HEGEL'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA

Eugene Anowai*

Abstract
Hegel's political philosophy can simply otherwise be seen as his theory of the State. In it, he assigns a supreme power to the State (that is, the government). The State as the universal will of the Absolute Spirit assumes an unquestionable standing because the Absolute cannot be wrong in its decisions taken through the political leaders who are mere stooges in its hands. The political leaders cannot be wrong because they act according to the wills of the Absolute Spirit. This situation can well be seen evident in Nigeria's political clime, whereby the elected leaders of the people who are supposed to represent the will and aspirations of the people choose to govern with the mindset that they, without consultation, know all the best for the people. They make and execute laws under the misguided and ill-conceived notion that they are supreme over their subjects. Worse still, they corruptly enrich themselves to the detriment of their subjects, for, after all, in the theory of Hegel, they (the government) are embodiment of the Absolute Spirit. This paper takes a look at the defects in Hegel's theory of the state which the representatives of a country like Nigeria might have taken as their model in pushing through their anti-electorates' style of living and leadership.

Introduction

According to the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes, the contract by which we avoid the state of nature and enter civil society is an agreement between individuals, "as if every man should say to every man, I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition, that you give up your right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner"(Stumpf, 2003). Two things stand out clearly in this contract. First, the parties to the contract are individuals who promise each other to hand over their right to govern themselves to the sovereign; it is not a contract between the sovereign and the citizens. The sovereign has absolute power to govern and is in no way subject to the citizens. Secondly, Hobbes clearly states that the sovereign can either be 'this man' or 'this assembly' suggesting that, in theory, at least, his view of sovereignty was not identified with any particular form of government. It may be that he had a preference for a single ruler with absolute power, but he recognized the possible compatibility of his theory of sovereignty with democracy. But whatever form the sovereign would take, it is clear that Hobbes saw the transfer of the right to rule from the people to the sovereign as both absolute and irrevocable (Stumpf, 2003).

This social contract theory has much in common with Hegel's theory of the state where Hegel postulates that the state (the government) is the embodiment of the absolute spirit. They are, therefore, beyond reproach for, according to Hegel, the sovereign acts in the name of the universal will and reason and not arbitrarily.

Nigeria's political representatives (and representatives on the African continent at large) have consistently displayed a striking resemblance with these two theories of

the state above. They act and govern in a way that clearly suggests that they are up there while their subjects are down here. They care less to carry the electorates along in both their legislative and executive functions. Worse still, when one raises his or her voice high enough, he is trampled upon so as to be reminded of his or her level in the state.

So, I set out in this study to show the relationship between Hegel's notion about the State and the governing notion that Nigeria's political representatives have with respect to their subjects. To do this, I shall first describe briefly what a representative democracy entails. Then, I shall summarize in a few points Hegel's theory of the State, after which I shall do the link-up between it and Nigeria's representative democracy. Finally, I shall suggest a better system and governing principle for the country's representative democracy.

What is a Representative Democracy?

Representative Democracy (also indirect democracy, representative republic or psephocracy) is a type of democracy founded on the principle of elected officials representing a group of people, as opposed to direct democracy (Wikipedia, 2018). A perfect example is Nigeria, where citizens elect a president and members of the National Assembly. They also elect local and state officials. All of these elected officials supposedly listen to the populace and do what's best for the nation, state or jurisdiction as a whole.

Powers of Representatives

Representatives are elected by the public, as in national elections for the national legislature. Elected representatives may hold the power to select other representatives, presidents, or other officers of the government or of the legislature, as the Prime Minister in the latter case (indirect representation). The power of representatives is usually curtailed by a constitution (as in a constitutional democracy or a constitutional monarchy) or other measures to balance representative power: an independent judiciary, which may have the power to declare legislative acts unconstitutional (e.g. constitutional court, supreme court). The constitution may also provide for some deliberative democracy (e.g., Royal Commissions) or direct popular measures (e.g., initiative, referendum, recall elections). However, these are not always binding and usually require some legislative action—legal power usually remains firmly with representatives. In some cases, a bicameral legislature may have an "upper house" that is not directly elected, such as the Senate of Canada, which was in turn modeled on the British House of Lords (Wikipedia, 2018).

