

KARL MARX REVOLUTIONARY PHILOSOPHY AND REVOLUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the political philosophy of Karl Marx upon which projections of revolution in Nigeria is presumed. The analytical paradigm of this paper is anchored on the philosophy in the Age of Liberalism. The paper is based on qualitative research, and reviews literature from secondary sources. The paper argues that many revolutionary movements around the world, including Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa were fairly inspired by the Marxist revolutionary ideas. The concept of revolution used in the context of this paper simply refers to the inspiration which a group of people derive from the revolutionary philosophy of Karl Marx to engage in mass protests and movements, seeking to improve their welfare, but not necessarily to overthrow the status quo of the bourgeoisie to enthrone the proletariat rule. Revolution for this paper only makes sense through the massive protests that followed the 2012 oil subsidy removal, the change revolution in 2015, and the EndSars protests in 2020. Nigeria is yet to witness a real revolution in the sense that Karl Marx conceived of it, but only to the extent that his ideas provided the inspiration for mass protests and demonstrations against the existing status quo, seeking to improve and reform the existing order to offer opportunities for the masses. The paper argued further real revolutions have been truncated in Nigeria because of government policies and laws that target dissident voices; ethnic nationalism; and lack of class consciousness. It is thus, recommended that labour unions and civil societies should embark on massive awareness advocacy to sensitize, mobilize and lead the public to gain the right consciousness, determination and resilience needed to sustain protests and mass movements seeking to reform and improve the existing order that benefits the few privileged but to the disadvantage of the vast majority of the people, who live in misery. In the conclusion, it is submitted that, if the obstacles impeding revolution in Nigeria are overcome, Nigeria is likely to experience a radical change and transformation in her socio-economic and political structures.

Keywords: Karl Marx, Philosophy, Revolution, Social Change, #EndSars Protests

Introduction

The task of political philosophy as it span throughout the ages is to achieve a better society for humanity. This is why political thought assumes many dimensions, spreading across the various areas of human endeavour. Political philosophy attempts to know both the nature of political things and the right or the good political conduct through critical and coherent analysis (Gould &Thurby, 1969). The concern of philosophy is to facilitate the attainment of a better society through knowledge, which is essential for the organization of society in a manner that would engender peace, security and development.

Political philosophy began in the classical period through to the Modern Age or Enlightenment. Karl Marx is said to be a philosopher in the Age of Liberalism. The general current of philosophy the Modern Age is based on the notion that man endures the most of a tortuous living occasioned by exploitation, oppression and suppression. As Enemu (2008, p.60) puts it, "the contemporary society has become a theatre of genocide, bloodshed, mistrust, unrest," anarchy and exploitation. Therefore, to address the challenges affecting life in society requires a logical and conscious inquiry into the problems facing the life and existence of man in society. This is why the political theory of Karl Marx offers the benefits of understanding the capitalist system anywhere in the world, and its attendant exploitation, oppression and suppression of the masses. As a philosopher in the Age of Liberalism, Marx understood the values of liberty and freedom from exploitation and servitude of the ruling elite. Marx's attempt to provide a road map out the exploitation of the masses, therefore, serve the basis for his locative history or revolution through class struggle (Beckman, 1983), which explains the movement of the society from one mode of production to another by violence, and the accompanying improvements in the productive forces and the social relations of production.

The philosophy of Karl Marx covers many aspects of the society, including his exegesis on the dialectical nature of society, theory of surplus value and economic determinism among others. However, this paper concentrates on the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx, and argues that Marx's revolutionary philosophy is central in understanding the causes of revolutions in many political systems across the globe, including Africa, Asia, Middle East and Europe. However, revolution in the context of this paper differs from the Marxist revolutionary idea. Karl Marx sees a revolution under a capitalist society as a way of capturing power with the intensification of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx (1975, p.682) puts it thus: The proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie, is compelled by the force of circumstance to organize itself as a class by means of a revolution; it makes itself the ruling class and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production." To stabilize the result of the revolution, a dictatorship of the new dominant class, the proletariat, would confiscate all capital, organize labour, compel all to work, centralize credit and finance, establish state factories, and concentrate the means of transport and speed up production. Marx believes that "the road to socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the state (Okaja, 2009, p.34). For this paper however, revolution simply refers to the inspiration which a group of people gain in mobilizing themselves under mass protest and movements, seeking to improve their conditions without necessarily seeking to overthrow the existing authority to enthrone the reign of the working class. A revolution for this paper makes sense in the context of mass action, protests and demonstrations in Nigeria against unfavourable government policies and programmes. Examples include massive protest that followed the 2012 oil subsidy removal, the mass action before and after the 2015 Presidential Election of Muhammadu Buhari as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the recent *EndSars* protests in 2020. This paper argues that the Marxist revolutionary ideologies only provide inspirations for these mass actions, which are aimed at improving the conditions of the people, but not seeking to overthrow the existing authority.

