

REVITALIZATION OF THE CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN ECONOMY: AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at examining the Islamic perspective of the contemporary Nigeria Economy with focus on the Islamic concept of economic development such as fear for Allah, accountability to Allah and application of Allah's guidelines with a view to rejuvenating the mindset of people for a much better and fruitful society. The study was literature review. It discussed the economic problems of Nigeria, such as fraud, money laundering, drug trafficking, bribery and corruption. Consequently, it was discovered that there had been various attempts by the Federal Government of Nigeria to alleviate and even curb the persistent economic problems ravaging the nation but has failed to tackle pragmatically the core economic problems of contemporary Nigerians. It was concluded that Islam is not merely a set of beliefs but has solutions to tackle and curb these problems.

Keywords: Nigerian economy, Islam, revitalization, belief, Allah

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Nigeria today is confronted with stark reality of economic woe and abject poverty. Less than 10% of her populations are living in unprecedented affluence while majority are condemned to poverty, spine kind of exploitation, oppression and deprivation (Odudele, 2006). This as a matter of fact has necessitated all segments of the society to try and put in place criteria for survival or recovery as the case may be. They had been various attempts to alleviate and even to curb the persistent economic problems ravaging the nation by the Nigerian Government.

For instance, in April 1982 the Former President of Nigeria, Alhaji Sheu Shagari, introduced the price stabilization Act which conferred on the President power to take necessary steps to revamp the country's economy. General Ibrahim Babangida, after the failure of inter-National Monetary Fund (IMF) loan, also, introduced 915 - month National Emergency Recovery Fund (NERE) which was then a mandatory levy upon all categories of workers both in the public and private sectors. Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was also introduced in 1968.

There was also, an introduction of social campaign known as War against Indiscipline (WAI) by Buhari/Idiagbon regime in 1984. Still, Oputa panel was also established by President Olusegun Obasanjo for the purpose of probing those that had recklessly spent and wasted public funds. Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), National and State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS and SEEDS) were also established to reduce, control and correct the economic challenges facing the nation (Akanbi, 2001) and Akinwumi 2000).

All measures adopted by the Government has failed to tackle the problems. It is necessary therefore, to reveal the Islamic perspective of Revitalization of the contemporary Nigeria Economy as a panacea for the Nigeria's economic problems.

ISLAM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In a Muslim society, Islam and the economy are inseparable because Islam is not merely a set of beliefs. It also provides a definite outlook on life and a pragmatic programme for action (Malik, 2004). Therefore, the Islamic concept of economic development consists the moral, spiritual and material aspects. In Islam, the moral and the material, the economic and the social, the spiritual and the physical are inseparable. The welfare that Islam seeks extends beyond the life in this world to the life there is no conflict between the two. This is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an chapter (23:77) which reads thus: and seek, in that which Allah has given you, the home of the hereafter, and not neglect your lot in this world.

The Government strategies for the control and correction of the contemporary Nigerian economy should therefore include a thorough understanding of the social ideas and value of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Holy Prophet of Islam and a realistic assessment of Nigerians socio-economic situation. Undoubtedly, if certain Islamic concepts of economic development are infused into various measures the Government adopts for revamping Nigerian economy, the country will record an impressive growth in its economic development.

Fear of God: In Islam, Allah is one and He is the source of all things. To Him all belongs and it is He who has the right to direct and chart a path for the guidance of mankind in all matters including economic growth and Allah's guidance is the true guidance. By this concept alone mankind is liberated from servitude to other human beings and the exploitation of man by man. Selfishness, greed and lack of concern for fellow human beings contributed largely to the downturn of Nigeria's economy. Thus, adhering strictly to the fear of Allah will make the managers of Nigeria's economy demonstrate fair-play. This will greatly reduce the drain on Nigeria's resources by the operators.

Accountability to God: If all Nigerians realize that they are accountable to Almighty Allah, Nigeria's society will develop. Because,

this will lead to increase in creation of wealth and there will be commitment by the citizenry to the revival of the prudent management of resources and will increase the faith of people in the production of wealth, that is the "baking" of national cake rather than in its plundering, sharing. The Hadith of Holy Prophet Muhammed (SAW) which says that Allah loves that if any of you does anything he should do it well (Sidique, n. d and Khan, 1985) would then take a firm position in Nigerians work ethics. This will also, eradicate greed and the entire nation will merely be a trustee of the property of Allah, to whom we are accountable.

