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Islam, Democracy and Good Governance: A Glimpse of the Islamic Political Thought

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Abstract

It cannot be said precisely that Prophet Muhammad left a definite method of electing a leader or a successor, but he certainly put in place a practical mode of governance, which was earnestly followed by his companions who adopted various means of choosing their leaders. The contemporary intellectual discourses on the relevance or otherwise of democracy to Islam have generated hot debates among scholars. This paper is a contribution to the discourse, with the submission that democracy, though a name alien to Islam, in principle, is a concept that could be said to have been borrowed from Islam. If it is acknowledged that Muslims had bequeathed to the world a set of scientific knowledge and civilization which were later de-Islamized and Westernized, then a system of government which allows for the rule of law, sovereignty, equity and justice, human rights and mutual consultation should not have escaped the knowledge of the Western world. The West grasped every good thing from the Muslims, secularized it before representing it to the rest of the world, thereby giving the wrong impression that they were the harbingers of the system of governance. The paper conclude that, unless the modern democracy is given an Islamic touch, it will be harmful for the

consumption of the Muslim world, as it is in its present secularized form. The methodology used for this work included analytical, critical and historical approaches, while library sources were extensively utilized as tools of sourcing for information. The paper provides a locus for understanding the concept of democracy and good governance as perceived by Muslim political scientists and scholars.

Introduction

The Western civilization seems to have been overwhelmingly acknowledged across the globe so much that anything that does not come from the West or which has no connection with her is looked upon contemptuously. The force of globalization has helped the West tremendously in accelerating her influence on the rest of the world that her hegemonization becomes not only feasible but also gropes rapidly into homogenization whereby the whole world is being tailored towards looking at issues from Western perspective. Thus Westernization becomes a synonym of modernization. While virtually all the world's ideologies and cultural values seem to have been assimilated by that of the West, Islam remains the only culture, the only ideology and the only civilization that stands to compete and challenge Western civilization and ideology. It acknowledges modernization and frowns at blind Westernization, The clash of civilization, which erupted consequent upon the contact of the Muslim world with Western ideology culminated in the adoption of some concepts and terminologies which hitherto are not in Islam by the Muslims. The adoption of such concepts has, no doubt, shaken the *Ummah* to her epistemological root so much that multifarious views are upheld by various Muslims. While some totally reject any Western concept, some absolutely assimilate them, and some try to Islamize them. One of such

concepts is democracy which has become the only recognized and acceptable system of government and which is made virtually compulsory for all nations.

Millions of Muslims living in some parts of the world have adapted to democratic practices. Millions of them are found in South Africa, Australia, South America and even in Nigeria. According to Khan, more than 600 million Muslims are living under democratic societies - 250 million in Pakistan and Bangladesh, 29 million in Malaysia, 60 million in Turkey, 65 million in Iran, 125 million in India, 35 million in Europe and nearly 6 million in North America.¹ He further asserts that Muslims have even achieved more than other nations by electing women as heads of state: Tansu Ciller in Turkey, Khalida Zia in Bangladesh and Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan.² Its acceptance, on the other hand, has been condemned to the extent that some overestimated the participation of the Welfare Islamic Party in the existing democratic secular government in Turkey as an act of *kufir* just because of their belief that the term democracy is a manifestation of disbelief. It is on the basis of these divergent views that this paper shall discuss the concept of democracy and good governance with a view to analyzing the similarities and differences of the concepts from Islamic and Western political perspectives.

Islam and Governance

It is an undisputable fact that Islam is a comprehensive way of life, which covers every aspect of human endeavour. The religion, which touches such assumed minute aspects of life as mode of

¹. M.A.M, Khan, (1998), "Constructing Identity in "Glocal" Politics"; *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 15, no, 3. (Fall, 1998), 97.

