THE ETHICAL IMPLICATION OF SEPARATING MORALITY FROM POLITICS: TAKING A CUE FROM MACHIAVELLIAN POLITICAL IDEAS AND THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The attention of this paper would be to assess critically the consequences of any conscious effort to separate morality from politics giving that morality constitutes an essential and integral part of any political culture. With this understanding it becomes controversial and worrisome for any one to suggest that morality can be divorced from politics and still make a success out of the entire business of governance. The concept of Machiavellianism presents a very big challenge to this possibility in politics. I would attempt to show the dangers inherent in such a calculated effort using the Nigerian political experience as a case study.
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AIM OF THE STUDY

Every research effort is geared towards unearthing those fundamental and underlining factors that informs a particular reality, and this paper is not an exception. Therefore I will attempt in this long essay to evaluate the possibility of separating morality from politics as proposed by Machiavelli in his blue print for ruler ship. Attention would be on the ethical consequences of such exercise using the political situation in Nigeria as a point of reference.
CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The possibility of isolating morality from politics has become a subject of debate in most intellectual and political discourse. As a matter of fact the issue has assumed a polemical status in recent times. Consequently two opposing camps has been created, on one camp are those who disagrees with this possibility, they hinged their claim on the grounds that morality is an essential and integral part of any political culture. They equally argued that any conscious effort to separate morality from politics will amounts to removing the very essence of politics and also increases its vulnerability to all shades of practices. This view suggested above is similar to the one expressed by Saint Augustine (the African ecclesiastic writer) concerning the role of justice in governance. He says “remove justice what are kingdoms but gangs of criminal of a large scale”. What Saint Augustine is suggesting here is that, the idea of justice is an essential element of government and its absence will amounts to having no government. In the same vein the pro moralist will argue that if the concept of morality is removed from politics what will be left are gangs of deceivers and fraudsters in government. With this perceived dangers, they seriously argued against any attempt to divorce morality from politics.

On the other camp are those who are advocating for morality to be separated from the business of politics. These advocates strongly believe that it is possible to successfully carry out the art of politics without making recourse to the idea of morality. For them the notion of morality is an unnecessary burden that should be eased off the shoulders of politicians since politics is about choice and consequences which has greater weight on our public life than our private life. The argument here is that in politics we are more concerned with human actions and their resultant effect on public image than our private interest. To make their case clearer, politics is projected as an autonomous entity that should be free from the constrains and dictates of moral judgements. In other words the enterprise of politics should be spared of the usual hitches and complicities of moral dictates. One such advocate is Niccolo Machiavelli (fifteen century Italian political writer). Machiavelli in his famous book “The Prince” proposed a blue print for politicians to follow if they must become successful rulers.

1 Omoregbe.1993.p.127
3 Ramsay.1998.p.103
He sees politics as essentially a game of power acquisition and retention, for this reason he advised politicians to be weary of moral dictates which he considers as incompatible with the demands of power politics.\(^4\) What Machiavelli is suggesting here is that it will be difficult for politics to perform its primary role of preserving the interest of the state by adhering to the traditional dictates of morality. It is important to note some interesting factors that informed his attitude towards politics first was the political exigencies of his time and secondly was his pre-conceived notion of human nature. With this background, Machiavelli made a very strong case for morality to be separated from politics since history has shown that a good end has a way of justifying an evil means in governance.

The focus of this essay will be to show the ethical implication of separating morality from politics, taking a cue from Machiavellianism and the Nigerian political experience from the independent era to the present time. Much emphasis will be place on proving answers to the following thought provoking questions which are at the base of Machiavellian political thought.

i. Can morality be separated from politics?

ii. Is the acquisition of power the ultimate goal in politics?

iii. Can an evil means be justified by a good end?

It is disturbing to observe that since Nigeria gained its political independence, the Nigerian politicians have consciously and overtly pursued the business of politics in a more or less Machiavellian manner. They have assumed that the primary goal in politics is the acquisition and sustenance of power with what ever means deemed necessary, and once this is achieved, the moral implications of their action is considered immaterial. They strongly believe that the most crucial and important part of human action is the outcome and not necessarily the means used. This attitude by Nigerian politicians has left a devastating consequence on our tireless search for an enduring and lasting democratic culture. Like Charles Dickson (a seasoned political analyst) aptly described the attitude of Nigerian politicians as a three course meal of deceit, lies and plenty of magic.\(^5\)

Any close observer of Nigerian politics and politicians would most likely agree with the views expressed above. Nigerian politicians over the years have redefined the art of politicking to include primarily the business of acquiring and retaining power at what ever cost. This development has made it

\(^4\) Ibid. p. 103
difficult for Nigerian to enjoy the full dividends of governance. Politicians in Nigeria have over the years chosen to approach the enterprise of governance in a manner that could be most likened to the Machiavellian style of politics. This essay will be devoted to showing the impact of adopting such tactics in a polity like that of Nigeria and its ethical consequences on our moral life.

The entire work will be arranged in chapters, starting with the definition of major concepts, a preview of the concept of Machiavellianism and the Nigerian political history from the independent era to date, and finally descriptive analysis of Machiavellianism in display by Nigerian politicians and the ethical evaluation of such approach in politics. I will also try to make some useful recommendations on the way forward.

1.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

An intellectual exercise of this nature requires that those major concepts that will feature prominently in the discussions to follow, are given some form of clarification, this is inline with the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein (a contemporary German philosopher) who asserts that the intellectual scene is “linguistically bewitched”. He argued that the bulk of the problems confronting the intellectual world will be greatly reduced if thinkers and philosophers pay more attention to clarification of terms. Based on this I will attempt to give a working definition of these two major concepts; politics and morality, with a view to showing the relationship that brings these two concepts together especially as it affects the idea of governance.

1.3 WHAT IS POLITICS?

The term politics is derived from the Greek word “polis” meaning political community. “It is the art and science of government”. It could also be regarded as a collective decision made within groups, in other words politics is often associated with human behaviour within governmental set-up. Politics can also be seen as the process and method of making decision for groups. Although it is generally applied to government, politics is usually observed in all human group interaction, like in corporate, academic and religious settings.

The concept of politics can also be associated with the following kind of relations.

i. social relations involving authority or power

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6 Clarke.1996.p.659
7 Ibid.p.661
ii. the study of government of states and other political units
iii. the profession devoted to governing and political affairs.

Historically western political philosophy is said to have started with Plato and his book “The Republic”. This work provided an important starting point for political analysis. As a branch of study Aristotle conceived politics as belonging with ethics, that is, he saw politics and ethics as subjects that should be treated together through practical reasoning. He argued that there was no intellectual necessity to treat both subjects differently, since both politics and ethics are out to bring about common good. In the East, political philosophy is said to have began with Confucius. The Analects, a companion of Confucius observations, was also an important starting point for political theory and analysis. In principle politics is about determining the nature of an ideal society and the institutions that make it work. The aim of every society is to create enabling conditions for the best possible life for its members. Since determining the best possible life is one of the objectives of the philosophical field known as ethics, then one can rightly say that the most important dimension of politics is the ethical dimension.

Other political scientist sees the fundamental nature of politics as different from the ones suggested above, they argued that politics is essentially a mechanism for resolution of conflict and the central issue is how the decision making process should be managed without necessarily been engulfed in moral arguments. The concern here is basically the exercise of political power and the justification of political authority. Under this conception of politics, alternative concepts such as democracy, authoritarianism, plutocracy, oligarchy are given attention.

Another important aspect of politics is the economic dimension; here the question of who should be in control and distribution of societal wealth. This is where the debate of which system of economics should be adopted, such as capitalism and communism. From the above analysis, one can rightly say that the concept of politics constitutes three major dimensions namely ethical dimension which is about the creation and sustenance of common good, the second is political power which addresses the issue of centralization and decentralization of powers. Lastly is the economic dimension which answers the question of who controls societal wealth. Here the attention is always on common ownership and private ownership.

8 Ibid.p.661
9 Ozumba.1997.p.102
The concept of politics can also be viewed as an art of science concerned with directing and administering states or other political units. In this broader sense politics encompasses all activities through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live. Here politics is necessarily linked with the idea of conflict and co-operations.

Another useful understanding of the idea of politics is that of Andrew Heywood. He conceived politics in the following light.

1. He identified politics with the art of government and the activities of the state, the idea here is that politics is essentially a state bound activity. This definition in a sense tries to exclude some institutions and social activities from the realm of politics.

2. Politics as public activity associated with the correct conduct and management of the community’s affair rather than private concern of the individuals. This definition is in line with Plato and Aristotle’s understanding that it is within the political community that human beings can actualize the ”good life” which they desire.

3. Politics as a means of resolving conflicts by means of compromise and negotiation rather than force and naked power.

4. Finally politics as an art associated with production and distribution of resources in the course of social existence.

For Machiavelli, politics is primarily concerned with preserving and furthering the interest of the state. He tried to situate political activity in an autonomous realm, free from the constrains and limitations of moral judgements. Here Machiavelli attempts to demonstrate the incompatibility between the demands of traditional morality and power politics. On general terms politics is largely concerned with arrangement of legislation in order to determine who will gain most economically in any given society, and as such political process is usually characterized by conflict of interest among different classes that make up the society.

In this essay I will like to approach the concept of politics in a manner different from Machiavellian understanding. I will attempt to show that the game of politic carries other values than just the acquisition and retention of power. It should include other important values which are very central to human existence. Like the concept of morality and the

10 Ramsay.1998.p.105
12 Roth.1995.p.571
creation of good life. Politics for me should be about the collective decision of how the state should be organised with the aim of bringing about common happiness. This I feel can only be achieved if the concept of politics and morality are treated together. If we accept the fact that by nature men are political animal, then we should also consider the fact that politics is for man and not man for politics. Politics should be about promotion of those positive human values that will bring about the much desired happiness which men have always been seeking. I will be making a case here in this long essay for humanizing form of politics; that is a form of politics founded on those basic human values notably the idea of morality.

1.4 WHAT IS MORALITY?

The notion of morality is a universal feature of human life. It is a very complex field of enquiry with wide range of literature. The complex nature of morality makes it vulnerable to conflicting analysis, positions and debatable issues which have remained unresolved. But be that as it may, some working definitions have been given that could aid one in having insight to what morality stands for. The term morality is said to have appeared in the fourth century CE in the writings of Saint Ambrose, from the Latin mores (traditions, folkways). It is concerned with personally held ethical beliefs, theories of obligations and the social elements that reinforce it. The idea of morality is equally used to refer to a system of principles and judgements shared by cultural, religious and philosophical communities with common belief of what constitute right and wrong. Human being is constituted in such a way that not all actions befit his nature. Some kind of actions is antithetical to his nature and militates against his well-being. While some other kind of actions promotes his general well-being and leads to happiness and self-fulfilment. In other words man is expected to engage in actions that are considered morally right and refrain from actions that are considered morally wrong.

One good example of a well articulated moral principle is the one by Aristotle in his “Nicomachean Ethics” .like Plato, Aristotle emphasized on the importance of virtue to our understanding of the nature of morality. For him we should act according to what virtue requires and this can be done with the help of reason and understanding. Aristotelian ethics

13 Omoregbe1993.p.17
14 Ibid.p.18
15 Garreth.2001.p.1118-1119
is guided by a teleological concern which bothers on the notion of happiness. Happiness in this sense has to do with one's total life style as against few activities man usually engages in.

It is also worthy to note that the term ethics and morality are most often used interchangeably terms but do not mean the same thing. Morality encompasses a wide variety of areas related to the field of ethics. It will not be out of place if one presupposes ethics when dealing with moral issues. The relationship between ethics and morality is similar to the one between logic and thinking or the relationship between theology and religion. In each case the later is the basis of the former, we already have a sense of ethics and we already make moral judgement even without reflecting explicitly on the principles underlining our moral judgements. Ethics is therefore the systematic study of the fundamental principles underlying our morality.

