

## **Islamic Perspective of Change In Nigerian Political Landscape: Policy Implication On Attitudinal Change Among Nigerians**

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**Abstract:** *Social Change And Societal Development Come About Principally Through Technological Advancements, Class Conflict, And Political Action. Each Social Formation Is Located Within And Subject To The Influences Of A National Class Structure, A Regional Context, And A Global System Of States And Markets. Islam Is More Than A Religion For Those Who Seek Answers To Questions About The Unknown And More Than A Spiritual Guide For Those Who Seek The Best Of Morals. Islam Is Also An Entire Social And Political System That Reflects The Best Ways To Run A Prosperous Society. Along With Human Beings Is The Fundamental Factor In Social Change And Development As Opines Within The Context Of "Islah". Accordingly, This Paper Discusses About The Perspective Of Social Change In Islam Within The Context Of Political Leadership In Nigeria. The Fundamental Purpose Is To Understand How Islam Concerns About The Social, Political, And Economic Life As Well As The Morality And Ethics Of Nigerian Muslim's Umah Who Voted Massively For Change Mantra In The 2015 General Election. Hence, This Paper Aims To Reaffirm That President Muhammed Buhari Alone Cannot Install Expected Monumental Change In The Political Landscape Of This Country And Also Socio-Economic And Political Development Cannot Be Achieved Until There Is Attitudinal Change Among Nigerians.*

**Keywords:** *Islam, Social Change, Conflict, Development, Islah.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Islam Is A Way Of Life That Guides Human Beings To The Right Way, Which Satisfies Their Spiritual As Well As Material Needs. Along With Human Beings Is The Fundamental Factor In Social Change And Development. Accordingly, The Crisis That Muslim Societies Are Facing Today Is Multidimensional In Nature, Embracing Political, Social, Economic, Psychological, And Educational Domains. These "Crises" As Well As The Situations Of The Contemporary Muslim Societies Have Projected A Negative Impression About Islam To Non-Muslims. The Non-Muslims, Especially Western Thinkers, As A Consequence, Have Generally Presented Prejudiced And Biased Views About Islam. They Have Concluded That Islam Is Against Change And Development; Therefore, It Is The Main Cause Of Muslim Backwardness. According To Them, Islam Is A Barrier To Change And Development. This Myth Was Created By Some Western Thinkers And Orientalists, Who Influenced Some Muslim Thinkers That Did Not Understand The Real Dynamics Of Change As Articulated In Islam (Muhammad, 1992).

Since The Early Nineteenth Century, When Uthman Dan Fodio Established An Islamic State In Northern Nigeria, There Has Been A Close Symbiosis Between Religion And Political Power (Olaniyi, 1997; Dike, 2001; Mutiullah, 2010). As At Independence In 1960, The Issue Of Regional Or Ethnic Power Sharing In Nigeria Has Shifted To A Contest Between Muslims And Christians, With The Part-Muslim, Part-Christian Yoruba Of The Southwest Helping To Hold The Balance. Interestingly, Nigeria Has An Interwoven Of Its Ethnic And Religious Character Such That The North Is Predominantly Muslim And Comprises Mostly Hausa/Fulani Ethnic Group; The Western Yoruba Are Partly Christian And Partly Muslim While The Eastern Ibo Including The Southern Minority Groups Are Predominantly Christian. This Is Not To Suggest That There Are No Other Religious Groups In Existence, But The Duo Of Islam And Christianity Have Assumed A Dominant Status Over Other Forms Of Religion Such As The African Traditional Religion (ATR) (Jega, 2010). Consequently, Relations Between The Two Have Been Characterized By Series Of Ups And Downs.

This Background Is Essentially Relevant To The Issues That Manifested During The Just Concluded 2015 General Election. The Fundamental Objective Of This Paper Is To Enlighten Nigerians About The View Of Islam On "Change" With The Purpose Of Understanding How Islam Concerns About The Social, Political, And Economic Life As Well As The Morality And Ethics Of Muslim's Ummah. Hence, This Paper Aims To Reaffirm That President Muhammed Buhari Alone Cannot Install Expected Monumental Change In The Political Landscape Of

This Country And Also Socio-Economic And Political Development Cannot Be Achieved Until There Is Attitudinal Change Among Nigerians.