² Ibid

received dressing, greeting, toilet habits, and etiquette of eating among others, could not have kept quiet on the affairs of the state. The proper arrangement of the rows in prayers, coupled with the appointment of a competent Imam to lead congregational prayers, proves that Islam cherishes orderliness in the society. An *hadith* narrated by Abu Dawud further gives a clear picture on the need to have a leader in any community; the Prophet was reported to have ordered the appointment of an *Amir* to a group of three who are travelling together. It is reported in another *hadith* narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Amr that the Prophet (SAW) said: "It is unlawful for any three persons to be in a desert and not appoint one of them as their *Amir*". So, if a dictionary meaning of the word 'governance' as an act of controlling and directing the affairs of a country, city and its people using political power is anything to go by, then Islam and governance cannot be separated. If it means to control, guide or determine the affairs of the people, then Islam and politics are synonymous. Furthermore, if Islam arranges for appointment of an *Amir* in a temporary journey, then, one should not doubt that the religion should also have guidelines for the appointment of an *Amir*, as well as the responsibilities to be discharged by him and those he is to control and rule.

The Holy Qur'an explicitly mentions that it is Allah who entrusts the position of authority to whomsoever He wishes and as well dethrones whomsoever He pleases (3:26). This implies that the basis of governance in Islam is the firm belief in Allah as He who can enthrone. So the person in leadership is accountable to Him. In that wise, the contestants would not make assumption of the position of authority a do-or-die affair. The Prophetic tradition - "Be a leader if you are so chosen by the people" indicates that Islam frowns at imposition of a leader on a community through any means - rigging of election and any other form of election malpractice. The Prophet further explains that whoever forces his

way to leadership will not succeed in his administration, as he will not be divinely assisted.

The Islamic model of governance was demonstrated by Prophet Muhammad himself, who, despite his role as a Prophet, judiciously combined the administration of the *Ummah* with the prophetic assignments. He saw the assignment of administration as a service to the community. He thus remarked, "a leader of a community is their servant." The servant-leader's role of the Prophet is confirmed by the Qur'an when Allah says:

It was by Allah's mercy that you are kind to them; had you been harsh and hard hearted, they would have dispersed from around you. ...(3: 159).

That same Qur'an verse further spells out that overlooking the shortcoming of the subjects and due consultation with them should be adopted by the prophet in dealing with them. The human means of calling people to prayers, the appointment of *muadhin* and the strategies for wars were some instances where the Prophet accepted communal consultation. This explains why *shura* (consultation) becomes a pertinent feature of Islamic mode of governance. Through this, the prophet demonstrated the sense of accommodation and open-mindedness as a leader and guided against arrogance and self-centredness.

The Prophet was further instructed to dispense justice and equity without favour (see Qur'an 5:8 & 4:135). A clear manifestation of the rule of law and dispensation of justice without fear or favour could be appreciated from his reaction to the intercession of one of his respectable companions, Usman ibn Zaid, in respect of a woman from the tribe of Makhzumi who was found guilty of theft. The Prophet stood up and said:

Verily what destroyed those who came before you was that when the noble among them stole, they granted

them pardon; but when the weak stole, they amputated him. I swear by Him in whose hand is my soul, if it were to be Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad that steals, I would cut her hand.³

The companions of the prophet, most especially the *khulafa' Rashidun*, also followed the footsteps of the Prophet after him. On his assumption of duty as Caliph, Sayyidna Abubakr gave an inaugural speech, which demonstrated a true spirit of Islamic governance, saying:

O people, I have been appointed as your ruler although I am not the best of you. If I am right, obey me. If I am misguided set me right. Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger (SAW). If I disobey Allah and His Messenger, you are free to disobey me....⁴

The Abubakr-led government was remarkable for adequate consultation, while members of his Council of Advisors (*Shura*) were appointed based on piety and selfless services to Islam. He never gave position of authority to any members of his family. While addressing Yazid ibn Sufyan who was appointed as the governor of the conquered part of Syria, Abubakr gave him the following advice;

O Yazid! You have relations in Syria; do not try to give unlawful benefits to your kins. Of this I am afraid of my officers. The Holy Prophet said: if a Muslim officer appoints his kins on big posts which they do not deserve, he will be cursed for that by Allah and

³ Al-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh as-Sunnah*, Vol.2, (Beirut, Dar-al-Fikr.1981), 43.

⁴ Khan, M.A., *The Pious Caliphs of Islam* (Shomolu, Al-Waseelat Publishers, undated), 15.