Clearly therefore, the Marxist type of revolution has not taken place in Nigeria. However, the mass actions mentioned earlier, only provide a shallow view of a revolution, and only serve as inspiration for people to express their dissatisfactions, discontentment and grievances of some part of the population or categories of the population or the entire population. This paper thus, attempts to understand the extent to which these Marxist revolutionary ideologies provide

inspirations for mass actions, protests and demonstrations among some part of the population, seeking to effect changes and transformation of the system.

Revolution

Many scholars have attempted to study the phenomenon of a revolution but do not seem to agree on a common definition, causes and characteristics. Most of them however, agree that a revolution constitutes a challenge to, and possibly, the overthrow of an established order and results in the establishment of a new order radically different from the one it overthrew. This is why Cammack, Pool and Tordoff (1993), see revolutions as momentous events, involving fundamental social, economic and political change. The idea of a revolution in the developing countries have semblance to the social and economic context from which the great revolutions—

France, Russia and China—sprang: emergence of capitalism, limited industrialization, a small proletariat and a predominantly agricultural economy with large inequalities. The relationship between the revolutions and indications of revolutions in the developing countries and the Marxist revolutionary idea is based on the course of action and spontaneous uprising of the mass of the people who seek changes away from the existing order that favours the few privileged individuals. It is however, argued that that the writers on revolution in the developing countries, including Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and Regis Debray and others, have participated in revolutionary movements, mobilizing essentially the peasant guerrilla movements and emphasizing war or violence (Skocpol, 1979). This is therefore, the context in which Skocpol (1979, p.4) conceived revolution from below. For him, these revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structure; and they are accompanied and in part carried out through by class-based revolts from below. It must be pointed out that the revolutionary movements of Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, and the rest in Africa, did not provide sufficient ground for the Marxist brand of revolution, but merely serve to the extent that those ideas provide the inspiration for some mass action demanding for radical change.

For Gauba (2003) however, revolution means sudden or fast change in a social system which may affect all aspects of social life, including power structure, economy and outcome of mass mobilization, new discovery and innovations. McLean (1996) revolutions involve the overthrow of an established order, and sometimes involve a radical restructuring of social and economic relations. Revolutions incorporate both elite competition and mass mobilization, and their causes are long in gestation so that it may appear spontaneous, but may have taken roots from both domestic and external environments. It is sometimes difficult to understand when a revolution begins and when it ends; and even a times, the results such revolutionary movements may not be seen yet they constitute revolutions.

A revolution may be political and social. Politically, a revolution could be seen as a sudden and fundamental change in the government or political constitution of a country mainly by material causes, and actualized by the use of violence and force. This happened during the French Revolution in 1789, which resulted in fundamental changes like the movement away from tyranny and despotism of the monarchy to a democratic republic led by the bourgeoisie when such rights as the franchise was guaranteed to at least, a section of the French people. Similarly, the Russian Revolution of 1917 resulted in a change from a political system based on the autocracy of the monarchy to a dictatorship of the workers (Tuminez, 2000). It is important to

point out that, revolutions do not merely affect the political framework of the countries where they occur; they also result in major economic, social and cultural adjustments. McLean (1996) also added that a political revolution produces changes in the character of both state power and personnel. It leads to the transfer of state power from an old order to a new order that reconstitute the sovereign power of the state. He also sees social revolution as one which involves political and social transformations, class struggle and the pressure for radical change from below. This mobilization is sometimes manipulated by other actors to suit their interests away from the primary objectives of the movement. However, the depth of social transformation is a function of the intensity of the class struggle, the nature of alignment, the strategy organization, leadership of the movement, and the resilience of the revolutionaries.

The Marxist theory of revolution is however, based on dialectical materialism or historical inevitability or economic determinism. According to this theory, relationship between individuals and groups in all human societies is based on what Karl Marx called factors of production ingrained in the economic structure. This means that in every society, there are always two antagonistic classes—the rulers and the ruled or the exploiters and the exploited. In the course of the development of a society, there comes a time when tension arising from the strained relationship between the exploiters and the exploited inevitably occurs. In this case, the exploited usually emerge victorious to take over the reign of power. Karl Marx maintained that, it was in this way that human society moved from feudalism to capitalism and would move in like manner from capitalism to socialism culminating in the establishment of a classless communist society (Marx & Engels, 1967).

Although, revolutionary movements are generally organized with the aim of achieving certain objectives or goals such as a free society, a constitutional government, equality before the law and socialist communities, it has to be built around an ideology. The principal function of a revolutionary ideology is often to facilitate the development of crosscutting alliances between the various interests or classes in the society. V.I. Lenin for instance, dangled the slogan—“land, peace and bread” to rally the land hungry peasants, war weary soldiers and the oppressed masses under the banner of the 1917 revolution (Lenin, 1932). A revolutionary ideology also helps to legitimize or justify a revolution and to sanction its move in terms of the basic value sanctioned by its members/leaders or even all humankind. It is not surprising that some revolutionaries tend to use ideology to show that their actions are aimed at reforming society to its past glory, which had been disrupted by tyrannical or inefficient regimes.

