

## **Social Protest, Constructive Criticism and Unionism: the Tripartite Derivatives for State Management in Nigeria**

**Afonughe Irikefe Omamuyovwi<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** This paper examined the trine cord nature of social protest, constructive criticism and unionism to governance in Nigeria as stated in Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and People's right and other international laws. As a qualitative research it relied heavily on secondary source of information such as newspapers, journals and published works which are content analyze to befit the work. The paper adopted the system theory as a frame work of analysis because of its emphasis on input, output, feedback mechanism and stability of the status quo. After verification it is safe to mention that the formative life cycle of Nigeria as a country began from social protest, criticism and domestic allied group. This underscores the pivotal place of these trine cords in the independence of Nigeria as well as its political attainment. However, it is of no news that several military and democratic regimes in Nigeria have not come to terms with any act of obvious opposition due to their ever corrosive reactions. Thus, the work made series of recommendations such as follows: Government should consciously accept the place of pluralism in a democratic system of government, the business of government should be run with openness instead of opacity. More so, government as an institution should appreciate the place of dynamism as nothing is constant and so they should be open to criticism and accept the need for a change when necessary. Wilder consultation through bottom up approach should be a consistent order so as to continuously reflect the wishes of the people. In order words the public choice approach to policy formulation should never be negated. This will reduce the level of social clamour in a political system.

**Keywords:** Democratization; Political System; Social Protest and Pluralism

### **Introduction**

Nigeria's freedom from colonial conquest can be dated back to series of organized social protest, constructive criticism and unionism which later metamorphose into various political parties. According to Daghagba (2009:208) youth movement within the African colonies emerged and grew during this era. They engage in series of protest activities, movement and resistance directed against the colonial officials throughout the twentieth century. Their focused was on mobilizing racial awareness

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in progress, Delta State University, Nigeria, Address: Abraka, Nigeria, Corresponding author: afonughegoodluck@gmail.com.

and national consciousness especially in the cities. The youths were the most vibrant agents in colonial politics and their actions led to various independent movements in West African countries. In the words of Tar (2009) organized labour unionism in Nigeria has historically been the vanguard of protest against unfavorable government policies.

According to the Human Right Watch (HRW, 1995) several military regimes and dictators have always respond to social protest with violent repression using policemen and armed military personnel, imprisonment of political leaders, labour leaders and proscription of several labour unions. No wonder Aborishade (2014) averred that the policy of protest in Nigeria has its niche on physical and non physical violence control strategy. The former strategy involves direct physical force on protesters including use of poisonous teargas, harassment, arrest, detention, torture and all kind of inhuman treatment. The non physical strategy involve the use of draconian laws, rules and regulations to hinder the free exercise of universally recognized fundamental human rights of assembly actions.

Thus, social protest, constructive criticism and unionism were veritable in the epoch of the 1990s as several civil organizations and social activist led a lot of protest march against several military dictatorships of General Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. In his work Afenipe (2010) gave a succinct chronicle of social protest in Nigeria involving actors such as late Gani Fahwheinmi, Beko Ransome Kuti and Femi Falana under the auspices of civil society organization such as campaign for democracy (CD) led mass protest and endured all forms of deprivation and imprisonment during this era. Others like the Afro beat super star Fela Anikulapo Ransome Kuti use protest music about social ills, corruption and military oppression and resistance to people's conscience. It is rather apt to mention that social protest, constructive criticism and unionisms has been part of our catalyzing process and freedom annals from colonial shackles and post independence era of the bourgeoisie.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As established, Nigeria freedom and self determination was achieved through the tripartite act of social protest, constructive criticism and unionism. History has help to create the understanding that several protest groups later metamorphosed into political platform as civilized mechanism to better drive the clarion call for the conviction of the colonial masters that Nigeria as a Nation was ripe enough for her sovereignty. Suffice it to be mentioned that the failure of the indirect rule policy in

the east and the partial success of the policy in the western region was a foreshadow of the immediate drive to freedom sooner or later.

However, it is of no news that successive Nigeria government have always been in the act of suppressing dissent voices and pluralism despite the place of these derivatives in the management and achievement of independence. Thus, this paper is aimed at examining the usefulness of these tripartite derivatives to us as a growing democracy.

### **Research Methodology**

As a qualitative research, this paper relied heavily on secondary data which necessitate the use of published work, journal articles and news papers which were thoroughly analyzed in relation to the scope of the work.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

#### **Constructive Criticism**

It can be describe as positive way of addressing a policy with the view of problem solving. Hence, Wolfree (2018) defines it as the concern for others and a desire to be helpful to break down barriers in addressing issues and exploring solutions. It is creating the channel for open invitation and straightforward communication in problem solving by all involved. Its denotative aim is to solve a puzzle. It can be described as a collaborative conversation that creates positivity or light to a particular matter.