Allah will not accept any of his excuses or apology for that until he enters hell.⁵

The nomination of 'Umar took place after fair consultation with the *shura* committee. In one of his speeches, Umar said: Brothers in Islam! I am not your ruler who wants to enslave you. I am a servant of God and His people. I have been entrusted with the heavy responsibility of running the Caliphate administration. It is my duty to make you comfortable in every way and it will be an evil day for me if I wish you to wait on me every now and then. I want to educate you not through my precepts but by my practice.⁶

Caliph 'Um.ar -was no doubt a paragon of virtues for political leaders. His simplicity was unequal in human history. Unlike the contemporary leaders who draw people's attention to themselves by the fleet of flashy cars with highly disturbing sirens, hardly could 'Umar be recognized as the head of an empire. He could not afford taking or consuming what he felt his subjects could not take. He was extra careful of how public funds were expended. He once said:

I have no more authority over the *Baitul-Mal* (public treasury) than a custodian has over the property of an orphan. If I would be well to do, I would not accept any honorarium; if not, I would draw a little to meet the ordinary necessities of life. Brothers! I am your servant and you should control and question my

⁵ Ibid, 45.

⁶ A. Jamil, *The Hundred Great Muslims*; (Karachi, Feroz & Sons Ltd. 1977), 25.

actions. One of these is that the public money should neither be unnecessarily hoarded nor wasted. I must work for the welfare and prosperity of our people.⁷

As the chief executive of the Muslim empire, he appointed some judges and yet did not influence the functions of the judges. No immunity prevented him from appearing in the court of law as plaintiffs when occasions called for it. Once he had to attend the court of Qadi Zaid ibnThabit as a defendant. When the Qadi saw the Caliph, he rose from his seat and requested that a special seat be offered to the Caliph. Umar resented this and warned him, "unless you consider an ordinary man and 'Umar as equals, you are not fit for the post of qadi. The hand of impartial justice of 'Umar was extended to his son who was found guilty of taking alcohol and illicit sexual intercourse with a lady. He ordered his son to be flogged accordingly. The son died during the process, yet he insisted that the remaining stripes be administered on his corpse.

Caliph 'Umar equally performed creditably well in allowing freedom of expression in his administration. Maintaining distance to his subjects would not allow him to understand their problems. He thus formed the habit of parading the streets to assess their condition. Every man was free to question his actions. Once a man shouted in a public meeting "O 'Umar! Fear God." The audience considered this as an insult on the personality of the Caliph and so attempted to discipline him. 'Umar who did not feel offended with

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ For more on 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, see R.I. Adebayo, " 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab: A Model for Contemporary Political Leaders in Nigeria" in Ade, P. Dopamu, et al (eds) *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*, (Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, 2004), 233- 42.

⁹ . A. Rahim, *Islamic History*; (Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau, 1983), 80.

ihis. rebuked them, saying "If such frankness is not exhibited by the people, they are good for nothing, and if we do not listen to them, we would be like them".¹⁰

The administration of 'Uthman, the third caliph, focused on provision of social amenities for the populace. He was noted for provision of potable water, and construction of roads, bridges and canals. In addition to construction 'of mosques and schools, guesthouses were established for travellers in the cities."

The above are few examples of the type of government enjoined by Islam and practised by the Prophet and his early companions. The crux of the matter in administration and governance is the Qur'anic command of enjoining good and forbidding evil. This was responsible for the Muslims' genuine commitment to the welfare of others and being responsive to their needs. *Iman* (faith), *taqwa* (consciousness of Allah), *'adl* (justice) and *hubb* (love for others) are the watchwords of the Prophet's companions in their administration.

Later in the history of Islam, the Islamic institutions being put in place were transmitted to the rest parts of the world and the impacts of Islamic governance were felt in virtually all aspects of human life. This notwithstanding, a sort of interplay of culture, or rather cross-fertilization of culture, occurred, as the Umayyads were grossly influenced by the Greco-Roman civilizations. This introduced secularism into the hitherto Islamic governance put in place. The deviation from this step made the Muslims to shift their confidence from the rulers to the increasing group of righteous scholars who took it upon themselves to maintain the spiritual and moral discipline which Islam stands for. Meanwhile, the process of

¹⁰ A, Jamil, 31.