Application of the Shari'ah: The Shari'ah which is the law of Allah Abhors social vices and discourages speculative and non-productive economic activities. The country's current economic downturn can only be addressed through the application of Shari'ah in the dispensation of justice. This will reduce the economic crimes and other vices.

The state of the Nigerian economy, like any other economy is determined by the interplay of various factors, notably: supplier of resources; availability of resources at the right place, time and at the right quality; utilization of available resources to attain defined goals; and the attained goals must be greater than the utilized resources.

The above factors are applicable in Nigeria as a nation. It should be pointed out that resource utilization is determined by human action. The sources or otherwise of Nigeria's national economy is largely determined by the operators, that is, those who are placed in the decision making positions of the civil service, the elected governing bodies - both civilians and armed forces, the market women, contractors among others. Undoubtedly, if the behaviour of these operators of the economy is molded to a desired goal, the economy can be positively shaped and revitalized. But despite the fact that, Nigeria economy looks promising than any country in Africa in terms of resources and opportunities required

for growth and sustainable development, unfortunately, wealth mismanagement, corruption and lack of accountability and transparency by Nigeria Governments have been the main reasons for the poor economic performance. Despite the country's relative oil wealth, Nigeria's basic indicators place it among the twentieth poorest countries in the world (E.F.C.C. 2004).

Economic problems are those that emanate from people's desperate bid to earn wealth illegally thereby violating existing legislation governing the economic activities of the government and its administration. These problems include: fraud, drug trafficking, money laundering, embezzlement/ bribery, corruption, illegal arms deal, smuggling, human trafficking and child labour, illegal oil bunkering, illegal mining, tax evasion among others. (Akanbi, 2004).

Fraud: This can take different forms, but, the most popular one is the Advance free fraud otherwise known as (419) it has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian society. It is practiced everywhere in the country. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2000) describes it as an unlawful acquisition or reception of property or money. Islam recognizes lawful acquisition of property or money (Duran 4:7 and 37). It equally frowns at unlawful acquisition of property. Allah says "oh! Who believes Eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities" (Qur'an 4:2a) also, (Qur'an 2:188) says:

"And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of other people's property"

The non compliance with this Qur'anic injunction by many Nigerian has led to frequent cases of fraud in both private and public sectors. For example, Akanbi (2005) analyses that, a total of N33.546 billion was lost to fraud and forgeries through insider connivance in the Nigerian banking industry between 2001 and 2003. That of 2001 was N11.244 billion, 2002 N12.919 billion, while that of 2003 was N9.383 billion. Also Qwuamana (2005) added that, in Plateau state, a secondary school principal was chased out of school by his student

over fraud N7 million. The amount being their registration fees for National Examination Council (NECO) for 2005. The principal and other concerned members of staff of the school failed to remit the money to the examination body. This shows that, corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian blood. But, if we can adhere strictly to the above Qur'an injunction, fraud in its entire ramification would be totally curbed.

Money Laundering: This has also been described as an illegal business. The perpetrators in most cases illegally and secretly withdraw public funds and deposit them in foreign banks for their selfish interest. Balogun (2006) describe it as the off-shoot of fraud. This is the reason why money laundering Act of 2004 was enacted by the Federal Republic of Nigeria to prohibit the carrying of money about without due process of the law. Despite this prohibition, money laundering is still the order of the day, especially among the government functionaries. In Islam, money laundering tantamount to stealing and the Qur'an says "Do not devour one another's wealth by false and illegal (Qur'an 2:188).

Also, in the year 637Ad, the Holy Prophet Muhammed delivered his fare-well Address in the Farewell pilgrimage, on plain of "Aratat". He said "Your lives and properties are forbidden to one another till you meet your Lord on the Day of Resurrection (Khan, 1985) in another verse of the Holy Qur'an Allah decreed that, as for the theft male or female, cut off his or her hands a punishment by which of example. From Allah, for their crime, and Allah is exalted win power and wise (Qur'an 5:41). If Nigerians can adopt the above principle as stipulated by Islam, fear would grip those intending to steal or launder money and Nigeria would as a result enjoy absolute peace.

Drug Trafficking: This is another illegal business that has seriously soiled the image of Nigeria in the international community. It has become the stock in trade of many Nigerians. Allah enjoins the Muslims not to engage in anything that could cause their destruction

(Qur'an 2:195). Because, one of the things that could cause problem to one's good health is indiscriminate use of dangerous drugs such as cocaine and heroine. Their evil effects consist of lost of sense and shortage of life span.