Another contributor to our understanding of the nature of morality is Immanuel Kant. For Kant, ethical thinking places” right” before the notion of “good”, in that sense what a person considers as good comes secondary to right. The prime ethical question for Kant is how one “ought” to conduct himself, rather than how one” is” conducting himself. Kant ethical theory is said to be deontological in nature since it places premium on duty and justice before the idea of good. But the modern teleological theories places emphasis upon the search for what is good. Jeremy Benthams utilitarianism as expressed in his book *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Bentham argued that what is good for human being is the attainment of pleasure, what is right therefore, and what is morally worthy and virtuous are those actions that maximize pleasure and reduces pain. Such a theory is undeniably individualistic but can serve as a theory of general conduct, as theory of legislation and government.

Our understanding and appreciation of what morality is would be incomplete without making mention of what meta-ethics is. This area is concerned with the analysis of ethical terms such as “good”, “evil”, “obligation”, “duty”, and “principle”, “moral or immoral” .etc. The central issue in meta-ethics is the problem as to what precisely we mean when we say that an action is good or bad? How do we define a good action?. Here meta-ethics is sub-divided into Naturalism and Anti-naturalism. Naturalistic theories are those theories that explain or define moral goodness in terms of natural objects or properties .One example of such theory is the Hedonistic theory held by philosophers such as the Epicurus

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16 Ibid.p.1118-1119
17 Omoregbe.1993.p.21
and Jeremy Bentham. These philosophers defined moral goodness in terms of pleasure; this of course is subject to debate. For the Anti-naturalistic theorist, moral goodness is not a natural property that can be described or defined in naturalistic terms, and therefore can not be explained by empirical observation or sense perception. It is not something we can see or taste in things. One of the strongest opponents of naturalism in contemporary philosophy is the British philosopher G.E. Moore. For him moral goodness can not be defined in terms of natural property; such as pleasure, and any attempt to define good will lead to what he calls the “naturalistic fallacy”. The Anti-naturalist see goodness as a unique, unanalysable and indefinable, simple quality which can not be identify with any natural object but which we recognise when we see it in things.

Another kind of meta-ethical theory is emotivism; this theory holds that ethical statements are used to express one’s positive or negative emotions or feelings about certain things, and to arouse similar feelings in others. The “good” according to this theory is used to express one’s positive or favourable feelings about something. According to this theory, the word good in moral context fulfils two conditions (1) to express one’s approval of something (2) to evoke similar approval from others on the issue in question. The two major philosophers that are associated with this theory are A.J. Ayer and C.L. Stevenson.

Another moral theory that is worth mentioning is the prescriptive and normative theory. The prescriptive theory was made popular by R.M.Hare in his books Language and Moral,” and” Free and Reason. According to this theory ethical terms like “good” and “bad” are prescriptive .This means that they are used to prescribe a course of action. To say something is good is indirectly telling somebody to choose it. And to say something is bad is to tell somebody to refrain from it. For Hare moral statements are both evaluative and descriptive.

The normative theory is concerned with the norms, standard or principles of human behaviour .The central question in normative theory is the question, what is moral standard? Most ethical theories in western philosophy, like the hedonism, egoism, utilitarianism categorical imperative, natural law theory all attempts to answer this basic question.

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18 Ibid.p.23
19 Ibid.p.23
20 Ibid.p.24
Starting from the early period of intellectual contemplations, philosophers and political writers have always rummaged on the possible relationship between politics and morality. And to further complicate the debate, they were meant to grapple with the problem of situating those notable concepts that are integrally related to the debate, concepts like right, good, virtue and vice, personal liberty and public interest. But the big question is, should politics be subjected to the dictates and demands of traditional moral principles? This question as a matter of fact has generated two opposing views. These two opposing camps are ably represented by the Aristotelian views and the Machiavellian views. For Aristotle, the hallmark of human actions including politics is the pursuit of moral virtue, which in turn will guarantee common happiness for the individual and the society at large. But in contrast to this, is the Machiavellian counsel to the “The Prince”, he saw the need to exalt the idea of morality in politics as unnecessary, since both human nature and the mechanism of politics do not warrant it. He advised rulers and prospective politicians against any contemplation of a possible place for morality in politics.

What ever position one might decide to take, the fact remains that there seems to be a possible correlation between morality and politics. Both morality and politics help to regulate and direct human behaviour. As a regulator morality is concerned with interpersonal relation and interactions between person and group, whereas politics regulates relations between groups, different socio-political organizations and the state, with the control of state power as the focus. The relationship between these two concepts is a flexible one, and it is in this flexibility that we find the difference between private and public morality in social life. The point that is been made here is that the individual is a moral agent with private and public life. The connection between morality and politics is situated in the individual. When the individual moves from private life to public life the necessary relation between morality and politics is spotlighted. The enterprise of politics has no meaning without defining the place of individuals in it. It is the actions of these individuals that determine the scope and justification for politics. The moral status of individuals to a large extent justifies the relevance of political activities to man. We can ask ourselves this question, what impact would politics have on the lives of people living

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21 Garret.1994.p.159-176
in a society when the key actor in politics have no moral qualms? I believe your guess will be as a good as my.

The ancient theories of morality and politics make little or no distinction between these two concepts. Both Plato and Aristotle made no distinction between these two concepts in their moral and political thoughts. For them “ethics is at the same time politics” Aristotle argued that problems of individual morality can not be separated from the problems of political institutions. Aristotle’s view was teleological in that human actions should be judged by their consequences .The highest good for him is the attainment of common happiness. Thomas Hobbes in his book” The Leviathan” contrasted the views of Aristotle. He argued that human beings are self-interested. In the state of nature there will be a devastating competition between men, he demonstrated this with his famous notion of “war of all against all”. What Hobbes is suggesting here is that there is no place for ideals of morality and justice in such a state of anarchy and warfare.

This view by Hobbes was equally contrasted by the early intuitionist like Henry More, Ralph Cudworth and Samuel Clarke. For them morality is objective and holds in every situation .This assertion gave rise to the debate in moral philosophy concerning where morality should be derived from; reason or feelings. Other theorist like Hume and Hutcheson argued that moral judgement cannot be based on reason alone, that what reason does is to help us detect moral actions but we will only be motivated to do it with the aid of feelings. Another contributor to this debate Vassil Prodanov in his article *morality and politics in a changing world* asserts that our inability to situate the proper place of morality in politics arises from what he calls “moralization of politics and politicization of morality”. He argued that most often theorist and scholars evaluate moral issues politically and political issues morally. this for him has contributed in deepening the debate on the relationship between morality and politics .These controversies point to one interesting fact and that is the growing need to find the place of morality in politics and this is the challenge before this essay and to those who are interested in seeing the art of politicking having a moral anchorage.

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22 Ibid.p.159-176
24 Ibid.www.aucegyt.edu.2006-02-24
25 Ibid
26 Prodanov.2004.available at www.crvp.org accessed on2006-02-22( this website was created by the council for research in values and philosophy Washington DC. to study interpretations and development of cultures and its application to the challenges of contemporary change)
Having tried to give a general overview of what the concept of morality and politics constitutes and the possible relationship that exist between them. I will attempt to give a working definition of politics with a view to showing the need to incorporate the idea of morality in it. Politics in its pure and typical form is about collective distribution of power and societal resources. But I wish to look at the concept of politics beyond this form. I am more concerned on the need to take politics to a more transcendental and humane level and this is where the need for moral considerations comes in. For me, politics should go beyond just collective human behaviour within a governmental set-up. It should include the art of making positive and people oriented decisions on issues of power sharing, control and distribution of common wealth. The art of politics for me should have a human face. That is the collective process of distributing power and societal wealth should be organised in a manner that would enhance humane dignity and worth. It should go beyond the ability to acquire and retain power as perceived be the Machiavellian school of thought. The idea here is not to discredit Machiavellian form of politics but rather to suggest that the game of politics will bring about more of common good if given moral backing. Therefore politics should be viewed in terms of generating common happiness which will in turn bring about the good life we all desire. I believe politics should be for man and not man for politics. Man is a moral agent and for this his actions should be subjected to moral evaluation. Every one has a sense of morality and if this assumption is brought to bear in our actions then the art of governance will greatly be enhanced. Even ancient political thinkers like Plato and Aristotle equally saw the need to treat both concepts jointly. This they believe will guarantee the necessary good life man has always aspired for. I am not suggesting here that the concept of politics can not exist independent of morality but rather intend to make a case for the notions of morality to be properly situated in the business of politics in other words more attention should be given to the ethical implications of our political actions.
CHAPTER TWO
MACHIAVELLIANISM

2.1 BACKGROUND

Niccolo Machiavelli is a Florentine secretary and political writer. He was born in 1469 during the period of the intellectual and spiritual ferment that characterised the Renaissance. This was a period that marked the decline of the power and prestige of the papacy. At this time the principles of natural and moral law were being eroded and strong monarchies were being given birth to, as was the case in France, Spain and England.

Machiavelli entered public life in 1494, the year in which Charles VIII of France Northern Italy and the Medici was expelled from Florence. Machiavelli grew up during the golden age of Florentine culture, under, Lorenzo. He witnessed the years of internal instability in Florence and also saw the easy and unresisted inversion of Florence by France. As a young man who was not known in literary circle he was seriously concerned about the weak and fragile state of the Florentine wall against external aggression. And as a promising young man he absorbed the shock of that event. But then a lasting impression has been made on him. The collapse of the Medici taught him that any government that is not bolstered by the freewill of the governed is bound to fail. He served the Florentine government as a secretary and second chancellor; this work brought him mainly diplomatic responsibilities. And he held on to this position for fourteen years. During this time he was mainly occupied with running many diplomatic and military errands to help the Florentine government to consolidate its stand. He was not particularly a very successful diplomat but he was a shrewd observer and interpreter of diplomatic signals and political acrobatics involved in diplomacy. For instance he showed his genius for grasping the fundamental political condition of the states he visited, basing characteristic generalizations on a multitude of carefully observed details.

27 Murray.1958.p.80-81
28 Bull.1975.p.15
Machiavelli was particularly favoured by Soderini, who was an important pillar of the Florentine government. With the encouragement from this man, Machiavelli was able to make a very strong impact on the Florentine Militia which he considered as indispensable for a strong, dependable government. In 1512 Machiavelli suffered a big set back in his career when his inspired Militia could not withstand the Spaniards, this colossal failure eventually led to the overthrow of the Florentine government and the old Medici once again regained the seat of power. With this development Machiavelli was dismissed, since his loyalty was more to the state than to the republic. He however continued to watch the developments on the diplomatic field avidity, his two important books published posthumously are dividends of his lost days in government. What he lost as a result of his dismissal from public service he gained in his books. Still interested in going back to public service, Machiavelli in 1512 wrote a letter of advice to the Medici government with the intention of being re-instated, but this action earned him imprisonment and torture. His intentions was misconstrued as an act of conspiracy by the government of the day.

From history, we were meant to understand that Machiavelli married in 1502 to Marietta Corsin and they had six children. Machiavelli was said to be seriously engrossed in political affair with little attention to his matrimonial responsibilities. He was a man of strong emotions with great power for sarcasm and wonderful visions. He was indeed an acute political thinker. Who was overburdened with the problem of instability and division that bedevilled the Italian state of his time? He was a product of that chequered political history of Italy. Today he is credited with two important books of our time. The Discourse and The Prince which were published posthumously in 1531 and 1532 respectively. The Discourse deals with commentary and inquiry into the origin and maintenance of states while The Prince is a blue print on how a ruler can cement and strengthen the state based on principles set forth in the Discourse. He is also credited with other works the Mandragola and Clizia. His versatility erudition is quite commendable.