¹¹ A Hasanuddin, *A Brief History of Islam*, (New Delhi, Goodword Books, '009), 118.

materialism and secularism was further accelerated following the coming of Western colonialists to the Muslim world. The effects of this are identified and succinctly put by a renowned professor who claims, inter alia:

They superimposed the Western, secular and material concept of life on the Muslim society. They reduced the application of the *Shari'ah* to just family law. Even that was often polluted with the Western secular idea of the family. They imposed the idea of secular democracy on many Muslim countries. Those Muslim leaders who emerged as rulers following independence from the colonialists were often more Western than Muslim in their political outlook. That was because of the kind of education and orientation they received under the colonialists. They often tried to justify the modern democratic system as conforming to Islamic principles. However, there is certainly a limit to the extent to which modern Western democracy can be said to conform to the political principles of Islam.¹²

The Concept and Process of Democracy

The description of democracy by a one time United States' President, Abraham Lincoln, as the "government of the people, by the people and for the people" has been taken to be a good definition of democracy. An expansion of this definition was made by Schumpeter. in Avosetinyen, who sees democracy as institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire power to decide by means of a

¹². D.O.S Noibi, "The Shepherd & His Flock: Islamic Perspectives on Leadership"; (A Paper Presented at the 1st Professor Ismail A.B. Balogun Memorial Lecture held at Lagos State University, 2008), 4.

competitive struggle for people's votes.¹³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines democracy as "a form of government in which the right to make decisions is exercised by the citizens directly or indirectly usually with a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee all citizens the enjoyment of certain individual or collective rights, such as freedom of speech and religion..."¹⁴

From the above given definitions, some salient characteristic features of democracy are exposed. The first among such is secularism. The government of the people by the people and for the people implies that spirituality has been technically schemed out of the system. This makes it secular in nature, as it draws no inspiration from God. The separation between religion and politics gives the impression that the Creator has no say in the affairs of the people, hence the absolute reliance on human reasoning. This, according to Mawdudi, breeds skepticism in thought, confusion in values, expediency in standards, vulgarity in behaviour and opportunism in diplomacy.¹⁵ In the same vein, AbuSulayman describes it as:

A natural extension of the materialistic philosophy that regards man as a physical entity whose value is measured in terms of the pragmatic or utilitarian sense of his usefulness to the 'state', society and the world.¹⁶

¹³ M.S. Avosetinyen,, "Politics in the Annals of Nigeria Democracy"; *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8, no. 1., (2006), 45.

¹⁴ See *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, (Chicago, William Senton Publishers, 1983).

¹⁵ A. Mawdudi, A. "Political Theory of Islam", (Eds) in *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*; (London, The Islamic Foundation, 1988),7.

¹⁶ A.H, AbuSulayman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A New Approach Toward Reform of Contemporary Knowledge" in *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge*, (Herndon, IIIT, 1988), 114.

To crown it all, he sees democracy as an 'amalgamation of individuals who, by forming a majority, assume the right and the power to propagate their thoughts and achieve their personal interests, while making minimal concessions to minorities.'"

Another feature of democracy is sovereignty. The brain behind the theory of sovereignty was a French writer called Bodin, who saw it as a power supreme over citizens and itself not bound by laws.¹⁸

This implies that government is conceived as an institution consisting of representatives chosen by the people and responsible to the people. In essence, the ultimate political power of sovereignty rests within the mass of the people.

Electoral process is one of the features of democracy. It is the process through which candidates are elected to fill political posts.¹⁹ This explains the ways by which the representatives of the people are elected. As it is not likely for people to adopt a single ideology, people who are like-minded are supposed to come together under political parties whose agenda and manifestoes are in their favour. The process also involves selection of candidates for the available offices by each of the political parties, canvassing for votes by contestants through presentation of the party's manifestoes or programmes to the electorate. This is concluded by voting, where the candidates with highest votes are declared winners.

