

# Conflict and Sustainable Democratic Good Governance in Nigeria: A Theoretical and Philosophical Exposition

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## ABSTRACT

*There is a cordial relationship between good governance and the existence of peace and stability in the society. When the leaders and the led are treated with equity to the socio-economic resources of the state, the state is run as an organic whole, and there will be peace and stability in the society. This paper argues that in Nigeria the contrary is the case, even under democratic regime, which is expected to be harbinger of economic prosperity for the people, thus violent reactions from the citizenry is a coping strategy against the misrule of the leaders as it has brought a lot of poverty amidst plenty to the average Nigerians. The paper suggests that one of the ways out of the problem is adoption of dialogue and mutual understanding between the leaders and the led, based on the provision of good governance by the government and co-operation with the government by the citizens for Nigeria to attain sustainable democratic good governance.*

**Keywords:** *Conflicts, Dialogue, Mutual Understanding and Democratic good governance.*

## INTRODUCTION

While it is true that dialogue and mutual understanding remain essential components of conflict resolution, if the very basis of the society (socio-economic relations disequilibrium) between the rulers and the ruled, which has been popularly adjudged to have been favourably tilted to the side of the rulers is not redressed, conflict is likely to remain perennial in the society, especially in this capitalistic era when human situation in consonance with his location within the means of production. The Nigerian society has at no time enjoyed full scale peace right from 1960 when Nigeria became politically independent to the present dispensation. The story has been various hullabalos which have been occasioned by several innumerable factors as economic, political, socio-cultural, environmental, egoistic, and perhaps a little knowledge of dialogue and mutual understanding when incongruence of opinions, ambitions and expectation occurs in the society. Thomas Hobbes (quoted in) philosophically puts it: "if any two men desire the same thing, which they nevertheless cannot both enjoy, they become enemies, and in the way to their end, (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another". This is the situation in which Nigeria has been engulfed. The worst scenario is now being experienced with irate groups unleashing terror (bombings) throughout the country, even at the very nose of the government at Abuja (at the Police Force Headquarters and United Nations building), claiming lives in large number apart from properties destroyed.

The breakdown of mutual understanding and absence of dialogue to overcome conflict is a product of irreconcilable/unreconciled quarrel among human beings. According to Thomas Hobbes, in his Leviathan, there are three principal causes of quarrel in the society: competition, diffidence and glory. The first makes man to lure for gain, the second for safety and the third, reputation. The first uses violence to make themselves masters of other men persons, wives, children, and cattle. The second to defend them; the third for trifles, as a word, smile, a different opinion, and any other sign of undervalue, either direct in their persons or by reflexion in their kindred, their friends, their nations, their profession or their name. Conflicts in Africa, Nigeria in particular seem to be encapsulated in the first category as "...virtually all the regions of our continent, our nations are overwhelmed by the fruit struggles for political power, territorial acquisition, religious supremacy and ethnic domination" (Ogwu and Alli, 2007) coupled with the fact that "Africa's crisis of growth in the social sector is complicated by income inequality, high unemployment, increasing levels of poverty, social exclusion and uneven access to health facilities, education and basic infrastructure"(ibid). In the light of the grotesque picture above, this paper is set to theoretically, albeit normatively, situate conflict in the Nigerian political life. The paper is therefore divided into introduction, already done above; theoretical formulation; the setting of bad governance in Nigeria; the philosophical foundation and the way out.

Several theories have been used to explain the relationship between the government and the citizens vis-a-vis political obligation in the state. Political obligation is an essential aspect of the state in modern political community, more so in a democratic state like Nigeria. Political obligation expresses the relationship between the rulers and the ruled and that the relationship is expected to benefit both the rulers and the ruled. This study is premised on the organic theory of the state and it is associated with the issue of liberty of the individual in the state. According to Appadorai (1975), organic theory compares the state to an organism: an organism is a living structure composed of parts different in kind; these parts are complimentary to one another. The health of the organism depends on the healthy discharge by each part of its own function. Therefore, the end to which the state is used determines how healthy the organism will be. A state in which the apparatus and the socio-economic opportunities are being used by the ruling class to the disadvantages of the ruled in the way of absence of good governance, will not be healthy and is likely to be unstable. This is laconically captured by M'Kechnie (quoted by Appadorai, 1975):

*'As nothing that affects the parts can be indifferent to the whole, the state is bound by its laws, government to aim jointly with the citizens at the perfect development of every individual in the community. Nothing is beyond the proper sphere of government in pursuing this high end'.*

It is expressed here that when the end of the state to both the rulers and the ruled is not for the whole, there is organic lacuna and conflicts arise in the political community between those in government and the citizens. Though this theory is criticised for equating natural organism which has fixed parts with social organism with no fixed parts (Spencer, cited in Appadorai, 1975), the fact that human society has different spheres which interact, both vertically and horizontally and individually and in groups and the cordial relationships of

these parts promote peace and development commend this theory for use in the study of conflict in the society, particularly when it is occasioned by the factor of bad governance. Two, it serves as a call on the political leaders to see citizens as part of their own social body in the distribution of socio-economic benefits of the society through their policies and actions, and also serves as beacon to the citizens in recognising the fact that their cooperation with the rulers i.e. performing their own duties to the state, is a *sin qua non* for the survival of the state, particularly when the government plays its part well. Therefore, it is good for promoting the emergence of good government in a state where it is not available and "good government is that which brings maximum benefit to the greatest number of people in an atmosphere of stability, harmony, freedom, security, peace and availability of choice" (Obasanjo, 1990).

