

## **EDMUND BURKE'S CONSERVATISM AND NIGERIA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION**

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### **Abstract**

*This research focuses on the impact of Edmund Burke's conservatism on Nigeria's socio-political development. Edmund Burke's view on conservatism asserts that the society is an embodiment of values and traditions of generations past, inherited by the present and preserved for the future generations. Hence the traditional institutions, values and norms should be preserved in any political phase as a panacea for a progressive state. Nigeria as a nation, gained her independence from Britain over six decades ago, but still has the indices of an underdeveloped state. Faced with several issues as a result of an ideological lack, bad leadership, persistent corruption, the country has failed to live up to its potential. This study therefore investigates into the tenets of conservatism as proposed by Edmund Burke, to seek a pathway for the development of Nigeria. Hence, investigating the traditional values and norms, history which prevailed before the advent of colonialism, the study will make a proposition as to how these values will be brought into play for the advancement of Nigeria's social and political development.*

**Keywords:** Conservatism, Development.

### **Introduction**

For over five decades since Nigeria gained independence from colonists which was the British government, there have been questions basically about having a stable society with strong values, respect for human rights, rule of law, social and infrastructural development. These questions seem yet unanswered because Nigeria, in her fourth republic, has not yet moved or improved in the indices used in measuring social and political development amongst nations. Apart from the democratic system of government, Nigeria has also practised the Parliamentary, Military and Confederal systems of

government, amongst others since the independence in 1960. These systems were all explored all in the quest of good governance and development. We can only testify of little or no effect today. Amongst the recurrent issues bedevilling the developmental process in Nigeria include (but not limited to) the issue of corruption, social and moral decadence, issue of nepotism, violation of human rights, weak institutions, etc. Nigeria is geographically located in the western part of Africa and with a population averaging of over 200 million. Nigeria shares a border with Cameroon in the east, Niger in the north, Chad in the north east and Benin in the west. Hence, one of the world's most cultural and ethnically diverse nations. The consequence of this being ethnic bigotry, nepotism, intolerance leading to separatist movements, xenophobic attacks and war. This has degenerated Nigeria to a failed state by all indices. It is important to note that the leaders, having entered into a social contract with the citizens and members of the state, are charged with the obligation of making policies that encourage economic and social development. However bad leadership, greed, corruption and self-aggrandisement of the politicians and key policy makers have cost a lot in Nigeria. Achebe in his book *the trouble with Nigeria* emphasised this stating categorically;

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe 1).

From the above questions and problems identified, we can highlight a substantial lack in ideology. Problem of identity and problem of leadership are also identified as some of the problems that have hindered development, therefore will be exposed in the course of this research. The aim is to explore how the conservatism of Edmund Burke as an ideology that has helped shape strong institutions in more developed societies can also shape the trajectory of Nigeria's social political development towards a sustainable development path.

This research will employ the hermeneutical method of research. Hermeneutics is a method of philosophical research that is concerned with the understanding of texts and utterances. As a method of interpretation, hermeneutics provides tools for effective treatment of problems of interpretation of human actions, texts, etc. Burke in his writings has explicated a system of thought which bothers on conserving tradition as a veritable tool for a progressive system. This research will therefore interpret the concepts expounded in his texts, especially in his *Reflections on The Revolution in France* and apply it to Nigeria's social and political system to provide a pathway for development.

### **Burke's Theory of Conservatism**

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 gave Burke the best platform to express his thoughts. Being a member of the British parliament, he was fully involved in the political conversations of his time. Conservatism developed as an ideology in response to the claims of other, radical movements: liberalism, at first, then nationalism, socialism, fascism, feminism, environmentalism, all of which sought *change*, massive social 'improvement', reform and the removal of 'old', 'discredited', social orders, institutions and ways of life. Conservatism sought, and still seeks, to resist such change, to retard change, arguing for reflection, reassessment, and a willingness to consider the possibility that reformers might be mistaken. They believe that one should be very cautious about removing or radically changing old and long-lasting institutions and ways of life.