One of the ingredients of democracy is the rule of law. The law which can equally be referred to as constitution is the body of rules, customs, conventions and laws by which the relationships of

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ J.A, Adeyemi,(1999), *A Modern Approach to the Study of Politics*; (Ibadan, Akoi Production Limited, 1999), 18.

¹⁹ D.O, Eyiye, *Government Made Easy*; (Benin City, Quality Publishers Ltd., 2003), 46.

individuals are regulated in a state. In short, democracy is said to have favoured equality and justice via the electoral process, as it implies one man, one vote, and no citizen is regarded as superior to the other.

It needs to be mentioned that Western democracy or liberal democracy, as it is otherwise called, could not be regarded as a perfect system of governance. This might be the reason why a strong proponent of the system, Plato, describes it as the "worst of all lawful governments, and the best of all lawless ones." Burai also cites Winston Churchill to have described it as "the worst form of government, but there is nothing better."²⁰ A confirmation of the limitations of the liberal democracy is further discussed by Noibi, who sees the hijack of power by the financial giants and political demagogues, imposition of candidates on the populace, rigging of elections, hi-tech corruption, and loss of lives and properties, as some of the defects of the modern Western democracy.²¹ He, therefore, quotes the Iranian President's, Ahmadi Nejad's, open letter to President Bush in May 2006, disclosing some shortcomings of the liberal democracy:

Liberalism and Western style democracy have not been able to help realize the ideals of humanity. Today these two concepts have failed. Those with insight can already hear the sounds of the shattering and fall of the ideology and thoughts of the Liberal democratic system.

How long must the people of the world pay for the incorrect decisions of some rulers? How much longer will the specter of insecurity - raised from the

²⁰ U.M. Burai, "Islam and Democracy: Mutually Reinforcing or Incompatible"; *Weekly Trust*, (Abuja Media Trust Communication, January 10 -16, 2003), 5.

²¹ D.O.S, Noibi, 4-6.

stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction - hunt the people of the world? How much longer will the blood of the innocent men, women and children be spilled on the streets, and people's houses destroyed over their heads?²²

Islam and Democracy

A close examination of the process of democracy raises some rhetorical questions: Does Islam support democracy? Are these processes practicable without religion? Can Muslims participate in this system of government? In the first instance, we acknowledge that Muslim scholars are not unanimous on the issue of democracy developed and practised by the West. To AbuSulayman, the concepts of democracy and sovereignty are alien to Islamic culture, though he admits some apparent similarities between the concepts and the overall spirit of Islam.³ To him, the secular nature of democracy makes such concepts as majority, minority, election, and party system, of paramount importance in Western political systems. This consequently renders the concept of justice irrelevant in the system, and so provides legal loopholes for the strong to gratify their personal interests at the expense of the weak.²⁴ The immunity clause in the Nigerian constitution confirms this assertion.

In his own view, Noibi sees nothing left in the government of the people by the people and for the people when the political party machinery dominated by financial giants and political demagogues have hijacked power from the people, formulate the manifestos and select the candidates. Some developing countries

²² Ibid.

²³ A.H, AbuSulayman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A New.....144

²⁴ Ibid

could not implement their policies because they are under serious pressure from foreign countries.²⁵

In the same vein, Sayyid Qutb's rejection of democracy was a reaction to its Westernization. He discourages its importation to the Middle East and equally opposes to the idea of calling Islam democratic. To him, acceptance of democracy and admitting it as Islamic pose a problem of continuity should the concept become obsolete. He therefore asks a pertinent question thus:

If you present Islam to people today associating it with socialism and democracy because these are fashionable trends in this present time, you should remember that capitalism was, for a period of time, people's favourite system when it replaced the feudal system. Similarly, there were periods of time when absolute power was a desirable pattern of government, particularly when the objective was the unification of small provinces into a national set-up as happened in the cases of Germany and Italy under Bismark and Mazzini. Only time will tell what sort, of social system and method of government will be preferred in the future. So, what sort of colour will you be giving Islam tomorrow in order to present it to people in the guise they like most?²⁶

The above view was equally shared by Abdulqadir Abu Paris of Jordan, who did not subscribe to any reconciliation between Islam and democracy. Sai'd Hawwa of Syria initially supported the stand of Qutb and Abu Paris, but later adopted a more moderate

²⁵ D.O.S, Noibi, 6.

