POLITICS WITHOUT BITTERNESS: THE ONLY BEDROCK OF GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATION: BEING A PAPER DELIVERED AT THE RAMADAN LECTURES ORGANIZED BY IMAN ILORIN ON 9TH OCTOBER, 2006: BY YUSUF O. ALI ESO; SAN [xxx]

INTRODUCTION

To do justice to discourse it is not only pertinent but also imperative to examine the key terms in the topic viz- ***politics and bitterness.***

POLITICS Politics is defined to mean the art of science of government, the management of a political party, political affairs or opinions. Manoeuvring and intringing, policy making, as opposed to administration; civil rather than the military aspects of government.

In the similar vein, ***the Webster's Universal Dictionary and Thesaurus[2]*** defines politics as the science and art of government, political activities beliefs, or affairs. factional scheming for power.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, politics is the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, being able to influence decisions that affect a country or a society. [3]

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1. See the Chambers Dictionary (New Edition) page 1267-1268
2. By Geddes And Grosset, P. 370
3. 6th Edition p. 899

Jeff Haynes in his book[4] succinctly proffered a definition that depicts the intricacie of politics when he said thus:-

> *"Defining politics is simple: it is about the pursuit of power. But when it is won-by a class, faction, group or whatever politics is also about how to exercise power and to regulate the inevitable conflicts that emerge between the various, interest groups within a polity."*

Sir Winston Churchill in 1920 lamented philosophically in the following manner:-

> *"Politics are almost as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can only be killed once, but in politics many times."*

BITTERNESS

Bitterness is a noun form of "Bitter" which has various meaning, but the apposite definitions suitable for the purpose of this topic are:

> "Unwelcome to the mind; hard to bear; causing sorrow, filled with, showing, caused by, envy, hate, remorse or disappointment."[5]

From the definitions quoted above, one can rightly say that, "politics without bitterness" connotes, politics devoid of rancour, acrimony and the one that favour and encourage equal playing grounds among the stakeholders in the political class and more importantly, which gives room for opposition in a democratic setting.

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4. Religion in Global Politics published by Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998, p. 4
5 See: Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary of Current English P. 84.

In any nation, where politics with bitterness is the order of the day, no doubt, there can't be meaningful development and growth in all the facet of the polity will be retarded. A

recourse to history on the series of unpalatable events that culminated into the first coup de'tat of January 15, 1966 in this country will demonstrate vividly the adverse effect of politics shrouded or embedded in bitterness. It was the way and manner the politicians conducted themselves during the first Republic that led to the coup that wiped off the Republic six year after independence.

It would be recalled that during the first republic, the formation of political parties were done along dominant ethnic groups of the three large regions in Nigeria. It could be observed that in the North Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto was the leader of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) which gained power in the North, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Course led the Action Group which was the dominant party in the West while Dr. Azikiwe led the National Council of Nigerian and Cameroun (NCNC), which also held sway other political parties in the East. The tribal interest of the parties undoubtedly encourage the regions to compete for political control over each other. There was no genuine interest or concern for inter- regional co-operation, which was a sine qua non for the Federation's stability and success. The effect of this ethnicity problems also resulted into the civil war even after coup de tat had destroyed the parties in 1967.

An author put the scenario aptly as follows:-

> "One of the main tasks of political parties in single or multi party system is to shape events as well as to be influenced by situations. This is the main reasons why people come together to form parties. Common interests and aspirations are more effectively promoted by collective action than by individuals acting on their own.

> *Unlike political parties in other English speaking West African States, Nigerian parties became the creatures of events, they lost their ability to control the political situation. In the last few months in 1965 it was obvious to all that the basic principles of democratic government had been seriously compromised by the political parties.* ***These principles are the ability to compromise with and be tolerant towards the opposition; and to preserve a relatively honest leadership, which follows long- term policies and which accepts electoral defeat."***[6]

The events that led to the military intervention in 1966 were better chronicled by the ***Adewale Ademoyega*** in his book[7] as follows:-

> *"There was no doubt 1965 was a year of political gloom throughout Nigeria. Generally, people had been disillusioned and disaffected with the Balewa Government and the rulership of the* ***Balewa/Akintola/Sardauna*** *Clique of the NNA Economic, Social, Educational and Political problems were not solved* ***Corruption was rife and nepotism was the order of the day****. The safety values of the Nation were reposed in such institutions as the Courts; the census Commission, the Electoral Commission, the police and finally the Armed forces. But the sanctity of those institutions was being politically assailed, assaulted and dragged in the mud, so that they were fast losing their credibility. It became obvious that the national leadership was nearing its collapse and that the ship of the nation was heading for the rocks."*