The basic premises of Burke's political thought is Conservatism which advocates tradition as an existential component that provides a sufficient cause of human ontology. Conservatism is a political ideology that preserves tradition, custom, norms and values of people and refutes sudden or total restructure of the old system. For Burke and most conservationists, traditional institutions provide a foundation or blueprint for subsequent political and social ideologies. Hence conservatism as an ideology entails a detailed outlook and support on tradition and expresses a more preserved worldview which must be upheld at all times since it is a reflection of the past heritage, and an instrument bridging the gap between the past and the present, the living and the dead. The idea of a civil society for Burke is that which embodies the principles of choice, inheritance and rule of law. Burke believes that the traditional political rights of man is the right to be governed well, hence providing a peaceful and harmonious environment for the development of the state and its members. History and tradition of a people might include their folklores, adventures, festivals, religious systems, political institutions, food, music, etc. All but not limited to these, form part of the heritage which Burke's conservatism seeks to preserve for posterity. Tradition binds the people together creating that sense of an organic identity linking individuals to the nation.

Burke views the society or, perhaps more accurately, the 'nation' as essentially organic in its nature, a kind of living creature, developing according to its own laws and to specific historical and cultural circumstances. Individuals are the 'cells' that make up the nation, each having a vital role to play in its well-being. This analogy of society with a living organism has proved to be of fundamental importance to conservatives. As a living thing has structure and hierarchy, with various parts contributing to the overall functioning and well-being of the whole, so it is with human society. This also points to the fact that conservatism acknowledges hierarchy, both within national institutions and in society, as

vital for a well-organised society, and for the instilling of habits of social discipline, obedience and obligation. Conservatives see nothing wrong in a hierarchy based on birth, wealth, authority, so long as that hierarchy and its authority are founded on tradition and the rule of law. Burke ascertains the nation, with its distinctive culture, history and identity, second only to the family as the natural unit of human society and having a similar emotional tie.

Conservatism tends to be more patriotic as it preserves history and tradition of the people, protecting the natural rights of kings to rule via legitimate authority backed by tradition and rule of law. Also protecting the right of the individual to good governance, by the virtue of the social contract between the individual and the state. Often, explicitly or not, conservatives doubt the patriotism of their opponents and deride the 'foreignness' of their ideas. This brings Burke to question liberty in a sense that it doesn't uphold patriotism when such liberties are derided of virtue. The following statement in his *Reflections* explicates this;

In some people I see great liberty indeed; in many, if not in the most, an oppressive, degrading servitude. But what is liberty without wisdom and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint. Those who know what virtuous liberty is cannot bear to see it disgraced by incapable heads on account of their having high-sounding words in their mouths. (Burke 203)

Conservatism maintains a strong value for national institutions such as monarchy, the constitution, churches, ancient universities, historical sites, old regiments, etc. These institutions must not be desecrated in a bid to pass a narrative or for self aggrandisement. The constitution emphasises on the rule of law, separation of power, authority, freedom and rights of the members of the state. If there should be progress in the state, if law and order should be maintained, then these institutions, especially the constitution must be sacrosanct.

Edmund Burke is regarded as the father of Conservatism. But just as every other philosophical ideology, conservationists differ on certain notions and concepts. However, their basis of agreement underlines a significant value to history, tradition and values, also the reflection of these in the modern and contemporary society, as it will champion an ideal society.

### **Religion, Tradition and Politics in Nigeria**

The concepts of religion, tradition and politics can be regarded as the essential concepts that inspire all other activities of the individuals and the society which they live in,

accounting for the social structuring of the individuals in any dispensation they live in. Therefore, the pre-colonial and post-colonial Nigeria would be explored within these concepts, by a means of comparative analysis, in order to understand what is lacking and what should be reformed or reignited as conservatism proffers, for a sustainable development pattern in the social and political sphere of the Nigeria state.

Nigeria is a heterogeneous multi-lingual, diverse ethnic and traditional state with strong roots in indigenous religion and tradition. Religion is a way of life, so is tradition. Religious beliefs, traditional practices and doctrines are for the useful human development and peaceful co- existence in society. Affirming to this, Max Weber in his words as quoted by Giddens opined;

...each major religion of the world has developed its distinctive orientation towards all aspects of social life... these differences have had profound consequences for the development of human society. All religious groups are continuously shaping and moulding the personalities of their adherents who then as private individuals affect the economic, political, educational and other institutional systems of society. (A. Giddens 10)