Impetus to Marx's Philosophy

Man is the product of his environment. He lives and associates with others in it. He affects the environment, and the environment in turn affects him. Man is society and the society is man. Man draws influences and learns from the society around him and the personalities in it. Man creates the challenges of the society and solves its problems (Shima & Akaan, 2020). This is why Plamenatz (1966) argues that every thinker, even the most abstract, is deeply influenced by the circumstances of his day. It must be emphasized that Karl Marx's father, Heinrich was a Catholic Jewish but later converted himself to Lutheranism in 1817. His wife, Heinriette converted herself in 1825. Karl converted in 1824. It is pertinent to note that Lutheranism consisted of radical and critical views against exploitation in the world of Catholicism. Therefore, the Reformation crusaders like Martin Luther and John Calvin were critical of the perceived exploitation in the Catholic Church where the papal acquired wealth that made him richer than the rest of the

people, including the rulers or the monarchs. It is possible that Karl Marx was influenced by the teachings and message of the philosophers in the age of Reformation.

In addition, Rubel (1968, p.35) argued that Marx may have probably been influenced by the consciousness of his awareness of “his sense of marginality, his ambivalence towards society, and eventually of his conflicting qualities as a thinker and prophet, scientist and moralist.” The import of this is that, as a Jew, Marx suffered discrimination from what was and still known as anti-Semitism, which literally means the persecution or discrimination of the Jews. Semites were a broad group of non-European ethnic groups including Arabs, whereas anti-Semitism meant and still means an anti-Jewish racism. The Jews faced persecution since the history of Diaspora, which spread Jewish population throughout Europe and the Mediterranean after the Romans expelled the Jews from Palestine in AD 79. The Jews were also expelled from several other countries in the Middle-Ages, and in the 19th century in France, Austria and Germany (McLean, 1996). The discrimination of the Jews was nothing associated with a perception of inferiority as in the case of Africa; but the hostility against the Jews was the fear that they were gifted people and could outclass the original inhabitants because of their innate capacities and creativities. The feeling of marginalization may have influenced Marx’s thoughts on the exploitation and marginalization of the working class in the hands of the bourgeoisie of the elite.

Marx was also influenced by the teachings of what is described as “Utopian Socialism.” The Utopian Socialists were Fourier, Saint-Simon, Owen, Bever, Mably, Morelley, Meslier, Blanguie and Babeuf, among others (Ishaya, 1986). They were those who criticized capitalism and blamed the evils of the 18th century upon private property ownership. They therefore, sought to address these evils by championing a new course and providing a direction on the way to go in order to extirpate strife, antagonism and exploitation of the society. They also argued that capitalism was evil because it creates a class-divided society; it makes people ruthlessly competitive, making them to lose their natural instincts of compassion, fellowship and solidarity (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007).

It is also appropriate to say that Marx was influenced by the German philosophy, French political thought and English economics. From the German philosophy, Marx drew influences from the German intellectual tradition based on the Hegelian method of dialects. Marx accepted the teachings of Hegel as it regards dialects, but refused to accept that the struggle exist between ideas— thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. He therefore, replaced ideas with matter. For him, matter determines politics, economic structure and social behaviour, and this he called, dialectical materialism.

As said earlier, Marx was also influenced by the French Revolutionary tradition when he aligned with the idea that apocalyptic change motivated by a messianic idea was both desirable and feasible. He used this to introduce large-scale changes with the industrialized capitalist economy (with English as a classical model) in the 19th century. Marx was also able to understand the dynamics of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution using the writings of the English classical economics like Adams Smith and David Ricardo, who by their investigations of the economic system, laid the foundations of the labour theory of value. While the bourgeois economists saw a relation of things (the exchange of one commodity for another), Marx revealed a relation of men (Nisbet, 1969). He focused on the English society, which was the most developed society at the time, and tried to provide a road map for others to follow (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007).

Clearly therefore, it can be summed up that, Karl Marx was influenced by his background as a Jewish and a converted member of Lutheranism. The early socialists whose views were

collectively described as 'Utopian Socialism' also influenced Marx's thinking. The German philosophy, the French revolutionary tradition and the writings of English economics, all combined and influenced Marx's philosophy.

Karl Marx's Revolutionary Philosophy

Having being influenced by the prevailing circumstances in his days and the philosophical current in the Age of Enlightenment, Reformation and Liberalism, his environment as a German and the personalities (Hegel and Engels) within his time and space, Karl Marx developed his philosophy through his writings and theoretical postulations. It is therefore, pertinent to discern various themes of his philosophical reflections to include dialectical historical materialism, class struggle, theory of surplus value, theory of revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat, withering away of the state, economic determinism and theory of the state. This paper however, focuses on the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx to understand the violent transfer of power in political systems and the possibility of a revolution in Nigeria.