According to some political theorists like Edmund Burke, the representatives are not just the puppets of the electorates. In some cases, it is their duty to use their wisdom and privileged knowledge of particular circumstances to take decisions for the good of the state. Burke states:

> ...it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved

> communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion, high respect; their business, unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfactions, to theirs; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion (Bohn, 1854).

Unfortunately, the representation of the electorates in Nigeria is very regrettable. Often, the so-called representatives only do their bidding and turn blind eye to the needs and problems of those they are supposed to be representing. Hence, democracy has become, for most Nigerians, more a hypothesis than a reality. For most, the country is anything but truly democratic while the elected officials are anything but truly representative. Nonetheless, before we continue further on this issue of Nigeria's representative democracy, we shall take a look at the philosophical concept of State.

Philosophical Concept of State/Nation

The definition and the purpose of the State have assumed a controversial dimension long before the modern theorists emerged. Like every socio-political concept, the State has a long line of theorists trying to delineate its existence as a central concept in the region of human existence. It is important we run a brief analysis on classical scholars' thoughts on the purpose of the State before we officially subject Hegel's concept of State to serious examination. For instance, both Plato and Aristotle held that the State exists to procure the good life for the citizens. Aristotle conceived the State as having an ethical dimension, which is the provision of the platform for man to enjoy the good or happy life. Happiness is the goal of every man. If man does anything evil, for Aristotle (1962), it is with the view of deriving some form of happiness from the evil. Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the end at which all actions aim. The actions of the State also must aim at the happiness of its citizens. But for scholars like Hobbes (1946) and Locke (1952), the State is a product of the peoples' willingness to transcend the state of nature, which inhibits the possibility of a peaceful co-existence. In Hobbes, the state of nature is reputable for brutality and violence, while in Locke, it is a state of peaceful co-existence through the guidance of the moral laws, but with the possibility of violence due to man's moral weaknesses.

The State is the highest form of association that allows the realization of man's project of self-fulfillments. This definition is traceable to the ancient political philosophers' conception of the polis (the State) as the moral ground for the attainment of man's rational goal and as a product of natural necessity, which will enhance man's meaningful living. In other words, the State is not just a willing

transition from the State of nature but a natural phenomenon; a human necessity built on the nature of man as a political animal. Aristotle argued that man is by nature a political animal. This implies that man is intended by nature to live within the purview of his society, which is the collection of his fellow men. The family is the fundamental unit established by nature to cater for man's immediate needs. But because of the unlimited nature of man's needs, a higher form of association was necessary. According to Aristotle, the village emerged as the first association of a number of houses for the satisfaction of something more than daily needs. The dynamic nature of man's needs resulted in the highest form of human association, which is the State. Thus, the Aristotelian State exists primarily to cater for the endless needs of man in the society. The State has no other justification for its existence than the provision of a viable means of man's realization of his goal.

The sovereign has only three duties to attend to: the duty of protecting society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of society from the injustice or opposition of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain because the profit yielded would never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals, although it might frequently do much more than repay a great society. By the sovereign, Adam Smith (Appadorai, 1975) meant the State. The State is to prevent external aggression against its own unique and authentic existence. It should ensure justice in all interpersonal relationships within it. In other words, no member of the State should impoverish, exploit and oppress the others, unjustly. Also, the State and its institutions of governance and administration should not only service the need of some minority (those in power). They should rather be used to enhance the profitability of the whole society at large.

Max Weber's (1972) definition of the State 'as a human political community that has a monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Irele, 1998) becomes problematic. If our conception of the State is in terms of physical use of force alone, whether legitimate or illegitimate, then the danger of the tyrannical usage of the State's power of governance becomes a possibility in any polity. The Weberian conception of the 'State' in terms of legitimate use of physical force, alone, could lead to a problem due to the moral weaknesses of men. This physical force has the tendencies of being used by tyrannical leaders to the detriment of the lives of the citizens. Laski (1967) said, concerning the State, that it becomes an organization for enabling the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. The State enables the individuals within its jurisdiction to realize and achieve social goods. For these scholars, the State exists for certain ends or, put in another form, the State is the means to an end which is the self-fulfillment, self-realization, and self-development of man in the society.