2.2 THE REASONS FOR WRITING THE PRINCE

So many reasons informed his writing of The Prince. One of such reasons was his experience during his diplomatic days. This came as a result of his inner desire to solve the problem of instability and divisions within the Italian Republic. It was also an out burst of frustration and expression given to his already formed imaginative ideals for a more stable

29 Ibid.p.18
30 Murray.1958.p.81
government.31 There is however the subtle imputation to attempt to woo the strong men of Medici-Giuliano and Lorenzo to reinstate him. He felt that such an advice from him will make them reinstate him to the province of power this assumption was corroborated by George Bull when he asserts that “Machiavelli’s imaginative creation of the supreme type of the new ruler is too life like and sincere for it to be merely the by –product of servility”.32

Another reason is that Machiavelli was more interested in the state, and rather than in the form of its government, and the state for him is supposed to be a self sufficient entity capable of establishing formidable backbone for statecraft which include the politics of effective internal control with ardour for external invincibility. Machiavelli therefore believed that no weakling could carry out this task of unification, stabilization and invincibility without been a “superman” in the Nietzschean sense or an autocrat in his own sense. He therefore advocated for a strong monarchy as a way out of the weaknesses of Italy. Machiavelli wanted a strong state, capable of imposing its authority on a hopelessly divided Italy.33 The condition at that time demanded ruthlessness on the part of any Italian state seeking to resist foreign domination. He was concerned with historical facts and not abstract considerations.

When he left government, Machiavelli developed a kind of admiration for Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander. He saw in him, a man with ruthless power comparable to the one he advocated in The Prince which is needed for the proposed unification of Italy with a totalitarian kind of government.

Another important factor which inspired Machiavelli in the writing of The Prince is his conception of human nature. He saw man as naturally greedy, self seeking and wicked. He was more concerned with the “is” than the “ought” of human behaviour. For him, men are corrupt, aggressive, acquisitive and egoistic. This results in a state of affair that is closed to the Hobbesian state of nature of “war of all against all”.34 And because of this threat to man’s existence and property, he suggested the need for effective leadership not be ignored. And since man is more interested in acquisition of property than any other thing, then he will gladly submit to any ruler who can guarantee safety of his life and property. He stressed that this understanding of the psychology of human nature is very important for the Prince and this would serve as a tool for a good leadership.

31 Bull.p.18
32 Ozumba.1996.p.87
33 Bull.1975.p.20
34 Ibid.p.26
It is also worthy to note that Machiavelli did not want to indulge in abstract speculation about human nature. He relied on observation and experience garnered through his diplomatic involvements. He therefore recommended that the best way to deal with men is to be ruthless and “foxy”. To him, man outside the society is violent, lawless, dishonest and beastly. A man needs the society so that his excesses can be checked. Man is negatively gullible and this quality exposes him to continual deception. He argued that any body who wants to deceive will always find somebody who will allow himself to be deceived. All that the Prince needs do is to be a good pretender and dissembler so that the simple credulity of man will always be exploited by the prudent Prince.

He holds that the prince should not bother himself about morality and religion but because man is pretentiously moral and religious, the Prince could exploit this quality in man to his own advantage. Morality and religion makes susceptible to deceit. And since religion places the supreme happiness in humility, lowliness, and contempt for worldly object, this provides for fickleness and feebleness which can be exploited by the Prince to enhance his political gains.

2.3 THE PRINCE

It is interesting to note that Machiavelli’s political though is centred on his counsel to the prince or a ruler who which to acquire or retain political power. This kind of thought have come to be tagged “Machiavellianism”. It has become a common cliché associated with any government that operates without sufficient moral scruples. In spite of some practical usefulness of this theory, a lot of unsavoury attacks have been directed on this political thought. This will be discoursed later on in this essay, but be it as it may, it is clear that Machiavelli’s intentions was to show the importance of having one omnipotent legislator to weld together the disintegrating units that make up Italy. This legislator must be above the law and outside morality in order to conveniently and successfully carry out his task of unification, consolidation and influence. To be able to do this, the prince must freely use the tools of perfidy, cruelty, murder and any other means acceptable and expedient for the achievement of his objectives. He says that the use of force is indispensable but the prince should act in such a way that “when the act accuses him the result will excuse him”. It is the end that justifies the means. Machiavelli’s prince is supposed to be the perfect embodiment of shrewdness and self control. The prince is advised to make his virtues and vices appear good.

35 Ibid.p.28
36 Ibid.p.31
The book contains a series of note on how power could be wrested, retained and enhanced. Some of his counsels include the following:

(a). cope not only with present trouble but also with ones likely to arise in future and assiduously forestall them.

(b). quell trouble at knee level before they get to the shoulder and there by become Incurable-political disorder can easily heal if they are seen well in advance.

(c). Prowess and prudence are recommended as better tools for handling difficult cases of annexation and subjugation.

(d). A war that is timely and set for the present time should not be postponed. This means postponing the evil day to ones disadvantage.

(e). that whosoever is responsible for another becoming powerful ruins himself. The Prince should aim at making sure no strong rival emerge from any quarters.

(f). When ruling men, we must rule them tact, deceit and ruthlessness. The prince must avoid making mistakes in his manipulations of the people, because, one mistake is likely lead to another.

(g). When new states are conquered, their laws and customs should not be immediately changed . All those laws that pretend to further their interest should be introduced at least to win the confidence of the people.

(h). He counselled that men who want to be great should follow the tracks followed by earlier men of tact, prowess and prudence. By so doing he achieves greatness comparable to those he is imitating. Great men are often men of opportunities who came at an opportune time and who utilizes the same opportunity to their advantage. He mentioned men like Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus and others.37

(i). He says that it is risky to come to power through the favour or good will of some body stronger than we are because such favour can only continue if our ruler ship does not conflict with his interest, security and glory. He sees it as the most capricious and unstable thing to do. He cited the example of Cesare Borgia known as Duke Valentino who ascended the pinnacle of power through the good will, fortune, arms of his father Pope Alexander and through his own Prowess and prudence .He recommended Cesare’s ruthlessness any prince who wish to retain political power. Francesco Sforza using the right means and by his

37 Ibid.p.35
own great prowess became the Duke of Milan from the low-ebb of private citizenship.

Apart from these counsels Machiavelli handed out to the prince who intends to seize and retain political power. He equally treated other related issues like

1. How cities which live under their own laws be administered after being conquered.
2. How new principalities acquired by one’s own arms and prowess should be governed.
3. How new principalities acquired with the help of fortune and foreign arms should be kept in subjugation.
4. How some come to power through crime. An example here is Agathocles, the Sicilian who from the lowest rung of social ladder, as a private citizen of abject circumstances, rose to become the king of Syracuse. He did this by criminal means. He carried out his much audacity and physical courage that when he joined the Militia, he rose through the ranks to become praetor of the Syracuse. He seized and held the government of Syracuse by eliminating all the senators and the richest citizens of the land. After this he reigned without any other internal opposition.38
5. The nature of constitutional principality. This is the principality organised along the lines of sanity, not by crime or some other outrageous acts but by the favour of the citizens who have accepted willingly the rule of a prince who constitutionally have been given the mandate to rule.
6. How the power of every principality should be measured. Here, he talked about ecclesiastic principalities – The ecclesiastic principalities are said to have power given to them by God. Because of this, all their negligence to their state and subjects are seen as normal and no one is expected to complain or seek for a change. For instance Italy was riled by the pope, the Venetians, the king of Napel, Duke of Milan and the Florentines. These powers felt that no nation will be fearless enough to wish to invade Italy and that there is a tacit understanding that no principality within Italy should seek to expand its domain. These dreams were all eventually dashed as intrigues began to cede off portions of Italy to foreign powers, France and Spain in particular,
7. How military and mercenary troops are to be employed. He stressed the need for the prince to build on solid foundation. He warned the prince not to rely so much on the mercenaries that they could be dangerous and disloyal because they most times do not have something at stake in the country they are purported to be defending.

38 Ibid.p.38
8. How a prince should organise his Militia – He says that the art of war is all that is expected of a ruler. He should be able to organise his army, inculcate the necessary skill and discipline in them to make them effective. He gave an example of Francesco Sforza who later became the Duke of Milan. For him rulers with arm will succeed while ones with crosses and rosaries will fail. He says “we are bound to meet with misfortune if we are unarmed”.  

9. How a prince should carry out his conduct towards his subjects and friends. The natural feeling is to will that a prince possess all the virtues under the sun, but according to Machiavelli, is not in the prince’s best interest. For example, he says that if a prince is generous, he will soon plunder his resources and when he stops giving as he used to, his subjects will hate him. And more so he may not have enough to continue to keep him self in power. But if he is prudent and miserly, he will have enough to take care of his subjects at the least level of subsistence and still have enough to ward off external aggression and entrench himself in power. For Machiavelli too much compassion can be detrimental to the prince. He says Cesare Borgia was cruel and through his cruelty was able to reform the Romagna. What is important is to keep your state intact and your subject united and loyal. A prince need not necessarily honour his word except when it pays to do so. But he should with trickery and cunningness keep his subjects going with him even when they are deceived. What is important is to deceive them convincingly and satisfactorily that they are still at home with your government. He should play the fox and the lion. A fox to be able to recognise traps, and a lion to frighten off wolves. A prudent prince should be totally a lion. Otherwise he will dig his grave. When it pays. The prince should act in defiance of good faith, charity, and kindness, religious. He should have a flexible “chameleonic” disposition, varying as fortune and circumstance dictates. A prince must avoid being feeble, fickle minded, effeminate, cowardly and irresolute. He should be a man of courage, strength and sobriety. The two major things he should fear are (a) internal subversion from his subjects and (b) external aggression from foreign powers. He must make sure that his immediate staffs are men of intelligence, courage and loyalty. He must shun all flatterers who swarm his courts. A prince himself must be wise to be able to know what counsel to follow and to drop.

39 Ibid..p.39 
40 Ibid.p.42
It is also important to note that Despotism was also recommended by Machiavelli especially when one is trying to make a state and reforming a corrupt state. He despised morality because for him the first law of politics is expediency and not moral considerations. Machiavelli has no use for Christian virtues of humility, self-denial, meekness, patience, etc, but in their place he talked of the following virtues: vitality, energy, strength of character, ability to achieve one’s aim, desire for fame, courage, patriotism, ability to win power and preserve it. The prince is therefore a book of many facts and purpose, but one important goal it sets to achieve is to serve as a manual for states craft and for the achievement of unity in the state and an image of invincibility which will keep other nations far from the territorial borders of Italy.

2.4 THE INFLUENCE OF MACHIAVELLIANISM ON POLITICAL LEADERS

It is interesting to note that before Machiavelli rulers and princes had always found the need to use immoral means like the art of cruelty, false hood, and killings to gain and retain political power and in so doing they had to suffer the problem of guilt and moral qualms. But with the introduction of the concept of Machiavellianism which emphasizes the relegation of morality in politics, leaders and rulers now saw the adoption of immoral tactics as not only a rule but also a necessary tool in political mechanization. What was a simple matter of fact, with all weaknesses and inconsistencies pertaining, even in the evil, to accidental and contingent things has become after Machiavelli a matter of rights, with all the firmness and steadiness proper to necessary things. In other words political leaders have come to accept Machiavellian approach as a necessary rule (condition sine qua non) rather than an option for attainment and preservation of political power.

The counsel by Machiavelli to intending rulers in his book has been both misconstrued and misapplied by succeeding statesmen. There is no doubt that men like Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, Babangida and Abacha of Nigeria, Bush and Blair of the United States of America and Britain, have come to adopt some of the recommendations of Machiavelli. For instance Adolph Hitler was said to have made the following comments concerning the idea in “The Prince."

“Hitler told me he had read and reread The Prince of the great Florentine.