Exploring the religious practices and traditions that prevailed in the pre-colonial Nigeria, this study would critically articulate the effect of such practices in the social and political development of the community. Furthermore, the study would expose some of the ill practices which Edmund Burke's conservatism admonished should be phased out for the general good. The Igbo religion/tradition would be highlighted in this research as a case study to drive home its findings. The Igbos of the eastern hemisphere practised a traditional religion generally regarded as African Traditional Religion (ATR) today. In the Igbo ontology, the 'Chi' or 'Chukwu' is regarded as the 'Onus, the One' who is responsible for life and death, responsible for harvest and famine, protection against evil and wicked ones and in fact responsible for all that is within existence. There is a metaphysical interaction between the living and the dead. The Igbo belief system gives a fundamental meaning towards the ancestral preoccupation of the metaphysical sensation of the world. There is a robust interaction between the forefathers generally regarded as ancestors and the living. That is why whenever the Igbos break Kolanut, they make reverence to their 'chi' and their forefathers, to come and have a taste before the mere mortals. When things go wrong in the community, famine, sudden death, natural or environmental hazard, epidemic or any uncommon event, the members of the community beckon on the chief priest who is usually in charge of performing religious or spiritual functions towards the deities to as a matter of urgency, consult the deities for a mystical or ontological interpretation, and afterwards accept solutions which could be suggested by the deities through the chief priest. The traditionalists in the Igbo ontology found a

representation of their deities in objects and in nature. Igbos were craftsmen that also found representations of these deities in their most revered crafts and which they kept in their most sacred places in the compound usually called 'obu' for the family deities and 'nkwu' for the community deities. Abiodun observed that;

The Igbo religion was a mixture of human and spiritual beings. The Human category consisted of the priests, diviners, and ritual elders who conducted religious worship and sacrifices to god and goddesses. The divinities included ancestral spirits, and spirits of national heroes, and other deities. The revered gods and goddesses varied from one society to the other, and the shrines could be found in rivers, trees, road junctions, and on mountains and hills. (Abiodun 72-84)

The religious and traditional practices are so interwoven and complimentary. Traditional institutions such as the king, age grades, masquerade or chief priest, which are also political institutions made rituals and sacrifices as tool of reverence, consultation and authentication of the deities. These aforementioned institutions play the executive, legislative and judicial role conjunctively. Commenting on the leadership style of the Igbo political system, Ezenagu observed that the "Igbo communities during the pre-European era had developed political institution under the governing authority of the council of elders... supporting this assertion Nzomiwu (1999) affirms that the government of each Igbo community was in the hands of the elders (Ndiichie) whose permanent members were the family heads"(Ezenagu)

The Igbo political system was a decentralised, acephalous system with the actors deriving power and authority from tradition and divination from the gods and deities which they revered as a community. The people's role is that of obedience to authorities, being the brother's keeper, hence ensuring that they live in peace and harmony with each other. The Igbo festivals which make its culture distinct and rich are also rooted in some religious Igbo practices. The king and chief priest presides over such festivals as Iwa Ji, Mmanwu festivals, etc. There is always a religious aspect of these festivals before the traditional or ceremonial part. African Traditional Religion practised by the Igbos, as well as other religions, provide a moral framework for self-evaluation in respect to duty and obligations of man in the society. It provides a spiritual connection for meditation and interpretation of the universe. Religion serves as a steward for the examination of human actions including that of the political/traditional leaders charged with the development of the people, providing an ideological thesis to back up its teachings and admonitions, hence directing the individual to the obligation of love and kindness, also imbibing a sense of duty on the leaders and the people as well. Utensati in his words stressed the role of religion on the socio-economic and political development of the community.

...Religion is expected to provide the moral, psychological, social and spiritual infrastructure on which human and societal development could be based. But all of that is impossible without spirit of selflessness and cooperation. Human, societal and material development cannot materialise in the absence of discipline and God-consciousness. Religion is expected to help cultivate positive virtues among its adherents. (Utensati 65)

From the above positions, one could affirm the inseparability of religion and tradition from politics. As mentioned earlier, the relationship is complementary. Each at an obligatory end to the other and hence succeeded in ensuring a politically stable community in the pre-colonial era. Further claims were made on this submission by Chancellor Williams as he “identifies these institutions as functional political structures that characterised stability in the African societies” (Fagbadebo 48-159).