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6. *See Michael Crowder, The story of Nigeria (London, 1966), & James Coleman, Nigeria: Background to Nationalism (Berkeley; 1958*
7. *Why we struck-Evans brothers Limited, 1981, P. 21*

The political logjam or imbroglio that engulfed the Western Nigerian could be described as the least straw that break the camel's back. In 1965 there was a massive resentment and strong aversion for Chief Akintola Government. The aggrieved people of the Region

trooped to the street and chanted war song and pandemonium broke down in the Region. That was the era of "Wetie" which stands for the spraying of political opponents' houses and vehicles with petrol and set them blaze.

In this paper an attempt will be made to discuss briefly the various recognized form of Government, and specific analysis of method of governance under the Islamic law will be carried out. Furthermore, the characteristics or features of growth and development of a Nation will be considered.

Thereafter, a brief examination of the effects of politics not devoid of bitterness on the growth and development will be done and finally other factors that may contribute to the growth and development of a Nation will be considered.

RECOGNIZED SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT

We deem it necessary to discuss some form of government practice across the globe with the view to examining which is more prone to or adversely affected by bitterness hat characterized politics in party the world.

DEMOCRACY

Several definitions have been proferred by different authors, it has been defined to mean a system of government based on popular consent. It is a government which is derived from public opinion and is accountable to it.

Abraham Lincoln offered the popular definition that has become household thus:-

"*The government of the people, by the people and for the people."*

Democracy was coined from two Greek words:-

Demos (people) and kratic rule or government). The system is regarded as the best form of government that can be adopted by any Nation as it avails people of the opportunity to elect or reject their leaders or representative and their programmes if such are no longer serving the interest of the people.

John Locke one of the proponents and/or stalwart supporters of modern democracy put the basis of the theory in the following manner:-

> *"The property (life, liberty and estate) is a national right of a man. Government are created by a social contract designed for the preservation of that right, and when rulers violate the terms of the contract, society has the right to depose and replace them."*

Locke further emphasized separation of powers between the Executive and Legislature so that the legislative and executive powers can never fall into the same hands. Montesquiueu posited that judicial power also should be kept separate.

The writers like ***Rousseau, plato, prostotle,*** Socrates among others are strong supporters of modern theory of democracy. They all believe that power corrupt absolute power corrupt absolutely.

OLIGARCHY

This is form of government ruled by few privileged and powerful people. This system of government is described as selfish one because such a government rules only for the benefit of those few people in power.

TYPES OF OLIGARCHY

1. ***Aristocracy***:- This is form of oligarchic government ruled by few persons of the highest social rank referred to as the nobles. These persons who hold the political power constitute the elite group with the highest status and the best citizens in terms of intellectual capability in the society.

2. ***Plutocracy***:- This is a government controlled by few rich and powerful group. This wealthiest class controls political power because they invariably control the economic resources. These groups include the industrialist, landlords or financiers.

3. ***Military rule***:- This is government controlled by men in khaki uniform. The soldiers assumed powers through coup detat.

4. ***Theocracy***:- This is a form of government controlled by priests or a priestly class. This group or priestly rulers are considered to be divinely ordained. The law in a theocratic government are believed to be the laws of God.

5. ***Autocracy***:- This is a form of government in which one man or few persons rule with absolute power and authority without caring for the wishes of the people. The autocracy is characterized by the wielding of power without any effective accountability to the public, for example Nazist Germany.

TOTALITARIANISM

This is a form of government in which one supreme authority controls everything and there is no form of opposition. This form of government is also known as authoritarianism, it allows only one political party being controlled by the state to exist. The features of totalitarian includes the fact that citizens are the property of the

state, mass media are being controlled by state and laws are made to favour the whims and caprices of the rulers. Example of totalitarian regimes include: Nazist government in Germany, fascist government in Italy and Communist government in the defunct USSR under Joseph Stalin.

FEUDALISM

This is a primitive system of government and economic system based mainly on hierarchical order of ownership of land. This system of government which was practiced in Western Europe. In Europe in the middles ages, ownership of land was vested in the king or monarch or Emperor who also controlled all land users. Industrialization which brought with it capital that replaced land as essential factor of commercial activities brought about the collapse of feudalism.

