

## Islam, Socioeconomic Sustainability and Leadership Tussle

Abdulrahman B. Hamid

Centre for Trans-Saharan Studies,

University of Maiduguri

Email: [bansehamid2015@gmail.com](mailto:bansehamid2015@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*This article presents and analyses the nature and extent of the politics of leadership portrayed by some world leaders who ascended to the position of president. People are ready to accept and repose their confidence in God-fearing leaders who are honest, upright, trustworthy, impartial and hardworking. However, due to the involvement of some leaders in apprehensible and abhorrent tendencies such as selfishness, aggrandisement, sectionalism, political and religious bigotry in their leadership styles, they face a myriad of problems which adversely affect the effectiveness of their leadership thereby reducing efficiency, ushering in low productivity and causing social upheavals. As such, the objectives of this article were to highlight the socioeconomic predicament, and the problems of sustainable economy, and of leadership towards accomplishment of harmonious coexistence. The article used a descriptive analysis through retrieval of archive materials and consultation of academic materials. The article revealed that socioeconomic sustainability had being jointly pursued, with particular reference and emphasis to leadership in Islam. In fact, this system of wrangling had jeopardised the free flow of social, economic, political and harmonious existence. The results also revealed that masses are ready to accept leaders who can provide socioeconomic buoyant and social justice, equality before all for the achievement of optimum political stability, goals and objectives. The article discovered that leadership abused power by creating acrimony among the led, which brought lot of anarchy that led to socioeconomic degradation equally at the end tarnish their leadership style.*

**Key words:** leadership, Islam, socioeconomic, upheaval and sustainability

### Introduction

Leadership in Islam is not but entrusted test. Such trust is bestowed on a person to guide the *ummah* in the path of righteousness including social, economic, political and Islamic development (Adair (2002). Historically, leadership has not always been the case, going by the experience of the various communities globally; there is every reason to find some encouragement in leadership and contemporary reality for the identification and nurturing of a culture of its concept in all ramifications.

The challenge is that this poses to the need for a better understanding of the nature of leadership concept, its determinants, as well as prospects to the socioeconomic sustainability of this genre of leadership. Equally important is the need to explore ways in which the examples and experiences of positive leadership can be integrated into the broader international discourse on how to address the difficulties facing nations and this taps the opportunities that present themselves for renaissance. The paper is informed by the need to revisit the issue of positive leadership concept, by drawing palatable lessons of history of Islam. It examines the nature of leadership crises and then moves on to sketch what positive leadership could contribute to the resolution of the crises. The overall approach of this paper perceives leadership as a complex web of people and institutions working together.

No doubt, Islam stands at the crossroads of its existence as an ideology. Several decades since its introduction to the planet, the democratic ship of states remains largely unstable and unsure of its destination. Islamic leadership remains between salient and tussling as ever in stabilizing the ship of state and pointing it to the assured direction of democracy, development and peace with equity (Allen, 1983). Lessons of Islamic history to agitation of *sharia* are very important to the global secularistic situation as they tried to highlight people to understand their plight in terms of both polarities with other leadership ideologies. They also satisfy man's instinct of curiosity about past developments in all aspects of life (Abdulwahab, 1996). These have accumulated lessons of Islamic history that enable one to know the truth

about the past by sifting facts or what really happened from mere myth, legend and fairy tale. Therefore, lessons for Muslims and the good leadership concept in nations intends to engage a cross-section of participants and scholars in the good, positive values of Islamic leadership and how they positively shape socioeconomic sustainable policy and planning. Their attempt is to entrench very deep economic, political, social and international models that will enable them readjust themselves for better governance and new models and acceptable styles of leadership (Ikelegbe, 1995).

Leadership is a burden to whom is enthroned and it does not come from those who agitate for it, rather it is the *ummah* that chooses the one whom it seems appropriate to be given. Muhammad (SAW) is reported to have said:

*Do not ask for a position of authority, for if you are granted this position as a result of your asking for it, you will be left alone (without God's help to discharge the responsibilities involved in it), and if you are granted it without making any request for it, you will be helped (by God in the discharge of your duties) (Muslim, 1018).*

Leadership sometime takes the form of an explicit agreement or pledge between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to put things in order or to treat them fairly, equally, and justly irrespective of sentiment, nepotism, sectionalism and religious bigotry.