### **Conflicts and Democratic Good Governance in Nigeria: The Setting**

According to Adeleke and Babatope (2010), several interpretations have been given to the phenomenon of conflict in the society. It is an occurrence that cuts across the psychological, the political, the social, the anthropological dimension and other spheres of human existence. The current dispensation which took off on 29th May, 1999 with Chief Olusegun Obasanjo emerging as the president has witnessed many conflicts. These conflicts range from political, electoral, environmental, religious, communal, and economic to cultural types. Worse still, no state or region has been spared of these unwanted occurrences, which have led to destruction of both human and material resources that are inestimable. Or what Naira value can be placed on three Youth Corps members (Akande Oluwaleke Olalekan, Akinjogbin Ibukun Oluwatosin and Odusote Adetola Oluwole) who were killed in their primes while serving their father land in Plateau State in 2008 (Nigerian Tribune, 6 Dec; 2008:53). Conflict is becoming too costly in the society and we can no longer tolerate it. Quite interestingly, the youths that suffer most for Nigeria's economic downturn due to joblessness, are mostly found in the activities relating to conflict.

Be it as it may, it is a product of bad democratic governance. Momoh (2006) reasons that, in the past, the military has been adjudged as obstacle to democracy, but the trends today in Nigeria shows that the civilians can also be an obstacle to democracy. It is not all democracies that can produce good governance. A bad government cannot produce good life for the people. As Jega (2007) observes, the more public and elected officials exhibit irresponsibility, seem unaccountable and unresponsive to popular needs and aspirations, and the more poorly they conduct themselves in governance and state-craft, the greater the threats to democratic consolidation and sustainability, and since the state was unable to satisfy basic needs of the people, they in turn withdrew from the sphere of the state, into ethno-religious and communal cocoons, with heightened sensitivity to the roles of the others in their marginalization and immiseration. Kjell Magne Bonderick (cited in Otokiti, 2008), when he became Prime Minister of Norway, set up a commission on human values. The commission was to reflect on the questions affecting the future and survival of his people, such as: What is good life? What value do we have? and How can we ensure that all actors in the society participate in bargaining the future?

Oyediran and Agbaje (1999, cited in Robert, 2002) listed eight attributes of good governance. As such any governance which does not exhibit these attributes is bad, since in practical sense, governance can be good or bad.

1. Accountability of government officials, including politicians and civil servants
2. Transparency in fundamental procedures.
3. Predictability in government behaviour and mutual decisions.
4. Opening in government transactions
5. The rule of law and an independent judiciary.
6. Free flow of information and freedom of the press.
7. Respect for human rights.
8. Decentralization of political structure and power.

However, Isham *et. al* (1995, cited in Robert, 2002) suggests three possible ways of evaluating the quality of governance.

- Accountability (including legitimacy, institutional pluralism and participation.
- Openness and transparency
- Then, predictability of the rule of law.

Roberts (2002) has added that any evaluation of the performance of government (executive) must take into account, the environmental context in which governance is carried out. Let us say here that governance is carried out in a conflict-ridden environment right from Nigeria's independence till date, if at any time there is peace, it is a pyrrhic type. Conflict is perennial in Nigeria largely due to the fact that the character of Nigerian state does not provide for good governance, and the citizens adjust to the system conflictingly. In this instance, conflict has become a coping mechanism for the Nigerian citizens, knowing full well that Nigerian government at all levels don't give what is due to her citizens, their portions of national wealth if not asked for, and if it has to become a stalemate, before it can be granted. However, Dudley (1975) has emphasised that violence is only one modality of action and there is no reason why it should be conferred a particular logical status... Violence, thus is not self satisfactory. Its use has to be justified and this can only be done when all other avenues of effecting change have been exhausted.

While the Dudleyan sense may be seen as the ideal, but the character of the political parties in Nigeria have been failing in being strategy of "interest aggregation." Okoosi-Simbine (2006) succinctly captures this by saying that, "in a competitive system, the party aggregates certain interests into asset of policy proposals and then it contests for the people's verdict on them at the polls. If it wins, it will be able to put in place decision-makers who will formulate policy on the previously agreed policy." In Nigeria, elections are manipulated in favour of those who get the support of the power that be in collaboration with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), creating in its intent, crisis of participation (i.e. the extent to which the parties that have evolved since 1999 have met the needs of those who want to be part of the political process). We have seen several stolen mandates returned to the owners by the Court e.g. Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Edo, Rivers States e.t.c. But this is when those affected have the wherewithal to challenge the stealer in the Court, but where the reverse is the case, the foregone aberration is a forgone conclusion.