Hegel, who forms the basis of our discourse, projects an idea of the State that exists as an end itself. The State in Hegel's political thought evolves as the supreme body in the society. The destruction of such projection becomes a necessity in our modern time. This is because Hegel's conception of 'the State', in the hand of despotic leaders, will inhibit both national and individual developments of the citizens.

The State and Sustainable Development

Given the peculiar nature of the State as the center of governance and the unification of the society, the idea of development, as well as sustainable development, cannot be discussed without the State being a central player. Development is not just infrastructural, but it is also human-focused. Kayode underscores it thus:

> Development is not just to make the poor wealthy, but to make the poor productive. The need of the poor…is not relief but the release of their inherent potential for individual growth, enhanced productivity and higher social and political responsibility. This way, development turns man into an asset, not a liability (Kayode, 2002).

Thus, the State is supposed to focus on the developments of its people. In other words, the State ought to provide a conducive environment for the citizens' realization of their dreams, aspirations and projections.

Markandya (1990) posited that what constitutes development depends on what social goals are being advocated by the development agency, government, analyst or adviser. We take development to be a sector of desirable social objective… The elements of this sector might be:

- Increase in real income per capita;
- Improvement in health and nutritional status;
- Educational achievement;
- Access to resources;
- A fairer distribution of income; and
- Increase in basic freedoms

The pursuit of these ideals of sustainable development is the goal of an ideal State (a proper State) whose citizens' welfare guides the formulation and implementation of all policies and laws. Any State that does not focus on development as its priority could be said to fall within the purview of the Hegel's State that occupies our attention.

Reflecting on the character of the Nigeria States and their agenda for sustainable development, Ake (2001) succinctly stated that the problem is not so much that development has failed, as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place. By all indications, political conditions in Africa are the greatest impediment to development. Thus, the absence of development in Africa can be located in the absence of the ideal political leadership that could use the forces and the resources of the State to spawn viable development. The State, in the hands of corrupt political leaders, becomes a predator and a supreme entity whose policies are meant primarily

for the few elites, who control it without recourse to the undeniable existence of the teaming masses.

Elliot defines sustainable development in terms of:

> A political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making; An economic system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development; A production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development; A technological system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance. An international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; An administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction (Elliot, 1999).

He argued that sustainable development is about reconciling development and the environmental resources on which society depends. Therefore, we can posit that the State has the responsibility of channeling the resources within its territory to promote developmental projects for the benefit of the larger society. World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) defined sustainable development as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This implied that sustainable development entails maintaining development over time, focusing on the unborn generations. Therefore, the present African States must begin to redress their ideological base in order to accommodate the prima facie tenets of sustainable development.

Metaphysics and Hegel's Political Theory

However, in order to be able to do justice to Hegel's concept of the State, there is a need to understand the metaphysical foundation of his theory. For Hegel, the whole universe is the self-projection, self-externalization, self-manifestation, and self-development of the Absolute Spirit. The Absolute Spirit is the grand finale, the ultimate, and the totality of all beings. It is the unification of all that exist in this world of material experience. The appearance of man on earth signified the highest projection of the Absolute Spirit. When man comes to know the Absolute through reason, it is simply the Absolute that has come to know itself through man. The self-development of the Absolute is through the dialectical process, which entails the synthesizing of conflicts and contradictions into a new form. A thesis is negated by an antithesis. Both form a synthesis which, in itself, contains another thesis and antithesis. This process continues, for Hegel, as the order of change and transformation in the society.

In projecting itself in the form of material or physical universe, the Absolute negated itself by being a spirit. The Absolute is the unification of both spirit and matter and takes different dimensions within the cosmic process of development through the logic of dialectics. The Absolute reaches its highest development in the emergence of the State as the supreme will of the Absolute Spirit. The State is the highest externalization of the Absolute Spirit.