Islam further emphasises that the leader does not stand behind his people to push them to do things of his will contrary to his jurists in council (Yadudu, 2008). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) consulted his followers before taking decisions, or otherwise he waited for divine revelation from Divine Being (Allah) and placed himself within his people thereby facilitating progress and inspiring the developmental accomplishment. In this regard, leadership depends on the ability to control and motivate others and to coordinate their efforts.

More so, Soghill (1974) succinctly put, "leadership is a dynamic process in a group where by one individual influences the others to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group tasks in a given situation. With this, one can say that a leader is the most influential (powerful) person in a nation or country who provides direction, guides ministers' activities and ensures that the country's sovereignty is attained through economic, social, political, cultural and coexistence sustainability (Hamid & Grema, 1991). In fact, a leader is a person with power over others or exercises the power for the purpose of a nation's development towards achieving group goals (Okafor, 1996). The term leadership therefore, is defined as a process where one person exerts social influence over the members of the nation for purpose of achieving group goals.

Having defined the concept of leadership, it is important to observe some leadership theories which some of the contemporary scholars view. These theories will enable us understand the leadership problems in Africa, West Africa and Nigeria in particular. In this respect therefore, a brief survey of theories of leadership have been undertaken. The trait theory of leadership was the subject of study by researchers in the 1900s. Personalities such as Fayol (1980), Stogdill (1948), Gib (1954), Nkrumah (1960s), Toure (1970s), Sankara (1980s) and Gaddafi (2011) etc had their efforts directed towards the identification of intellectual, emotional and physical traits characteristic of successful leaders. The rationale was that if these positive traits could be identified in prospective leaders, effective leadership could be guaranteed. In other words, leadership ability is a direct function of these personality traits.

### **Leadership roles from an Islamic perspective**

In Islam for instance, the primary roles of a leader are those of servant-leader and guardian-leader. First, the leader is the servant of his followers. He is to seek their welfare and guide them towards good. The idea of a leader as a servant has been part of Islam since its beginning, and has only recently been developed by Robert Greenleaf (1970):

*The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. The best test and the most difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons?*

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has emphasized another major role of the Muslim leader: to protect his community against tyranny and oppression, to encourage God-consciousness and whether as servant or as guardian, a Muslim leader may make use of certain bases of power to be efficient and effective if such does not go in contrary to the principle of divine law. Islam recognizes the existence of power, but suggests etiquette for its use and not to mishandle it. A commander (of the Muslims) is a shield for them.

As such, a leader shall be persuasive and willing to learn from the wisdom of the led. Jurists in the council such as Senate, Special Advisers, and Representatives of the House, Religious Leaders, Community Leaders and Elders of the nation should be recognized and their views should also be looked into. A leader whether within the Islamic perspective or not should be patient no matter what type of adversity he may be experiencing.

### **Concept of leadership in Islam**

This principle encapsulates the process of inner comprehension of leadership towards betterment of the proletariats. The principles of leaders and followers are based on continuously monitoring and evaluating their successes, progresses, dividends prosperities, and areas of improvement accordingly. They work hard towards productivity of the *ummah* in general as well as encourage others in the struggle for self-improvement and socioeconomic sustainability (Abdulrahman, Muhammad, & Muhammad, 2018).

Power is the capability or potential to get something done while influence is the exercise of power to get something done. Authority is formal power that a leader has as a virtue of the position. Power and leadership are interdependent but are not interchangeable. A leader needs power to succeed and influence others but power alone does not make an effective leader. There are two types of leadership power: personal and positional. Both are used in varying proportions depending on the leadership situation. Personal power is based on character, expertise, charisma, and personal relations. Positional power is based on formal authority that includes decision-making, reward, punishment, and control of information and organizational resources (Kosack & Fung, 2014). The leader has to make a correct judgment of which source of power to use in a particular leadership situation.

Influence is exercise of leadership power. Powerful leaders have more influence and credibility, and they can get more compliance from their followers. Leaders can get follower compliance by rational persuasion, appeal, pressure, promise of rewards, negotiations (win-win, compromise). They get followers to do things either by making small demands followed by big ones, or by starting with big demands followed by small ones if the big ones are not possible (Omar, 1999).