Leadership is very essential for the enthronement of sustainable democratic good governance in any society whether developing or developed. It is very much essential in transitory society such as Nigeria. Leadership, according to Bob Dewey (2010) "is setting aside personal short term vested interests and working for the national and public interest instead. It is doing the right thing for the country and for all the people." However, a servant leader is required to do this, but the Nigerian state presently lacks a servant-leader. According to Okunade (2008), a Servant-leader is sharply different from one who is leader first. For a leader first, it will be a later choice to serve - after leadership is established. One other difference is in the care taken by the servant first to make sure that other people's highest priorities' needs are being served. Having servant-leader is the greatest problem facing Nigeria.

For a servant-leader to emerge in the society, and serve as instrument for good democratic governance, political leadership need to exhibit some of the following 24 core competences, according to Oluabunwa (as quoted in Mordi, 2010) sound education, capability to envision, ability for effective communication, experience in human resource management, high level of intelligence quotient, ability to translate ideas into results, humility of spirit, ability and willingness to make sacrifices, inherent ability to influence outcomes, and high level of integrity. The others are measurable inclination to selflessness, a deep-seated desire to achieve, a palpable love for people, a visible democratic inclination, known ability to accept mistakes and faults, a keen demonstration of accountability, flair for teamwork, a demonstrable understanding of profit and loss statement and the ability to interpret a balance sheet, a measurable ability for hard work, healthy body, mind and spirit, an exuding self-confidence and tolerance for diversity, charisma and ability to mobilise, and fear of God. This is why Olusegun Obasanjo (2010) reasons that "anybody can be placed to do anything but not anybody can identify what is right and do it right. We must be conscious that it must not just be anybody. Happily, we have men and women of calibre, merit, substance, and track record from everywhere within this country".

Immediately President Goodluck Jonathan assumed power on May 5 2010, his first priority was to add three presidential planes to those already available on the presidential fleet. Leaders behave as if their priority is the priority of all. They think that when they eat well, every Nigerian also eats well. Despite 36 States, 1 FCT and 774 local governments in Nigeria, apart from the almighty and octopodal federal government, existing in principle essentially to bring development to the people, majority of Nigerians continue to suffer making our situation conforming to Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren (1999, cited in Gboyega, 2003) expression "that there is too many government, but not enough government". For average Nigerians, particularly the down-trodden masses, the current democratic dispensation as not brought out or achieved their aspirations. As Jega (2007) has remarked: "If democracy means anything to them at all, it was that system in which all sorts of politicians come to them at periodic intervals to coax, cajole, intimidate or harass them for their support and votes. It represents a situation in which all sorts of people make all sorts of promises to them, raising their hopes and, almost simultaneously, dashing their expectations and aspirations", whereas "the people look up to democracy for a better deal, for economic

development, end to poverty, social inequality, political participation and of corruption (Bagu, cited in Jega, 2007). According to Adebimpe, Adeleke and Yusuf (2010), "what we have seen so far in Nigeria is that every successive regime, be it military or civilian has the tendency of promoting National unity. Two, every regime provides programmes of combating corruption with the view to ameliorating poverty, as corruption has been popularly accepted as a causative agent of poverty and vice versa. Yet there is no past administration that has not been accused of corruption". Beyond this, the spate of corruption increases in Nigeria in terms of number of people in both vertical and horizontal segments of the Nigerian society as it spare no age, tribe, profession nor class vertically and horizontally, making it to gain audacious strength, that people, particularly those in government who stand puritanical and reformist are rebuked by the people, on the one hand, and the quantity of resources being siphoned by Nigerians, in which we no longer talk of units, tenths and thousands again but million and billion in multiple forms.

The cases of some former governors like Lucky Igbinedion and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, and those of Bank chief executives as Cecilia Ibru of Oceanic Bank testify to this. Nigerian leaders are self-centred and live not by examples but precepts, borne by greed and avarice (acquisitiveness/materialism). Our leaders forget that the foundation of an effective authority over fellow human beings has moral and ethical backgrounds, where morality is defective, authority is ineffective. Corruption has increased in Nigeria with the country ranking 130th out of 180 countries surveyed in the 2009 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released by the Transparency International (The Punch, Wed; Oct, 27, 2010:10). Last year, Nigeria scored 2.7 points and took 121st position but this year its CPI dropped to 2.5 ranking to share the same position with Lebanon, Libya and Mauritania. Political rhetoric has become a method and means of political domination of the people by invoking adulterated nationalist feelings.