MONARCH

Monarch has been defined as a system of government under the rule of a King. Queen or Emperor known as the monarch. In some countries, the monarch is the sole ruler and absolute authority. The power of the monarch is unlimited and is both the head of state and head of government. Monarchy is a dynastic system which the monarch is succeeded by his or her children and power is transferred from generation to generation.

TYPES OF MONARCHY

Absolute monarchy:- This is the type of monarchy in which the monarch has unlimited powers. The monarch does not derive his powers from the Constitution but rules by divine right, prominent examples of countries where absolute monarch is being practiced includes Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, King Khaled of Saudi Arabia and Emperor Haile Salessie of Ethiopia.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY

The monarch under Constitutional monarchy does not enjoy absolute power and he derives his or her powers from the Constitution. The monarch is only a ceremonial or a figure head of state and a symbol of the nation. The actual power of governing is vested in the elected representative. Countries that practice this system of government include; Britain, Sweden, Demark, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Austria and Holland.

An advantage of monarchy over other form of government is that it brings about political stability but the monarch could be a despotic leader.

PRINCIPLE OF GOVERNANCE UNDER THE ISLAMIC LAW

We have the strong conviction that, if the various principles enunciated in the Holy Quran and the Hadith of prophet Mohammed (SAW) are strictly adhereto, in the day to day running of the affairs of a Nation, then the acrimony and bitterness that normally characterized politicking and/or politics across the globe wouldn't have occurred.

It is in the light of this view that we consider it necessary to examine some of the Islamic tenents that regulate governance in Islamic States, so that out politicians particularly our muslims brothers and sisters in the helms, of affair of this country could borrow leaf from the beautiful doctrines on ideal governance with the view to enabling them to turn over a new leaf.

APPOINTMENT DESTINED BY ALLAH

Under the Islamic law, the right to rule or partake in the helms of affairs of a Nation by anybody is bestowed by Al-mighty Allah and not by the whims and caprices of individual

10 In other words, no one has the inherent, personal, intrinsic, independent claim to power.[8]

The Holy Quran unequivocally provider thus:-

> *"Say, "O God! Lord of power (and Rule). Thou givest power to whom Thou pleasest, and thou strippest off power from whom whom thou pleasest. Thou enduest with honour whom thou pleasest, and thou bringest low whom thou pleasest. In thy hand is all Good. Verily, over all things Thou has power"*[9]

The commentary of ***A.D. Ajijola***"[10] on this point is very apt, the learned author said:

> *"No matter what form authority takes, no matter in what shape, the instrument of control are fashioned-empires, kingdoms, city states, democracies, dictatorships, military or what not whatever usages or law are established by agencies, for putting them into operation the agencies remain answerable to God. If their law create unrest, discord, strife and unhappiness or if they fail on the score of positive achievement in the pursuit of the common objective of human civilization, these agencies exope themselves to indictment before the august throne of the Divine Maker and Master of all."*

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8. *See Islamic Concept of Social Justice, A.D Ajijola P. 110.*
9. *See Quran III verse 26.*
10. *Op Cit P. 111.*

DEMOCRATIC ELECTION PROCESS

Islam embraces democracy and this can be demonstrated by making recourse to the event that led to the appointment of Abubakar as the first caliph after the demise of the prophet (SAW). It will be recalled that after the death of the prophet, the problem confronted the ummah was the issue of who would be the Khalifa or successor of the prophet in the Muslim State of Arabia.

The question was whether the successor should emanated from the prophet's family thereby making the successorship hereditary or was it to be elective in line with the Arab tribal custom of electing the chief? Eventually both the Muhajirun and Ansar resolved and unanimously elected Abuakar as the first Khalifa.

It should be emphasized that the election of Abubakar settled the question of succession and a crisis posed to Islam. Hence Abubakar's succession established the democratic principle of election in the Khalifat of Islam. The very fact that Ali's right to the Khalifat was not raised during the meeting was an indication that the idea of legitimacy was altogether foreign to the early Muslims."[11]

The inaugural address of ***Khalifa Abubakar*** depicted or reflected the qualities, a good leader should possess. He said inter-alia thus:-

> *"You have elected me your Khalifa althought I am not better than you. I need all your advice and all your help If I do not right, help me. If I do wrong, correct me. In my sight the powerful and the weak are alike and to both I wish to render justice. You should obey me as long as I obey the Lord and His prophet. If I disobey them, you should forsake me."*[12]

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11. See Islamic History by A Rahim, P. 53-54
12. See A. Rahim Op cit p.55.