## **II. Islamic Concept Of Change**

Generally, Change Is A Universal, Unavoidable, Irreversible And Is A Necessary Phenomenon (Przeworski, 1991). Change Is Everywhere And Happens All The Time. It Is Unavoidable In The Sense That It Imposes Itself Upon Us. It Occurs Whether We Like It Or Not. Change Is Endemic; Therefore All Societies Must Change. Those That Do Not Will Disappear. Indeed, The General View That Is Found In The Eastern And The Western Literature Affirms The Universality, Irreversibility, Necessity And Unavoidability Of Change. According To Abdullahi, (1991), The Term Change Is Itself Part Of The Western Jargon Of Political Sociology And As Such It Reflects The Values Of The Western Scholars Like Comte, Durkheim And Weber.

Islam Views Change, As An Inseparable Part Of Our Life And It Should Be Allowed To Take Its Natural Course At Both The Individual And Societal Level. Islam Has A Unique Vision About Social Change, Which Is Not Found In Other Ideologies And Religions. It Agrees With The Necessity, Unavoidability, Irreversibility And Universality Of Change (AL-Qardawi, 1985). Therefore, It Advocates The Necessity Of Changing Human Societies Particularly Muslim In Accordance With Shari'Ah Requirements. However, The Basic Point That Affirms The Uniqueness Of Islamic Mission And Vision Of Social Change Can Be Traced Back To Its Fundamental And Eternal Foundation That Is *Tawhid*. *Tawhid* Implies That There Is No God, But Allāh Who Knows About Everything That Happens In The Universe And The Only One Who Knows What Is Useful And What Is Harmful For All Human Beings And Their Societies. This Is The Core Idea Of Islam And The Basis Of All Aspects Of Human Behavior And Life As A Whole. Hence, Change Also Must Be Aligned According To *Tawhid*. Therefore, The Main Objective Of Change In Islam Is To Assert And Proclaim The Unity Of Allāh In All Spheres And Aspects Of Human Life. Another Objective Is To Improve And Change The Inner Nature Of Human Beings Spiritually And Morally In Order To Succeed In This And The Other Eternal World Where We Have To Live Forever. The Bases And Objectives Of Change In Islam Are Different From That Of Westerner Worldview. The Basis Of Change According To The West Is Materialistic; Therefore, Its Objective Is To Succeed Only In This World And Worship Their GNP, GDP And Life-Style.

## **III. Theory Of Change In Islam (Islah)**

The Theories Of Change Offered By Western Sociologists Are Generally Materialistic In Nature (Shiner, 1999). The Reason Is That These Theories Were Formulated To Oppose Religion In General As Well As Christianity In Particular, Which Was Against Change. Muslims' Theories, On The Other Hand, Explain Change Not Only Materially, But Also Spiritually And Morally, Because These Theories Are Based On Islam. They Also Indicate The Direction A Society Must Take If It Wants To Change And Not Disappear.

Islam Has A Unique Vision About Social Change, Which Is Not Found In Other Ideologies And Religions. It Agrees With The Necessity, Unavoidability, Irreversibility And Universality Of Change. Therefore, It Advocates The Necessity Of Changing Human Societies Particularly Muslim In Accordance With *Shari'Ah* Requirements. Islam Uses Many Special Concepts That Are Not Found In Other Theories, Particularly Western, To Refer To Change. These Concepts, In The View Of Al-Jazairi, (1976); Are Generated From The Basic Islamic Sources, The *Qur'an* And *Sunnah*, And They Include *Tagghaiyyur*, *Tabaddul*, *Tahawwwl*, *Khoroj*, *Tajdid*, And *Islāh*. It Agrees And Does Not Oppose Western Concepts Such As Evolution, Progress, And Development. But It Offers Different Definitions And Interpretations Of These Concepts. In Addition, It Defines Social Change As It Refers To Spiritual, Moral And Material Changes, Which Occur In A Society And Its Elements On The Basis Of *Tawhid* As Discussed Above.

