

# **BOKO-HARAMIZATION OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISTS IN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE**

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## **Abstract**

*The contemporary Nigerian state is replete with leaders that are engrossed in theft of the national treasury for personal aggrandizement. These indices of maladministration adventure that found expression in fiscal banditry have been the highest stage of terrorism that any nation can experience. Hence this study specifically studied the activities of these leaders and equated them with terrorists, thus the coinage; Boko-Haramization. The study discovered that the Nigeria leadership has over the years embezzled monetary allocations for the purchase of arms to fight terrorism, she has also misappropriated funds for the building of infrastructures and investment in education, agriculture and other developmental projects that are necessary to create decent society. These have affected the country in a number of negative ways. Hence, religion has the singular duty to serve not only as a moral compass but also as a pressure group to call the Nigeria leadership to account. This is in the hope that it will help in addressing the menace that is already a great challenge to the Nigerian society.*

**Keywords:** Boko-Haramization, Political Institution, Religion, Terrorist, Leadership, Governance.

## **Introduction**

It is an almost universal undeniable postulation that the yearnings and aspirations of citizens is a leadership that ensures good governance for all. Good governance encapsulates democratic dividends, where citizens share in the prosperity of the land (Ngbea, 2017). This holds true in the opinion of the Hobbesian treaty; where citizens in the state of nature surrendered their rights and privileges in exchange for a community that provides direction for all through legitimate leadership (Honderich, 2010). This is so because it allows everyone the opportunity to access all the privileges accruing thereto and to also be given equal treatment. Thus where this is not obtainable, the resultant effect will be anarchy.

In contemporary Nigerian society for example, at least since the return to democratic rule in 1999 after an interregnum, where the military held sway, the citizens have longed for a leadership that is people oriented (Asad, 2017). The leadership question is therefore at the centre of the expectations of the citizens to share in the wealth and prosperity of the nation. Little wonder, at every election circle, they had tramped out en masse to vote for a leadership at all levels that will pass the test of good governance. This is necessary because it will ensure prosperity for all and sundry. The last general elections bear testament to the above assertion. The electorates with high expectation for free, fair and credible elections have voted. Whether the general elections were conducted in line with the electoral guidelines or whether it was free and fair, is left for the public

to decide. But the general atmosphere suggests that the people's will was smashed. And this is not the first time that Nigerians will complain of such a gross act of electoral fraud. Claiming ignorance will be contrary to the principle of justice. Von-Wezsacke (1985) as cited in Kukah (2010) avers that whoever closes his eyes to the past becomes blind to the present, whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity becomes susceptible to the dangers of a new infection.

Thus, it is evidently glaring, that the expectations and hopes of the people have almost always been defeated. This understanding is held, at least, in the assessment of many a citizen to which most academics and even onlookers share in such opinion. Therefore, it could be said that with the blatant failure in almost all spheres of human life, ranging from economy, security to education among many others, the people have not maximally benefitted. For the security situation has worsened to the extent that citizens do not longer sleep with their eyes closed. Banditry, kidnapping, Boko-Haram insurgency and many other agitations that could be likened to acts of insurrection, have soured communal relationship (Afolabi, 2015). Hence, it has deterred human capital development and social prosperity. The economic ladder has gone down to the lowest ebb in the last eight years or so. The educational decay that greeted the country's educational sector is only better imagined.

From the foregone, it becomes literally difficult to contemplate how the very leaders, who are elected on the basis of trust for stewardship in governance, cannot provide the needed succor which the people so desperately desire. No wonder, Ambrose (2017) asserts that if legitimate authorities cannot tame the rise of insecurity, educational decay and economic retrogression, but can only indulge in baseless embezzlement of the national treasury, then the leaders should be equated to terrorists. This is true because terrorists usually engage in unprovoked destructions. Thus, an unprovoked looting of the national treasury is akin to fiscal terrorism. On this basis, this paper tasked itself with the burden to examine the activities of leaders who occupy our political institutions vis-à-vis their apparent maladministration adventures. This is in view to paving the way for religion to proffer solutions that could stand the test of time and thus, drastically eradicate bad governance or reduce it to a bearable level.