²⁶ Sayyid Qutb, In the Shade of the Qur'an, (vol. 5, Surah 6), 116.

position, by canvassing for adoption of democracy by the Muslim world. In his words:

We see that democracy in the Muslim World will eventually produce victory for Islam. Thus, we warn ourselves and our brothers against fighting practical democracy. In fact, we see that asking for more democracy is the practical way to the success of Islam on Islam's territory. Our enemies have realized this fact, and that is why they have assassinated democracy and established dictatorships and other alternatives. Many of the followers of Islam have been unable to see the positive things democracy provides to us; they only looked at the issue from a purely theoretical and ideological perspective, and failed to look at it from the perspective of reality, namely that the majority rules, that the values of such a majority dominate and that in whichever country a Muslim majority exists Islam will prevail. Even when the Muslims are a minority, democracy is mostly in their interest.²⁷

Qaradawi sees nothing wrong in the adoption of democracy, if it implies that people must choose their ruler by themselves without imposition, if people have the right to bring him to account if he commits a mistake and if they must have the right to depose him and choose a new ruler if he goes astray, and if democracy is embodied in 'elections, public opinion poll, preference of the majority rule, multiparty system, the right of minority opposition,

²⁷ Hawwa, Sa'id (1988), *JunduAllahiTakhtitar.*,; Beirut, Dar Ammar, (Cited by Tamimi, Azzam, *Democracy in Islamic Political Thought*. (A paper based on a Lecturer at the Belfast Mosque in October 1997), 71.

freedom of the press and the independence of jurisdiction.²⁸ He refers to a *hadith* related by Ibn Abbas to drive home his point that democracy is in harmony with the essence of Islam, which warns against imposing a leader on a congregation. The *hadith* says "three people's prayers will not rise above their head even an inch; one who leads Muslims in congregational prayer while they do not like him."²⁹ Another *hadith* quoted by him says:

The best of your Imam - rulers- are those whom you love and they love you back and you supplicate Allah for their own good, and they for you. The worst of your Imams are those whom you loathe and they loathe you and you curse them and they curse you.³⁰

Sovereignty as a concept in democracy is equally not seen by scholars in the same face. In the actual sense of it, there is no disagreement among them that the basis of Islamic political system is the sovereignty of Allah and vicegerency of mankind and so sovereignty cannot be exclusively claimed by man. To AbuSulayman, the concept of sovereignty is alien to Islam and so debating on its adoption or rejection of the term does no service to Islamic thought. He traced the origin of the concept to the confrontation between the monarchy and the feudal lords who gained power by uniting together during the emergence of the European nationalist states. To him, the term sovereignty was used to indicate the placing of political and legislative power in the hands of the representatives of the people.³¹

In his defence of democracy and the concept of sovereignty, Qaradawi argues that:

²⁸ Y, Ai-Qaradawi, *State in Islam*; (Cairo, EI-Falah, 1998), 210-18.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ ibid.

³¹ A.H, AbuSulayman, "Islamization of Knowledge: A New.....146.

We must not take for granted the claim that since democracy means that people must rule themselves by themselves, then it rejects the fact that the ruling is for none but Allah. Now, democracy is based on the principle of the people's rule yet this does not contradict the principle that says that the rule is only for Allah on which Islamic Jurisprudence is based. It rather runs counter to the principle of the individual's rule on which dictatorship is based. Upholding democracy does not necessary mean the rejection of the Rule of Allah that is conducted and embraced by human beings.

One of the most highly cherished ingredients of democracy which is very much in line with the Islamic mode of governance is the doctrine of the rule of law which is the basis for equity and justice in the application of law of the land, where religion, ethnic, wealth, race and political affiliation is not allowed for any preferential treatment. The rule of law in Islam transcends the satisfaction of bestial instincts and temporal lusts which pave way for the immunity clause granted some political office holders, as demonstrated in the Nigeria's 1999 constitution. A clear demonstration of this is the imposition of more stringent law for the wives of the Prophet should they be guilty of anything exceeding the bounds of retribute (33: 31-32).