Good leaders lead by teaching leadership and good leadership involves empowering followers by coaching them and then sharing leadership power with them through delegation. Followers must be given real authority, information and resources but must be held accountable for what they are doing. Empowered followers have heightened self-efficacy and self-confidence. They will have higher performance, exhibit more co-operation, achieve higher personal growth, and in the end all ensure the survival of the organization.

### **Campaign to Promise-keeping in Islam**

All Muslims, whether leaders or followers are advocated to keep their promises, as yardsticks to success and to Allah's fearing. Once promise fail, signs of hypocrisy manifest, and once signs of hypocrisy manifest then, the whole system gets affected with various carnages. The signs of a hypocrite are 3, Messenger of Allah said, *"Three are the signs of a hypocrite: When he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust"*. On the basis of this, Islamic leadership does not condone failed promises as Allah (SWT) says: *Oh you who believe! fulfil (all) obligations*. Keeping one's word characterizes a Muslim, and breaking one's word is tantamount to hypocrisy.

*"When you look at them, their exteriors please you. When they speak, you listen to their words. They are as (worthless as hollow) pieces of timber propped up, (unable to stand on*

*their own). They think that every cry is against them. They are the enemies; so beware of them. The curse of Allah be on them! How deluded they are (from the truth)!" (Q,63:4)*

We can see today their styles of promises in their campaign models as their way of life. This style had plunged the nations into confusion and brought down socioeconomic well-being of the nations, especially those that are socially, politically, and economically buoyant to their citizenry. Islam, has for sometimes now been subjected to modern economic hardships due to its rejection of usury, a contemporary monetary policy of interest banking and its system of fraudulence.

### **Socioeconomic and Leadership Tussles**

Bad leadership has jeopardized the socioeconomic and coexistence relationship of this great planet of mankind in that, leadership is no more a ladder of stir of motivation but whoever ascended on it needs to strive in order to satisfy those who supported him/her. It is on it that Fayol (1980) indicated that it is the art of influencing people to strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of state objectives. It is also the art of influencing, directing and guiding the efforts of the citizenry to work in harmony.

A leader does not stand behind the masses to push them to the stage of hardship, but places himself between the followers thereby facilitating progress and inspiring them to accomplish the nation's socioeconomic sustainable level. In this regard, leadership depends on the ability to control and motivate others and to coordinate their efforts. This can be achieved through a variety of leadership styles.

According to Soghill (1974), leadership is a dynamic process in a group where by one individual influences the others to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group task in a given situation and a situation of loots of the treasury. In another view, a leader is a person with power over others or exercises the power for the purpose of influencing their behaviour towards achieving group goals (Okafor 1996). Fielder compares two styles of leadership: Psychologically distant and controlling; and Psychologically close and more permissive.

### **Bestowal Leadership in Islam**

Leadership has been recognized to an increasingly greater extent as one of the significant aspects of human activity. The question of how one attains a leadership position has been extensively investigated. A man becomes a leader not only because of his personality attributes but also on the basis of various situation factors (what the job requires, who is available etc) and the interaction between the leader's personality and the situation. While the leader is frequently chosen from among the group's more intelligent members, intelligence alone will not suffice.

More so, leadership goes with quality and setting of objectives and goals and targets and mobilization of organization resources (both human and materials). The main kinds of power include the following:

1. **Reward power**: the leader who is enabled to reward followers who serve their purpose
2. **Coercive power**: a leader who is enabled to punish followers who fail to serve their purpose
3. **Legitimate power**: a leader who gives his subordinate the full backing of his organization
4. **Referent power**: which is based on the follower's identification with an admiration for the leader
5. **Expert power**: which is based on the leader's expertness in some field or on some specialized skill or knowledge

In a hadith, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessing of Allah be upon him said:

*"Any man whom Allah has given the authority of ruling some people and he does not look after them in an honest manner, will never feel even the fragrance of Paradise", (Hadith 264).*

### **Negligence of Leadership Responsibility**

With the disappearance of the Caliphate in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, even a vague symbol of world-wide Muslim political leadership centres and *Shari'ah* vanished. This serious development and the absence of a

revivalist nucleus even outside the broader caliphal context meant the deprivation of the Muslim *Ummah* and their responsibility of a necessary instrument of change that the first generation taught by the Prophet (SWA) found essential to institute its lifetime could not withstand with the neglect of the Western leadership (Hamid & Grema, 1991). Instead, the Muslim communities to take it as a responsibility, were dashed and scattered around geo-political vulgarities called nation states.