It is important to note that apart from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria; Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo used as a case study here, there are several other ethnicities in the pre-colonial Nigeria that operated their own traditional and political systems, distinct from each other but common in the set out goal of achieving peace, co-operation and development in their communities and which they recorded success. The political institutions were clearly accountable to the people. People that formed members of these political institutions were usually men of high repute, council of elders, ‘Nze na Ozo’, Ogboni in the Yoruba structure, age grades of different types, chief priest, etc. This set of people in one way or the other, provides for what Plato refers to as a ‘civilised state’. Traditional political system which is not written down but passed on by history and culture, from one generation to another, began to phase out with the advent of the colonial masters in Africa at the wake of the 18th century.

In the post-colonial period which is now, the religion, tradition and politics of the west having been imposed on the over 250 ethnic groups that make up Nigeria, becomes more distinct from each other, even though they compliment as well to make the effect on the state. There was a paradigm shift in the political ideology and structure of administration. The colonists came to Nigeria with a new religion, the Christian religion which was thoroughly infested mainly on the southerners of Nigeria, with the northerners still with the established Islamic religion which was practised as well under their centralised leadership system. Insa and Nathaniel noted this stating;

Nigerian Christianity dates back to the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the early nineteenth century, which was followed by the emergence of a literate African elite, consisting of liberated and returned slaves as well as local converts, in coastal cities such as Lagos. Because Christianity is much younger than Islam

in the local context, it is not associated with Pre-colonial relations of power.(N. Insa)

The British employed the indirect rule system in the administration of the Northern protectorates.

It is important to note that there were independent ethnic groups in the northern protectorate that had their different traditions and political systems which weren't Islam or Sharia. But by virtue of the grouping of the northern and southern protectorate, and the indirect rule system, they were assimilated under this new structure of Islam with their leaders paying allegiance to the British monarch. At this time, Christian religion had infiltrated the south, which along with it was a western model of modernization and democratisation. With the abolition of slave trade across the

Atlantic, the return and emancipation of the slaves, the southern people of Nigeria embraced western religion and education which were formidable tools for further entrenchment of this culture, hence providing leverage for the western domination of Nigeria. The people embraced education, soon the educated elites challenged the status of the colonists in their land, this awakened the consciousness and quest for political independence from Britain. Within 100 years of colonial presence in Nigeria, the traditional, religious and political structure of indigent people all washed off. This constitutes a significant epoch in the socio-political shift of the indigent people now known as Nigeria. Hence, emphasis was shifted to the tussle of power, acquisition of properties control of the means of production, etc. Capitalism therefore made its way into the economic system and as a result produced a society of endless class struggle. Traditional values and norms became optional to the people as well as the leaders. The primary aim of the government which is for the welfare and development of the people now turned out in the opposite way, making these rights of the citizens, a mere privilege of the elites in the society. Leaders now seek legitimacy from the people in the western democratic system portrayed by the colonists. The people were vulnerable and easily manipulated systematically. At the dawn of Nigeria's independence, the country became more divided across ethnic and religious dichotomy. Within the two popular religions; Christians and Muslims, there is still a dichotomy. For Christians, it is a dichotomy of Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, Jehovah witnesses, etc. This is applicable to Islam as well. Poor religious ideologies and practices have further deteriorated the sense of consciousness of the people. The topic is no longer about spirituality or morality or values, the topic is on materialism and egoistic antagonism. Mediocres claiming to have the spiritual solutions to poverty, ailments, and an ignorant majority seeking solutions to



their present realities, hence falling prey to these religious adulterers. An endless cycle of corruption! Utensati stressing the abuse of religion in Nigeria noted;

The quest for materialism has led to commercialization of religion. Commercialization of religion may not be peculiar to Nigeria, but now it is alarming. Rather than preaching the mind of God to people, some Christian and Islamic clerics are marketing their services and selling some religious objects that they claim to have miraculous effects. They reduce their religious teachings to only one thing: a means of making money. (Utensati 65)