Deriving from the above, Marx believes that revolution is inevitable in any society. He defined a revolution as a locative history (McLean, 1996). For him, in every historical epoch, class interests are irreconcilable and the antagonism between these classes is a driving force for the development of social and political change. Marx thus, states that, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Change cannot come by reconciling this class struggle, but change comes when the oppressed class seeks for change, while the privileged class struggle to maintain the status quo. The struggle between these two classes is fundamental, and a driving force for change (Mahajan, 2008). When the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production reaches a climax, revolution occurs and this brings a qualitative change or transformation from one mode of production to another.

Marx explained how the society moved from slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and with the hope that even the socialist economy would pave way for communism which lies at the point of exhaustion of history. Throughout this history, classes are central to revolutions or the movement of the society from one mode of production to another. Marx argues that, in any class-divided society, there are usually two main classes: those who own private property and those who do not own private property. What is normally central in any class-divided society is class-consciousness. In the Communist Manifestoes, Marx identified two classes in the capitalist society. These are the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx and Engels (1973, p.675) wrote about this thus:

Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonism. Society as a whole is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other—bourgeoisie and proletariat.

For him, revolution is not a mere way to capture power, but it is also a means of transforming the society. Revolution would come with the intensification of class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx and Engels (1973, p.682) argued that the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie, is compelled by the force of circumstance to organize itself as a class by means of a revolution; and it makes itself the ruling class and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production. To stabilize the result of the revolution, a dictatorship of the new dominant class, the proletariat, would confiscate all capital, organize labour, compel all to work, centralize credit and finance, establish state factories, and concentrate the means of transport and speed up production. Marx believes that "the road to

socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the state (Okaja, 2009, p.34).

Marx and Engels (1973, p.74) provided a road map for the emergence of the proletariat as dictators over the bourgeoisie. He wrote thus:

We have seen above that the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy....The proletariat would use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and increase the total of productive force as rapidly as possible.

The emphasis on the aspects of the dictatorship of the proletariat is to crush the exploiters; to defend the country; to strengthen ties with proletariats in other countries; to enlist the masses for socialist revolution and reconstruction; and to organize socialism, abolish classes and found a society without classes and without a state. The two fundamental functions of the proletarian dictatorship are the suppression of the bourgeoisie, and the establishment of socialism, which would lead to communism. After the abolition of the bourgeois state, the socialist state comes to have control over all means of production. In due course, the economic management of society and the proper utilization of its, economic resources becomes an important function of the proletarian state. For this purpose, the proletarian state depends upon scientifically educated staff (Okaja, 2009).

Marx believed that, after capitalism is completely destroyed through a revolution, there would be no need for the state again. The state would naturally wither away, and a classless society would emerge (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007). In the classless society, family and religion as institutions of exploitation would disappear or die away. As the opiate of the people, religion would die away. The family, which is a bourgeois institution for perpetrating property rights, would be done away with. Under the new system, the principle would be, "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs (Marx & Engels, 1973, p.768). This refers to the principle in the communist society.

Marx's Philosophy and Revolutionary Struggles around the World

Many revolutions in the past and in the present are influenced by revolutionary theorists, such as Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Mao. In the particular case of Marx, his intellectual thinking on revolution led to the liberation wars in different places. Marx's doctrine has had a profound impression and expression among several thinkers, philosophers, reformers and revolutionaries around the world. Third World writers on revolution like Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Mahatma Gandhi, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and Régis Debray have also been involved in revolutions. As Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2007, p.351) put it, "the emphasis on action and revolution made Marx a philosopher, a scientist and a revolutionary. His revolutionary ideas informed revolutionary reaction in many countries of the world—in Africa, Middle East and Europe (except in Western Europe)."

In Western Europe and the United States, Ebenstein (1969) argued that the revolutionary actions did not take place because of the liberal tradition that kept open the system for social reforms and democratic engagements through constitutional means. This is emboldened by the enlarged space for franchise and peace engagements even at the time Marx claimed that the ruling class would not abdicate. However, the wave of revolution across Europe generally was based on the Marxist-Lenin revolutionary ideology. This was coupled with the intellectual

reactions in the age of Enlightenment (Tuminez, 2000). The various revolutions and revolutionary movements such as the 1789 French Revolution, 1797 Napoleon, which established Sister Republics in Italy; 1804–15 Serbian Revolution against the Ottoman Empire; 1814 Norwegian independence attempt against Denmark-Norway and future Sweden and Norway; 1821–29 Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire; 1830–31 Belgian Revolution; and 1830–31 Revolution in Poland and Lithuania, broke out due to nationalist feelings. In Ireland, Italy, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Hungary, and Norway, local hostility to alien dynastic authority started to take the form of nationalist agitation. The first revolt in the Ottoman Empire to acquire a national character was the Serbian Revolution (1804–17), which was the culmination of Serbian renaissance that had begun in Habsburg territory, in Sremski Karlovci (Ebenstein, 1969).