To his mind, this book is indispensable to every political man. For a long
It did not leave Hitler’s side. The reading of these unequalled pages, he said, was like a cleansing of the mind. It had disencumbered him from plenty of false ideas and prejudices. It is only after having read the Prince that Hitler understood what politics truly is”. 42

With the above comments from Hitler one would not be surprised the level of evil and immorality committed by the German government during the Second World War. In a Machiavellian thinking of no giving room for opposition, Hitler conceived the German (Aryan race) and the Jewish race as the most superior in the world. And to ensure a complete domination of the world by the Aryan race, he decided to embark on systematic cleansing of the Jewish race in Germany. This led to the death of thousands of Jews in the concentration camps. Hitler tried to explain away his cruelty and inhumanity by suggesting that when a man assumes power that the chances are there that he will engage in self-indulging fantasies and by so doing loses the most precious of his possessions and that is his “humanity”. This action by Hitler raises a lot of moral issues. If Hitler had moral scruples, why would he think of exterminating a particular race in order to perpetuate his own race? From this understanding it will not be wrong for one to assume that Hitler must have taking the counsels of Machiavelli in the prince seriously. The events of the Second World War have shown the dangers inherent in reducing the art of politics to a mere exercise in the art of acquiring and retaining power. This is in line with the famous quote of Lord Acton who says that “absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

In recent times we have equally seen the absence of ethical values and high level of deception and falsehood being used by the world super powers, especially the United States of America and the Great Britain for continuous domination of world politics. This growing phenomenon was aptly capture by Joseph Rotblat in his article ethics and politics where he asserts that “nothing demonstrates more vividly the absence of ethical values in the conduct of world affairs, and the loss of trust in our in our political leaders, than the recent events that have led to the Iraq war”. 43 The issues in question here is the military intervention in Iraq. After the September eleven terrorist attack on the United States, The American government saw every need to use falsehood and distortion to hit back at their perceived aggressors in the Middle East. The Bush led government tried to make the rest of the world to believe that the key to world peace lies in taking firm control of the political arrangement of some countries in the Arab world. They directed their attacks on three countries that were perceived as having

42 Gilbert..1939.p.p135
nuclear capability. These countries are Iraq, Iran and North Korea. They were branded as the “three axis of evil”. And are to be seen as great danger to world peace and stability.

To make good their intentions the American government with disregard to the due processes in the security council of the United Nations, formed what they tagged as the “coalition of the willings”, for a military assault on Iraq. The Saddam Hussein led government of Iraq was accuse of not only pursuing nuclear weapon programme but also aiding and abetting terrorist.

President George Bush of the United States was said to have secretly convinced the British Prime Minister Tony Blair on the option of overthrowing the Saddam Hussein led government in Iraq through military means. And to get the endorsement and support of the British parliament and people. Prime Minister Tony Blair had to resort to false representation of facts. He informed the British parliament that the government of Saddam Hussein poses a direct danger to Britain and the world. But after the invasion and the subsequent overthrowment of the government in Iraq, it was discovered that intelligent information provided by Tony Blair to the British parliament was distorted by Blair’s aids to suit the intentions of the government.

It became clear that the Prime Minister Tony Blair misled the British parliament and the British people. The issue then is, if Tony Blair’s government decision to participate in the military intervention in Iraq was guided by ethical considerations, the most honourable thing for the Prime Minister to do was to apologise to the British people and seek for forgiveness or resign as the head of government. But none of these happened. This is a clear case of disregard for ethical considerations in decision making process of government. Similar case abounds in other political arrangements like that of Nigeria. And this, I will discuss at length in the later part of this essay.

44 Ibid
CHAPTER THREE

3.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF NIGERIAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Nigeria is regarded as a product of colonial creation. For administrative and economic convenience, the British government brought together three colonies to form the country called Nigeria in a historical event called The Amalgamation of 1914. It is the most populous black nation in the world with a population of over 120 million people and about 250 ethnic groups and languages. The three dominant ethnic groups are the Hausas –Fulani’s occupying the northern part of the country, the Igbo ethnic group is found in the south-east of the country while the Yoruba ethnic group are settled in the south-west of the country. There are other smaller ethnics groups which form the minority groups.

On the economic front, Nigeria is known to have large crude oil reserve. But before the discovery of oil, the mainstay of the Nigerian economy was agriculture, with groundnut, cocoa and palm oil as the major produce. But with the production of crude oil in commercial quantity in the early 1970s, Nigeria became heavily dependent on oil as its main sources of foreign exchange earning. Every successive government in Nigeria is faced with the problem of diversifying the economy to reduce this dependency.

Politically Nigeria has experienced two different forms of governments, the military and civilian government. The military accounting for thirty out of the forty-five years it has existed as an independent state. The remaining sixteen year was for civilian rule. For better understanding I will break this analysis into two different eras; the military and the civilian rule.

3.2 THE MILITARY ERA

Military intervention in politics is a common feature in the politics of most developing countries and Nigeria is not an exception. The usual reason given for their incursion into politics is to correct the ills of past civilian governments. The military rule is also seen as a kind of rescue mission necessary to correct and save most country from the ineptitude of

46 Adejumobi&Momoh,1995,p358
civilian rule. Nigeria’s first experience of military intervention in politics occurred in January 1966 when some middle-ranking officers of the Nigerian army led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu staged an attempted coup. The coup failed and was suppressed by the federal troops because the officers that masterminded the coup were politically naïve and inexperienced in the art of coup planning and execution. Instead a military junta led by General. Aguiyi Ironsi from the Igbo ethnic group was installed as the first military head of state and commander in chief of the Nigerian arm forces.

This sudden change of government was perceived by many northerners as an attempt by the Igbo ethnic group to dominate the politics of the country. The reason for the coup was however the growing dissatisfaction among Nigerians on the corrupt and selfish manner the politicians were piloting the affairs of the country. Before the military intervention, the polity was heated by the census crisis of 1963 and the electoral crisis of 1964. With this brewing crisis the military saw every reason to intervene in the politics of the country.

On assumption of office General Ironsi failed to appease the northern political elites who demanded for the coup plotters to be placed on trial. He equally appointed officer from the Igbo extraction into key political offices. General Ironsi also promulgated Decree 34 of 1966 which nullified the federal system of government and replaced it with a unitary system; this he considered as a better alternative system of governing the country. This very action by General Ironsi reinforced the fears of the northerners who earlier saw Ironsi’s government as a calculated attempt by the Igbos to take over the politics of the country.

At the height of the northerners opposition to the unitary system of government a counter was staged in July 1966 which saw the killing of high ranking Igbo officers including the head of state General. Ironsi. This counter coup brought to power Gen. Yakubu Gowon a Christian from the middle belt of the country. On assumption of office, Gen. Gowon quickly reintroduced the federal system of government with four regions, namely the Northern, Eastern, Western, and the Mid-West region. These regions represented the major ethnic groups that make up the Nigerian state. Aside from the elimination of many Igbo officers in the July 1966 coup, General.Gowon also introduced policies and programmes that were against the interest of the Igbos, especially those living in the northern part of the country. As a result of the strained relationship and the increasing tension between the federal government and the Eastern region, coupled with the unabated killings of the Igbos living in the northern

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47 ibid.p.360
48 ibid.p.362
49 Soyinka.1966.p.170
part of the country, Colonel Chukwu Emeka Odimegwu Ojukwu who was in charge of the Eastern region opted for a secessionist mission by declaring the Republic of Biafra from the Nigerian state. Efforts by the international community to resolve this crisis proved abortive, like the Aburi Ghana accord of January 1967.

The Nigerian civil war lasted between 1967 to 1970, with thousands of lives lost especially people from the Igbo ethnic group. The war ended in 1970 and Gowon government began a massive reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reconciliation within the country. This exercise was aided by the oil price boom of the early 1970s, with a lot foreign exchange earning for Nigeria. In an attempt to bring the country back to civil rule, the Gowon government announced a nine-point transition to civil rule programme that was to culminate in handing over power to a democratically elected government on October 1976. Some of the high point of the transition programme included reorganization of the country’s Arm forces, a national head count, establishment of the twelve states announced in 1967, and formulation of a new constitution and finally election of a civilian government.

Even with these lofty programmes the government of General Gowon was finally toppled. This was largely due to the over politicization of the military and the sectional or ethnic politics of the Nigerian state. The brought to power another military head of state in the person of General Murtala Muhammad. This government earned so much support and goodwill because of the leadership style and the positive radical changes introduced by Gen. Muhammad. He was courageous enough to purge the public service that was ridden with corrupt, inefficient and indolent persons. He equally initiated a transition programme that was to take the country back to democratic rule come October 1979. But his regime did not last long as he was assassinated in an abortive coup led by Colonel Bukar Dimka from the middle belt region of the country. With the assassination of Gen. Muhammad, the mantle of leadership fell on his second in command General Olusegun Obasanjo. In the spirit of continuity General Obasanjo decided to carry on the policies and programme of his predecessor especially the transition to civil rule programme. Finally in October 1979, after a general election he handed over power to a democratically elected government led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari whose party the NPN won the majority vote.

The military in their usual tradition seized power again in December 31, 1983. With General Muhammad Buhari as the head of state. The reasons given for this sudden change of government was the unabated level of corruption and mismanagement of the country’s
The major focus of General Buhari’s government was to salvage the country’s economy which had suffered so much from mismanagement. The government of General Buhari went into action by investigating and arresting the major political actors of the Second Republic for being responsible for the economic woes of the country. The regime of General Buhari also introduced other punitive measures to check the activities of other interest groups like the Nigerian Medical Association and the National Association of Nigerian students. The government also promulgated two decrees that restricted freedom of the press and suppressed critics of the government. In particular decree four which forbids any journalist from reporting any information considered embarrassing to the government. In that same spirit, two journalists Nduka Irabor and Tunded Thompson were convicted in 1984 for publishing articles the government considered embarrassing. There was also decree two which gave the Chief of Staff Supreme Headquarters to detain any person considered a security risk for six months without trial.

The military government under General Buhari also initiated programmes and policies to resuscitate the battered economy and the high level of indiscipline among the civil society. One of such initiative was the war against indiscipline policy (WAI) which was aimed at bringing back the sense of decorum to the civil society. Buhari’s government was regarded as too rigid and authoritarian especially within the military circle. This government was finally overthrown in August 22, 1985 in a palace coupled by another officer, General Ibrahim Babangida.51

On assumption of office, Genera. Babangida again promised to retain the country back to civil rule within the earliest possible time. But as time went by the hope of restoring democratic rule began to fade away as his government repeatedly shifted the transition to civil rule time table. With so much pressure from the pro-democratic groups and the international community, General Babangida finally imposed two political parties on Nigerians. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention. And on the 12th of June 1993 Nigerians finally went to the polls. This election was greeted with a lot of hope and excitement, Nigerians saw the election as an opportunity to ease out the military from the politics of the country which for long had being in their hands. This election was also regarded by many observers as the freest and the fairest in the history of the country. At the end of the election, a business man and a front line politician Chief M.K.O. Abiola won the election on the plat form of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). With 58 percent of the votes.

51 Ibid.p234
But this election was eventually annulled by General Babangida. And this threw the country into another political crisis which paved the way for yet another military take over led by Gen. Sani Abacha.

With General Abacha in power the polity went through another era of military dictatorship. He promised returning the country back to civilian rule but continued to prolong the transition to civil rule programme. With so many cases of human right abuses, there was also an increased number of political detainees and execution of some labour leaders and human right activist. One of such cases was the hanging of Eight Ogoni human right activists including the renowned play writer Ken Saro-Wiwa. For their alleged role in the death of Nine Ogoni Chiefs who were pro-government activist. This particular incident attracted world-wide condemnation both from other governments and human right organizations. During this regime Nigerian foreign image suffered so much because of the poor human right record of the government.  

Finally in June 1998 General Sani Abacha died of heart failure and was succeeded by his Chief of General Staff, General Abdulsalam Abubakar.

The government of General. Abubakar did not waste much time in returning the country back to civil rule. Elections were held in February 1999, with three political parties. The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), The All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and The Alliance for Democracy (AD). This very election produced yet another ex-military head of state, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, as the democratically elected president and he was finally sworn in on 29th of May 1999.

3.2 THE CIVILIAN ERA

Nigerian attempt at democratic rule could be divided into three different periods namely the First Republic (1960-1966), the Second Republic (1979-1983) and the third Republic (1999-till date). I will attempt to look at the major actors and the event that led to the collapse of each of the eras.

3.2.1 THE FIRST REPUBLIC (1960-1966)

At independence in 1960, Nigeria inherited a parliamentary system of government fashioned after its British colonial masters. With three major political parties which reflected the ethnic

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52 available at www.odili.net accessed on 2006-05-02. (odili.net is a web page for news and commentaries on politics and events in Nigeria)
composition of the country. The NPC (Nigerians Peoples Congress) was dominated by the Hausas from the Northern region. The NCNC (National Convention of Nigerian Citizens) represented the Igbos from the Eastern region, while the AG (Action Group) was dominated by the Yorubas from the Western region of the country.