These nation states that rose upon the role of the abolition of the *Shari'ah* were subsequently replaced by secularism, where European colonisation still exists in their dozens, pathetically, encapsulating in the millions of Muslims. A gargantuan secular political blanket is rather spread upon the *Ummah* obliterating the values of Islam out of sight, posing it as outmoded style. By proxy, Muslim nations are engulfed with acrimonies by cronies of unidentified nonentities wiping out human species of all. These kinds of atrocities are manifested in Nigeria, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Libya, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger republics where Muslims are in majorities.

Leadership is from God and He gives to whom is pleases as lent for a period of time. This can take as long as possible but limited time, no matter how dictatorial a leader is, will be stripped off the mandate from him by God. As such leaders should be conscientious of their promises so that on the day of Judgement, they would be free from blameworthy.

### **Rule of law**

Bureaucratic procedures are used interchangeably by leaders to the laid down laws and are now being bypassed to veto power and procedures (Scheppelle, 2013). Rule of law is often used to adhere to the constitution at the local, national and international levels, while due process is mostly used to refer to observation of laid down rules and regulations in an organization but both imply strict compliance with the rules (Santos, 2012). Democratic rule should be perceived as a process rather than an end in itself as perceived by most leaders. It should be seen as a process with multiple challenges foremost among which is good governance characterized by the supreme rule of law otherwise referred to as due process.

Democracy is seen as a human approach to ordering the society aimed at delivering a sustainable economy with the highest standard of leadership expectation and living of the people to manifest certain preconditions which organize the society in such a manner that its affairs are conducted in strict compliance with established rules and regulations, that is, rule of law. It is the application of the precepts that transform a society into a civilized one and indeed set apart the human society from that of animal jungle (Voigt, 2012). Viewing the above excerpts, one could see deviance of the human exposition of separation from of reality of unionism to side-track third world nations and others calling themselves as civilized nations.

The most threatening problem is that democracy has become a cesspool of political manipulation and manoeuvre by the political leaders for their selfish interests. Another problem is the failure of the political actors to give a fertile ground for democracy to thrive as a typical politician is hungry for power no matter its source and impervious to moral indictment (Bosselmann, 2013). The real meaning of democracy is yet to sink into the psyche of the leaders who tend to perceive politics as strictly a game of self-enrichment via public treasury as opposed to service for the public good. This kind leadership is being exhibited in Africa. This simple reason is responsible for the abuse of the democratic principles or values which impair the realization of good governance and socioeconomic sustainability among the proletariats years after establishment of democratic rule.

### **Accountability**

Accountability as one of the core elements of democratic principles or values. It is conceived by Blair (2000) as the act of being answerable to the electorate on one's action and inaction. Adamolekun sees accountability as focus on sanctions or procedures by which public officials may be held to account for their actions. Bovens (2014) observed that accountability lies in the fact that it induces a sense of responsibility in those who are called upon to account and it obliges officials and politicians to engage in open dialogue which calls into question what they are doing and sanctions the basis upon which they are

found. Shaoul (2012) sees accountability as responsibility to account for stewardship of resources and authority. This implies that accountability has such dimensions as fiscal, legal, programme, process, outcome, public, political, and administrative accountabilities.

The demand for accountability has been aggravated by the sharp decline in resources available to state institutions. The inability of the Nigerian populace as well as the politicians to enforce accountability in the public sphere of life, especially in government transactions has led to abuse of this principle of accountability which impairs the practice of good governance. For the past 16 years of democratic rule in Nigeria there was no single representative that was called back as a result of his action or inaction.