In the East and Southeast Asia, successes were recorded in the revolutionary struggles championed by communist movements pursuing strategies of revolutionary guerrilla warfare. The causes of revolutions in these places were based on a poor, densely concentrated peasantry, marked inequality in landownership, a commercial/plantation agriculture developed largely under the impact of European colonialism, the growth of middle class influenced by nationalism and Asian Marxist thought. In the cases of Cambodia and Vietnam, the peasants and nationalist movements were mobilized and organized. In Cambodia, the revolution led by Pol Pot pushed for reforms in landownership. In Malaysia and Indonesia, powerful communist movements developed but were unable to resist colonial armies or indigenous regimes. The communist movement in Malaysia also suffered a similar fate, but at the hands of the British army (Cammack, Pool & Tordoff, 1993).

In Cuba, the revolution of 1959 was led by Fidel Castro and saw the overthrow of the dictator, Fulgencio Batista. The revolution had its roots in the struggle against Spanish colonialism, which intensified in the second half of the nineteenth century. Though, its immediate cause started with the attack on the Moncada army post in Santiago de Cuba by a group of about hundred poorly armed guerrilla. Fidel Castro and Raul Castro, his brother and others were arrested, and were sentenced to 15 and 13 years in prison respectively. However, due to pressure from all quarters, they and others were freed in 1955. They then regrouped and eventually overthrew the Batista regime in January, 1959 (Tuminez, 2000; Cammack, Pool & Tordoff, 1993; Schulze, 1991; & Ebenstein, 1969).

In China, the Chinese revolution led by Mao Tse Tung in the 1920s culminated in the overthrow of the National Party under Chiang Kaishek. This revolution was in response to the intense exploitation and suppression of the peasant by the National bourgeoisie. It was the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that enlightened the peasants of their dehumanization, a situation that created in their minds, class consciousness. This consciousness led to the intense struggles that later resulted in the Chinese revolution.

In Latin America, the revolutionary force inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideology produced aggressive revolutionary struggles to overthrow the old elite, with considerable violence as in the cases of Mexico (1910-17) and Bolivia (1952). It was also evident in the cases of Cuba (1958-9) and Nicaragua (1979) where dictators were overthrown by wide uprising through adherence to the ideology of Marx. The Maoist revolutionary movement, Sendero Luminoso, enjoyed considerable support in Peru in the 1980s, but could not overthrow the government (Cammack, Pool & Tordoff, 1993).

In the Middle East, the debate has always been about whether the pockets of revolutionary movements were influenced by the doctrine of Marx, or simply based on natural issues rather

than economic issues. Some argue that the process of social change in the Arab states has always been initiated by conspiratorial offers and not always backed by popular participation. Though in Iran, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979 through a revolutionary process involved the support of the people. In Egypt, the first upheaval took place in 1952, with strong attacks on the ruling elites. Jamal Abd al-Nasser, who organized the revolution or coup, wrote thus, "We were fight in Palestine, but all our thoughts were concentrated on Egypt. Our bullets were directed at the enemy trenches but our hearts were hovering over the distant motherland, left an easy prey for hungry wolves to ravage" (Nasser, 1972, p.17). This implicates that the economic condition and the role it played in the revolution. This lay credence to the Marxist-Leninist ideology root in the economic as a force for a revolution.

In the case of Africa, the struggle for liberation from the shackles and yoke of colonialism became the defining moment in the history of the Continent when the people engaged the colonial regimes and demanded for independence. There are those who believe that the struggle for independence in Africa was influenced by the Marxist-Lenin revolutionist ideology. At the same time, others believe the struggle was not influenced by any ideology, but was merely a struggle among people to take control of their own affairs, and this is why the question of transformation of the society did not play out. Moreover, all classes of people including the elite, the citizens and even the poor were collectively committed to this struggle. They operated not by any defined ideology. Despite this, the torrent of uprising in many African states quickly gave a picture of a revolutionary struggle.

There is therefore, a sense in which one can speak of two waves of revolutions in Africa: the struggle for independence that began since the 1940s, and the second wave of agitations for change especially in northern Africa in the 1980s. this is why scholarly analyses of the democratization process—often referred to as Africa's 'springtime' or 'second independence'—dramatically increased at the end of the decade of the 1980s"(Schraeder, 1995). Mauduit (2012) also argued that the wind of democratization, blowing since 1974, did not spare Africa, with the exception of North Africa—an area that lagged behind the rest of the continent. However, the "Jasmine Revolution"—prompted by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010 in SidiBouzid, Tunisia, and the ousting of Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali 28 days later on 14 January 2011—was a brutal awakening. The North African revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya gave a new impetus, a trigger, to Africa's democratic evolution. Immediate reactions came from Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi, and Senegal. Some African governments banned any mention of the dreadful words *Jasmine Revolution*, *Arab Spring*, or *North African revolutions* from the Internet and public media. Other autocrats openly supported the despots being ousted. The North African revolutions spread like wild fire in the Middle East and shocked the whole world, especially authoritarian regimes that impede the United Nations Security Council's search for a way to protect communities and civilians from abuses by their own governments.