Hegel's metaphysics does not accommodate duality in nature. All is encompassed within the whole. Everything in the world is a manifestation of the Absolute. The known and knower, consciousness and its objects, the finite and the infinite are all moments in the dialectic process of the Absolute. Nothing in the universe is self-contained. World history is the history of the development of Absolute. Different civilizations in the world's history are all products of the stages in the development of the Absolute. From early civilization of the east, to the Roman Empire and to the German civilization in Hegel's time are all the developmental stages of the dialectic moments of the Absolute's self-projections. The State emerged as the material representatives of the Absolute in subordinating the wills of the individual to the universal will of the Absolute Spirit. The individuals have no concrete objective wills different from the universal will of the Absolute represented by the State. The freedom of the individuals is subordinated to the supreme will of the State.

Hegel's Theory of the State

Hegel did not conceive of the State as an authority imposed from the outside upon the individual. Nor did he consider the state to be the product of the general or majority will. The State, said Hegel, "is absolutely rational – substantial will" and again, "the state is the actuality of the ethical idea." Hegel conferred upon the state the characteristic of a person, saying that the state represents universal self-consciousness. A particular individual, he said, is conscious of himself insofar as he is a part of this larger self. And, Hegel says, "since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality, and an ethical life." A person's spiritual reality is also found in the State, for as Hegel says, a human being's "spiritual reality consists in this, that his own essence – Reason – is objectively present to him, that it has objective immediate existence for him." Recalling that Hegel was not interested in formulating a theory of the *ideal* State, his descriptions of the *actual* State are all the more striking. It was the actual living state about which he said that "the state is the embodiment of rational freedom," and, most striking of all, that "the state is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth" (Stumpf, 2003).

All these highly exalting descriptions of the State would make it appear that Hegel had advocated the totalitarian State. He did insist, however, that the State preserves individual liberty, by which we are members of civil society. Neither the family nor civil society is destroyed by the State; they continue to exist within the State. The laws of the State do not issue arbitrary commands. Laws are universal rules, which have their application in individual cases involving individual people. Moreover, laws must be rational and directed at rational people. The reason for laws is that men, in their ability to make free choices, are capable of choosing ends that harm others, and insofar as their acts harm others, their behaviour is irrational. The function of law is therefore to bring rationality into behaviour. What makes an act rational is that it at once achieves a person's private good as well as the public good.

The function of the State is therefore not to compound personal harm or misery by issuing arbitrary and therefore irrational commands, but rather to increase, through its laws, the aggregate of rational behaviour. The State is thus an organism that is seeking

to develop the Idea of freedom to its maximum, and to achieve objective freedom only as its individual members do. In this way, the laws of the State, rather than being arbitrary are rational rules of behaviour that the individual himself would choose if he were acting rationally. The only limitation upon the individual will that reason allows is the limitation required by the existence of other wills. The sovereign acts in the name of the universal will and not arbitrarily. The State, according to Hegel, then "is the Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human Will and its Freedom" (Stumpf, 2003).

Ethical Dilemma in Hegel's Politics

The obvious problem in the Hegel's State stares us in the face. The State, as a self-manifestation of the Absolute, carries within its bowel a magisterial prowess that is subject to no questioning or gives no room to the voice of dissent. The State organizes itself as the supreme body in the society whose law is subjected to no review because it is the final stage of the Absolute, who is a supreme coordinator of world history. The Absolute is a rational conscious being whose activities illuminate human history as the force of progress in the communities of the human race. The Absolute cannot be wrong as the totality and the unification of all beings; so the State that emerged out of it cannot be wrong in the implementations of its policies. The people should willingly throw themselves into the hands of the State as the final objectification of the infallible Absolute Spirit. Man's freedom can only be realized in the State. The State is the only precondition of the attainment of individual ends and aspirations.