Equality, in a democratic set-up, implies 'one man, one vote'. As good as this method is, it is hampered by the fact that the vote of a morally upright and God-fearing individual has the same weight with those of a thug, hooligan, prostitute and an ex-convict, and which are manipulated by politicians to rig themselves into

Y. A!-Qaradawi,,,,, 211.

office. The Islamic concept of equality in a political set-up implies the choice of leaders from elections carried out by people's representatives who should be people of proven integrity, righteous and God-fearing.³³ Through this method, Abubakr was able to emerge as the first caliph. Upon the expiration of his tenure, Umar and Uthman were chosen to rule the *Ummah*.

The issue of canvassing for vote as a process of democracy has been exposed to criticisms by scholars. Apart from unhealthy rivalries which ensued among contestants, the process, because of its materialistic and secular nature, encourages money politics and godfatherism, which consequently breeds all forms of electoral malpractices, hooliganism and other political crises. The atrocities perpetrated by thugs employed by politicians are succinctly described by Ayua:

Our politicians arm them, drug them and give them a feeling of protection and of being above the law. They kill, maim, commit arson, rape and desecrate the sanctity of human life.³⁴

From the foregoing, it has been discovered that Western democracy could not be totally accepted by the Muslim and that its equation with Islamic governance could not be upheld. That notwithstanding, it cannot be denied that apart from the secular as well as the material nature of its process, the system borrows a lot from the Islamic system of governance. Where Islamic

³³ B.R. Raheem, "Toward Inculcating Islamic Political Ideals in Nigerian Democratic Leadership" in Dopamu, Ade P. et.al (eds), *Religion, Leadership and Society: Focus on Nigeria*. (Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, 2004), 245.

³⁴ G Ayua, "The Orgy of Violence and Quest for Nationhood". *The Gleaner Magazine*, no. 8. (Makurdi, St. Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary. 2005/06),6.

government lays emphasis on the desires of Allah, democracy amplifies the desires of man. Where democracy gives preference to human sovereignty, Islam recognizes the sovereignty of Allah. However, the process of democracy can be used to attain good governance. In fact, due democratic process was taken by the then Governor of Zamfara State in northern Nigeria to re-introduce *Shari'ah* consequent upon the bill he sent to the State House of Assembly in 2000. This same procedure was taken by other states which followed suit.

One can appreciate further that democracy takes much after the Islamic system of government by considering some other systems of government in political history. Theocracy is a system of government where an individual who claims to have assumed Divine right of legislating laws forgives whomsoever he wishes and deprives others his hand of forgiveness. This type of government is not in line with the teaching of Islam which derives its law from the Qur'an, the word of Allah and the practice of the Prophet. *Ijta'* and *Qiyas* are only secondary sources of Islamic law.

Aristocracy as a system of government involves restriction of authority to a particular social class whereby the succeeding generations inherit it from their predecessors. This system of government does not tally with the Islamic system of government, as it was not practised by the Prophet and neither was it practised by the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Dictatorial government is a government by force, a government which takes decisions without any consultation. There are serious contradictions in this type of government and that of Islam, which enjoins due consultation, mutual love between the ruled and the ruler, as well as acceptance of the leader by the community.

From this, it can be seen that except for secularism, which renders democracy ineffective to guarantee comprehensive social justice and protection of the people, democracy could have been a true representative of good governance which Islam upholds.

The influence of Islam on the West has been widely acknowledged by both Muslims and non-Muslims. The influence was all embracing, as it covered all aspects of the Western life. Considering the great influence of Muslims on the Western Europe, Watt has this to say:

.....it is clear that the influence of Islam on western Christendom is greater than is usually realized. Not merely did Islam share with Western Europe many material products and technological discoveries; not merely did it stimulate Europe intellectually in the field of science and philosophy but it provoked Europe into forming a new image of itself.³⁵

In the same vein, Briffault (cited by Qutb) recognizes contributions of Muslims to the modern world. He avers that:

Many other effects of Islamic civilization shed their rays of light on Europe. Although there is not a particular aspect of the European blossoming whose origin cannot safely be ascribed to the influence of Islamic culture.³⁶

Another scholar, Robert Briffault is said to have confirmed the Muslims' contributions to the Western world when he wrote:

There is not a single aspect of European growth in which the influence of Islamic civilization is not traceable... it

³⁵ W.M. Watt, *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe* (Islamic Survey 9) (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1972), 84.