LEADERSHIP AS TRUSTEESHIP

Under the Islamic law the position occupy by anybody in governance circle is regarded as being held in trust for the populace. The bases of this Islamic doctrine is the facts that the ownership, sovereignty and power belong to God. Everything in the world exist at the mercy of Allah. The glorious Quran provides thus:-

> "And blessed is He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all between them. With Him is the knowledge of the hour (of judgment). And to him shall be brought back."[13]

A.D. Ajijola[14] in his book commented on the above verse of the Holy Quranic provisions in the following manner:-

> ".....all empires and kingdoms and all instruments of control by man over man, and the lower animals, are mainly *TRUSTS* put into their hands with a view to the mutual benefit of all. No one therefore should presume to act as if he were the absolute master, because real ownership and mastery over everything and every one lies only with God; others in their respective forms are no more than mere *TRUSTEES*, answerable before God for the manner in which they discharge the trust reposed in them."

JUSTICE UNDER THE ISLAMIC LAW

The idea or principle of justice is well entrenched under the Islamic law. The Holy Quran unequivocally provides thus:-

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13 Chapter XLIII verse 85.

14. Op Cit p. 109

> "Verily. Allah commands you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when ye judge between man and man, that ye judge with

justice: verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For God is He who heareth and seeth all things."[15]

From the quranic injunction above, we are enjoined as a citizen of a Nation to ensure that men of honour and integrity are appointed or elected to pilot the affairs of the State. In other words, if persons that have honour are appointed, no doubt they would not siphon public fund and use same for their personal aggrandizement. This verse dwel on justice by persons appointed to the position of authority, not only our judges.

It is rightly observed that, Even-handed justice for all, irrespective of the circumstances of birth, financial weight, colour, class, political leanings or religious affiliations is the foremost condition for the creation of a sense of security in the public without which mo regime can last or achieve anything of real benefit to people.[16]

PUBLIC FUND

Under the Islamic law, the people in government are not free to handle public money the way they like. The uniqueness of Islamic principle which had been established during the life of prophet Muhammad is that, public money should not be spent lavishly, but for the provision of accommodation, defence, security, improve living standards of the people by providing requisites amenities and safeguard their soul and properties.

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15. See Quran 4 verse 58
16. See A.D. Ajijola Op Cit P. 113.

Khalifa Umar was quoted to have said that the duty of the government in a muslim State is not to squander public money but to utilize it to improve living standards of the public and to increase their allowances.

It is observed that in many muslim countries, governments generate inflationary conditions by continuous increase in government expenditure especially outlays related to security and expenditure on salaries of officials and favourites. This attitude seriously contradicts the principles laid down by Islamic law on the government expenditure.[17]

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was quoted to have said that:-

> "Anyone who takes even a needle from public money will be accountable for it on the day of judgment."

The foregoing underscore the importance of accountability in governance and that should be the watch word of the persons in authority. Anybody that occupies the position of authority must set a good precedent to the whole nation in taking minimum out of public fund as demonstrated by Umar during his tenure as the Khaliffa. The caliphs during their tenure demonstrated to the world that they were trustees of public money.

Islam also make provision for those who work for the government some additional benefit. The prophet is also quoted to have said that, those who work for the state will be given marriage allowances, a means of transport and a servant.

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17. See Fiscal Policy & Resource Allocation in Islamic Edited by Ziauddin Ahmmed, Munawar Iqbal and M. Fahim Khan Pgs. 114-115.

From the few principles enunciated above, we support the view expressed in some quarters that hereditary kingship or monarchy is alien to Islamic principle because offices

of government are to be entrusted only into the hands of capable men through election which choice should not be influenced by any other motive.

It is incumbent on muslims to elect competent or qualified person as their representative in governance and not from the point of descent or wealth, or the influence and strength of adherents, but solely on the criterion of whether the candidate possesses those qualities without which no ruler could be a source of blessing for those he ruled over.

FEATURES OF GROWTH AND F DEVELOPMENT OF A NATION

The level of growth and development of any nation, will depend on the presence of the following:-

1. Provision of basic social amenities such as
    (a) Good road network or efficient transportation system
    (b) Stable electricity supply
    (c) Existence of pipe-borne water
    (d) Well equipped hospitals or clinics
    (e) Qualitative education at reduced cost, if not totally free.
2. The citizenry or average citizens should live above the poverty line.
3. Employment opportunity to take care of unemployment and concomitants problems. 4. Rural development
5. Technology development or advancement
6. Industrialization
7. Sound fiscal policies
8. Increase in the value of the legal tender (i.e Naira)
9. Political stability.