Hegel (1953) posited that 'the history of the world moves on a higher level than that proper to morality. The demands and accomplishments of the Absolute and the final aim of Spirit, the working of Providence, lie above the obligations, responsibilities, and liabilities, which are incumbent on the individuals in regard to their morality'. According to him, the concept of morality, as conceived in the family and the civil society, is quite different from the State's. The State is guided by its supreme moral sense, which is a derivative of the Absolute ideal of morality. The State, therefore, possesses its own unique morality that could be at variance with the private morality of the individual. The historical figures (leaders) are nothing but mere stooges in the hands of the Absolute, who is the primary force behind the development of world history. These historical figures, like Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and others, were weapons in the hands of the Absolute. The Absolute is also behind the emergence of some of the best leaders the world has ever known. George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Nelson Mandela, and the rest were all handmaids of the Absolute.

The implication is that moral praise and moral blame cannot be adjudged in the Hegel's ethical framework. This is because the historical actors acted without possibly knowing why they did. The Absolute directed the course of cosmic history through them without their self-consciousness. We cannot hold them responsible for their actions because they do not have absolute strength to act otherwise. The Hegel's political leaders are subject to the control of the Absolute Spirit therefore, they cannot be held responsible for the actions since it is the Absolute Spirit that acts through

them. The citizens should, therefore, accept all laws, policies, and governmental decisions as the final projections from the Absolute Spirit, who is unquestionable. The leaders are only implementing the decisions of the Absolute, however, unknowingly. These political postulations gradually led to the emerging of tyrants, who consider themselves as nothing but helpless agents in the custody of the Absolute.

Hegel's exaltation of the State above the individuals and his justification of all social eco-political policies taken by the political leaders and the bureaucratic administrators as the arts of the Absolute's instigation of cosmic history through its dialectic process are unpardonable. This is because the cruel leaders in African politics have emerged as tyrants who can be considered in the Hegel's sense as historical figures under the usage of the Absolute's adventure to cosmic development.

Philosophical Implications of Hegel's Theory of the State

Hegel's treatment of most of the social issues can rightly be seen as a direct criticism and rejection of some of Rousseau's liberal opinions. Rousseau had put forward his idea that man is born free but is everywhere in chains. For him man is naturally free. He captures his freedom as soon as he gets the opportunity. This freedom of the individual, ordained by nature, offers the general will. The general will is the will that discrete individual, that appear to be more powerful than their fellow individuals, and the less powerful individual falls the victim of surrendering to more powerful individual and as a result pay their obeisance to them. As it were, it was Rousseau who initiated the romantic cult of democracy. This led him to formulate the contractualist theory of the state against which Hegel would hold as a contrary view, one that is strictly organic. More so, the constitution of Germany showed clearly that Hegel's conception of the dialectic was controlled by a moral rather than a scientific purpose. Hegel explained that the object of the essay was to promote understanding of things as they are, to exhibit political history not as arbitrary but as necessary. The unhappiness of man is a frustration that arises from the discrepancy between what is and what he is feigned to believe ought to be. It occurs because he imagines that event is mere unrelated detail and not a system ruled by a spirit. Its remedy comes with reconciliation, the realization that what is must be and the consciousness that what must be also ought to be. This is manifestly the principle which Hegel later summarized in the aphorism, "the real is rational and the rational is real". The authority that was fully conferred on the civil society, with the elimination of the state government as it were upheld by Rousseau was seen by Hegel as nothing but transitory means to an end and not the end itself.

Thus, the absolute democracy of Rousseau was rightly criticized by Hegel. And the criticisms gave direction to Hegel's philosophy of the organic state. This absolute democracy gave individuals the right to agree and form government of all citizens' participation. This implies that there is no state outside the civil society, because all are decision makers. This form, according to Rousseau, accords well with individual inalienable freedom that should not be surrendered to another. Hegel found serious faults against this liberalist individualist absolute democracy. He saw its demolition and replacement as the hope of a new socio-political order.