### **Transparency**

The concept of transparency is an ethical precept of Islam that is concerned with moral imperatives that centres on being upright, fair, and open in all one's dealings with people both at the official and private level. Akpa (2008) argues that for transparency to be fully understood, it has to meet the following:

- A life and living anchored on the principles of probity, good conscience and a clean track record devoid of attain and cover-up, cheating, or lying. A transparent officer therefore has no skeleton in the cupboard and being an open book tries to live up to the oath of office.
- A life which derives its maximum joy and satisfaction from mentoring or helping others to grow and prosper without any hidden agenda or envy.
- A life that sees and dispenses justice from the point of merit and free from ethnic, religious or nepotic considerations.
- Employing all means available to the public office holder to make it possible for the citizens to have unhindered access to information about management of his office. The office holder is ready and willing to share information in an open manner.
- Making open to the people existing procedures for making decisions.
- Ensuring that there exist open channels of communication between the public and government to enable the citizens understand and monitor government property.
- Being responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people.
- Obeying due process procedures and rules in order to be perceived as equitable and fair.
- Making available to the public all public accounts and audit reports.

Transparency will account to nothing if there is no accountability, because accountability is the outward manifestations of transparency, the existence of both principles contributing to an effective and equitable management of public and private affairs (Meijer, 2013). In this way transparency and accountability seek to protect government from errors, misallocation of resources and corruption (Kahler, 2015).

### **Sycophancy in Leadership an Islamic perspective**

Islam is clear that sycophancy is not condoned, likewise the clandestine motive in any form, it is an obsequiousness that tarnishes the good image of the leadership. This form of leadership has become today a fashion of the democratic setup. In the nightmarish scenario of the citizens' marginalisation to political irrelevance, it means that almost all the Muslim nations, the overwhelming majority of the nations that are entrusted with the responsibility of saving mankind from anti-justice forces, are themselves pioneers in the secular goals of anti-progress **tyrants** governing them according to sycophancy and hypocritical clandestine (Hamid & Grema, 1991).

Because of sycophancy emotional, nations belonging to Muslim are indeed confronted from two battled fronts: political tyrants in their midst who have taken upon themselves the divine function of law-making, not merely providing marginal *ijma* supplements, and non-Muslim forces in imperialist or quasi-imperialist form brandishing decadent secular ideologies of various stripes threatening to over cloud the Muslim nations in a neo-colonialist gulp.

### Disadvantage of sycophancy

Sycophancy does not yield a positive development; either the leadership position, socioeconomic sustainability but an act of blind adherence to a certain ideology, group or individual. This approach has negative repercussions in both personal and political grounds:

- Dictatorial regime: Leader is more important than principles.
- Importance to religion, caste etc.: Gives birth to communalism.
- Compromises on ideals of democracy.
- Important agendas like development can be neglected.
- Discourages innovation, scientific temper-conservative mindset is promoted to preserve religion, caste etc.
- Freedom of Press is curbed or they are monitored to promote the leader.
- Various other stakeholders like civil society, NGOs etc. do not have a say in policy matters.
- Similarly, this approach in personal matters can have negative impact in family life as well as official matters.
- Blindly following a senior can discourage transparency in organization.
- Merit is compromised.
- Position of women would remain lower as they are not accepted as natural leaders.
- Real issues etc. will remain neglected. This will have negative impact on organization goals.

### Conclusion

After highlighting the leadership in Islam, the Muslims who struggle for their socioeconomic and leadership survival had failed on several occasions due to their style of approaches to what one can consider as negligence towards pulling the masses along whenever they ascent to the leadership position. Proletariats suffer much in the hands of these so-call leaders whom Allah bestowed upon them, as such they ally with enemies of Islam in order to protect their positions. These have been the actions of their ways to endanger socioeconomic sustainable and political stability of human race, including the environmental favourable existence. Islam is a complete system touching all segments, which many leaders of the world conceive as being either coercive machinery to anarchy or the struggle to blockage. However, a few of those who perceive it as a complete way of life do not hesitate to repose their confidence on whoever wants to lead them in whatever ways. Such a leader should be honest, upright, trustworthy, impartial and hardworking, provided he can provide socioeconomic sustainability to them spiritually and practically. In addition, some of the leaders become apprehensible and abhorrent incapable of guiding the led to what they yearn, such as selfishness, aggrandisement, sectionalism, political and in their leadership of dishonesty, they face a myriad of problems which adversely affect the effectiveness of their leadership thereby causing socioeconomic hardship that usher in low productivity and cause social upheavals. It is in view of this that the topic of this paper was hypothesised.

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