The first national government was formed from the alliance between the NPC and the NCNC, with Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa as the prime minister and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe. While the AG became the opposition party with Chief Obafemi Awolowo as its leader. The political system became fragile and unstable because of the ethnic rivalry that existed between the three major regions the make up the Nigerian state. The census crisis of 1963 and the election imbroglio of 1964 brought the first republic to a halt. The military quickly took advantage of the situation and seized power.

3.2.2 THE SECOND REPUBLIC (1979-1983)

After eleven year of military rule the country was finally returned to civilian rule in 1979. This time around the political system was fashion inline with the presidential system of government with five political parties. Elections were conducted and Alhaji Shehu Shagari (a northerner) was elected as the head of state under the platform of NPN (National Party of Nigeria) which also won majority of the seats in the national assembly. In 1983 the NPN under shehu shagari was returned to power in another general election. But this time around the election was said to be characterized by wide spread electoral malpractices. The government of Shehu Shagari was also accused of poor economic policies. The government was finally over thrown in December 31, 1983 in a military coup led by Gen. Mohammad Buhari.

3.2.3 THE THIRD REPUBLIC (1999-till date)

The military once again relinquished power in 1999 in a general election which saw the ascension to power for the second time, but as a civilian head of state Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. He was elected under the plat form of the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) as one of the three registered political parties in 1999. On assumption of power the government inherited a lot of problems such as dysfunctional institutions, corruption in the public service, collapsed institutions, politicised armed forces, ethnic and minority groups issues. Seven years after, the government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo is still grappling with these hydra-headed problems facing the nation.
In summary I have tried to give a run down of the journey so for Nigeria in terms of its political development from the independent era to the present time. In the subsequent chapter I will try to illustrate the role Machiavellianism has played in shaping Nigeria’s political future.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 HOW MACHIAVELLIANISM IS USED IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

Historically Nigeria gained political independence from the Great Britain in the year 1960. Forty six years after, Nigeria is still trying to shape its political future, but a major handicap to this task is largely ruler ship problem. A lot of factors have been advanced for this and one of such is the attitude of Nigerian politicians towards the idea of power and wealth. According to Lloyd in the book *Nigerian politics and military rule*, the problem with Nigerian politics is not just about hostility fanned by ethnic group differences but largely from competition between people for power and wealth. In particular the idea of power which I believe is a very central issue in politics since it places a major role in determining the mode of distributing societal wealth. Thus the concept of power becomes an indispensable tool in the field of governance. The great Florentine political writer Niccolo Machiavelli also perceived this and place so much emphasis on the need to preserve power in every political endeavour.

Politics in Nigeria since independence have equally tolled this same line, which I would describe as a more or less Machiavellian style. The following line demonstrate this idea more aptly

“Machiavellianism is a political art form. Those who are astute in the art are either naturally gifted or study and refine the use of modern absolutism. Nowhere in partisan politics is Machiavellianism so common than where competition for the control of power and resources are the fiercest. Nigeria, given its ethnic and demographic dynamics, represents, perhaps, the best theatre for Machiavellian politics”

To make my case clearer I will try to show this semblance of Nigeria kind of politics to the one proposed by Machiavelli under the following issues

i. ethnic politics in Nigeria

ii. military intervention in Nigerian politics

iii. electoral and census crisis in Nigeria

iv. tolerance for opposition

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53 Lloyd.1972.p.132
54 Eso. 2004. www.kwenu.com accessed 2006-05-09 (kwenu is a social cultural organisation for the advancement of the interest and right of the Igbo speaking ethnic group in Nigeria)
v. the use of the power of incumbency

4.1.1 ETHNIC POLITIC IN NIGERIA: the issue of ethnicity has remained a major problem in the political life of Nigerian. This problem can be traced back to the pre independence era when Nigerian was still under the colonial rule. For administrative and economic convenience the British government merged together different ethnic groups under different region in a historical event termed as the amalgamation of 1914. This singular effort brought together people and cultures with little or nothing in common and this has had a profound effect on the political evolvement of Nigeria, with each ethnic group jostling for power ahead of the other.

This very problem was manifested in the first republic where the three major political parties that contested the election of that era were formed along ethnic considerations. The NPC (northern people congress) was made up of people from the Fulani- Hausa ethnic group, the NCNC (national congress of Nigerian citizens) was dominated by the Igbo ethnic group. While the AG (action group) was the Yoruba ethnic group controlled party. With this ethnic composition every party strived to project and further the interest of its group, and this generated a lot of conflict which saw the collapse of the first democratic government in Nigeria.

It was also surprising to see yet another manifestation of this ethnic based politics in the second republic. Each of the political parties that participated in 1979 general election election represented both in composition and in character the different ethnic configuration of Nigeria. The major political actors of this era took advantage of this ethnic sentiment to by adopting every strategy possible to cling on to power at what ever expense. The election of 1979 saw the mergence of Alhaji Shehu Shagari (a Fulani-Housa) as the president, with Dr Alex Ekwueme (an Igbo) as the vice president. While the Yoruba saw them selves as the opposition group. This very situation made it impossible for a stable democratic government to be sustained at that period in time. With ethnic politics as the order of the day the polity was characterized with a lot of acrimonies and conflicts such as the census crisis of 1963 and the electoral impasse of 1944 which brought Nigeria’s first democratic experience to it’s heels.

56 Nweje.2000.www.nigerdeltacongress.com accessed on 2006-05-07(nigerdeltal congress is an association of elites in the oil rich region of Nigeria. The purpose is to protectt and further the interest of this oil rich region of Nigeria)
57 Ibid.
From the foregoing instances one can see the role of ethnicity in the political life of Nigerians. Every group tries to use ethnicity as a pedestal to political control and a guarantee to sense of belonging in the system. It is a common phenomenon in Nigeria that people do not think their citizenship can find full expression until one of their own is in charge. Each of the three major ethnic groups are known to maintain assertive status when it comes to power acquisition and preservation, thus there is always a continual competition for power dominance among the different ethnic groups. Even in the public service, Nigerians are more at home with people whom they share the same ethnic inclination. Ethnicity is a decisive factor in determining how power and societal wealth is distributed in Nigeria. One can only appreciate better the nature of Nigerian politics if the role of ethnicity is properly understood and situated. The multi-ethnic composition of Nigerian has continued to inspire so much competition for power with different groups mapping out strategies to have control of power at every general election. For instance in 1964 general election the northerners voted in block for the NPC to ensure that the northern base party wins the election. With this ethnic base politics, control of power becomes very essential and strategic to the furthering of the interest of every group. When politics is played in this manner the ideals of Machiavellianism are encourage and this has been the lot of Nigerian politics.

4.1.2 MILITARY INTERVENTION IN NIGERIAN POLITICS: another avenue of observing the Machiavellian traits in Nigerian politics is the nature and manner of military intervention in Nigerian politics. Out of the forty-six years Nigeria has existed as an independent state, military rule account for thirty years of it. The usual excuse given for this incursion into politics is to correct the shortcomings of the civilian government. But is it really the case? Let’s look at the first military government of 1966.

The General Aguiyi Ironsi (an easterner from Igbo ethnic group) led the government of 1966 came into power with aim of addressing some of the weaknesses of the civilian government before it. But it deviated from this and decided to amend the country constitution to allow for a unitary system of government which was to ensure more concentration of power in the centre. The government felt that the unity and stability of the country was in danger and with more power concentrated in one hand, the task of governing the country would be made easier. His government promulgated the decree no2 which gives the military...

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59 Adejumobi&Momoh,1995.p358
government the power to detain persons and groups without trial for a period of six months. General Ironsi also appointed Igbo officers to key positions in his government. This action by General Ironsi did not go down well with the northern political elites who saw it as a Machiavellian plot by the Igbos to dominate the politics of the country. With this disaffection, another military coup was stage by some northern officer which saw the killing of key Igbo officers including the head of state General Aguiyi Ironsi. From Dudley’s account of the events that precipitated the Nigerian civil war, the attack on the Igbos was a mental stereotyped one. In other words the Igbos ethnic group are seen as one with domineering inclination most likened to the one suggested by Machiavelli.

Every military government in Nigeria makes the promise of correcting the ills of past civilian government. Policies and programmes are presented with the aim of turning around the economic and political fortune of the country, and most importantly laying the foundation for a smooth take over of government by the civilian. These promises are greeted with relief and hopes for a better country. As time goes on this dreams and hopes are dashed away as the military are unable to improve the political and economic fortune of the country. Like the case of Babangida regime. He came into power in 1985 with the promise of taking the country out of its economic and political doldrums. But eight year after the story was not different. And the most disappointing was his endless transition to civil rule programme which culminated in the annulment of June 12th 1993 presidential election won by a prominent business man and frontline politician Chief M.K.O. Abiola. This very election was acclaimed by both local and international observers as the freest and fairest in the history of Nigerian politics. With the annulment of this election, Nigerians dream of having a democratic government was once again dashed away and the military continued its dominance of the politics of the country. With this character and disposition General. Babangida was regarded as the Machiavelli of Nigerian politics for his practical demonstration of some of the basic tenets of ruler ship as prescribed by Machiavelli in his book “the prince”.

The military government that preceded that of General.Babangida did not fair better. General. Sani Abacha took over the mantle of leadership as a result of the inability of the interim government to maintain the unity and stability of the country the transition to civil rule programme was shifted times without number and the usual excuse given is the need to

60 Ibid.p.359
61 Dudley.1993.p.132
62 Ibid.p.133
lay a solid foundation for eventual take over of power by the civilian. He foisted five political parties on Nigeria and made himself the sole candidate in an election that was never held due to his death from heart failure in 1998. Within the five years of his administration there was a complete dysfunctional and collapse of the countries institutions, with corruption at it highest level, coupled with its poor human right records.\textsuperscript{65} The intervention of military in Nigerian politics is another means of observing those Machiavellian attitudes that are show cased in Nigerian politics.

4.1.3 ELECTORAL AND CENSUS CRISIS IN NIGERIA: periodic elections are part of the demands of democratic values; it is an opportunity for people to express their wishes and choice of those who will pilot the affair of the state. It is an opportunity people look forward to make a change in their political future. But in Nigeria election periods are times of anxiety and uncertainties .people are not so sure if their votes will make the difference in determining the actors that will pilot the affairs of the country. The history of Nigeria is littered with cases of inconclusive elections. According to Prof.Omo Omoruyi (a renowned political scientist and one time director of the centre for democratic studies Abuja)” the 1964 and 1983 presidential election was presided over by men (Balewa of the NPN, and Shagari of the NPN) who were determined to rig in order to establish a dominant party and succeed them selves in power”.\textsuperscript{66}

One of the problems that led to the fall of the first republic was the election crisis of 1964.in that particular election, the ruling party led by Sir Tafawa Balewa did every time it could to ensure that his party (NPC) secures the majority votes; election results were inflated especially areas controlled by the party. This act did not go down well with the opposition party (AG) led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. This generated a lot of protest and violence around the country. Another case was the election of 1983. The NPN led government under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari was also accused of rigging the 1983 presidential election in favour of its party. There were places where the number of votes casted exceeded the number of registered voters. This raises a lot of questions on the credibility and transparency of the electoral body (FEDECO) that conducted and supervised the election.\textsuperscript{67} The result of this very election became a subject of protracted legal battle between the ruling party (NPN) and the opposition party (UPN).

This same phenomenon repeated itself in the 2003 presidential election. The PDP controlled government were also accused of influencing the result of 2003 presidential

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid
\textsuperscript{67} Adejumobi&Momoh,1995.p360
election. In particular the overwhelming votes recorded by the PDP in the south western states of Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti and Ondo. These are states that are supposed to be the strong hold of AD one of the rival parties of PDP. Even in the gubernatorial election, the PDP was also accused of manipulating the result of the election to favour its candidates. A very popular case was that of Anambra state in which election petition tribunal ruled that the election result which declared Dr. Chris Ngige as the governor was actually rigged to favour the PDP candidate. The tribunal finally reversed the decision of that election and declared Chief Obi of the APGA as the actual winner of 2003 gubernatorial election in Anambra state. 