Both the military and civilian regimes adopt it. The government usually tell Nigerian citizens to pray, even to fast sometimes on the problems that were generated and become degenerated by elite greed, thereby advertently or inadvertently rendering Nigerians fatalistic, carrying about magical psyche of conscientization instead of the critical type that is needed, and has been applied for scientific discovery and national development in the developed world. According to Osuntokun (2010), 'the purpose of government is basically to make the human condition better. At the same time, man over the years, has always known how limited his ability is in cosmic perspective. This is why man over time has always appealed to God, Allah, Osanobua, Ubangiji, Chineke, Olodumare, Obasi and the various names God is called in many languages.' Prayer is one such means of appealing to God, but not every society applies prayer or other religious ethos for the development of the society. In Nigeria, they apply prayer to the detriment of the country's well being. Niyi Solanke expressed acerbity over the bad use of prayer in Nigeria:

*"The military stole us blind, they asked us to pray. Politicians are stealing us blind, they ask us to keep praying. Bankers are stealing us blind, they ask us to keep praying. EFCC cannot successfully prosecute those that it has been set up to prosecute, yet we are asked not to be tired of praying"* (quoted in Ayoade, 2010: 52).

The Nigerian economy is under severe pressure, pressure borne by unethical behavioural patterns as corruption and disempowering environment of debilitating security risks, in terms of physical insecurity and various conflicts across the land and unbearable production/economic risks. Many companies have been reported to have departed Nigeria for neighbouring countries. Dunlop Nigeria Limited, for instance has left Nigeria for Ghana due to inclement production environment (Adeleke, 2010). Our manufacturing sector operates below the installed capacities. Even when and where they intend to operate fully to capacity, there are no incentives to producers to cushion production shocks. They solely bear the risks. Therefore, the Nigerian state has been unable to provide two sorts of public good. According to World Bank (1992), irrespective of the orientation of the economy (market or otherwise), only the state (governments) can provide two sorts of public good: rules to make market work efficiently, and corrective measures in the event of market failure. At the home front here, cassava farmers have not had a good tiding this season in terms of below production cost prevailing market prices occasioned, perhaps by glut as a result of water log due to unceasing torrential rainfall this farm year culminating in untimely harvest and ultimately ruining the potential storage for the rainy time.

Who shall cushion the losses for them? Are we saying that the government is not aware of their losses? They are on their own! However, when somebody constructively criticises the sombre performance of the government, they readily and quickly respond in a propagandist rather than in informative manner. Propaganda exists to create gobbledygook (deceit) and not telling the people what they should hear (the truth of the matter; that they have spent the money and that they needed time to gather another money). For instance, when they had not paid the "Teachers Salaries", they went on air to deceive the populace that they did not owe any teacher any month's salary. They went further to say that if anybody had not been paid; such should settle with his/her superintendent at work place as if the superintendents are the employers of the workers and the chief accounting officer of the government responsible for the payment of salaries and wages.

May it be asked at this juncture that, are the Head Teachers and Principals of Primary and Secondary Schools respectively the employers of teachers in our public schools to be responsible for the payment of the salaries of their colleagues? Teachers, just like gatemen, gardeners, drivers, cleaners and house helps, are perhaps the most undervalued personnel in Nigeria today (Adeyemo, 2010). Government fails to realise is that they are kill the trigger factor of development because it is the teachers, through pedagogy and andragogy, who unlock the intellectual treasures inheres in learners through which creativity and innovation, the engine of economic development is attained as is done in the western industrialised world and the Asian Tigers. Nigerian citizens need to generate constructive voice to government activities and not only eating crumbs from the master's table. Our leaders make decisions that are self-centred, rather than providing policies that will be of general benefit. As Ayoade (2010) noted of this: "the decisions are often tentative because they are not driven by principles but are often by affective conditions of ego, political careerism and ethnicity. Nigerian high policy decisions are determined by what is momentarily right rather than what is intrinsically good. This is the case even with choice of zoning and

rotation which benefit the political class more than the system". It is the selfishness that is associated with this scenario that now creates bad feelings among the top-notchers of People's Democratic Party (P.D.P) -as to the morality of Jonathan contesting 2011 election, having been a party to the extended National Working Committee of PDP (NWC) that decided for zoning or rotation of offices in Nigeria, and his fundamental human right, to contest, since the North is expected to use eight years before the south can regain power, having spent its own eight years (1999-2007). Why is this so in Nigeria? Nigerian government does not see the citizens as part of the social progress and therefore we have top-down policies instead of down-top policies and no way the results can be fruitful. Our leaders continue to demonstrate three circuits of primitive accumulation: Primitive Accumulation of Capital (PAC), Primitive Accumulation of Power, Accumulation of Terror (Momoh, 2006). Primitive Accumulation of Capital has to do with crude and barbaric means of getting rich.