### **Boko-Haramization**

Boko-Haramization is a coinage from the word Boko-Haram. Boko-Haram is an Islamic militant organization based in the northeast Nigeria. It is also active in Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Mali. Boko-Haram is loosely translated to mean western education is forbidden (Mbaya, 2013). It is a terrorist organization that has been terrorizing the northeast of Nigeria and its border communities for more than two decades. Thus, Boko-Haramization here is an adjective, qualifying all acts bastardizing our political institutions as acts of terrorist.

### **Understanding the Nigerian Political Institution: The Journey So Far**

The amalgamation of 1914 by Lord Fredrick Laggard saw the emergent process for the beginning of a new nation called Nigeria. History reveals that the colony of Lagos, the southern and the northern protectorates were merged to form an entity called Nigeria. According to Agi-Otto (2014) these protectorates were characterized by decentralized socio-religious structures irrespective of size and shape. And the various ethnic nationalities existed as independent nations, with their forms of government and leadership structures.

It is imperative therefore to note that in the north, there were different kingdoms such as the Kwararafa Kingdom, the Sokoto Caliphate, the KanemBorno Empire and the Tiv Nation among

others. In the south, there were the Oyo Empire, the Bini Kingdom and the Kingdom of Opobo among many others. These kingdoms, empires and caliphates are peopled by different ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Hausa, Tiv, Jukun, Orobo, Igbo and others (Onouha, 2008). Igbo occupies the east of the southern protectorate with its unique form of governance structures and leadership styles, with each of these units operating as a separate independent entity. And none was neither under the political or judicial subjugation of another nor paying allegiance to any power or authority outside its enclave (Kukah, 1998).

More so, most scholars believe that even though the different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria exercised socio-political independence, it was not in isolation of global events. Thus, the then prevalent global event where states under colonial rule clamored for self-rule soon crept into Nigeria. At that point, some early national figures such as Herbert Macaulay, Anthony Enahoro, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Ahmadu Bello, Tafawa Balewa among many others, asked that Nigeria be granted independence (Umar, 2003). As a consequence therefore, different constitutional conferences were held to begin the gradual process of British withdrawal from the Nigerian political scene. By 1960, October 1, in an event that was greeted with pomp and pageantry, the Union Jack came down and the Nigerian flag went up, signaling the beginning of an independent Nigeria (Olufemi, 2013).

At independence, Nigeria operated the British styled parliamentary system of government. However, the first republic was not to last long as it was overthrown by a group of some young military officers on January 15, 1966. Seven months later, there was another military coup that replaced the government of Major General Johnson, Thomas Umunnakwe Aguyi-Ironsi. The succeeding military government headed by General Yakubu Gowon, presided over the Nigerian civil war, where an estimated figure of between 1.5 Million to 3 Million Nigerians, mostly of Igbo origin were massacred, killed, maimed or starved to death (Kukah, 1993). After the civil war, there was the continued back and forth of the exchange of leadership between the military and the civilian. During this period, Nigeria witnessed a short-lived second republic from 1979 to 1983 and an aborted third republic in 1993 (Mbaya, 2013). It was not until 1999 when the military finally returned to the barracks. Thus, the fourth republic that begun in 1999 continued till date with the last general elections held on February 25, 2023 and March 18, 2023 respectively. The general elections offered the Nigerian electorates the opportunity to elect their president, members of national assembly, governors and members of states assembly to occupy political institutions and preside over the affairs of government at least in the next four years.

### **Book-Haramization of the Nigerian Political Institution: Examining the Eroding Values of Democratic Dividends**

The modern Nigerian state is officially federalist and democratic in status with a modified United States of America presidential system of government. Such state status is to be for the benefit of the citizenry in every facet of life. This is because the various federating units will bring the government closer to the people, so that they can enjoy the dividends of democracy. Thus, Section 14 (1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, states that; “Nigeria shall be a state based on the principle of social justice”. This goes to show that democratic values and principles are at the core of governance. Section 2 (14) (2) (b) postulates that, “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”. In the same light, Section 16 (2) (c) stipulates that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or group.