Nigeria is made of over 250 ethnic groups scattered across the 36 states, oftentimes, politicians appeal more to ethnic and religious sentiments in their electoral campaigns and in bargaining for power, position, and individual material interests. The dawn of independence was met with series of ethnic and religious motivated violence and bloodshed, from military coups aimed at forceful takeover of the state, to civil war which lasted between 1967 to 1970. At different times, religious groups have come together to form an umbrella body such as Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) , Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), etc, that would give them the greater voice to drive home their political and religious demands. Therefore forming a civil organisation, influencing the political and social economy. Affirming this indivisibility between religion and the government, Abiodun noted;

Interconnected with religion and politics was the formation of associations geared towards promoting and protecting the common interests of the people. Fadipe and Fajana agreed that the tradition of having associations was common to all pre-colonial Nigerian societies. Associations were used as social-religious agencies for enforcing political policies and/or maintaining law and order; they were sources of political empowerment (Abiodun 72-84).

Religion have done well in the aspect of improving social welfare, therefore setting the pace for state with regards to the fulfilment of her moral obligations to the people. By providing schools, hospitals, housing, etc, from the arrival of the early missionaries till date, Christian religion have proved to be a force to partner with the state and her agents. Despite the positive impact of religion on the political and social polity, it has failed to provide that essential moral check on the people and further degenerated the traditional belief and value system of the people, thereby giving the unfortunate freedom without any form of modesty or restraint. The leaders have been found wanting but religion no longer plays this role of a watchdog or steward of actions of man. One can categorically conclude that the federal system of government cannot work in Nigeria, there cannot be a peaceful coexistence of over 250 ethnic groups under one nation-state. Sentiments and religious bias could mar the development of all members of the state thereby defeating the

aim of the formation of a civil state. When peace is lacking, there is always anarchy, social and political instability and a resultant state of nature emerges. The political structure of the Nigerian state has not made a genuine impact on peaceful coexistence, development and happiness of the members of the state. The centrality of leadership in most societies has given unprecedented popularity to the concept of democracy. It is the way that a society is governed that determines whether it is democratic or authoritarian. Such a system of governance equally has implications on the values and norms which the society lives by. It is the structure of a society that determines to a large extent the type of leadership that can emerge from it. This is so because the structure of a society has inherently peculiar challenges which correspondingly demand peculiar solutions. Modern liberal democracy, however, assumes a 'one size fits all' approach to the solution of problems (especially that of governance) peculiar to each society.

### **Conservatism for Socio-Political Development of Nigeria**

As one can deduce already, there was an organised system in the pre-colonial era which reflected the culture and tradition of the indigenous people of over 250 tribes that make up Nigeria today. For Burke, "I would not exclude alteration neither, but even when I changed, it should be to preserve. I should be led to my remedy by a great grievance. In what I did, I should follow the example of our ancestors"(Burke 205). Most times, people make laws to reflect their reality. Reality is however as a result of an experience peculiar to the people. They reflect on these realities and propound a theory to suit their present state. To drive home this point, Nigeria as a state should embrace their present reality to streamline a system of government that aligns with the interest of the people, and provides a functional structure that bridges the gap in the administration of a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria. At the introduction of this research, the problem of identity, ideology and leadership was highlighted, and it is important to note that the genesis of these problems (especially the problems of identity and ideology) are as a result of the activities of the colonists on the African land. From amalgamation, to indirect rule to assimilation. There is a need for a paradigm shift in the way we think, with our institutions, with our education system, with our system of governance, with everything which we have learnt from the west. Talking about the system of government practised in Nigeria from the second republic till today, it has not provided a solution for an inclusive government and ease of administration. At different times, states have been created to be added up to the already existing ones, yet the problem is not solved. To bring government closer to the people, local government administration has been created as well but not autonomous in the discharge of its duties to the local indigenes. The pre-colonial political arrangement gave room for leadership and representation at all levels. From the age grade, to the

kindred and to the town at large. In our current system, state government have constantly interfered in the discharge of the duties of the local government thereby defeating the aim of the formation of the local government, there is an urgent need to reemphasize the impact of the local government authority and its autonomy, this will go a long way in bringing the government closer to the people. This is an aspect of conservation to be enshrined and enforced in our society today, in order to foster development at all levels.