As Bangura (1994, cited in Momoh 2006) noted, wealth creation is an integral part of class formation. It embodies relations of domination and subordination. Social and political life largely depends on how material production is organized and methods used in reproducing/defending advantages and minimizing/overtaking disadvantages. The relevant question is whether dominant groups use authoritarian or democratic methods in regulating their economic practices, and whether disadvantaged groups can freely pursue their interest and improve their life chances through open and non-repressive transactions. The ways production and business activities are organized have implications for the organization of civil society and state power". The second has to do with how civilians sustain, or rig themselves into power. This makes politics become warfare and for electoral violence to become an enduring aspect of politics (Okesipe, 2003 cited in Momoh, 2006).

The third, Accumulation of Terror, has to do with the proliferation of militant groups as Odua Peoples' (O.P.C.), Egbesu Boys, including the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger-Delta (M.E.N.D) that was allegedly involved in the October, 1st 2010 bombings in Abuja. Never the least in the list of terrorist groups is Boko Haram with its uncountable material and human casualties since it came to life in the northern part of Nigeria. This disease did not spare the Nigerian public service as "public service generally takes its cue from the government. Where the government is drifting, unfocused, and rudderless, the performance of the public service can neither be expected to be efficient nor effective. Lethargy, uncaring attitude, godfatherism, bossiness, egocentricism, gross erosion of morality, indolence, corruption, impropriety and loss of integrity would be its hallmark" (Obasanjo, 1990). Majority of the people, particularly the Youths have become enduringly negatively optimistic about Nigeria becoming a state for all and sundry in spite of its being full of milk and honey. Development continues to be a moon shine, and without its availability, no amount of dialogue can relegate conflict to the background. This is why Chief Obafemi Awolowo in 1976 remarks that:

*"It only remains for me to emphasize that the sole justification of a state is the economic advantages which division of labour and exchange of goods and services can confer on the inhabitants of the*



*state. Families do not aggregate and unite in one community or state just for the use of one another. The compelling motivation is economic. Take away this motivation and the natural legitimacy or justification, as well as the autocratic and self-sustaining cohesion, of the state disappears. Happily, for the continued existence of the state as a corporate entity, man is instinctively susceptible to economic motivation. And the more progress he makes in realizing his economic aspirations, the stronger his motivation"(cited in Fasola,2009:13)*

How many youths have jobs or gainful jobs to do in Nigeria? The youths have the highest unemployment rate in Nigeria in the range of 40-60% among those aged between 15 and 25 years and that unemployment varies by educational level, urban-rural, residence, age group classification. It is pertinent to note that unemployment among people with higher education has increased steadily from 1998 to 2004 (Akande and Okuwa, 2009). It has been submitted that "those young...people who have access to good education, stable employment, high incomes and supportive communities are not deprived of status and are far less likely to become involved in gang violence (Thomas Chibo, 2010).

Though the government cannot provide jobs for everybody in the society, but is there any enabling environment in Nigeria to engage in private practice? Where are the Banks to grant loan to school leavers, even trained apprentices? The Bank Chief Executives, seeing what goes on at the governmental level engage in privation of banks' treasuries. The cases of Cecilia Ibru of Oceanic Bank, Erastus Akingbola of intercontinental Bank, Bartholomew Ebong (Union Bank) Okey Nwosu (FinBank), Sebastian Adigwe (Afribank), Francis Atuche (Bank PHB), Charles Ojo (Spring Bank) and Ike Oraekwuotu (Equitorial Trust Bank) (Atojoko, 2010) readily enliven one's memory here. The results of the negative optimism of Nigerians are the various conflicts we continue to experience in Nigeria. It is on this note that Larry Diamond (2009) argues that:

*"If democracies do not work better to contain crime and corruption, generate economic growth, relieve economic inequality, secure social justice and freedoms, sooner or later, people will lose faith and embrace (or tolerate) non-democratic alternatives".*

It is even a double jeopardy on the part of the citizens. The citizens lose through non-provision of basic amenities in the society amidst availability of resources, and corruption by the ruling elites and the little remnant of state resources, the state uses it to acquire weapons to quench various conflicts across the breath and length of the country. Security problem is a great excuse for the Nigeria's federal government to concentrate most of Nigeria's resources at the centre. There are more of security problems in Nigeria than problems emanating from social provisioning. This renders security vote in the Nigerian budget to take the lead year in year out with the attendant neglect of the productive sectors of the economy. According to Akinyemi, Akindele, Vogt, Aluko, and Ede (1986) defence spending is considered unproductive because it does not contribute directly to the creation of civilian consumer and capital goods. Military expenditure is further considered non-productive because it diverts to itself, resources otherwise might have been allocated to pressing civilian needs, such as investment in technology and science, provision of efficient

utilities, investment in human capital and the establishment of viable social, political and financial institutions. This is why Allan Peacock and Jack Wiseman (cited in Mbanafoh, 1986) advanced a hypothesis that:

*"that social upheavals not only have a tendency to increase the level of public spending relative to private sector spending, but also to cause a concentration of fiscal responsibility on the higher levels of government."*

Far above dialogue in Nigeria, the Nigerian government needs to provide an enabling environment to engage those who are willing to work, as idle hand is devil's workshop. It is as a result of this that Elliot Jacques (1967 cited in Soley, 1989) asserts that:

*The actual place occupied by the individual and the family in any social and political system can be judged by the provision made for work. To call itself well-ordered, a society must of a certainty be able to provide work for every citizen who wants to work. But it must do more. It must provide work which enriches the individual by allowing him to exercise his full wit and capacity in his work-and indeed by calling upon him to do so-giving him room to progress in responsibility as he progresses in capacity. It must provide an economy so regulated as to ensure a fair and balanced distribution of wealth in connection with work: fair in the sense that each man is assured of his due measure of reward for the level of work he is employed to carry out; and balanced in the sense of giving each one that standard of living which he can enjoy without on the one hand experience the bitterness of want, or on the other hand being prey to idleness or tempted into compulsive and wanton expenditure."*

## **SOCIO-POLITICAL/PHILOSOPHICAL BEDROCK OF CONFLICTS AND BAD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA**

The problem of conflict and absence of good governance in Nigeria anchors on political obligation. The issue of political obligation revolves around the philosophy that the citizen of a state has the duty or is under obligation to obey the orders of the state. The question is why must a citizen obey the state, man being a rational being? Political philosophers down the ages-Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mills, Burke, Hegel- have accepted this as a principle which sustains the idea of the state in the first place, but they have not all agreed on how to justify this doctrine (Onyeoziri, 2005). The issue of political obligation places moral burden on both the state and the citizen particularly when placed against social contract theory postulated by Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jacques Rousseau which argues that political society grew out of a social contract between the citizens and the state and, according to that contract, the state was to owe some responsibilities to the citizens who, in turn, owed obedience to the state. In the words of John Locke for instance, individuals surrendered among themselves individual rights which were not inalienable because they were natural, in order to set up a government. If the government so set up cannot guarantee good governance, the people can remove

the government and replace it with another. Jeremy Bentham later introduced utilitarian concept of government in which he argues that government was to be justified on the basis of the happiness of the greatest number of people. This idea has been furthered by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in delivery of social welfare to the citizens by the state in establishing social justice in human community, and this has come to stay. According to Osuntokun (2010):

*"It is now an accepted thing that governments in the enlightened parts of the world owe the citizens support when out of job or when in sickness. In some countries, citizens expect government to provide reasonable comfort in terms of accommodation and shelter as well as education, apart from the normal roles of government's provision of infrastructure and security".*

The Nigerian constitution also places this responsibility on the Nigerian government and this is captured in the fundamental objectives and the directive principles of the state policy, section 16 (a): "control the national economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity" (quoted in Ojelabi, Adebimpe and Adeleke, 2009). In some parts of the world, the welfare of the citizens is paramount to the government and this has generated a collapse of diverse interest in society for national development, leading to the development of civic culture among the rulers and the ruled. But culture is generated by the development of 'civic virtue' in the society. Democracy goes beyond the consent of the people because it is not all elected leaders that involve the citizenry in socio-economic development of the state and not all democratic governments are freely and fairly brought to power as late President Umar Musa Yar'Adua openly confessed that the election that brought him to power was fraught with irregularities.

Therefore, social contract alone cannot adequately justify the reason why a citizen must obey the state. Dagger (1997) as cited in Onyeoziri (2005) argues that developing a 'civic virtue', sustained by the idea of regarding members of a body politic in a joint cooperative endeavour, is more satisfactory basis for justifying political obligation. To this extent, a political community is a human community in which members are united for primary purpose of making binding decisions about their collective life in the community. This is based on the organic view of the state. What we are experiencing in Nigeria today is inchoate and crisis-ridden political set-up characterised by militancy, brigandage, kidnapping, armed robbery and senseless killing of high and the low becoming the order of the day (Agunsoye, 2010). Those in government aggrandise national resources for themselves and their families while ignoring the suffering of the powerless masses. Our social facilities as education, health, transportation, water, gainful employment are decadent. Political corruption reign in apogee with impunity in Nigeria as the leaders are not accountable to the citizens and therefore governance is not seen by our leaders as a cooperative enterprise. Our leaders fly abroad for treatment of ailments that well run and well stocked hospitals could have handled. When there are natural disasters in the land, relief material are promised but not given in spite of budgetary provision for emergencies. Even when they are provided they go to those who are close people in government, thereby killing

social justice. Security is totally broken in Nigeria to the extent that calculated and government-targeted bombing can take place at the nose of the government on a day the Nigerians are celebrating Nigeria's independence anniversary. On the contrary, Barrack Obama abandoned a carefully planned trip to Indonesia where he grew up when there was an accident and consequent pollution of the Gulf of Mexico. According to Osuntokun (2010), this is the 'essence of the difference between a modern democratic state and a state just evolving from feudalistic and tribal politics while wearing all the appurtenances of a modern state.' It is this scenario which propelled Clauke Ake (2003) to reason that, "however, the assumption so readily made that there has been a failure of development is misleading. The problem is not so much that development has failed as that it was never on the agenda in the first place. By all indications, the political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development".

