equilibrium (*tawazun*), responsibility (*fard*) and benevolence (*ihsan*).[36] A further explanation of these virtues is germane here:

Equilibrium (*tawazun*): This is in respect of the need to maintain justice and a balance in all actions. Following the middle path (*alwasatiyah*) is enjoined in the following creeds:

> Thus, have We made of you an Ummat justly balanced.[37] God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, injustice, rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition.[38]

Responsibility (fard): This is closely linked to freewill as man is responsible for his actions and liable for his choices at personal and official levels.

> O believer! Fulfil (all) obligations . . . for Allah doth command according to His will and plan.[39]

Benevolence (ihsan): Islam encourages man to be involved in acts of kindness without any obligation.

> Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet), and what your right hands possess: For Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious.[40]

Other ethical principles in the Quran include:

Honesty: "Do not mix truth with falsehood or hide the truth knowingly."[41]

Contentment: "And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which the Lord hath given them think that it is good for them...."[42]

Good Neighborliness: This virtue is emphasized in the following injunctions:

> So woe to the worshippers .... who are unmindful of their neighbourly needs.[43] Love for humanity what you love for yourself.[44] Feed the hungry, visit the sick, feed the captive if he is unjustly confined, assist any person oppressed, whether Muslim or Non-Muslim.[45]

It is clear from the foregoing that the nucleus of the Islamic ethical system is an obligation for Muslims to always enjoin and do what is right on the one hand and forbid and shun what is evil on the other.

**Governance in Islam**

Essentially, governance in Islam encompasses the legal, moral and spiritual. Islam encourages man in all his actions, personal or official, to focus on Allah and society. This goes to prove that governance in Islam does not separate the secular from the spiritual, particularly in view of the concept of trust (Amanah). Allah lists those who fulfil their trust among those who will eventually succeed thus"

> Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants shall find favour in Allah.'[46] Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with justice: Verily, how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He Who heareth and seeth all things.[47]

In a democracy, leaders' primary responsibility is to Allah and the electorate. Powers must be exercised on behalf of the people, in the people's best interest and in strict accordance with Allah's laws. Specifically, Islamic ethics affirm the leaders' dual responsibility of being accountable to Allah for their conduct and responsibility to the citizens who reposed their trust in them through election or appointment. Therefore, while leaders must protect citizens' best interests at all times, they must exercise power responsibly with the belief that they are equally accountable to God.

Rulers and the ruled should consider themselves as Allah's representatives on earth and, therefore, must do everything to reflect His ways, win His favour with a strong conviction that all positions and resources are held in trust for Allah. In light of this, Sambo, cited by Hadi, A. M. (2009), identifies three principles of the Islamic governance system, namely adalah, shura and altizamat almuatinin.[48]

**Equality before the law (*adalah*)**

This implies equal treatment of every citizen regardless of their class, ethnicity or religion. Every citizen must be fairly treated, and justice ensured at all times. Nobody should be above the law , and there should be no preferential treatment under any circumstances. Islamic ethics in governance prescribes absolute justice for all as follows:

> O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).[49]

In this manner, Islam established equality for the entire human race and struck at the

very root of all distinctions based on colour, race, language, or nationality. Qur'an further states that:

> O my servant: I have forbidden dhulm (oppression and wrongdoing) for Myself and I have made it a thing forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another.[50]

**Consultation (*shura*)**

Leaders must regularly engage in consultation and seek advice from the citizens on issues affecting the State. One hadith says: "Consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision, put thy trust in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust in Him."[51]

Consequently, leaders (in a democracy) should have, in addition to the cabinet, a formal and an informal think-tank for consultation and valuable pieces of advice. Such people must be of piety and knowledge. Notwithstanding the consultation, with superior knowledge, information and better judgment, the leader is not under a strict obligation to accept every piece of advice. In such an instance, he should try to convince the advisers with a superior argument. Once the Shura/Think-tank is convinced, his position on the issue becomes consensus of opinion (*ijmaa*).

**Obligation of the ruled (*Altizamat almuatin*)**

When the government fails, the tendency is to blame the leaders alone. We usually forget the fact that governance is a contract between two parties: the Government and the citizens. There is no government without citizens. In Islam, citizens are expected to fulfil certain responsibilities and duties. These include the right and duty to choose and remove their leaders (in a democracy). They have the right to choose, elect and remove their leaders through the ballot box at prescribed intervals. There should be no consideration for selfish interests in the election of a leader. The main decider should be the fear of Allah and performance according to the hadith that states:

> When trusts are neglected, then await the Hour." He said: How would they be neglected, O Messenger of Allah? He said: "When positions of authority are given to people who are not qualified for them, then await the hour.[52]

The citizens have several obligations to the government. These include, among others, obedience, assistance, Payment of Zakat and Tax and love and regular prayers for the leader. They may be explained thus:

**Obedience (*taa'aa*)**

In addition to complete submission to Allah, Islamic ethics demands that citizens give their complete loyalty, cooperation and obedience to the constituted authority. They are enjoined to obey their leaders except when they are commanded to commit sins. This is necessary for social harmony, political progress and economic development. The Quran states:

> O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best, and most suitable for final determination.[53]

The Prophet also stated that:

> Whoever obeys me, has indeed obeyed Allah; whoever disobeys me, has indeed disobeyed Allah; whoever obeys the leader, has indeed obeyed me; whoever disobeys the leader, has indeed disobeyed me.[54]

**Assistance (*Nasrah*)**

Flowing from loyalty, love and affection for the state, the citizens are expected to assist and support the government to the best of their abilities. Such include unsolicited and tactfully rendered sincere advice in all matters that promote peace, affection, cooperation and good works for the benefit of the people. Such cooperation in the pursuance of a noble cause is also expected among citizens for purposes of good neighbourliness and upliftment of the community. Most crimes against the state are criminal activities by citizens against fellow citizens. The practice of good neighbourliness will considerably reduce crime. It is stated thus:

> O ye who believe! Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour...[55] Also: O ye who believe! Strengthen each other... that ye may prosper.[56]

Citizens are also expected to cooperate in the performance of acts geared towards the promotion of the common good with the intention of seeking Allah's reward (hisbah). The fraternity and brotherhood the Prophet established between the Muhajirun (Migrants) and the Ansar (Helpers) in Madinah is a practical example. Prophet Muhammad stated thus: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his neighbour. By Allah, he does not believe, By Allah, he does not believe He whose neighbour is not safe from his abusee."[57]

Payment of zakat and Tax: Zakat is a pillar of Islam. Zakat payment is a moral obligation payable by 'wealthy' citizens as a support for the poor and the running of the government, among others. Zakat is a proven instrument for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. Aside from its economic importance, zakat is a viable vehicle for the promotion of communal love and the prevention of class hatred, as the economically vulnerable are assured of the provision of their basic needs by the rich through the zakat institution. It is stated in the Holy Book thus:

> And be steadfast in prayer and regular in charity: And whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you, ye shall find it with Allah: for Allah sees well all that ye do.[58]

Also:

> And let not those who covetously withhold of the gifts which And let not those who covetously withhold the gifts which Allah Hath given them of His Grace, think that it is good for them: Nay, it will be the worst for them: soon shall the things which They covetously withheld be tied to their necks like a twisted collar, on the Day of Judgment. To Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.[59]

Although in non-Islamic states, zakat is not collected in a centralised manner, Muslims can gather their zakat to assist the poor or even the state in addressing some developmental challenges. In the same manner, payment of taxes and levies by Muslims to the state is an obligation that must be honoured in the social contract of a state.

**Love and Regular Prayers for the Leader**

The Prophet (PBUH) was and still is enormously loved and prayed for by his people and their successors. For a nation to overcome its challenges and prosper, love between the leader and the people must be reciprocal. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "The best of leaders among you are those whom you love and who love you in return. They pray for you, and you pray for them."[60]

Today, more than fourteen centuries after his death, his followers worldwide still venerate, love and pray for the Prophet every minute of the day. Can we say this of those who govern today and their citizens?

## Examples from the Prophet and Noble Imams

Are the aforementioned lofty principles and practices of Islamic ethics in governance enunciated so far utopian, or were they ever practically manifested by mere mortals like us? Let us have some glimpses from the Prophet and Caliphs of Islam in relation to some of the issues discussed so far.

**Humility:**

The Prophet was humility and kindness personified. He never engaged in extravagance and waste. He lived in a simple house, ate simple food and slept on a simple mattress made of leather and leaves of the date tree. He served people with kindness, was very generous and had a listening ear. Despite being a Prophet and Head of State, he was humble, modest and never accepted being hero-worshipped. This trait is exemplified in the narration below:

> While on a journey with his Companions, and it was time to prepare food, he asked for a sheep to be slaughtered. A man said: I will slaughter it, And another one said: I will skin it out. A third said: I will cook it. So, the Messenger of Allah [pbuh] said: I will collect wood for fire. They said: "No. We will suffice you with work." "I know that you can do it for me, but I hate to be privileged. Allah hates to see aslave of his privileged over others. So, he went and collected firewood.[61]

**Justice**

The Prophet (PBUH) and the Banu Makhzum woman incident demonstrated justice. The Prophet's strict adherence to justice, regardless of whose horse is gored, is demonstrated in this hadith:

> The Quraish were anxious about a woman f'om Banu Makhzum who had committed theft and asked: "Who will speak to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) about her?" Then they said: "No one will be bold enough to do so except Usamah bin Zaid, the (Companion who was) dearly loved, they spared him by the Messenger of Allah (PBUH)."So Usamah (May Allah be pleased with him) spoke to him, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) (angrily) said, "Are you interceding regarding one of the punishments prescribed by Allah?" He then got up and delivered an address in which he said, "Indeed, what destroyed the people before you was just that when a person of high rank among them committed a theft, they were not punished; but if the same crime was done by a poor person, they inflicted the prescribed punishment on him. I swear by Allah that if Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad, should steal, I would have her hand cut off.[62]

Umar bin al Khatab and Land Administration demonstrated fairness to the weak as accounted for below:

> Many territories, including Iraq and Persia, were won for the Muslims during the time of Caliph Umar al Khatab. Previously, the Arabs usually shared war spoils among the victorious army based on the maxim "spoils belong to the victors". Consequently, the army insisted that all the agricultural land be shared while resident occupants be made their slaves. Umar convoked a shura meeting, whereby the Sahabas supported the army. Umar opined that while all other spoils could be shared, agricultural land should belong to the state to generate revenue for the future funding of the army and maintenance of law and order and that the former occupants should not be dispossessed of the land but be made to pay taxes to the state. The Sahabas were convinced. They accepted Umar's positions, which then became ijmaa (consensus of opinion).[63]

**Accountability, Love and Kindness**

Umar bin al Khatab was the second Caliph. He was a courageous, humane and responsible leader. He is also known as al Farouk, the distinguisher between right and wrong. He was reputed for moving around at night to inspect the condition of his subjects. He extended his sense of responsibility and kindness to animals. While rushing to catch a camel. He was quoted to have said:

> I am catching one of the camels of charity that had run away. If a goat were lost in the rims of the Euphrates[river], Umar would be accountable for it on the Day of Judgment.[64]

In light of this practice, the highest example of piety and honesty expected of leadership was demonstrated by the earliest successor of the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims are expected to follow examples shown by their imams.

**Honesty, Integrity and Modesty**

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was from the Umayyad dynasty and became the Caliph 99 years after Hijra (717-720). Though the Umayyads were able to expand the Islamic State borders and maintain the political and religious unity of the Muslim nation, they were considered autocratic, secularly minded and corrupt. However, Umar bin Abdul Aziz, a young man of 'fashion and fragrance', on his appointment, returned the Islamic State to how it was governed by the rightly guided Caliphs. He dumped his extravagant lifestyle and emulated the Prophet (PBUH) and the foremost caliphs. He returned all the mighty estates, palaces and the humongous wealth owned by members of the Umayyad dynasty to the state.

His conduct aligned with high ethical values in Islam as encapsulated in these sayings of Prophet Muhammad, thus: "The best among you is one who has the best manners and character.[65] Strive always to excel in virtue and trus."[66]

Good character, which embodies honesty, transparency and fairness, is hereby enjoined on leaders and followers. A country whose people lack moral virtues of truthfulness and accountability entrenched in ethical governance can hardly make progress, and argues that a lack of ethical governance, truthfulness, and responsibility is central to Nigeria's (and other African nations') developmental challenges.[67]

These virtues are better embraced now, or else the trend of impunity will continue because the Qur'an states thus: "Never will God change the condition of a people until

they change it themselves with their own souls..."[68] This implies that we must not expect changes in our social, political and economic wellbeing until we change our mindset of seeing public office as an avenue for self-enrichment. Voters must also abhor corruption in our electoral system.

## Conclusion

Ethical governance is a value-driven administrative style applicable to individuals, institutions, corporate bodies, and the state to develop a personal and organizational culture of excellence, effectiveness, and efficiency. Good governance is premised on ethical and moral principles as advocated by Islam, whereby all thoughts and actions are viewed through the prism of worship. Consequently, Muslims are expected to hold their respective offices, institutions, business concerns, organizations, or government as sacred trusts and perform their roles, responsibilities, duties, or assignments with the consciousness of either reward or punishment from Allah.

To mitigate the challenges threatening the nation today, largely from the unethical Nigerian governance system and stave off the looming implosion, Nigerians must jettison individualism and self-centeredness that breed corruption and promote primitive accumulation of wealth at the expense of the masses. For all (Muslims and non-Muslims) to borrow from Islamic tenets, the fear of Islamization of Nigeria must give way to the embrace of Islamic virtues. Islamic ethics in governance must be revisited and embraced by all, particularly by the owners of the heritage, the Muslims. It is, therefore, pertinent to embrace the tenets of Islam highlighted and discussed above and many others, for the Nigerian society to be ethically governed with both leadership and followership playing their roles with the fear of God. Thus, the state must take measures to provide equal opportunities for personal development to all people. The state also needs to establish an economic system that leads to equitable distribution of wealth and freedom from any kind of socioeconomic exploitation.

Thus, more than anything else, Nigerians need value reorientation. National Orientation Agency and all media outlets (electronic, print and emerging social media) have critical roles to play. These may include the packaging of jingles and programmes that teach ethical governance.

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