The 2014 national conference was converged as a matter of necessity to solve the problems that have existed and threatened the unity and stability of Nigeria. The ethnic plurality of Nigeria allowed for people from all cultures and ethnicity, profession, age groups and class to come together under one platform to discuss the grievances, challenges and needs of each ethnic group. At the end of the conference, it was resolved to restructure the nation. By restructuring, the federating unit will share exclusive powers with the confederating units (state). By implication, the states would have their destinies in their hands. Therefore, accelerate growth and development across the regions. Political and development analysts have often argued that the Nigerian state is too large to be managed by a single federating unit, and therefore power has to be shifted to the component units as was the case in pre-colonial Nigeria. This would provide an unwavering opportunity for realising the full potentials as a region/state. Commenting on conservation of tradition and history in fostering development, it would be nearly impossible to impose a foreign language, culture and tradition on the people and expect them to prosper. However, conservatism as proposed by Burke calls on an imitation of tradition, thus; “let us imitate their caution if we wish to deserve their fortune or to retain their bequests. Let us add, if we please, but let us preserve what they have left”(Burke 205). Since the colonisation era has passed, it is important to embrace the conservation of the tradition and history of the ethnic groups that make up Nigeria as a part of the process of decolonization, only then would it be possible for citizens to prosper. Thus “our people will find employment enough for a truly patriotic, free, and independent spirit in guarding what they possess from violation” (Burke 145). There is the need to remodel the traditional institutions of the king and the deities which the people revered. There is a need to return to our fashion, entertainment, food, education and every other phenomena that made us Africa, remodel them to fit this modern 21<sup>st</sup> century era. This is what conservative thinkers like Edmund Burke, Samuel Huntington referred to as situational conservatism. The idea is not to throw away our culture and traditions as Africans, but to conserve them as much as possible, as such there won't be hasty change by greedy elements that seek to use the change agenda as propaganda to suit their selfish needs and satisfy their ego. It should be a properly thought and gradual process that refers back to history in analysing the needs of the modern day culture and tradition.

Having this in mind, there will be a need to restructure and give exclusive powers to the constituent units. That is to say, the federal system of government in Nigeria doesn't promote the unity, welfare and progress of Nigerians, therefore another model of government should be considered in order to foster growth and development. The submissions made at the national conference of 2014 should be implemented for the sake of peace, stability, progress and unity of Nigeria. It should be enacted as a working document, a law which should be implemented for the good of the greatest number. No man should put their interest first but the interest of the people should be considered. Checking back on the traditional democracy practised in the Igbo society, the impact of elders were of high esteem. Everyone wasn't allowed a seat in running the affairs of the community, age was a major distinguishing factor as experience comes with age, and hence different age groups were made to create impact in their own way for the progress of the community. Now, there is a prerequisite for participation, notwithstanding one's alliance or interest, your right ends where the other person's right starts. This is an African democratic system. Imbibing a western pattern of democracy, which states the clause "government of the people, by the people and for the people" gives a totally wrong sense of belonging to everyone. Everyone therefore, without due qualification could rise up and take a very sensitive position in the affairs of the state, simply because Nigeria practises a western democracy and then it gives an ignorant person the right to vote and be voted for. Someone that has the right to vote should be a rational man, that is able to reason about the consequences of his actions and the impact of a candidate he is about to vote for. An eligible voter should be someone that is morally stable to not enthrone a questionable character, someone that doesn't think of what he will gain personally from the candidate but what will benefit the commonwealth, he should be able to think about the future of his kids and generations to come. An eligible voter should be someone stable in mind and body (that is not to dismiss people with ailments and disabilities, they should also be recognized and given a special place in the commonwealth). To attain such stability, there should be a level of education to have attained, there should be an impact created by the person already through the work of his hands or his profession, an eligible voter should not be easily compromised with any material thing. This should also be the case for a candidate to be fielded in any electoral position. If this agenda is not pushed and made a statutory law, a mediocre would continue to be enthroned in sensitive positions, they would not be able to make impactful decisions when it is to be made, rather it would be retrogressive. There's been obvious cases of such ignorant people in government and the result has been disastrous in the development and progress of the nation. To think that these set of ignorant people still vie for positions in government becomes more worrisome. To toe this part is to toe the part of destruction and it is nevertheless disastrous for the development of Nigeria both socially and politically.