Not only this, they also practise politics of exclusion, in which the masses are being gradually removed from the leadership selection process, culminating in Herbert Marcuse oxymoron, "free election of masters does not abolish the masters or the slaves...what obtains in these societies is a comfortable, smooth democratic unfreedom" (cited in Jinadu, 1979). President Goodluck Jonathan sought to have persona list agenda imputed into the 2010 Electoral Act being proposed for amendment. First, President Jonathan sought to amend section 25 (1) of the 2010 Electoral Act by giving the Electoral Commission the power to determine the sequence and dates elections at both the federal and state levels. Two, he sought to change section 87 (8) of the Electoral Act by allowing political appointees at the convention or congresses of any political party for the purpose of nomination of their candidates for any election (Fafowora, 2010).

In the instance of the first part of the proposed amendment, he wants to put the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) above the control of the people (i.e.) their representatives in the National Assembly, in which case INEC will be above the people that created it, instead of being under the people. He wanted a situation where the Electoral Commission will be for the autocratic whims and caprices of the President more so that the Presidency is responsible for the appointment of INEC Chairman and its members as stipulated by 1999 Nigerian constitution (Section 154 [1]), a return to black period when INEC acted in various obnoxious capacities that were not legally granted to it because of do-or die politics of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. This is an attempt to return Nigeria to dark days of Olusegun Obasanjo. In this sense, majority of the party members would be disenfranchised in the party primaries and be mere voters at the general elections, in which most times INEC declare winners as losers as 2007 general elections have manifested, in the second instance. As noted by Agbo (2010) noted:

Instead the President wanted to give the party caucus the power to determine the candidates of the party for elections and also make appointed government officials automatic delegates to party conventions. Giving the large size of political appointees at both the federal and state levels, this provision would make it impossible for any other than the incumbent or his preferred candidate to emerge as the party's standard-bearer. In Nigeria, there is organic lacuna or disconnect, borne by absence of 'civic virtue' as enunciated by

Dagger (1997) as cited in Onyeoziri (2005) between the government and citizens, and citizen-state disconnect, as Ayoade (2010) noted, will accentuate the decline of the state and increase citizen anti-state behaviour and this is the foundation of the various conflicts and crises in the Nigerian society. The citizens no longer see themselves as part of the state due to bad governance occasioned by the selfishness of the political leaders. Joseph Proudhon, the iconoclast French philosopher, once said "property is theft" and as Osuntokun (2010) remarked 'upholding property rights without social responsibility would undermine democratic rights of the poor. It is in this idea that society is an organic whole in which the right of the powerful and the rich must be balanced with the right of those who do not have wealth and political status in society. As a way of protecting their selfish motives, the leaders prop up antics of divide and rule in the society. Ake (2003) notes that 'for example, they manipulated ethnic and communal loyalties to elicit loyalty and establish common cause with some communities. In doing so, they divided into hostile camps not only the elites but also the wider society and transformed ethnicity into a violent and highly destructive force'. This is not palatable for a federation like Nigeria, which wants to sustain itself and succeed. It is against this backdrop that Ramphal (1979: xix) remarks that:

*"For a federation to be able to resist failure, the leaders, and their followers, must 'feel federal'- they must be moved to think of themselves as one people with one common, self-interest- capable , where necessary, of over-riding most other considerations of small group interest. It is not enough that the units of a particular federation have the same ideal of 'the good' but that 'the good' for any one must be consciously subordinate to or compatible with 'the good of all'. This, then, is tantamount to an ideological commitment not to federation only as a means- such as, for example, a means to gain independence or financial stability, to utilise secondary or tertiary factors- but to federation as an end, as good for its sake, for the sake of answering the summons of history".*