Periodic head counts otherwise known as census is an exercise aimed at knowing the actual number of people occupying a particular geographic or political region. The figure gotten from this exercise is use for economic planning. With this understanding people are supposed to make themselves available to enumerators with fact the will be documented for future planning. But in Nigeria census exercises are greeted with misgivings due to lack of proper education and political understanding. in Nigeria census exercise do not usually produce the desired result. The 1963 census exercise was characterized by conflict of figures especially from the northern region. Like in the northern region where the figures presented were far more than the actual number of people residing in that region. According to one of the observers of that very exercise every living thing was counted as human ,including goats and chickens just to give the impression that there are more people living in that region of the country. With this the census exercise of 1963 became an object of controversy. Results from the western and the eastern region were also inflated, with figures far above the actual number of people living in that region.

Even the census exercise of 1993 was also characterized by accusation and conflict. The exercise was not well perceived because of the ethnic and religious provisions included in the data presented by the organisers. In general census exercise in Nigerian is most cases perceived as a mean to gain political advantage. With this in mind every group tries to inflate figure coming out from its region.

4.1.4 TOLERANCE FOR OPPOSITION: in every political arrangement there is bound to be oppositions. These oppositions could be persons or groups and they play important role, especially in providing an alternative to the government in power. They also help to make useful criticisms on the policies and programmes of the government. Like Robert Dahl

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68 see Thisday newspaper of march 16th 2006.www.odili.net accessed 2006-03-17
69 Ibid
observed in his book *political opposition in western democracy* “It is a common view in most political commentaries that the strength of democracy is measured not by the strength of the government, but by the strength of the opposition, or at least its potential strength.” This underscores the need for accommodation and tolerance of opposition groups in any democratic government. Machiavelli in his counsel to intending ruler makes a case for non-tolerance for opposition in government. He advice the prince to see to it that every opposing voice is removed as soon as possible. This advice has had a profound influence on the attitude of rulers and politician to the place of opposition voices in government. The case in Nigeria is not different from the one suggested by Machiavelli. Most opposition groups have had to pass through so much just to air their voice on programmes and policies of government that bothers on common interest. This is so because different successive government in Nigeria are known to have zero tolerance for opposition voice. Both the civilian and the military government in Nigeria have had to device means of weakening the opposition groups and persons. Most time they are made inactive with their views inconsequential to the politics of the day. In the most extreme case these voices are silenced when they become too critical of the policies and actions of the government. This situation is largely responsible for the increasing cases of politically motivated killings in Nigeria in recent times. For instance during the regime of General Abacha, some notable politicians like Pa Alfred Rewani (a frontline politician) Alhaja Kudirat Abiola (the wife of late Chief M.K.O. Abiola the acclaimed winner of the annulled presidential election of 1993) were assassinated by men believed to be working for government. While the publisher of the Guardian newspaper (a daily tabloid in Nigeria) Chief Michael Ibru survived an assassination attempt on his life. Another instance was hanging of the leaders of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) Ken Saro-Wiwa and seven other human right activists in 1985, for their uncompromising stands on the issue of the oil rich Niger Delta region of the country. This particular incidence attracted world-wide condemnation from the other governments around the world and non-governmental organization such as the Amnesty International. The government of General Abacha was suspended from the Common Wealth of Nations for these human right abuses. Even in the present government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the opposition are no having it good. The multi-party system is gradually turning into one party system, with the ruling People Democratic Party (PDP) taking full advantage of its hold on power to keep the opposition groups in a docile state. the major actors in this opposition

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70 Dahl.1966.p.458
groups and parties also have their sad stories to tell, some have also paid the supreme price of 
loosing their life for being too critical of the actions of the ruling government. Like the 
assassination of Chief Bola Ige of the Alliance for democracy (AD) in December 2000.Chief 
Harry Marshal of the All Nigerian Peoples party (ANPP) in 2003, and Chief A.K.Dikobo in 
2004. Any close observer of the political situation in Nigeria will find it difficult not to link 
there series of killing to the government of the day. If the ruling government claims not to 
have hand in these killing, how come these men are from the opposition parties?

4.1.5 THE USE OF POWER OF INCUMBENCY: another means Nigerian politician’s 
display some of the antic of Machiavellian politics is the use of the power of incumbency. The 
history Nigeria has shown that no government in power has ever lost an election to its 
opposition party .Nigerian politicians are known to use the power of incumbency to return 
themselves in power by manipulating electoral results. This was the case in 1964 general 
election where the ruling NPC( Northern Peoples Congress) led by Sir Balewa tried every 
thing possible to rig the election. The election result of 1964 was contested by the opposition 
party the AG (Action Group). This dispute led to the first post independent political impasse 
in Nigeria and consequently the fall of the first republic.

This same situation repeated it self in 1983 and 2003 presidential elections. There was 
wide spread rigging and manipulation of election results masterminded by the government in 
power .for instance in 2003 election the ruling party PDP( Peoples Democratic Party) 
mandated the governors of all the PDP controlled states to ensure that the sates are delivered 
to the pary in presidential election. What this suggests is that the election results coming from 
these states must be in favour of the incumbent president. With this mandate the final result of 
2003 presidential election reflected not the wishes of the electorate but the wishes of the 
ruling government of ruling peoples democratic party led by president Obasanjo.

Another case is the present move by Obasanjo’s government to extend the life span of his 
administration beyond 2007. The constitution of Nigeria prescribed two term tenure for any 
serving government. And Obasanjo’s government is expected to hand over to another 
democratically elected government come 2007. But news coming out from Nigeria indicates 
that president Obasanjo has sent a bill to the country’s legislative body (the national assembly) 
for the amendment of the country’s constitution which would allow him run for the third term 
in the coming 2007 presidential election. How does one explain this move by the president to 
remain in power even when the country’s constitution states other wise?
4.2 THE EFFECT OF MACHIAVELLIANISM ON NIGERIAN POLITICS

What I have just given above is a vivid picture of Nigerian politics and its close resemblance to Machiavellian form of politics. This attempt by Nigerian politician to carry out the business of politics in this manner has had a profound effect on our search for a stable and enduring democratic future and by extension contributed so much to the inability of our ruler to deliver those desired dividends of governance. What most Nigerian politicians have done by pursuing the business of politics in a Machiavellian manner is what I will call a “categorical mistake”, in the sense that these politicians failed to understand the remote factors that warranted Machiavellian kind of politics. Machiavellianism is a product of political exigency of a time in Italy. The very situation that encouraged Machiavelli to make those recommendations to an intending ruler can not be said to be the same in Nigeria. Therefore it will be a miscalculation on the part of Nigerian politicians to assume that Machiavellian tactic would be acceptable in Nigerian politics.

It is also worthy to note that Nigerian politicians preference for Machiavellian kind of politics was not borne out of the genuine desire to have a strong and stable polity but rather to satisfy their personal interest and this has left a lot of unpleasant implication for Nigerian political culture. One of the out come of pursuing the business of politics in a Machiavellian manner is the acceptance of power as the ultimate goal in politics. Politics viewed from this standpoint generates so much competition for power, with less attention to the idea service.

There are a lot of instances where political office holders show disrespect for the rule of law and other constitutional authorities in their quest to preserve the power they have acquired. The need to retain power has become the focus of every Nigerian politician, not for the purpose of rendering service but to further personal interest. In attempt to secure political power, little attention is given to moral implication of their actions. What we now have in Nigeria are politicians with power but without morals. This has had a very negative effect on our political development since independence. People with genuine interest to serve are either scared away or schemed out of the system.

With the exaltation of power above every other consideration, politics in Nigeria has become a haven for people with no moral scruples. With this situation development, the political system lacks transparency, fairness, orderliness, accountability and mission to serve.\footnote{Omoregbe.1993.p.187} People now go into politics with the sole purpose of what they can get out of the system in term of power and wealth and not necessarily what they intend to contribute to the
system. An example is the case of former Nigerian president (Ibrahim Babangida). He ruled Nigeria for eight years and laid the foundation for the institutionalization of corruption in the civil service.\(^\text{72}\) He also holds the record of running an endless transition to civil rule programme in Nigeria for the countless times he shifted his proposed date of handing over to a democratically elected government. The press under General Babangida’s regime also had its dark days. So many media houses were shot down and a lot of journalist detained for publishing materials that the government considered too critical about its actions and policies. The case of the assassination of the Editor in-Chief of the News watch Magazine, Chief Dele Giwa in 1985 is still fresh in the minds of many Nigerians. He was silenced with a letter bomb received from men suspected to be agents of the government. When General Babangida was finally forced out of office in 1991, he was quoted as saying that he had no regrets for his actions while in power.

“It is a matter of indifference to me if any group of person are in disagreement with the actions of my administration, the policies of my government were taken with best interest of the country and as such I have no regrets for the steps my government took to ensure the unity and stability of the nation”.\(^\text{73}\)

The view expressed above is a personal comment by Gen. Babangida, which I believe is expected from him but many regarded him as the Machiavelli of Nigerian politics for his practical demonstration of those counsels handed out to the prince by the great Florentine political writer; Machiavelli.\(^\text{74}\)

With Nigerian political experience we can see the possible implication of any conscious effort to separate morality from politics. These implications can be summarized in the following lines.

i. With Machiavellianism as the guiding principle in politics, rulers and politicians are well motivated to devising a means of ensuring that the concept of politics remains an autonomous entity free from the demands of the traditional dictates of morality. This has reduced the idea of politics to a field where any thing but moral scruples is possible. Not just in Nigeria alone, events around us have shown that when political mechanization is devoid of moral consideration it is often prone to abuse and misuse of power.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.p.188
\(^{73}\) Ibid.p.190
ii. Machiavellian kind of politics tends to encourage over exaltation of power above every other considerations in governance. When so much emphasis is laid on the notion of power, other values like morality and service becomes very immaterial in politics. With this, politics now become a veritable ground for people who are power tasty to display their personal fantasies. The case of Hitler is there to remain us of what power could become when politics is exercised without moral qualms.

iii. Machiavellianism in politics encourages despotism. People who acquire political power with Machiavellian vision in mind see every need to preserve such power even at the expense of the common good of the people they have taken an oath to serve. This accounts for the proliferation of dictatorship around the world especially the developing countries. The case of late Sani Abacha of Nigeria, late president Inasingbe Eyademma of Togo, Augusta Pinochet of Chile, Fidel Castro of Cuba just to mention a few.

iv. Another effect of Machiavellianism in politics is that it encourages corruption and abuse of power. It is not common to find a ruler who has carried out the art of politics in a manner likened to the one recommended in the prince, without such a ruler being corrupt and abusive. In the words of Lord Acton, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Machiavellian style of politics gives so much room for misappropriation of power and public fund since the ruler enjoys absolute power and control over the state. In Nigeria today most political office holder are so powerful and rich with a lot of state immunities that their actions are hardly checkmated. Just recently a serving governor of Bayelsa state in Nigeria was arrested in the United Kingdom for being in custody of over one million pounds sterling, which he could no explain the source.  

v. With a Machiavellian in power most moral institutions like the church are exploited and used to further personal goals. Most rulers who adopt Machiavellian tactics are known to be pretentiously moral and religious. It is a common scene in Nigeria to see the politician carrying out the business of politics pretending to be religious and morally upright just to further their personal interest. One of the ways they do this is explaining every of their political actions with reference to God. Just recently a former Nigerian president General Babangida was interviewed by the press on his alleged plans to run for the presidency in the coming 2007 presidential

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75 see sunnewspapers November 5th available at .www.odili.net.accessed on 2005-09-07
election. He answered this question by saying that he will run for the presidency come 2007 if God says so.\textsuperscript{76} How does one appreciate this answer if not by concluding that this former president is pretending to be religious when he is not?

vi. Machiavellian approach to politics pays a lot of premium to the ends of human actions, with the means as inconsequential. This method of evaluating human action is quite problematic since not every action can be justified by the ends. For instance how does one justify a violent and forceful method of bringing about a change in government as used by the Nigerian military? It does not sound convincing to claim that an evil mean can be justified by good ends. Even in the realm of logic, a sound and logical argument is arrived at when there is a correlative relationship between a premise and the conclusion. But this seems to be the case in Nigerian situation. In an attempt to acquire and preserve power, Nigerian politician adopt every means possible and once this is achieved the ultimate goal of politics has been achieved.