Moreover, It Differs With The Westerners Theory On The Question Of What Is Changing In Order To Identify Change. Hence, Islam Asserts That Not Everything Can Be Subjected To Change. There Is Something, Which Cannot Be Changed Such As *Huddud* Laws (Mutiullah And Olaofe, 2010). In Contrast, For The Westerners, Everything Is Subject To Change, Even The Concept Of God And Religion. However, The Things That Can Be Changed, In Islam, Go In One Of Three Directions: Deviation From The Absolute, Parallel To The Absolute Or Return Toward The Absolute. These Three Directions Can Also Be Reduced To Two For Convenience: Changes Toward The Best And The Worst. Westerners Have Presented The Same Directions, Toward The Best In A Uniliner Or Multiliner, Cumulative Manner, Or Toward The Best And The Worst In A Cyclical Manner. But What Makes Islam Unique In Its Theoretical Approach And Direction Is Related To How Far Change Is Consistent And Agreeable To The Divine Law And How Far It Deviates From It. All Else Is Only A Manifestation Of This Law.

As Change Goes In Different Directions In Islam, It Must Take Place At All Levels: Individual, Group, Community, Societal And Universal, But Mostly At The Level Of The Individuals. The Reason Is That Individuals Are The Active Agents Of Change. Any Change In Them Will Cause Subsequent Changes At The Other Levels. In The Case Of Individuals, Islam Emphasizes To Change Their Inner Beings; Their Awareness And Consciousness, Their Attitudes, Beliefs, Motivations And Morality And Spirituality. As A Result Of This Inner Change, Society Will Also Change From One Stage Of Perfection To Another, Both Materially And Non- Materially.

#### **IV. Change In Nigerian Political Landscape**

Change Is Ubiquitous In Any Society, Particularly In That Which Strives To Fulfil Human Needs. And It Takes A Committed Leadership To Accomplish A Propitious Change In A Society. Nigeria's Short Life Has Been Packed With Successions Of Social Changes. There Has Been The Shift From Regions To States, From Farms To Cities, From Agriculture To Industries, And Now Power Shift From Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) That Has Been In Power Since Inception Of Fourth Republic, 1999 To The Opposition Party, All Progressives Congress (APC). Having Experienced Untold Hardship Since 1999, Nigerians Want Change. They Desire Fundamental Changes To The Way Things Are Currently In Their Lives At The Visceral Level. Today, The Country Is Characterized By High Spate Of Insecurity, Blatant Corruption, Impunity, Poverty, Unemployment, Ineptitude, Lack Of Power Supply, Poor Health Facilities, Decayed Educational System And Moribund Economy; The PDP, A Party With The Paradoxical Slogan '*Power To The People*', A Self-Contradictory Statement Which Can Only Be True If It Were False, Gave Birth To The Oppositions Slogan '*Change*'. The Change Did Not Come Without Some Sacrifices And Selflessness. This Change Did Not Come Until We Saw The Last Of Political Parties Like The ACN, CPC, ANPP And A Fraction Of The APGA. These Political Parties Came Together And Metamorphosed Into The Party With The Acronym APC (All Progressives Congress).

George Bernard Shaw Said: "*Progress Is Impossible Without Change, And Those Who Cannot Change Their Minds Cannot Change Anything.*" On This Note, The Change Agents Spearheaded By Gen Muhammadu Buhari, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, As Well As Some Aggrieved Members Of The PDP Called "The New PDP", Capitalized On The PDP's Inefficiency And Boastful Approach To Governance. Every Nigerian, Muslims, Christians And Idol Worshipers United To Have A New Life In The Country Just As It Had Happened In 1993 When Nigerians Stood Firmly For Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola, The Acclaimed Winner Of 1993 Presidential Election That Was Annulled By The Military Junta Of Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. At This Time, Nigerians Were Convinced That Buhari Was The Man To Save The Country That Appeared To Be Going Off The Rails Under Former President Jonathan, The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Flag Bearer.