Organic lacuna or disconnect exists in the society when the objective of the rulers and the ruled are dissimilar on the use of the resources of the state. The rulers use state resources to their own advantage and to the deprivation and detriment of the ruled, in a way depriving a large number of the citizens the desired development due to lack of concern for the equitable distribution of national economic wealth. The arrival of democracy does not imply existence of cordial relations between the State and the citizens. To this extent, there is no link between social pluralism and political pluralism in Nigeria and in most democratic African States, indicating the superficiality of democratic equality. Though multiparty democracy is conceded, but at institutional level, for example, democratic aspirations and the needs of the African Civil Society are completely blocked (Joseph Ki-Zerbo, 1990, cited in Asobie, 1993: 6). This is failure of prudential principle of political obligation, in which citizens obey the state because the state is serving the interest of the citizens, and doing things that benefit the citizens. Therefore, the conflicts that ensue in Nigerian society is a bit different from Hobbesian type in which "if any two men desire the same thing, which they nevertheless cannot both enjoy, they become enemies, and in the

way to their end, (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another". The Nigerian type is that in which if any two men desire the same thing, which they can both enjoy, but in which one deprives the other, they become enemies, and in the way to their end, (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy or subdue one another. The elites, as Claude Ake (2003) has noted, 'in trying to consolidate their power and to prevent rivals and oppositions from having access to state power, they used state power to control the economy and to appropriate wealth. This political strategy created an unproductive state capitalism in which surplus was accumulated and distributed with state power, and the law of value could not take root and the regulations whose power of enforcement is used corruptly'.

Thus, development has been hampered by corruption, and because the contextual character of Nigeria's political contestation has always been defined by her ethnic fractionalization, the substantive purpose of the struggles has remained personal accumulation in the guise of ethnic group interest. This is true for all political actors, be they traditional or modern elites, civilian or military politicians. This is why the process assumes the character of primitive capitalism and its most effective instrument (from the perspectives of the players) has been corruption (Olopoenia, 1998). Therefore, economic development, 'which is largely concerned with ensuring notable and sustained increase in a nation's real-national income (the sum total of all goods and services produced in a nation) couldn't have taken place in Nigeria because of the absence of social development which is concerned with the human capital and how to mobilize the latter for the enhancement of the quality of life of the majority of the citizens through basically non-economic elements (Sanda, 1981). The importance of social development is recognized by Pajestka (1973, cited in Sanda, 1981) as he stated that:

*"Since human factor is of decisive importance for increasing the economic efficiency of each society, it is right that the transformation of man, of his behaviour and of his socio-productive features should become the point of concentration of any development strategy".*

### **Salvaging the Ravaged Situation**

Except for some few ones that are essentially economic in nature like the 'Agbekoya Uprisings in the 60s, the anti-SAP riots in the 80-90s and the Niger-Delta oil wealth distribution imbroglios, all conflicts that have taken place in Nigeria are sectarian in nature and context, though revolving around power relations' adjustments in intent. They have been fuelled by people who try to take cynical advantage of differences and divisions for political reasons, based on our diversity of ethnicity, diversity of religion, diversity of language, geography and cultural traditions. They have used these conflicts to pull down Nigeria's glories in the international community since our leaders' attitudes and behaviours don't continually strengthen the constructive relationships of dialogue and mutual understanding and respect for different members of the society because of their short term vested interests and lack of working for national and public interest.

In the 2007 Failed States Index (FSI), Nigeria was ranked 17 out of 177 countries, making it worse even than Niger, the poorest country in the world, which was ranked 32 (Abubakar, cited in Olaniyan, 2009). Apart from the Failed States Index of Nigeria by the World Bank, Nigerians themselves have become pessimistic about Nigeria on the provision of sustainable democratic good governance, given the rising proportion of poor people in Nigeria, amidst availability of mineral wealth. However, in spite of our despondence, greater heights still lie ahead of Nigeria if we do what is expected of us all-leaders and followers. There is fertile soil, good climatic conditions, rain, oil and of course skilful people. Pooling human and material resources together by purposive leadership and followership is the next agenda for Nigeria and it shall take its pride of place in the comity of nations, particularly becoming 20-2020, which is the vision of the current Federal Government of Nigeria.

Therefore, the solutions are not far-fetched: eradicate poverty and entrench prosperity by generating jobs for those who are willing to work; turning over a leaf by the government, by eschewing bad government and put up the characteristics of good government that produces good governance, and on the part of the citizens, co-operation with the government, by playing well our own parts, as co-operation provides synergy for effective and efficient government and each time we see any incongruence, we adopt dialogue (either intra/inter elite or elite-mass) as conflict destroys while peace builds. As Momoh (2007) has said, "wars (conflicts) whether fought internally or externally, requires weapons and weapons are purchased with money. Thus, war is a business for the elites. War brings money to warlords, but peace brings responsibilities to statesmen and women."

Education and re-orientation against killer ideologies either of murder or suicide in the name of propagating a religion or political fervour is urgently needed. The Holy Bible out rightly rejected killing of neighbour as contained in the Biblical Ten Commandments. The same thing with Holy Qur'an (Qur'an: 5:32). The leaders must, as Dewey (2010) emphasised, continually strengthen the constructive relationships of dialogue and mutual understanding and respect between different members of the society. It is high time we sought peace with all in our society through the instrumentality of good governance which will reinforce dialogue and mutual understanding in the resolution of conflicts that our socio-political system throws up and achieve peace in order for Nigerian state to join comity of nations that practise and promote sustainable democratic good governance.

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