The second wave of aggression against the authoritarian regimes in Africa is arguably true of the effect of Marxist-Lenin revolutionary ideology. This is because most of the reasons advanced as the cause(s) of the Arab revolution generally included unemployment, food inflation, corruption, poor living conditions, lack of fundamental human rights and injustices. These became the reasons which for Abulot (2011), the people want to bring down the authoritarian regimes. This therefore, resonates with the Marxist ideology of revolution that is inevitable for the overthrow of the despotic regimes and oppressed systems, to enthrone a system that is free from

exploitation and subjugation. In this regards, the Marxist still believe that the proletariat shall rise to overthrow the exploitative regimes of the capitalism to enthrone a system that is based on the principles of liberty and freedom from servitude.

In Africa, some critical thinkers were inspired by the Marxist revolutionary ideas. For example, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania was one of the leading African statesmen that clearly articulated the path to socialism. The major thrust of Nyerere's philosophy is encapsulated in *Ujamaa* which emphasized Africaness in its policies (Nyerere, 1970). It means family hood. It is a clarion call for the people of Africa to come together as a family working together for the common good. Following in the path of Karl Marx, Nyerere argued that in socialist societies, men are regarded as equal irrespective of age sex, place of birth, and religious belief. Under socialist society, workers are allowed to contribute their quota to the total wealth of their society as work becomes both a duty and a right in which case there cannot be unemployment. Such a society must also put the instrument of production and the mechanisms of exchange under the control of the people who are expected to use them in a positive way.

In the case of Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau, he believed in a revolution from below, and became the main architect in the struggle to root out colonialism from his country. His political value can be found in his moral commitment to fight against the Portuguese imperialist domination of his country and other parts of Africa. To Cabral, the essential characteristic of imperialist domination is the usurpation of the freedom to develop indigenous productive forces. To him national liberation entailed freeing the national productive forces from foreign domination. He held colonialism responsible for the paralysis, stagnation and suppression of development in Africa. He also said that the ruling class in Africa suffered a loss of prestige to the extent that it could not command the obedience and support of their people in order to develop their respective states (Okaja, 2009). He was convinced that his national liberation movement was a revolutionary movement because it sought to liberate his country from imperialist domination. On the role of the peasantry and the proletariat in the revolutionary movement, Cabral while not disputing the orthodox Marxist view as to the leading role of the proletariat vis a vis the peasantry, still felt this can easily be the case in big cities where the working class population is well developed. However as the reality in his country showed that the working class was almost non-existent and where they were present they served as unpaid spies and informants of the colonialists. The peasantry (Fulas) was small and was ever willing to do the biddings of the chiefs. Therefore, those who formed the vanguard of his revolution were the petty bourgeoisie who became dissatisfied with the racist policies of the colonialists who they thought would assimilate them into their ranks. Cabral however insisted that this class must commit class suicide in order to be reborn into the working class movement. Like Lenin, Cabral believed in the desirability of a revolutionary vanguard party that is efficient closely knit and politically conscious to mobilize the working class and the peasantry for their roles in the national liberation movement to bring about true national independence.

For Frantz Fanon of Algeria, he became an active militant committed to the cause of the Algerian independence from France. In 1956, he resigned his post to join the *Front de liberation* (Algeria National Liberation Front, FLN) guerilla army that eventually forced France to accept Algeria's independence. He expressed his political philosophy most clearly and comprehensively in his best known work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967) in which Fanon wrote on the need for a violent revolutionary struggle to end colonial rule, not only in Algeria but in all colonized

territories. He said that national liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth; whatever may be the heading used or the new formulas introduced, decolonization is always a violent phenomenon. To him, since colonialism was built on violence it also had to be overthrown by violence (Fanon, 1967). Unlike the Marxian position that the peasantry is a fighting force, Fanon identified this class and the lumpen proletariat as a revolutionary force because to him it felt the pinch of colonialism more than the other classes and partly as a result of his distrust of the working class which he saw as a class for itself.

Marx's Philosophy and the Possibility of a Revolution in Nigeria

Many revolutions have taken root in different parts of the world, even in Africa, especially in the Maghreb. In Nigeria, it is difficult to discuss about a real revolution despite the poverty and doldrums in the system and the exploitative nature of the periphery capitalism in the country. However, Odental (as cited in Solomon, 2009, p.7) posits that "it can be stated as a rule that, when people are driven by a sense of an injured identity, coupled with notions of relative deprivation, the application of force would not cause them to back down, but rather strengthen their resolve."