Buhari Has Been Described By Many People As The "Masses Friend And The Elites Nemesis". He Is Feared By The Elite Over His Likely Crackdown On Corruption And Waste In Government. Buhari Arguably Has The Largest Street Support Among Nigerian Masses Irrespective Of Their Ethnic And Religious Affiliation. He Is Also Perceived As A Strong Character That Is Capable Of Quelling The Islamic Sect Insurgency That Has Ravaged Large Swathes Of The Country's North-East Region. The Emergence Of The APC Presented Nigeria With Its First True And Potent Opposition Party Since The Country Returned To Civilian Rule In 1999. Many Political Analysts Submitted That The Presidential Election Presented The Best Opportunity For An Opposition Party To Clinch The Coveted Post Of The Presidency In Nigeria. The APC Grabbed The Opportunity In Resounding Fashion. Sensing Defeat By The Opposition APC Party, PDP Resorted To Using Religious Politics In Its Campaigns In Order To Scare The Electorate Away From The APC. Whenever They Went To A Muslim State They Would Tell Them Never To Vote For The APC Because It Is A Christian Party – Based On The Fact That The Vice-Presidential Candidate Is A Pastor.

When Campaigning Among Christians, They Would Tell Them That The APC Is A Muslim Party That Has A Hidden Agenda To Islamize Nigeria. They Often Say That The APC Is The Political Wing Of The Dreaded Boko Haram. The President Runs From One Big Church To Another Giving Them Huge Amounts Of Money To Campaign For Him. Some Pastors Tell Their Congregations That They Have To Save Christianity In Nigeria And That Voting For The Opposition Will Spell The End Of Their Faith. This Kind Of Campaign That Makes Religion A Political Tool Was Successful In All The Previous Elections, But This Time Around It Failed Dismally. Its Failure Marks A Watershed In Nigerian Political History; It Is, In Fact, A Peaceful Revolution That Took Place Without Any Significant Violence. It Indicates The Triumph Of Pragmatism Over Sentiment And Identity Politics. The Deep Hatred And Animosity That Has Defined Muslim-Christian Relations Over The Years And Manifested In Their Voting Patterns Has Been Miraculously Undermined. As A Result Of The Bad Governance, Many People Decided That They Would Not Continue To Allow Their Religious Sensibilities To Be Manipulated By Selfish

Politicians Who Are Only Interested In Enriching Themselves. The 2015 General Election Shows That Nigerians Have Now Decided To Make Obsolete Karl Marx's Famous Remark That "Religion Is The Opium Of The People".

It Is Pertinent To Realize That Before His Victory In The Last Presidential Election, Buhari On His Part, Had Failed In Three Previous Attempts To Emerge As A Civilian President: 2003, 2007 And 2011. This Is The First Time Nigerians Elected A Prepared And Determined President Who Has A Plan To Transform Nigeria From A Pariah Nation To A Developed Country. Though A Combination Of Socio-Political, Religious And Moral Factors Determined How The Country's Six Geo-Political Zones Voted, The Electoral Battle Was Largely Drawn Along Regional Lines. Voting Patterns Showed That The South-West, North-East And North-West Voted For Buhari While The South-South And South-East Voted For Jonathan. Both Candidates Shared Votes In The North- Central.

## **V. Towards Attitudinal Change Among Nigerians**

Allah (SWT) Has Categorically Stated In Glorious Qur'an That "..... Surely, Allah Does Not Change The Condition Of A People Until They Change Their Own Condition;" (Qur'an 13 Verse 11). It Was A Former American President, John F. Kennedy Who Admonished His Citizens, "Do Not Think Of What America Will Do For You, But Think Of What You Will Do For America". It Is Also True That Most Of The Developed Societies Attained Their Present Status Through The Concerted Efforts Of All Citizens And Residents. Unfortunately, Same Cannot Be Said Of Our Dear Country, Nigeria Where Citizens Do And Say Unprintable Things About Their Country Without Recourse To The Impact Of Such On The Nation. While Americans Rise In The Morning To Bless Their Country, Nigerians On Daily Basis Make Negative Confessions Like "Nigeria Is Spoilt Beyond Repair", "This Country Cannot Be Good Again" Et Cetera.