Nigeria's Representative Democratic Samples from Hegel's Theory

From the foregoing, one can notice that Hegel seems to have given official nod to totalitarian leaders in third world counties like Nigeria. Even though the second paragraph above could seem to counter this claim, it is quite unfortunate that Nigeria's representatives care less to properly and fully understand the theory of the State like Hegel's before claiming such supremeness in matters of legislation and execution of laws affecting the people intricately. To buttress a little more, it is not wanting the numerous occasions that the country's selfish politicians enact laws that are so very unpopular with the people that they are meant to represent their interest. Take for instance; how many times since Nigeria's democracy in 1999 have the lawmakers called for public hearings and referendums on very important legislations before they got passed into law? Another good example is the 2014 National Conference convened by the then President, Goodluck Jonathan. This conference, in my own view, gathered and examined the interests of majority of the citizens who were quite represented to an appreciable level owing to the way the representatives for the conference were chosen from all walks of life: geo-political zones, socio-political parties, religious affiliations, royal climes, and educational backgrounds. Unfortunately, the then president, having failed to implement the conclusions of the conference because of the fast-approaching general elections then, the report of the conference got swept under the carpet by the new administration. Now, following deafening calls by the subjects for their interests captured in the report to be implemented by the present administration, the government decided to set up another entirely different committee made up of only themselves in the ruling class – without being representative at all of the vast socio-political, religious, geo-political, educational, and economic differences in the country. This is a clear manifestation by the country's ruling class of the regrettable, supremacist mindset that the leaders of the State are supreme and that their aggregation – to use Hegel's philosophical words – represents the Divine Idea as it exists on earth.

Even the mind-blowing corruption of the so-called representatives to the detriment of their subjects speaks more volume than could ever be comprehended. The manner in which the officials enrich themselves as well as the way in which they use more than two-thirds of the nation's security apparati to protect themselves without minding what the electorates are going through because of insecurity or what they think or say shows their "higher-than-thou" mentality and belief. After all, going by Hegel's theory, they (the government) are the embodiment of the absolute spirit which is subject to no interrogation or scrutiny whatsoever from any quarter. This model of representation is most heartbreaking and mind-boggling, for based on this model, development of the nation becomes secondary to the expensive needs and comfort of the elected officials.

Way Forward

The Hegelian political theory granted a supreme power to the state (government). The state as the universal will of the Absolute Spirit assumes an unquestionable posture because the Absolute cannot be wrong in its decisions taken through the political leaders who are mere stooges in its hands. The political leaders cannot be wrong

because they act according to the wills of the Absolute Spirit. The official position of this conception has been the basis of the exploitation and the dictatorship in the third world countries. The state should not have any goal than the provision of the platform that will aid the well being of the citizens. Even if the state cannot meet the needs of all its citizens, it must not destroy their means of meeting their own needs. It must provide the platform that will aid in the realizations of their own needs. The state must be development driven and sustainable development that entails the maintenance of holistic development The state is a driver of development and that the state has a responsibility to its citizens, for part of the social contract between the state and the citizenry is for the former to provide an enabling environment and instrumentality for a range of cultural expressions. These would include liberal provision of educational, recreational, and aesthetic facilities. The orientation of the state as well as the civil society in this direction would enhance the realization of basic cultural needs.

Even if one would contest the reality of the social contract theory, the fact remains that the state exists for the welfare of its people. Contrary to Hegel's postulation of the state, the state has no supreme existence far above the people who give it meaning. The Hegelian State is a breeding ground for tyrants, and the African post-colonial state is an experiment of such. The only way to achieve this deconstruction is through demystifying the duo concepts of the state and of political leadership. The state exists for the people. The political leaders are expected to be at the service of the people as their representatives. We must reconstruct the concept of the state from the notion of a dominating organization controlled with varying degrees of efficacy by a ruling group which competes for power and compliance, for sovereignty, with other political, economic and social organizations both internal and external.

The above definition portrays the Africans' conception of the state. The state in Africa (Nigeria as a case study) has fallen into the hands of the ruling elites (the minority), who compete vigorously for state's power and use it for their personal financial advancement. The state is to make laws and enforce them through the use of its agencies and its political actors; however, the state is not just about making laws and enforcing them. The state has as one of its primary goals; the well-being of its people. This should be one of the goals of the peoples' representatives (political leaders) and not just the initiations and the implementations of policies. All policies must have the peoples' well-being as their goal. It is true that the 'demos', also known as the people, cannot rule the state as the representatives of themselves; but their voices should not be ignored in governance.