In Islam, one's daily prayer are not accepted if he/ she is intoxicated (Qur;'an 194:43). Similarly, the uses of narcotic drugs are on the increase, evidenced by increasing crime waves such as: raping, prostitution, armed robbery, assassinations among others. These are among the reasons Islam forbids the use of drugs and any other thing that can intoxicate. Also, these prompted the Federal Republic of Nigeria to ban illegal production, transaction and consumption of hard drugs in Nigeria. The Laundering of Money realized in such illicit transaction is equally prohibited (FRN 2004). If Nigerians can strictly follow the above Qur'anic injunction coupled with the Federal Republic of Nigeria directive, the ever-present economic problems would be totally eradicated.

Embezzlement/Bribery: The Federal Republic of Nigeria (199, 2000) describe bribery as money, donation, gift, loan, payment, release, discharge, or liquidation of loan discount, commission, rebate, bonus, employment, contract of empowerment, obligation or other similar advantage demanded, given, promised to be given or accepted with the intention to influencing a person's performance or non-performance of his or her official duties. Therefore, bribery involves taking money or material substance illegally from any individual before rendering assistance which would have been rendered without any illegal collection. As regard this, Allah enjoins mankind not to consume their wealth wrongfully nor offer it as bribe so as to deny other people their rights. (SAW), makes him to course the giver, the receiver of bribery as well as intermediary between them (Doi, 1984). He added that, when Umar Ibn khatab was the khaliph of the Muslim Empire, he warned his governors to beware of gifts because they form part and parcel of bribery. This implies that the government officials must be very careful of accepting gift

because the motive of the may be to influence his action or decision but may not necessities revealed it until he succeeds in delivering the bribe.

Even, the modern way of collecting bribery inform of gifts is prohibited by Islam. For instance, one occasion, prophet Muhammed (SAW), sent one of his companions to collect Zalat (alms giving) on behalf of the government. The companion remitted the amount he collected as Zalat and retained the one given to him as gifts. The prophet got annoyed and told him that if he had stayed in his father's home, nobody would have gone to present him gift (Al-Mundhiri, n.d). This informs Doi (1984) to say that taking of gifts by government functionaries in the process of discharging their duties is forbidden by Shari'ah. He, however agrees that gift may be exchanged among friends and relatives because gift may according to prophet Muhammed (SAW) remove rancour and increase love and affection. Now, if Nigerians can adopt the above principles as stipulated by Islam, fear would grip those intending to give or take bribe and Nigeria would, as a result enjoy absolute peace and economic revitalization.

Corruption: This is the perversion of normal process for the sake of obtaining an advantage which in most cases is personal and selfish (Akani, 2001). It is a way of getting material enrichment or opportunities for oneself and or others through the use of ones public position or personal connection without reference to the rules and procedures of office or due process of the law (Fkekwe, 1986 and Chalmers, 2003). Yoyo (2001) added that, the benefits derivable from corruption include ill gotten wealth and unmerited power or social standing. According to Lemu, (1990) corruption collapse both bribery and forms of official misconduct. Corruption is a major recurrent issue of governance in Nigeria. In Nigeria also, corruption has become endemic and eaten deep into the fabric of the nation.

Corruption in its totality inhibits development; on the other hand, corruption in Nigeria had reached a crises stage and this had

generated enough public revulsion and condemnation from anti corruption crusaders. In order to control this, Allah warns mankind to stay away from shameful deeds (Qur'an (6:90). He says that the condition of a people will not change unless they change it by themselves (Qur'an 13:11). He concludes by commanding the meaningful people to enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong doings (Qur'an 104 and 110). If all Nigerians adhere strictly to these Qur'anic injunctions certainly corruption will be a thing of the past and definitely the contemporary Nigeria economy will be revitalized.

CONCLUSION

It would be inferred from this study that Islam and economy are inseparable because Islam is not merely a set of beliefs. It equally provides a definite outlook on life and a pragmatic programme for action. It has laid down rules and regulations for the nation's economic development, in which if all Nigerians follow, will definitely revitalize the economy. We all are aware that Nigeria development effort is modeled after the prototype of growth developed by the Western theories and practitioners of planning, yet we do not have to follow the west blindly because a comparative study of Nigeria development policy and economic performance shows that the strategy of imitation has failed to deliver the good. It is therefore pertinent to deliberate on how Allah's guidance can be used to revitalize the contemporary Nigeria economy.

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