Many Endlessly Expect What Nigeria Can Do For Them And Are Not Willing To Do Anything For The Sake Of The Country. However, There Are Other Nigerians Who Still Believe That The Country Will Work And Achieve Greatness, Regardless Of Its Current State. It Must Be Stated That Meaningful And Enduring Change In The Socio-Political And Economic System Of Nigeria Cannot Be Attained By President Buhari Alone. To This End, Government Functionaries, Civil Servants At All Levels And Every Nigerian Are Expected To Set The Pace By Curbing Corruption, Indiscipline And Act Of Wasteful Spending. Political Office Holders Should Be Patriotic In Service And Be Accountable In All Their Dealings.

Nigerians Should Know That The Onus Is On Them To Give Whatever They Can In Evolving A Country Of Their Dream. There Is Need For Us To Have A Holistic Reflection Of Our Lifestyle And See If We Have Contributed Anything Substantial To The National Drive Towards Economic Prosperity. Those In The Civil Service And The Private Sector Should Use Their Positions To Contribute Meaningfully To The Progress And Growth Of The Nation. It Is On This Note That Those Involved In The Recent Threat To National Unity And Security Are Urged To Have A Rethink. It Takes Unpatriotic Elements To Bomb And Destroy Their Country's Places Of Interest As Being Witnessed In The Country, No Matter The Grievances Or Level Of Provocation. It Is Regrettable That This New Dimension Had Put Nigeria In The Global Spotlight For The Wrong Reasons. Besides, Security Agents Too Must Be Seen To Be Nationalistic In The Discharge Of Their Constitutionally Assigned Duties. Whatever We Do, We Must Ask Ourselves, How Much Does It Enhance The Change Process? No Matter How Good The Intention Of The Government, It Is The Patriotic Zeal On The Part Of Those In Authority And The Citizens That Will Translate To Faithfulness And Efficacy In Translating Them To The Positive Results.

To Achieve The Much-Talked About *Change*, There Must Be A Complete Change Of Attitude On The Part Of All Nigerians, Including The Political Leadership Class, Because No Matter How Perfect Or Excellent The Constitution, Or Other Instruments For Ensuring Accountability And Checking Corruption In The Country Might Be, All Will Come To Naught Unless Everyone Abide By The Law Of The Land. Nigeria Is Simply Lacking In One Thing That Every Nation, Big Or Small, Needs To Achieve Greatness: *Credible, Responsible And People-Oriented Leadership*. That Is Why I Feel So Pained When I See People Compare Some Of Our Leaders To The Likes Of Lee Kuan Yew, Mathir Muhammed, Etc. These Are Leaders Who, Together With Their People, Oversaw Genuine Change Of Their Societies From A Relatively Underdeveloped Colonial Outpost With No Natural Resources To Developed Economies.

## **VI. Recommendations**

Islam Is A Complete And Comprehensive Way Of Life; It Is Universal In It Scope And In Its Applicability. Islam Sets Standard Of Divinely Guided Social Justice, Moral Value, Ethical Identity, Political System And Transparent Economic Norms. Islam Propagates The Above Through Education And Knowledge Under The Two Sources Of Sharia: The Qur'an And Hadith. It Is Within This Context The Paper Recommend The Followings;