However, despite these constitutional stipulations, a cursory peep into the Nigerian political scene reveals that Nigerian political leaders have not lived up to the expectations of the citizens and the task which the constitution bestows on them. The political leadership in Nigeria has been bastardized to the extent that leaders feel that they are no longer accountable to the electorates. The leaders exhibit what can be termed as leadership rascality. Once they assume the position of leadership, they do not lead by the rule of law as stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigerian leadership misadventure is usually made noticeable through the act of nepotism display in the appointment of key personnel in the government's cabinet. They usually appoint family and friends into professional ministries and departments, not minding whether or not, they are qualified to occupy such offices. No wonder, Richard (1987) is of the view that the political class has been caught in the web of "prebendalism". Richard (1987) associates prebendalism with the centrality of the Nigerian polity of intensive and persistent struggle to control and exploit the office of the state. He opines that prebendal which is a pattern of political behaviour that rests on the justifying principle that political offices should be competed for and then utilized for personal benefit of the office holders as well as of their reference or support group characterized the Nigerian political underpinnings. In such a case, the official public purpose of the office often becomes a secondary concern however much that purpose might have been originally cited during the periodic competition to fill it.

The above, illustrates the desire to engage in official corruption which captures the degree of the moral decay that has characterized the Nigerian political institutions at least, since independence. From available records, the Nigerian political institutions have been conditioned for corrupt practices and manipulation of the administrative procedures, to allow for easy access to wealth through looting the national treasury. Such corrupt tendencies have been rooted in the Nigerian blood stream since independence which the process itself is shrouded in corruption. Little wonder, Ugwu (2002) posits that the pre-colonial society knew little about corruption but soon after Nigeria's independence in 1960 and shortly afterwards in 1963 when Nigeria had become republic, corruption grew in galloping proportions in every sphere of human life. In the same vein, Maier (2001) insists that Nigerians spend a good part of their lives trying to get better of the government for their own benefit or that of their family, their village or their region. Rare then, is the head of state who acts on behalf of the nation. No wonder, Kukah (2010:2) posits that:

Nigerian has remained trapped in a time warp. It has not succeeded in extricating itself from colonial trap that is suffused with inherited prejudices and distorted social histories. History has continued to serve as a platform for the reinforcement and concretization of age-old regional, ethnic and religious prejudices. The result is that in politics, economics, education, academia, religion and every area of our national life, these prejudices continue to dog and shape the choices we make in our relationship.

Therefore, the dividends of democracy such as jobs opportunities, access to quality and affordable healthcare, free and compulsory education, security, good access roads, peace among many others, which are provided through good leadership, have eluded the citizenry. This is because the nation is deeply immersed in ethno-religious sentiments, regional bias and corruption arising from poor and weak leadership and the results are embezzlement, fraud and kick backs (Ugwu, 2002). The government and leadership styles have been structured to allow for official corruption. Thus, the Newswatch Magazine as cited in Anugwom and Igbo (2002) found that corruption in Nigeria is institutionalized through the establishment of many elephant projects and money gulping jamborees, such construction of fly-over and double-carriage highways many of which are ill-maintained. These projects are known to be ways of siphoning public money and

rewarding loyal public officials, politicians and retired and serving military administrators or governors who run their states as if they were private estates.

The above stark reality was true then just as it is now. Hence, the blazing heat of the fire of political corruption has sent so many Nigerians packing. Thus, “japa” has become a popular phrase that indicates leaving the country in the search for greener pastures overseas. The numbers of skilled, semi skilled and unskilled workers of all kinds that usually leave Nigeria on daily basis in search of greener pasture overseas are only better imagined. It is now a known fact that the streets of Europe and America are littered with Nigerians of all backgrounds, sweeping the streets and washing corpses just to earn a living. In other instances, Nigerian professionals who see openings for jobs in the middle-east, Asia, Europe and America usually do not let such opportunities pass them. According to Odey (2001), from a politically standpoint, the turmoil, the repression, and the general insecurity that pervaded Nigeria, forced thousands of her citizens to flout all international borders' laws in order to get out of the country either by hook or by crook. As a consequence therefore, Nigeria's external image suddenly degenerated to a shameful state.

Indeed, Nigerians are undergoing severe and excruciating experience as a net effect of corruption. A chronicle of the people in public and civil services that are involved in corruption and are protected by institutions of law enforcement, will only leave one shading tears. And, Nigerian leaders, virtually at all levels of government, ranging from states to local governments, are on the lead in exacerbating it. This of course demonstrates the state of the eroding values of democratic dividends in Nigeria. Consequently, the “talakawas”, the downtrodden and the common men appear helpless.