On the course of this philosophical discourse, to investigate the problems of development in Nigeria, a lot of arguments, and critically objective reflection in the light of Edmund Burke has brought us to the conclusion that if traditional systems are conserved and referred to, can prove an unprecedented progress and development in any political institution it is applied to, with Nigeria included. Basically, the system of government in any state affects the total structure of the state and its institutions including the means of production, standard of living, values and ethical standards attainable and upheld. Nigeria practises a capitalist economy which is characterised by obvious class distinctions. The gap between the rich and the poor is so glaring that it has come to the revolutionary phase whereby the artisans and workers revolt against their masters in respect to their current state, thereby challenging the status quo. Capitalist government is a system that gives the monopoly to private individuals to own the means of production, as a matter of fact, some of the exclusive list of services are also entrusted in the hands of private individuals. The capitalist system enthroned greed, corruption, money laundering, unhealthy competition, high standard of living, poverty, amongst other social, political and economic vices. Sometime in the past, between 1970-2010, Nigeria had slowly shifted from mixed economy to forge on with capitalism. Governments have not been able to manage institutions, industries and services efficiently. As at 2010, they have already privatised most of the public utilities, services and industries such as Nigeria Airways, National electric power authority (NEPA), NIPOST, etc. The unfortunate part is that these private companies also got their wealth through embezzlement of public funds, they personalised it, and on paper took up the control of such companies and services under their privately owned companies, redistributing these products and services to the poor masses. This study insists that capitalism is not an African system but a borrowed system from Britain, America and some other western states. Looking at the books, one might make prejudiced judgement specifying a mixed economic system but that is only in the books. But in actuality, it is a capitalist economy. In the course of this research and the reflections that followed forthwith, it becomes so glaring how the Nigerian capitalist system has adversely affected the well-being of the average Nigerian. Burke believes and insists that property should be redistributed equitably as a matter of obligation on the government. In a situation whereby the rich would focus on using their property to sustain the poor through tax, employment of labour in a conducive working environment and provision of welfare both in labour and outside labour. Burke insists that the rich are duty bound of these obligations in a harmonious society. However, in Nigeria, the people live on the barest means. Work their heads off just to feed without any means of savings. On their way to work, they spend long hours in traffic and on bad roads. The people cannot access a good healthcare system, some cannot afford to be educated formally, just to name a few

challenges of a capitalist economy coated with chronic corruption, tending to terminate the existence of the Nigerian state itself.

The question now lies on which viable system of government could protect the interest and well-being of the people, both the rich and the poor in the society. At this crossroad, welfarism could be obliged as a system of sustainable socio-political development, inclusive government and as a purposeful system for the distribution of goods and services among the citizens of the state. The main purpose of this system of government is for the well-being of members of the state. Every action of the government, every of its policies are directed towards the maximum wellbeing of the greatest number. Omeregebe observed that this is a system of government where the bourgeoisie are given the necessary support to flourish, then the government in turn charges them through taxes. The taxes in turn are further used for the common purpose of providing an inhabitable environment which strives for a perfect state. The provision of security , housing , healthcare, free education, etc are made possible with the tax funds and other strategic means of government. The advantage bound to this system is that it provides for equal opportunities for both artisans, workers and the entrepreneurs. An average man can be able to afford the basic amenities, healthcare, education, and so on. There is an equitable distribution of the commonwealth. Welfarism is synonymous with the pre-colonial communalism practised in most parts of pre-colonial Nigeria including the Igbos of the East. Land which is the major means of production was shared amongst the families in the community. The male members of the community, from the eldest to the least male gets a portion of land which he uses in cultivating for his family. The leaders of different communities also ensure that their communities are living their best lives, in peace and harmony. Every household has enough food to share with their neighbours. There was accountability, checks and balances in the community administration. Disputes are settled by elders or chief priests. Selfishness, corruption, greed was barely heard of. Positions of leadership are not seen as positions to enrich oneself as the oracle and chief priests play the role of a religious custodian by the constant moral check on actions and enshrining the objective moral standards and obligations.

On a final note, it is important to re-emphasise Burke's point on referring to conservatism as an indispensable element of development. Tradition and history makes up for that bridge between the living and the dead and future generations. Inquiring into the known, one could unfold the unknown. It is via the known that we could ascertain the unknown. Therefore tradition points back to where we started and where we are headed. It preserves the people from indiscriminate occurrences recorded in the past and echoes a new heritage, not far from the old but complimentary in every sense of it.

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