In summary, I have attempted in this chapter to show how the concept of Machiavellianism is used in Nigerian politics and the possible affect of such application on the political culture of a countries like Nigeria. In the chapter ahead I will attempt to evaluate the use of this approach inline with some notable ethical theories.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid
CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 EVALUATION OF MACHIAVELLIAN PRINCIPLE AND NIGERIAN POLITICS

Having shown how Machiavellian principles are used in Nigerian politics and its effect on Nigerian political culture, I will in this chapter attempt to evaluate these principles inline with some ethical theories which have been very useful in making valued judgment on the acceptability or otherwise of certain human actions. The attention would be on these three ethical theories, namely Kantian principle, Utilitarian principle and Aristotelian moral principle.

Immanuel Kant’s moral theory is centered on his principles of Deontology. This principle places so much emphasis on the need to respect the human person. For Kant, any human action that places wealth and power at par with human being is an immoral one. The prime ethical question for Kant is how one “ought” to conduct himself, rather than how one “is” conducting himself.77 Here so much emphasis is placed on the importance of duty and justice in human action. Kant maintained that every human action should be evaluated in line with his three categorical imperative. According to Bowie, Kant’s three categorical imperatives can be summarized in the following lines.

“Act only on the maxims which you can will to be universal laws of nature”78

What this statement suggests is that we are supposed to act in a manner that we would wish others to act and be accepted universally. Put differently our moral conduct should be in conformity with our expectation and that of others.

“Always treat humanity in a person as an end and never as a means merely”79

In inter-personal relationship, Kant encourages us to regard others not as a means to an end but an end itself. In other words we are not supposed to use others as a mere instrument for achieving our aims.

“So act as if you were a member of an ideal kingdom of ends in which you were both subject and sovereign at the same time”80

77 Clarke.1996.p.661
78 Bowie.2002.p.4
79 Ibid.p.4
Here Kant expects us to act as if we are in a state in which we are both a citizen and also a leader, in other words we should do to other as we expect others to do unto us. This is the Golden Rule in practice.

For Kant only human beings can act rationally because they have freewill and this gives us our dignity and unconditional worth. His ethics is basically that of duty and not consequence, he asserts that an ethical person is one who can act out of right intentions guided by reasoning. For instance a person who goes about seeking for political power with the intention of rendering service is acting morally than one who goes about seeking for political power but without the intention of rendering service to the people.

Kant equally suggested that an action can only be justified if it passes the principles of categorical imperatives, In other words an action is morally permissible if it conforms to his principle of categorical imperative. He noted that one of the major characteristic of this principle is the sense of “fair play”. For him human beings are free moral agents and they act from laws required by reason. And this gives them dignity and value beyond price.\(^\text{81}\) Thus one cannot use another simply to satisfy his or her own interest. According to Kant in interaction we must not do any thing to diminish and inhibit these unique human capacities. These imperatives as postulated by Kant hold so much for politics especially when the three are considered coherently or logical.

The teleological theory as proposed by Jeremy Bentham in his book *an introduction to principles of moral and legislation* places emphasis on the search for what is” good”. This utilitarian moral philosophy tries to evaluate the rightness or wrongness of human action on the basis of it’s out come .For the Utilitarian, human actions should be measured by the goods which the consequence of such action brings, they believe we should act in order to bring about the best of consequence. In addition, they maintained that actions that generate pleasure should be pursued against one that brings pain. For instance (i) if action A brings benefit and be B harm, then A should be pursued.(ii)if action C brings about dividends, and D brings about failure then C should be pursued. It encourages us to always pursue actions that bring about maximization of utility. In taking up an action the following factors should be considered:

\(^{80}\) Ibid.p.10
\(^{81}\) Ibid.p.10

Ibid.p.11
i. put all the alternative actions open (choices)
ii. Consider the number of individuals that would be affected from the alternative course of action.
iii. Asses how the alternative actions would affect each individual
iv. Chose the action that would maximize utility.\textsuperscript{82}

Bentham argued that what is good for human being is the attainment of pleasure, what is right is therefore and what is morally worthy and virtuous are those actions that maximize pleasure and reduces pain. Such a theory is undeniably individualistic but can serve as a theory of general conduct, as well as a theory of legislation and government.

Aristotle articulated his moral philosophy in his “Nicomachean Ethics”, he emphasized on the importance of virtue to our understanding of the nature of human actions. For him we should act according to what virtue requires and this can be done with the help of reason and understanding.\textsuperscript{83} The highest good for Aristotle is the attainment of common happiness. This happiness can only be guaranteed if human being conducts their affair and actions in a virtuous manner. What Aristotle is emphasizing here is that our actions should be motivated by the desire to bring about common happiness. And the key to this common happiness lies in virtuous actions.

Happiness is the highest good because we chose happiness as an end it self. For instance somebody is said to be good if he or she performs well like one who sings very well could be called a good singer. The act of singing is a distinctive activity of man which distinguishes him from any other creature and it is part of our rationality. In this sense the highest good should be the activities of the rational soul in accordance with virtue.\textsuperscript{84} Aristotelian moral philosophy is teleological in nature since it is more concerned with the consequences of human actions.

It is necessary to at this point to access the basic tenets of Machiavellian principle with these ethical principle mentioned above. From the understanding of the presupposition of Kantian moral principle Machiavellian political idea are unethical since it places so much emphasis on the need to preserve political, power at all cost. Whereas Kantian principle

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.p.11
\textsuperscript{83} Roth1995.p.571
\textsuperscript{84} see www.sparknote.com accessed on 2006-04-16(sparknote.com is a website created by Harvard students to help academia perfect the art of writing academic papers. it carries insightful analysis on endless range of subjects)
places emphasis on the need for “fair play” and the application of the “golden rule” in human action. Machiavelli in his counsel obviously makes no provision for the universalization of our action in line with the principle of golden rule. What mattered to him in politics is the need to gain and retain power with whatever means possible. Machiavelli insisted that any means used in politics is justifiable so long as power is gained. But a Kantian approach would suggest otherwise. For Kant, human beings are not supposed to be regarded as a means to an end but as an end itself. In other words, Kantian view is in conflict with the Machiavellian anti of using human beings as an instrument for the attainment of political power.

The utilitarian on the other hand seems to be in tandem with Machiavellian approach on how best to organise human action especially in the area of politics. Machiavellianism and utilitarianism are both consequential in outlook since they both place emphasis on the ends of an action rather than the means. What matters in utilitarian understanding of human action is the amount of utility an action brings and any action that brings more utility should be encouraged. If this is translated into Machiavellian understanding then the overemphasis on power acquisition and retention should be encouraged in politics.

Another question that must be addressed here is the beneficiary of this power acquisition. Is this power going to benefit the generality of people in the society or just the ruler seeking for the power? This is the area Machiavellianism runs into conflict with utilitarian moral principles. Machiavellianism to me is more individualistic in nature since it does not make provision for the good of all. By the utilitarian standard, if politics should be about acquisition and retention of power, then it must be for the good of greater number of people. But from the Machiavellian understanding, the need to acquire and retain power is primarily to further the interest of the ruler. Based on this understanding one could see that Machiavelli had no provision for morality in his political principle.

From the above understanding of some of the basic theories guiding human action one can argue that morality should be a necessary ingredient of any enduring political culture and Machiavellian principle obviously give very little attention to this necessity. Historical fact available has shown that the game of politics has been subjected to different interpretations and understanding which when put into practice without moral consideration tends to be abused. Man is not only a political animal but also a moral agent; therefore his actions should be seeking to bring about a sort of harmony between his
political inclination and moral needs. For instance Aristotle argued that the problem of individual morality cannot be separated from the problem of political institutions. With this he made a case for the idea of morality and politics to be treated jointly if the good life we all desire should be achieved. What is important here is the need to pursue politics in a virtuous manner as against the immoral attitude recommended by Machiavelli. The concept of politics as perceived by Machiavelli obviously is in conflict with the Aristotelian view. It will be a difficult task for any one to convincingly show how Machiavellian form of politic will generate common happiness without making provision for moral scruples. Aristotle appreciated the complexities of human society and suggested for a necessary inclusion of moral dictates in every political arrangement, but Machiavellian thought otherwise. The manner the game of politics is been played around the world suggest that we could create a better society if morality is given a place in our action, especially in the realm of governance.

When politics is stripped of its moral considerations the game becomes prone to a lot of unwholesome practices, like what is obtained in Nigeria today. People are supposed to be attracted into politics with the intention of leaving a good legacy not only in their time but also for the generations to come. Like Kant suggested that human actions should be in conformity with universal standard. In other words we should act in a manner that is not only acceptable to us but also to others who are affected by that action. Machiavellian principle seems not to be in tandem with these universal demands of Kantian theory, nor is it in line with Kant’s third categorical imperative which lays emphasis on the application of the golden rule in our actions. Even when pitched with the utilitarian theory, Machiavellianism as way of life is still questionable.

How then do we assess Machiavellian attitude in view of these notable standards of assessing human behaviour? The Answer to this question lies in understanding those factors that influenced Machiavelli in the writing of the prince. These are:

i. the necessity to separate morality from politics
ii. power as the ultimate goal in politics
iii. Lastly, evil means can always be justified by a good ends in politics

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85 Garreth.2001.p.1118-1119
In will like to examine these basic assumptions of Machiavellianism as a political theory. In his counsel to an intending ruler, Machiavelli calls for a conscious effort in isolating politics from morality, for him the demands of morality constitutes unnecessary distraction for the expedient nature of politics. Further more Machiavellian asserts that politics is an autonomous realm that should be free from traditional dictates of morality. The point Machiavelli is trying to put across here is that the expedient nature of politics does not warrant moral considerations and any rule that chooses to approach the game of politics with moral scruples is bound to fail and the ruler that makes conscious effort to isolate morality from politics will be successful in the business of governance.

I do not intend to dispute the fact that politics and ethics are two different entities, but I disagree with Machiavelli on the necessity to separate both concepts as a mark of rule especially when it comes to the business of governance. I believe there is a useful relationship between politics and morality and this I feel should be explored by ruler and politician who go into politics with the primary aim of rendering service to the people. When political office holders are elected into power, as a mark of rule are made to take an oath to serve and protect the interest of the people who had given them the mandate to rule. This oath of office requires the spirit of accountability, fairness, transparency and obedience to the rule of law on the part of the ruler. It becomes difficult for a ruler to perform this role when he makes a deliberate effort to isolate certain basic considerations in human interaction like the idea of morality. Moral scruples for me have a way of acting as a check and balance in human interaction including politics. Man is not only a political being but also a moral agent. This underscores the need for man to make room for moral considerations in his actions.

Experiences around us are testimonies to the indispensable role of morality in human life. The political situation in Nigeria today is a good example of what a political system could be if stripped of moral considerations. Nigerian politician, possibly with Machiavellian influence have thrown away the idea of morality to the winds. Politics for most Nigerian have become a good avenue for them to display their immoral tendencies. With this, the people are denied of the desired dividends of political participation.

Another basic assumption of Machiavellian theory is the believe that the ultimate goal in politics is the acquisition and retention of power. Here Machiavelli tried to reduce the concept

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86 Ramsay.1998.p.103
of politics to a game of power tussle. For Machiavelli the primary aim of politics is power acquisition and the means used in acquiring this power becomes immaterial the moment power is secured. John Gardner in his writing on *leadership and power in organization* described power as the basic energy needed to initiate and sustain action, in other words power is the capacity to translate intentions into reality. In the same vein great leaders like Richard Nixon of the United States saw power as the opportunity to build, to create, nudge history in different directions. The crucial thing here is not really what power is, though necessary but why leaders seek for it and how it is used. Some conceives power as a tool to enhance their ability to facilitate the work of their organizations and groups. While others value power for its own sake. And they use this power for the personal satisfaction it brings. But a leader who uses power in the service of his organization is using it in the most constructive sense. But a leader who seeks power for its own sake and for personal satisfaction is at a level of personal maturity that will compromise his ethical position and risk his organizational effectiveness, and even endangers the long term progress of his organization. The same thing goes in politics. Power if used for self preservation rather than service for common good could jeopardise the stability and unity of any political system. For Machiavelli to have reduced the game of politics to mere acquisition of power show his level of appreciation of what politics should stand for and this has had enormous effect on how the enterprise of politics is perceived by intending politicians. This Machiavellian stand on politics has opened the gate for entry to individuals whose main aim of going into politics is just to have a feel of power.