³⁶ S. Qutb, *The Religion of the Future*; (Syria, International Islamic Federation ::! Student Organizations, 1975), 72.

is highly possible that but for the Arabs, modern European civilization would never have arisen at all.³⁷

To corroborate the virility of the Islamic Caliphate in heralding civilization, Adedimeji cited a letter which was written by King George of England, Sweden and Norway and addressed to Khalifah of the Muslims in Andalusia, Hisham III and taken to him by a delegate led by the Princess of the king. The letter reads thus: To: His Excellency, Khalifah of the Muslims in Andalusia, Hisham III.

From: George II, the King of England, Sweden and Norway.

After saluting your Excellency, we see the progress your Kingdom had made in area of Science and Technology, Literary and Social AmenitiesAnd we want our children to emulate from these good gestures. So that it can be good beginning to spread the light of knowledge in our own country, which was dominated by ignorance from all corners. I have sent my Princess with other British children to come and learn from their honourable age mates in your kingdom. Along with her are these small gifts.

I hope that your Excellency will admit her with love and compassion.

Signed:

Your Subordinate,
George II.³⁸

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ M.A. Adedimeji, "Kemal Ataturk and the Fate of the Ottoman Islamic Caliphate." A Lecture presented at the Kwara/Southwest Zone of the International Institute of Islamic Thought Monthly Seminar held at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin on 16th April 2009.

If it cannot be denied that the Muslim world has contributed immensely to the intellectual rejuvenation of the Western world, and that the modern developments in science and technology could not be stripped of Islamic origin, then one can conveniently conclude that the system of government laid down by Islam and practised by the companions of the prophet could not have escaped the awareness of the West when they were learning from the Muslims. Just as they secularised education, this system of government was de-Islamized in the name of democracy before selling it out to the rest world. What is now left is that Muslims should look for means of re-Islamizing democracy and throwing away the un-Islamic aspects of the system to make it consumable to the Muslim world. Some doubting Thomases can look at this as a white-elephant project, but the manipulation of democracy to expand the scope of *Shari'uh* in some northern states of Nigeria has proved the possibility of this. With the expansion of *Shari'ah* in some northern states of the country, some Islam-related institutions have been put in place. Such Islamic institutions as judicial institutions of *Shari'ah* implementation, the institution of *wilayat al-Mazalim* (Public Complaints), *Shari'ah* Commission, Ministry of Religious Affairs, the *Hisbah* Board, the Zakat Commission, and the Societal Re-Oriented Commission, to mention but a few, have been put in place.

Conclusion

So far, this paper has discussed the concept of democracy as exemplified in the Western system and the perspective of Islam. The secularization of the concept of democracy explains the dichotomy between it and the Islamic system of government and (his is true of other legacies of Islam bequeathed to the West. While we can not say that the current democratization process is in line with the teaching of Islam, we contend that a lot had been

borrowed from the Islamic system of government to enrich Western democracy; and that if not for its secularization which allows for vices, corruption, hooliganism, thuggery, vandalization. election malpractices and other political crimes, it would have been recommended for the Muslim world for adoption.

In the light of the above, we strongly recommend that the aims and objectives of the contemporary system of education needs to be revamped so that it incorporates spirituality and reduces emphasis on materialism as this type of education is faulty and any faulty system of education, undoubtedly, produces faulty graduates. To prepare children for future responsibilities. Muslims should ensure that Islamic education is not thrown into the dustbin, as doing this will not afford them the opportunity of having the much-cherished flavour of Islamic education, which teaches good governance.

Looking at politics as a dirty game by the Muslims may not help the situation, as this may result to dirty people governing the righteous ones. Conscious Muslims who understand the teaching of Islam and are aware of their accountability to Allah are enjoined to join it for better performance. A conscious Muslim will use his office of responsibility to better the lots of the people and correct the ills of the society.