The conception of democracy as an institutional arrangement in which individuals acquire the power by means of a competitive struggle for the people's votes promotes the idea that politics remain as the domain of the elites (the minority). Here, the possibility of mass participation is unrealistic, for the elites (the minority) are allowed to wedge the state power of governance, while the majority demonstrates their involvement only in electing the so-called political leaders. More so, if we go by such notion, ordinary citizens do not and perhaps cannot have a sophisticated grasp of

public policy and political affairs. For them politics is a little more than a morality play, where cultural clichés are affirmed and private frustrations vented.

This is, indeed, a radical postulation about politics. If the people are conceived as nothing but mere irrational objects to be ruled and dominated by the few educated elites, then the majority stands the chance of being exploited, dominated, and impoverished by those who hold the political power. This is the Nigerian political experience. The elites have been able to sidetrack the people from governance such that the people have no relevance in the policies that affect them. There is a need to deconstruct and reconstruct the concept of the State in African politics. The state and its institutions, as operated by the political leaders and the bureaucrats, should not assume a magisterial position above the people for whom they are in power, whether elected, nominated, or selected. The people should not be totally cut away from the government whose policies should enhance their (people) welfare.

There is no difficulty in showing that ideally, best form of government is that in which the sovereignty or supreme controlling power in the last resort is rested in the entire aggregate of the community, every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being at least occasionally called upon to take an actual part in the government by personal discharge of some public function local or general. Even though J. S. Mills recognizes the fact that the whole community cannot be directly involved in governance, the point remains germane that the state (government) should not be ran without the inclusion of the people in the general decisions that affect them.

The Nigerian state should avoid the Hegelian patrimonial and absolutistic outlook and integrate the people into its holistic development project. In other words, the state, although under the direct control of the minority, should descend to the level of the majority by paying attention to them as the people whose collective existence gives room for the emerging of the state and its apparatuses.

The essence of true democracy is to be found, not in voting or representation, but rather in deliberation. While this argument does not discount totally the value of liberal attachment to institutional reform of governance or the requirement for pluralist constitution, it regards these ideals as insufficient in themselves for the grounding of democracy. Instead, it argues that the deliberative ideal looks to the creation of a community whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members. This involves the cultivation of public spheres in which there is genuine dialogue between the agencies of public governance and those likely to be affected by their decisions and actions. With popular democracy, public authorities are expected to justify their actions, since governance is regarded as democratic only to the extent that the people individually and collectively enjoy a permanent possibility of contesting what government decides.

This reflection on democracy is by implications relevant to the contemporary Nigerian state, given that Nigeria is undergoing a wider acceptance and agitation for democracy as an ideal form of government. The state should involve itself in adequate

dialoguing with the people. The state's actions through its leaders are to be justified; thus, this will enhance the possibility of accountability and transparency, which are the central missing factors in Nigerian politics. The reconstruction of the state entails the elevation of the people to the positions of occupying the central point of considerations in the initiation and implementations of the state's policies. The leaders are not meant to lead without the consent of the people who will suffer the direct effects of their policies. The leaders are not to act as though the people are bundles of illiterates, apolitical, and unenlightened minds. This is the new ideal of the state that the post-colonial Nigerian society needs to evolve; a state that is primarily about the peoples' well-being; a state where the leaders are committed primarily to the peoples' welfare and not just theirs.

If the State is not committed to the peoples' welfare, the people will not be committed to the welfare and the continuity of the State. According to Dukor (1991), the people of Nigeria neither understand the sanctified institution of the State nor do they have any commitment to it. The Modern Nigeria state and its socio-economic formation lack an organic relation with the traditions of the people. It has not vibrantly integrated individuals, groups and institutions in such a way as to create polity expressing the aspiration of the people. The reconstructed state integrates and expresses the aspiration of the people. The Nigerian state should express the aspiration of the people in the societies

***Eugene Anowai, PhD**
Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University
Igbariam, Anambra State
Email: chukwueloka@yahoo.co.uk

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