### **Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: Terrorists Calling the Shots**

It is evidently glaring from what we have seen in the foregone analysis, that the Nigerian political history is characterized by deliberate poor leadership and weak governance. Thus, it appears obvious that the Nigerian elected representatives at all levels, have formed a syndicate akin to a terrorist gang, to loot the commonwealth of the Nigerian state at the expense of effective leadership. The Nigerian ruling class has mastered the art of deception in leadership and they can hide under any cover, be it religion, ethnicity or region in order to stay afloat on the political stage. Yusuf (1982) posits that, they usually find cover in ethnic affiliation or religious inclination to perpetrate these heinous crimes against the people. Thus, he insists that:

The intermediary bourgeois cannot appear as what he really is in the political economy of Nigeria. He has to find a cover... He has to take cover – as a Muslim or Christian. He has to take cover as an Ibo, Hausa, Idoma or Efik. He has to posture as a majority or minority... essentially as a means of creating the context for his fancy dress ball, for his charade of disguises in order to further entrench division among our people, slow down their awakening at any cost; even the unity of our country for which so much has been sacrificed (25).

Thus, the Nigerian political leaders who are supposed to be the custodians of the highest values of good governance and effective representation through worthy leadership as enshrined in Nigeria's constitution, have turned terrorists, thereby destroying every noticeable fundamental fabric with which the country is stitched. It is therefore challenging that the Nigerian political class can go to any length, no leaving any stone unturned in their quest to continue holding unto power. They employ all manner of tactics, dividing the people along ethno-religious and regional divides, not minding if relationships are soured. The ancient strategy of divide and rule has been used across cultures and civilizations especially by the colonial masters at the detriment of

development and at the expense of merit. No surprise, Kukah (2010) opines that regionalism; religious affiliation and ethnicity still weigh heavily as determinants in the choices and appointments of political officers and even bishops in the various Christian churches in Nigeria. This is equally true in almost all facets because Imams face the same challenges too across the country and that the result is that the nation lives under the weight of catch-22 contradiction.

Little wonder, Newswatch (1989) as cited in Ogbonnaya (2016) quoted General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida to have admitted that Nigeria is passing through a period of grave crisis and it is the attitude and role of the elites which have determined the nation's history. As an elite and the then military president, he avers that as leaders, they equate their ends with the ends of the groups and communities to which they belong. They also mobilize others to fight for their individual causes, individual beliefs and interests. He equally states that the worst features in the attitude of the Nigerian elites include; factionalism, disruptive competition, extreme greed and selfishness, indolence and abandonment of the pursuit of excellence.

From the foregone therefore, it could be seen that these terrorists parading as leaders have over time manipulated religion and ethnicity and hence, used them as tools to fan the embers of disunity and disaffection among the people. They have instigated so many communal and ethno-religious crises which resultant net effects have been wanton destruction of lives and livelihood (Reno, 2002).

A chronicle of these politically instigated ethno-religious and communal crises are very instructive. Without question, Nigeria since the 1980s had its fare share of bloodiest ethno-religious riots and communal uprisings with each producing or introducing a new dimension. The Sunday Tribute chronicled the violent religious uprisings in Nigeria among which are the December 1980 religious disorders in which a staggering figure of 4177 people lost their lives and properties worth hundreds of millions of naira were destroyed, the 1982 Maitatsine riots in Maiduguri, the 1987 Kafanchan riot and a host lots of others too numerous to mention (Sunday Tribute, 2015).

The fact remains that all these adventurous disasters have been peddled by our founding fathers, which soon after independence, seemed not to have faith in one Nigeria. For instance, the Parrot (1960) as cited in John (2013:22) quoted Ahmadu Bello to have said that:

This new nation called Nigeria should be an estate of our great grandfather, Uthman Danfodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minorities in the north as willing tools and the south as conquered territory and we must never allow them to have control over their future.

In another instance, Ahmadu Bello said, “the Prime Minister and Sardauna need to go back to Lagos to deal with Zik and Awo...we want your support...if you did not give it, there will be trouble” (Ambrose, 2017:13). Elsewhere, Obafemi Awolowo ventilated, “that Nigeria is not a nation. It is mere geographical expression. It is a merely distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not” (Mbaya, 2013:18). All these postulations are the expressions of selfish interests all at the detriment of the poor masses who are always the losers. The poor man loses at almost every policy decision of the government. He has never been at the centre stage of the genuine programmes of the government that will benefit him. Thus, the poor man loses all the times. Agbese (2002) cited in Odey (2014) posits that:

The poor is a loser. Always was, always is and always will be. When things go wrong, he loses, when things go right, he is not much better. The politician calls him the common man... when the

gods of hate demand a sacrifice as a condition for peace; his common blood is available to the high priests of hate... when nations want to massage their ego, they put a uniform on the common man, put a gun in his hands and send him to the killing field where the leaders themselves fear to tread... when religious leaders have some problems deciding what name to call the supreme being of their faith, they summon the common man not to advise them but to fight and die for their own stupidity.