EFFECTS OF POLITICS NOT DEVOID OF BITTERNESS ON DEVELOPMENT

The growth and development of any nation where politics without bitterness is a mirage will bring about the following social vice:-

(i) Lack of continuity in policies and programmes of government at all levels

(ii) Anarchy or wanton destruction of lives and properties.

(iii) Political violence, breeding of political thugs

(iv) Corruption

(v) Lopsidedness in award of Contract, execution and appointment of persons to public offices

(vi) Lack of sincerity of purpose and distraction.

(vii) Assassination or political killings

(viii) Jettisoning of the Rule of law

OTHER FACTORS THAT COULD IMPEDE DEVELOPMENT

1. Bad leadership
2. Instability in government or policies
3. Corruption.

BAD LEADERSHIP

You will agree with me that even if bitterness that characterized our politics is removed, or controlled, there can't not be meaningful development where the crops of the politician that are elected to pilot the affairs of a nation lack the basic integrity, honour and dignity.

William Penn once said:-

> "No system of government was ever so ill devised that, under proper men, it wouldn't work well enough."

Mr. Brad Saddler in his paper presented at a fraud prevention lecture organized by the Justice Research Institute in collaboration with ICPC held on ***3rd October, 2006*** while commenting on the qualities a leader must possess, observed thus:-

> "Society must insist that persons who put themselves forward as candidates in election, and therefore as operators of the system of democracy, must have integrity. They must have the courage to established their integrity by voluntarily submitting themselves to public scruting.

Mr. Brad was tried for fraud and corruption in South Africa and was convicted.

INSTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT OR POLICIES

There cannot be serious growth and development in the face of instability in government. Where the policies of government are being changed with impunity, as a result of change in government no meaningful development would be recorded thereby.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is a big menace that affilict Nigeria like any other Nation. Corruption has become a pandemic that has eaten deep into the fabrics of our society.

In Nigeria, an attempt to curb the menace led to the formation or establishment of ICPC and EFCC. Their creation was a welcome development to expose our corrupt leaders. But the Government should not be selective in those to be arrested and prosecuted.

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18. See the Punch Newspaper Wednesday, 9" October, 2006.

Any Nation that is governed by corrupt leaders could not witness growth and development in the real sense of it. ***Hon Justice Ayoola*** while delivering a speech in the recently concluded seminar on ***fraud prevention organized by the Justice Research Institute aforementioned***, asserted that it is imperative for a leader to encourage the people to do what is right if the fight against corruption is to be won, it must be based on courage to expose the corrupt and past misdeed.

His Lordship reiterated the fact that society should insist that aspirants in future elections must be individuals of proven integrity. He advised that:-

> "Nigerian must have the courage to publicly condemn corrupt people but sadly, such courage is lacking in our society today. I believe that if democracy as a system of government is to produce the desired result. It must be practiced with integrity"[19]

It is our humble view that the problem of corrupt leaders is more worrisome than that of bitterness in our politics.

Conclusion

Politics is not supposed to be a do or die affair, if every politician and elected representative play the game by the rules no doubt the unwarranted rancour or bitterness that are associated with politics would be eradicated. Our politicians must be prepared to accept defeat and should offer constructive criticism rather than constituting opposition with the aim of to stifling the running of government.

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19. See The Punch Newspaper Op Cit p. 9.

In the case of ***Okoriji vs Ngwu [12] Ndoma Egba JCA*** observed as follows:-

> "It now appears as a matter of general knowledge that defeated candidate in some elections are unwilling to concede defeat. They take the opportunity

> even on sliding stones to fight on until they drown. If some of them had the courage to acknowledge the success of their opponents, the transitional arrangements would have clinched and the country set on the path of "true greatness" unity and prosperity."

It must also be emphasized that the party in power should not create bitterness and heat up the polity by their discriminatory policies capable of extinguishing the opposition.

The winning party should endeavour to do justice to all irrespective of the difference in political affiliation or groups. Political appointments should be made to cut across the various interest groups and geo political zone.

If the government in power should cultivate the idea of fairness and justice, then politics enshrouded with bitterness would become a thing of the past in Nigeria or any Nation. Whatsoever we believe strongly that if our politicians or political office holders should imbibe and adhere strictly to the tenets of Islamic law governance which is devoid of hatred and injustice, we hope this will go along way to solving our problems.

Ma salam.

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20. (1992) 9 NWLR (Pt. 263) 113 at 117.