No real revolution is experienced in Nigeria despite the fertile ingredients of a revolution in the country. Going by the theories of revolution, it is apt to argue that the various military coups in Nigeria were some brewing ferments of revolution. For example, the 1966 coup led by Kaduna Nzeogu in Nigeria, and the counter-coup in the same year, was one that was hinged on class struggle, which for Marx, is an ingredient for a revolution. This is why for Marx; a revolution cannot take place without class and class struggle. It must be understood that, the military coups in Nigeria were the fall out of ethnicity, but not necessary the consciousness on the part of the groups to seek to overthrow the government to bring about radical change and transformation. This is the sense in which the idea of a revolution as conceived in this paper inclines more to the inspiration which the Marxist revolutionary ideologies had on mass action, than the basic requirements of Marxist revolution which involve overthrow of government by the working class to create their dictatorship. Moreover, those movements lacked the basic qualities of a revolutionary movement such as articulated leadership, dedication to the ideals of the movement by the planners, proper organization and co-ordination, external support, cross-cutting alliances, and a host of others as conceived by the Marxist revolutionary ideologies.

Moreover, the various industrial actions, protests and demonstrations carried out by the organized labour unions, and students against the obnoxious policies of the government, and often seeking for change, have also lend credence to the possibility of a revolution in Nigeria. This implicates that it is possible to achieve a revolution through the activities of the workers and peasants drawn across the various sections of society, expressed in terms of strikes, boycott, demonstrations and protests, normally organized by the organized labour and civil society organizations against escalating labour crises caused by unpaid wages, killing of workers, increases in prices of fuel and electricity tariffs in the country, are pointers to a revolution in the country. A particular case worth mentioning was the massive protests that greeted the pronouncement of oil subsidy removal by the then President Goodluck Jonathan on January 1, 2012. This decision to remove subsidy on oil prompted a massive protest action against the in almost all of Nigeria's major cities. This attracted the attention and reaction of the workers, peasants and even the elites, who were part of the government at the time. This means that the revolution-like protester was one from both above and below. Unfortunately, these so-called

organized labour unions lack the organization, the kind which Karl Marx requires for a successful revolution to take place. This perhaps is the reason for the failure of the several mass actions and protests in Nigeria, which often have not always yielded the objectives they set out to achieve.

Campbell (2012) revealed that the protesters shutdown economic activity in Lagos, Ibadan, and Kano. In the country's capital, Abuja, most gas stations were closed. Road haulage and civil aviation were seriously affected. In Kano, the metropolis of the predominately Muslim north, the protest was accompanied by a reported accord between Christians and Muslims. There were news photos of Christians providing protection while Muslim protestors pray, and Muslim returning the favour in a city that is known for religious hatred and Islamic radicalism. It is thus clear that despite the ethnic lines and divisions in Nigeria, it is still possible for the entire population to unite in a mass action or protest to seek for reforms and radical change.

Civil society organizations, professional associations, the organized labour, street urchins, some men and women of the police force who are widely hated for corruption and brutality and market women joined and participated in the protest. People were walking about two hours to get to protest sites because they were passionate about what was going on and if the same zeal and commitment is extended to ending the peripheral capitalist economic system in Nigeria, it would just be a matter of months and the anti development brand of capitalism in the country would be uprooted. Even among the elites, for example, Senator George Akume, the then Senate Minority Leader, called on the President to change his mind on the removal of oil subsidy, and demanded that the President should first, revamp the collapsed rail system, repair the ill-maintained roads and improve marine transportation even as he looks inwards to ensure fiscal discipline in Government expenditure profile (Akume, 2012). This provided the current necessary for a revolution.

Another significant moment that provided a sense of a revolution was the historic emergence of MuhammaduBuhari as the President of Nigeria on the platform of the opposition All Progressive Congress, against the incumbent President, GoodluckEbele Jonathan of the then ruling People's Democratic Party on March 28, 2015. Since one of the conditions for a revolution requires mass mobilization and massive action aimed at achieving certain objectives, it is apt to say that the commitment of the electorates to effect a change in government was highly revolutionary. This underscores the fact that, despite the divisions of the population along ethnic lines, and religious circles, it is yet possible for a united action to take place Nigeria, especially when the people emerge with an injured identity borne out of frustration arising from the failure or inability of the government to provide for their yearnings and aspirations.