#### **Indices of Constructive Criticism**

The indices are as identified by Warrick (2017) are:

**Time:** It should be done without delay as the event unfolds so it won't lose its value when the matter is forgotten and the situation becomes cloudy.

**Specific:** To avoid confusion it is necessary to describe the actual behavior needed to be improved upon and sharing examples of how that might be achieved.

**Tone:** It is a two way conversation that needs an invitation tone. No wonder Baird (2017) buttress the point that the right tone is very vital in message delivery. It gives a positive view or light to the issue.

**Improvement:** Its basic idea is to bring about a general improvement to the polity. The central focus is going or moving forward.

**Feedback:** According to Baird (2017) it is a full cycle. He opined that it is not just delivering the message but making sure the message is heard and received.

### **Social Protest**

Social protest can be described as a plural disagreement by a section of people over a circumstances, events or policies. No wonder Cohen (2000) conceptualize it as an organized efforts by significant numbers of people to promote social change. The underpinning purpose is to cause a change. However, Crossley (2002) describe it in Marxian term as signs of impending collapse of the existing capitalist order or as attempt by individuals to move concern away from class politics to their own sense of belonging, self expression, cultural and individual freedom. It can be describe as a gateway to freedom or self determination which may involve a wider scope of areas such as economic, social and authority.

No wonder Becks (1997) describe it as anti political or mass protest where disaffected individuals confront injustice and impersonal repressive power with the only means at their disposal. This view was supported by Leonard (1997) as a new social movement activism which involves framing a politics of hope for the politic of the future. The general spirit of social activism in general is to change the unpleasant status quo experience by a people. No wonder Domelli (2006) a social feminist defines it as social transformation induced by plural transformation and social action informed by personal interest to influence a change.

According to Auvinen (1996) social protest consist of riots and strikes which have an expressed political target or involving a conflict behavior against the political machinery. In fact, Auvinen expressly identifies three types of protest as political demonstrations, riot and political strike. He further clarifies a political demonstration as an organized non-violent protest by a group of citizens while riot is any violent demonstration or clash of a group of citizens and a political strike is any form of industrial action by individual workers, government employee or students ( Eesuola, 2012). Thus, Charles (1996) defines it as contentious politics that involve a

contentious activity on the part of the claimant or those who claim to represent them, relying at least in part on non-institutional forms of interaction with the elite's opponents or the state.

In the words of Tercheck (1974:133) social protest refers to public activities involving confrontation politics to apply stress to specific targets for the purpose of affecting public policy. This definition was corroborated by Kritzer (2001:630) as meeting up target in public policy. No wonder Opp (2009) describes it as sustained challenges to power holders by a disadvantaged population living under the jurisdiction or influence of those power holders. It is of the same frame that Auviven (2009) recaps in his work the reasons for protest which are: bad economic performance in a state, ethnic dominance, authoritarian political regime, deprivation of all forms. In their conceptual framework Hollander and Einowhener (2004) and Olafsson (2007) averred that social protest is a non-conventional form of political participation while Useen (2001) describes it as a high risk of political behavior.

However, social protest is common in a democratic environment which permits individuals' group's expression as a means of policy formulation and policy implementation evaluation in a political system or milieu.

### **Unionism**

It is a collection of the work force of a nation or organization that come together to fight a common front. The term was conceptualized by Jackson (1983:69) as a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the condition of their working lives. Historically, union representation and collective bargaining has been the key for a stable working population in developed economy and it has made it possible for workers to gain a more equitable share of the wealth that they create. No wonder Rao (2010:93) averred that with the policy of minimum wages, norms for mandatory work hours, provisions for health and safety and overall improvement in working conditions has made unionization become instrumental in improving the welfare and workers' quality of life. Thus it is the umbrella shade for every individual worker in an organized system.

According to Paul (2016) trade unionism is defined as permanent organization which improves the economic conditions of labor, promotes labour welfare and protects the interest of workers. It is the driving force for expressed shades of opinions in a formal organization. The encyclopedia Britannica (2019) identifies its function of protecting

the individual worker and securing higher wages and preventing excess supply of labour which will give room for workers exploitation by the employer.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work adopts system theory as its framework of analysis. The theory was heavily developed by the Austrian Canadian biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and the American sociologist Talcott Parsons in (1902-1979). It is a broad descriptive theory of how the various parts and levels of a political system interact with each other. The central idea of system analysis is based on analogy with biology; just as the heart, lungs and blood function as a whole so do the components of social and political systems. When one component changes or comes under stress, the other components will adjust to compensate.