In view of this, it can be safely asserted, that these leaders have excused themselves from the task of leadership and have now turned terrorists, dishing out bad governance, depriving the people of democratic dividends and manipulating them as tools for destruction. Thus, what the ruling class knows best is looting the national treasury. The civil servants who are experts in administration usually do present themselves as willing tools. They embezzle money meant for infrastructures, security and jobs, thereby further stretching the grip of poverty on the people. What then can be worst than terrorism if terrorism is actually the destruction of a people's livelihood. Obadiah (2020) alleged that a seating governor in the north is a commander of bandits and Boko-Haram, and that he is using state resources to provide logistics for those terrorist groups so as to cause mayhem and remain at the corridor of power. These ugly developments must be tamed otherwise, Nigeria will remain a pariah state and her leaders turned terrorist in governance, will continue to plunder its resources at the expense of development.

### **Rescuing the Collapsing Political Institution and the Leadership Structure: Recommending the Role of Religion**

For Nigeria to make headway in leadership and governance and thus, rid its political institution from the menace of those terrorists parading as leaders, the following recommendations are useful;

1. Religion, especially Christianity and Islam, under the auspices of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jamatus Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, should pressure the National Assembly and the State Houses of Assembly to be deliberate and purposeful in their legislative duties of law making in order to come up with legislations that will strengthen our governmental institutions so as to make them strong for service delivery. If this must be achieved, these religious groups must partner with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to organize the people in such a way that they can hold their representatives to account in the event that they sort to compromise by doing the biddings of the executive arm of government.
2. The executive arm of government both at the federal and state levels must be effective in the delivery of their mandate in serving the people. Leadership is the head and when the head is rotten, the body follow suit. The people's interest therefore, must be at the centre-stage of their policy formulation and implementation. The attainment of this can be facilitated when responsible leaders are elected into position of authority. This is so because men of integrity live up to the task of effective leadership. To achieve this, CAN, JNI and CSOs must collaborate to educate the electorates to the extent that they can subject all political candidates to debates so that they can present their manifestos on the basis of which they should be elected. This is so because when they failed or are failing in leadership, they can be reminded of the promises they made and thus be held to account.
3. CAN, JNI and CSOs should support and encourage the institutions saddled with the responsibility of fighting corruption such as the Economic and Financial Crime

Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and ensure that they be given a free hand to fish out corrupt officials and make them face the wrath of the law without witch-hunting and victimization. This is so because a country that does not allow any agency enacted or established by law to freely carry out its statutory function that country is only waiting for its collapse. Countries that fit into the typical examples of failed states are usually come by as a result of mounting cases of unchecked official corruption and maladministration.

4. In all honesty, CAN and JNI with the support of CSOs should work in collaboration with the Judiciary and the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) in restoring confidence to the common man. This should be done in the hope of igniting the spirit of checks and balances in governance. Any country whose judiciary and the legal systems are not strong, such country do birth dictators who change laws at will and lord it over the people as though they are presiding over a regime of slavery.

## Conclusion

This research has sort to look at how the Nigerian political institutions have been turned to a terrorist organization, thereby breeding leaders who in delivery service to the people as stewards in governance, have shown themselves as criminals, embezzling funds, looting the treasury at the expense of development. The paper argued that if terrorism is an unprovoked attacked on the people then the bad and poor governance style, exhibited by leaders of Nigeria cannot be better named than referred to as terrorists hiding under the guise of leadership. In fact, no terrorist group or organization can be as worst as bad leaders who use state resources at the detriment of economic development and prosperity of the people. In the hands of such leaders, all kinds of criminal elements are bred. If it is true that, everything rise and falls on leadership; then, such leaders must live up to the challenge of personal example. If we must get it right as a nation, then we must advocate for right and responsible leadership. Thus, having this in mind, the paper offers some recommendations in which religion can help, and hoped that if they are implemented, such terrorists parading as leaders who loot the national and states treasuries will be tamed for accountability and eventual development of the country in all facets.

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