The last assumption posited by Machiavelli is the notion that an evil means can always be justified by good ends especially in the field of politics. Here am inclined to disagree with Machiavelli on the following ground: first, any one with good understanding of the basic rules of logic would agree with me that Machiavellian belief that an evil mean can be justified by a good end is illogical. In logic, a statement is considered to be sound and valid if there is a necessary relationship between the premises and the conclusion. Therefore Machiavellian argument is not only invalid but also illogical. Secondly Machiavellian position can also be faulted if one considers the broader aim of politics which goes beyond power acquisition and retention. Politics encompasses all activities through which people make, preserve, and amend the general rules under which they live. In other words politics is a means of resolving by

87 Gradner.1985. [www.au.af.mil](http://www.au.af.mil) accessed on 2006-04-17(this is a website created by Air university Alabama USA, to provide professional, degree and military education for officers and civilians. it provide education on the following areas air,spacepower,leadership and management)
88 Ibid.
means of compromise and negotiation rather than force and naked power.\textsuperscript{89} From the above understanding of the wider goal of politics; one can begin to appreciate the myopic conception of politics by Machiavelli. My position here is that power acquisition is part of political mechanization but should not be seen as the ultimate goal in politics. The acquisition of power should be regarded as a means and not and end itself. If power must be the focal point of politics then it should be used for the betterment of not just the power holder but also the generality of people whose domain this power is exercised. This is my conception of power and how it should be used in political arrangements.

Another important argument posited by Machiavelli in his theory which I will like to examine is his conception of human nature. He saw man as naturally greedy, self-seeking and wicked. He was more concerned with the “is” than with the “ought” of human behaviour. For him men are corrupt, aggressive, acquisitive and egoistic. This results in the state of affair close to the Hobbesian state of nature of “war of all against all”.\textsuperscript{90} He maintained that his psychological theory of human behaviour is important for the prince so as to be equipped with the right understanding of human nature which will be a guide to effective ruler ship. Further more; Machiavelli says that he did not want to indulge in abstract speculation about human nature. He relied on observations and experience enriched by his vast diplomatic involvements. He therefore recommended that the best way to deal with men is to be ruthless and “foxy”. To him, man out side society is violent, lawless, and dishonest and beastly.\textsuperscript{91} Man is negatively gullible and this quality disposes him to continual deception. He says that any body who wants to deceive will always find somebody who will allow himself to be deceived. All the prince needs is to be a good pretender and dissembler so that the simple credulity of man will always be exploited by the prudent prince.\textsuperscript{92}

Machiavelli equally suggested that an intending ruler should not bother himself about morality and religion but because man is pretentiously moral and religious, the prince could exploit this quality in man to his own advantage. Morality and religion makes man susceptible to deceit. And since religion places the supreme happiness in humanity, lowliness, and

\textsuperscript{89} see concise oxford dictionary.1985.p.35-37
\textsuperscript{90} Bull.1975.p.15
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.p.25
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.p.27
contempt for worldly object.\textsuperscript{93} This provides an avenue for the prince to exploit and enhance his political status.

What I have given above is a graphic picture of what Machiavelli conceived the human nature to be and the possible ways this human nature could be exploited by an intending ruler to further his political gains. But the question one must address here is; is Machiavelli right about his conception of human nature and is it justifiable for Machiavelli to have suggested these counsels for an intending ruler? If accepted that human being have the tendency to exhibit these trait mentioned by Machiavelli, is it enough reason for him to have generalize his assumption? What Machiavelli has done here is termed in logical parlance as \textit{fallacy of hasty generalization}. It is like giving a dog a bad name just to hang it. Every human being cannot be categorised as naturally greedy, self seeking and wicked. There are cases of men and women with good virtue and are willing to go into politics with the aim of serving the people, using the best of their ability. One good example is the case of former American president, George Washington who asked the American people to think what they can do for their country and not what the country can do for them. Another good example is the founding father of the Indian nation Mahatma Ghandi. He was a role model not only to the Indian people but people around the world. He left a legacy of self denial and politics of non-violence. These are men who found themselves in position of authority and they left positive legacy not only in their generation but also for the generations after them.

I wish to argue here that Machiavelli’s assumptions on the nature of human being are erroneous and as such unacceptable to any one who has a good appreciation and understanding of the intricacies of human psychology. According to Aristotle man is a product of his epoch, put differently our environment and circumstances has a way of shaping our attitudes and dispositions towards issues and people. History has shown that the game of politics has been a beneficiary of both good and bad traits of human behaviour. People’s attitude to politics is mostly informed by their interest and what they understood the game of politics to be. If the political exigency of Machiavellian time warranted those counsels he handed down to an intending rule, the same can not be the case in the present day politics.

Politicians in Nigeria have taken the Machiavellian theory so serious by pursuing politics the manner they have, without proper understanding of those immediate and remote factors that

\textsuperscript{93} Murray1959.p.80-81
inspired Machiavellian theory of politics. Having discussed Machiavellian political ideas and its effect on Nigerian politics. I will like to make the following assertions;

i. Any conscious effort to separate politics from morality will increase the vulnerability of politics to sharp practices, like rigging, bribery, political assassinations, despotism etc.

ii. It is incorrect to assume that the ultimate goal in politics is the acquisition and retention of power, since politics has a broader implication than just power tussle.

iii. It is also wrong to assume that an evil means can always be justified in politics. This I have tried to debunk as not only illogical but also unjustifiable.

iv. There is the need to have a proper understanding of the complexity of human psychology in order not to presuppose that Machiavellian attitude is the best way to organise human conduct in politics.

v. There is also an expedient need for better appreciation of the man Machiavelli and the circumstance that warranted his principles in politics.

5.2 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

So far I have tried in taking a critical assessment of the concept of Machiavellianism and how Nigerian politicians adopt this strategy in political mechanization. Attempts was also made in showing the ethical implication of adopting this tactic in politics arrangement like that of Nigeria. In summary, I will like to recap these major points and also make useful recommendation on the way forward.

Before the grand entry of Machiavellian though into world political thinking, scholars and ruler have always considered the concept of morality and politics as issues that should be treated together, but with the emergence of Machiavellianism, political leaders and scholar began to contemplate the possibility of separating these two concepts. With this line of thinking, politics began to lose its moral considerations. This development has lead to the coming to power by individuals who, like Machiavelli considered the idea of morality and politics as in compatible fellows that must be separated at all cost. The game of politics was now regarded as an autonomous entity that should be free from the dictates of morality.
Power acquisition and retention became the order of the day in politics. The concept of power was also exalted above every other value as the ultimate goal in politics.

This wind of Machiavellianism was also felt in distant places like Nigeria. Politics in Nigeria from the independence has followed the Machiavellian tradition of separating politics from morality. According to Omoregbe in his book *a systematic and historical study of ethics,* with Machiavellian ideas, Nigerian politicians were made to believe that politics and morality do not go together, hence politics was regarded as a dirty game”.94 In other words; the best way to succeed in politics is the use of immoral means. Nigerian politicians equally believed that the ultimate goal in politics is to grab power by all means (fair or foul). they also subscribed to the view that a good end can always justify an evil means in politics.

This Machiavellian strategy has become the modus operandi for Nigerian politicians (both civilian and military) they have continued to adopt immoral means such as coups d’etat, murder, assassination, rigging, and other fraudulent means to gain and retain political power. It is not surprising that no government in power in Nigeria has ever lost in any election and stepped down for a rival party. This has been responsible for Nigeria’s inability to conduct free and fair election since independence and our attempt in planting a stable democratic culture has been a failure. When morality is removed from democracy, its essence has been removed since democracy presupposes morality, honesty, liberty, fairness, peaceful and decent behaviour, open mindedness and readiness to accept defeat.

With the application of Machiavellianism to Nigerian politics, morality and democratic values were relegated to the background. All election conducted since independence has been a sham with manipulated results. The result of this is that we have never really practiced democracy even though we have been deceiving our selves and the outside world. It is somewhat difficult

94 Omoregeb.1993.p.131
to practice true democracy when a nation is committed to the principles of Machiavellianism and with this; political stability has eluded the Nigerian nation. Out of the 45 years of political independence the military rule accounts for 30 years. The army is highly politicized. These men in uniform come into power with the sole aim of having access to the state treasury and national wealth. They see politics as the surest and the easiest way to amass wealth and become millionaires overnight. In other parts of the world military men are not known for their wealth. But in Nigerian, the military has become the most lucrative profession. Our generals are fabulously rich courtesy of the state treasury.

The very moment morality was removed from politics in Nigeria, honesty transparency and accountability was thrown away with it. The result of this is that our government is now made up treasury looters, men and women who come into politics with the primary aim of enriching themselves with public funds. Like St Augustine rightly said “Remove justice and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminal on a large scale”^{95}, in the same vein I will say when u remove morality from politics what u have in government are gangs of treasury looter on a large scale.

Ironically Nigeria is a country richly blessed with both human and natural resources, but has remained a beggar nation with huge and crushing debt. Every year billion of dollars are realized from the sell of the country’s crude oil, but these moneys end up in private pockets as a result of corrupt and immoral people in power. Majority of Nigerians have continued to languish in abject poverty amidst so much wealth just because those in power have chosen to rule with less moral considerations. The Nigerian situation is a clear example of what governance could be if morality is consciously separated from politics as recommended by the Florentine political writer Niccolo Machiavelli.

^{95} Ibid.p.32
5.2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important for me to mention here that Machiavelli has made a very useful contribution to political thought. But there is the need for rulers and politicians to situate his works especially The Prince in the right context to be able to have a better appreciation of its values. The Prince is no doubt a classic for its insight into the possible nature of human psychology. And this will continue to excite and generate heated polemics in political discusses. My counsel is for scholar, politicians and all those interested in the science of politics is to begin to explore the possible relationship between politics and morality with a view to harmonize these two concepts that are very strategic to the art of governance. Machiavellianism is a classic in its own right and time but should not implanted in every political arrangement without due consideration on its suitability or otherwise.

Machiavelli in his writing of The Prince was out to provide solution to the problem of unity and instability of the then Italian which was threatened by forces within and out side the state. This situation can not be said to be the case in politics of today in Nigerian. Therefore it will amount to adopting the right solution to the wrong situation; this is what I had earlier termed as a” categorical mistake”. What Nigerian politics requires now is a form of politics with a humane out look, and not one with so much emphasis on power acquisition and retention. Politics as an endeavour has more to offer than mere power tussle. Service for humanity should be the focus of political interplays. I will like to outline the following recommendations:

i. Rulers and politicians need to channel their intelligence and energy towards the creation of common happiness in politics, just like Aristotle rightly suggested.
ii. Absolutization of power in politics breeds immorality and other corrupt practices that are common in the game of politics; therefore there should be less emphasis on power acquisition and retention.

iii. Those in corridor of power should use their position to effect positively the lives of those who entrusted them with this power. And not for self enrichment and glorification.

iv. There is also an urgent need to bring the concept of morality and other positive human values back to politics. This will no doubt re-energize the interest of men and women of proven integrity back to the game of politics. For too long the business of politics has become an all comers affair, especially people whose sole interest is to taste power at all cost. These set of people should be shown the way out for sanity to return to the game of politics.

In summary I have attempted in this long essay to show the ethical implication of doing politics in a Machiavellian manner and it is my utmost believe that if these recommendations I have given above are religiously pursued the game of politics will reclaim its lost glory. This will no doubt go along way to ensure that the practitioners and followers of politics enjoy the full dividends of political participation.
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