Addition, the recent movement that provides a precursor for a revolution in Nigeria was the #EndSARS protest movement of 2020. The movement began following the carjacking and shooting of a young man in Delta state by Nigeria's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) police officers in October 2020. Almost immediately, many young Nigerians began sharing their anger and their own experiences with SARS on social media, calling themselves the *SoroSoke* ("the Speak Up") generation. Within days, the #EndSARS hash tag became a movement that gave voice to Nigerians fed up with the violence, extortion, and impunity of the notorious police unit. The protests came to a head on October 20 when Nigerian security forces fired on protestors staging a sit-in on a toll road in the Lekki area of Lagos. Twelve people were killed, adding to dozens who have died across the country during the protests. Witnesses claim army and police officers were responsible for the unprovoked Lekki shooting. The incident was added to an

inquiry established to look into the SARS abuses (Kazeem, 2020). Mainly using Twitter and WhatsApp, young people have rallied and mobilized waves of protests to locations across the country with pretty simple formulas. For instance, when dozens of people converge on a location to host their own protests, they share their location on Twitter asking for “reinforcements”—a move that has seen crowds go from a few dozens to hundreds within hours in some places. The campaigns have also been sustained online where they initially began. With the protests growing organically and quickly across cities all over the country, the need for funding—to cover food and water for protesters as well as medical supplies and hospital bills when necessary—soon became clear. And calls for funding through donation drives were answered quickly as Nigerians at home and abroad began sending cash through local banks and online payment methods in a bid to fund what had become the largest protests in about a decade. When these channels were blocked by the federal government, the youth quickly resort to the use of bitcoin (Kazeem, 2020). Unfortunately however, not all the goals of the movement have been implemented, especially that, while some cities of southern Nigeria were fervent in the *EndSars* protest, the population in some Northern cities called for *Bring SARS to North*. This underlines the deep divisions in Nigeria, and essentially one of the reasons for the difficulty of achieving the Marxist type of revolution in Nigeria.

Despite the possibilities for a revolution in Nigeria, some factors have been working against this prospect. This is because the various administrations have been trying to nib in the bud the revolutionary elements with one law or the other. For example, with the passing into law of the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020, private organizations and associations, religious associations, charities, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations have interpreted this law as repressive, illegal, unlawful and unconstitutional on the ground that Section 839(1)(a)(b)(c)(2)(3) of CAMA 2020 (Kazeem, 2020), which empowers the Corporate Affairs Commission to suspend the trustees of an association and appoint interim managers to manage the affairs of the association is a gross violation of their fundamental rights to fair hearing, freedom of thought, conscience and religion and their right to peaceful Assembly and Association as enshrined and guaranteed by the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria as amended.

There is also the challenge of low level of enlightenment, which has given rise to only a negligible number of critical minds. This creates the problem of lack of mass followership, which is an important aspect of any successful revolution. Another issue is ethnicity. This factor is responsible for the situation in which people tend to defend ethnic interests rather than fostering a common front for socio-economic, cultural and political emancipation. Classes and groups such as civil society organizations are also central to the transformation of the society. The dialectical relationship exists among the groups as a collection, and the state has the potentials to occasion fundamental changes. However, in the Nigerian context, it has become difficult to identify real classes or groups that share national agenda and the consciousness of some ‘consciousness of a kind’ (Lipset, 1960), which implies some sense of existence as a group attribute.

Conclusion

The Marxist revolutionary ideologies proved useful, especially in Europe, Asia, and Middle East. However, in Africa generally, the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx prominently provide the inspiration for some mass action among some populations in the various cities of Nigeria. It is therefore, difficult to talk about the Marxist kind of revolution in Nigeria. While revolution based

on the ideas of Karl Marx involves radical and violent overthrow of the elite who exploit or bourgeoisies who exploit the proletariat or the working class, who are usually exploited; the idea of revolution in the context of this paper involves the inspiration gained from the revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx to stage mass protests, rallies and demonstrations as a reaction to the content of the some government policies and programmes. However, having witnessed mass actions such as massive protest sequel to the 2012 oil subsidy removal, the change revolution in 2015, and the *EndSars* protests in 2020, there is a possibility that a real revolution may sometime occur in Nigeria. Nevertheless, some obstacles play out to vitiate this possibility. This is because of the deep rooted divisions along ethnic lines and religious sects, a development that inhibits unity and proper organization of the population for a mass action in support or against the government. There is also the challenge of lack of class consciousnesses among the various classes or groups in Nigeria. Where the required consciousness is lacking, it is difficult to achieve the goals and objectives of a revolution. Until these challenges are surmounted, the chances of sustained revolutionary protests in Nigeria would remain a farce.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the various peoples of Nigeria must see themselves as belonging to one nation called Nigeria, and bound by this to live as one indivisible and inseparable unit. Nigerians should eschew ethnic sentiments and strive for national unity, and mobilize to pursue an agenda of radical change in the socio-economic, political and cultural rubrics of Nigeria. Pressure groups and non-government and civil society organizations should mobilize themselves against government's draconian laws and policies that impede radical change in Nigeria. Labour unions and civil societies should embark on massive awareness advocacy to sensitize, mobilize and lead the public to gain the right consciousness, determination and resilience needed to achieve a revolution in Nigeria.

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