1. **Gradual Change:** These Changes, Either At The Level Of Individual Or Society Must Be Planned And Be Gradual Because Islam Does Not Approve Sudden And Destabilizing Changes. Islam Requires Planning For These Changes In Order For It To Be Well Organized And Achieve More Effective Results. This Plan Must Take Place In A Gradual Form. This Means That Change Must Occur In Gradual Stages Leading To Perfection. A Singular *Qur'anic* Contribution Is That Everything In This World Changes In Stages. The Individuals, For Example, Would Not Be Able To Change Their Societies Unless They Change What Is Within Themselves; Soul And Mind. Therefore, The Campaign Of *Change Begins With Me* Is A Right Step In Right Direction. The Reason Why The Current Administration Of President Buhari Should Adopt Gradual Change Is That It Is More Lasting, More Influential And More Suitable And In Consonance With Human Nature. Therefore, Islam Is Generally In Favor Of Only The Positive Permanent Change, But Not The Temporal Or Fleeting Change That Lasts For Certain Period Of Time Or For Certain Conditions.
2. **Enjoin Justice:** With Justice A Society Will Rise And Without It A Society Will Fall. There Are Historical Events, Which Prove This Fact. The Best Example Is The Islamic Society Itself. There Was A Time When This Society Had A Meteoric Rise Mainly Because It Pursued The Cause Of Justice. However, It Presupposes The Existence Of Certain Conditions, Which Are Proposed By Islam To Change Humanity And Societies. These Conditions Are Brought Out Through Concepts Like Knowledge, *Tazkiyah*, *Tafakkur*, *Islāh*, *Jihād*, *Taskheer* And *Ijtihād*. All These Concepts Are Significantly Related To Administrate Justice And Eradicate Injustice. Therefore, The Current Administration Should Pursue Justice Without Prejudice. The Ongoing Anti-Corruption War Should Not Be Selective And Party Based. Recover Loots Should Also Be Spend Judiciously And Not Re-Looted Because The Misuse Of Wealth And Materialistic Values Lead To Injustice And This Causes Destruction Of A Society.
3. **Attitudinal Change:** The Federal Government Should Intensify Efforts In Changing Nigerians Negative Attitudes To Positive Ones. The First Element To Be Changed In Real Social Change Is Individuals. We Previously Mentioned That, In Islam, No Change Would Take Place In Any Society Without Changing What Is Within The Heart, Soul And Mind Of Its Individuals. Individuals Are Essential For The Existence Of A Society And For The Changes Of All Aspects Of Life. Therefore, Islam Gives More Emphasis To Change The Individual Of A Society Internally And Externally Both Materially And Immaterially.
4. **Poverty Reduction:** According To International Standards Of Poverty, A Person Is Said To Be Poor When He Lives Under \$1.25 Per Day. There Are Many People In Such Category In Nigeria And Their Plights Are Highly Deplorable. There Cannot Be A Meaningful Change In The Society Unless The Level Of Poverty Is Drastically Reduced And Government Implement Poverty Alleviation Program Based On Peoples Empowerment.
5. **Employment And Wealth Creation:** Unemployment Is One Of The Major Challenges In Nigeria And Does Not Need Much Explanation Because It Has Broken The Hearts Of Many Citizens. People Are Pushed Into Criminal Activities That Destroy The Basis Of Our Society Because High Level Of Unemployment. Federal Government Should Create Employment Opportunities And Provide Enabling Environment To Attract Foreign Investors And Enhance Business Investment. An Idle Hand Is A Devilish Workshop They Say. An Unemployed Citizen Can Be Tempted To Indulge In Crime To Make Money And Live Better.

#### CONCLUSION

Obama (2014) Once Said: “*Change Will Not Come If We Wait For Some Other Persons Or Some Other Time. We Are The Ones We’ve Been Waiting For. We Are The Change That We Seek.*” An Average Nigerian Wants To See The Much-Talked About Change Almost Immediately. But For This Meaningful Change To Take Place, All Of Us Must Change From Our Wrongdoing And Unscrupulous Attitudes To Imbibe Attributes Of Patriotic, Sincere And Responsible Citizens Of A Responsible Country.

Finally, The Above Clearly Suggests What Kind Of Change Would Be Involved In Following The Path Of Allah And His Apostle. As You Are Reading This Paper, I Ferently Hope That You Have Understood What Change Connote From Islamic Point Of View And You Must Know That In Every Minute That Passes, You Have An

Opportunity To Change And Become A Better Person Who Would Be The Instrument Of Positive Change In Our Society.

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