However, the theory was adopted into political science by David Easton and was conceived as David Easton Political System in 1953. Easton conceived the political system as integrating all activities through which social policy is formulated and executed. Easton defines political behavior as the authoritative allocation of values or the distribution of rewards in wealth, power and status that the system may provide. Easton conception of system emphasizes linkages between the system and its environment which involve the input (demands) that flows into the system and are converted into outputs (decisions and actions) that constitute the authoritative allocation of values and then a feedback loop is obtain.

According to Michael (2005) demands and supports constitute the two principal categories of the input. Demand involves statements or agitations by individuals or groups in the society to be effected. Support refers to ways in which individuals or groups may orient themselves favourably towards the political system. All these produce a resultant effect of decision making and a feedback mechanism in bringing stability (Odhe, 2009). The basic assumption of the system theory is stability which implies some notion of pattern maintenance. Base on this, much value is placed on the need for order. This explain the reason why successive government in Nigeria have continuously made effort in repressing dissent voices and opposing views so as to maintain the status quo which they are favorably dispose to.

### **Imperative of Social Protest, Constructive Criticism and Unionism to Governance in Nigeria**

As a matter of fact it is safe to mention that in stirring the wheels of governance in Nigeria the place of pluralism will continue to be ubiquitous as far as governance is about the people. No wonder Aminiya (2017) called on Nigeria leaders to develop a good attitude to criticisms as well as Nigerians to continue involving in constructive criticism in order to deepen the fabrics of national politics. Furthermore, he describes vibrant opposition exercised with caution as good for democracy and governance.

According to Akpofa (2010) the following are the importance of Social Protest, Constructive Criticism and Unionism:

**i. It checks government excessiveness:** They are the umbrella network which serves as a protective roof or hub against employers and government obnoxious policies statements and actions.

**ii. It strengthens citizens bargaining power:** The working class or group in a nation forms the highest percentage population of employee. These create room for the inevitable place of protest and trade unionism for the general protection of workers.

**iii. Feedback mechanism:** It is the antidote for determining the popularity of a government. Thus Kagboru (2012) describe it as an input mechanism in a political system which draws the connecting string of government and the governed in a society. The legitimate or illegitimacy of a government is always determine from the positive or negative response of the people at the grass root.

**iv. Democracy Buffer:** These tripartite derivatives form the pivotal thrust for citizens to ventilate their mind on governance because democracy as a system of government is always of the people by the people and for the people. This underscores the reason why the opinion of the people cannot be delineated in the polity because government and governance are not in isolation. No wonder Onuora (2015) states that the visibility of these practices will curtail absolutism as it sometimes common among African democratic leaders.

**v. Conflict Resolution:** It creates room for peace and conflict resolution which promote national cohesion. Hence, Akpofa (2010) describe it as the dynamics for continuous peace and order because it gives room for wider consultation, agitation and proper bargaining for a mutual truce to be achieved among the people of a state. With this there will be high reduction of suicide in the community because people have a wider scope of opportunities to vent their ills about occurrences to relevant

bodies instead of managing the situation by themselves which has the capacity of traumatizing them to point of exterminating their lives since it will be making no meaning( Ominike, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

This paper seeks to examine the place of social protest, constructive criticism and unionism to state management in Nigeria. From critical studies it is evident that dissent voices and actions have not enjoyed robust freedom in Nigeria as even democratic regimes have one time or the other repress citizens' act of protest and divergent views.

It is no news that government have always behave as if it can sieve itself from the people's will and choice and this have always create a stint to our nascent democracy which has always affected our place and pride among comity of nations. Formulated laws and actions of law enforcement agencies have never hidden their outright disdain to social oppositions as they are most times trigger happy people during protest era.

### **Recommendations**

This paper seeks to recommends that in order for us to gain our pride among comity of nations these derivatives should practically carve a niche in the fabrics of our political system. Therefore, government should be open and trade its dealings with Nigeria in an overt manner as well as be ready to change when it is discovered that policy statements or implementations meet a fall in public choice. Mass action or movement should be entirely separated from politics in order to achieve integrity and honesty in goal attainment. Government should capture these instruments as agents of change. Thus a more civilized should be employed in dealing with the people Politics in Nigeria should be seen as an opportunity to serve instead of a place for patrilineal or matrilineal wealth creation and finally, government should always do a wider consultation to across divide of the Nigeria society before decisions are taken.



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