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## Socio-Ethical Dimension of Machiavellianism in Nigerian Society

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# Socio-Ethical Dimension of Machiavellianism in Nigerian Society

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Machiavellianism as a political ideology is known for its immoral way of acquiring and retaining political power. This political view has been adopted by many politicians, most especially in Africa. However, the acceptance, adoption, promotion and flourishing of this immoral politics can only be possible in the society where there is little or no moral inclination. While Machiavellianism has been studied from political, causal and effectual perspectives, its socio-ethical dimension has not received much scholarly attention, especially as it has to do with Nigerian society; this is our intension in this piece.

Using B.F. Skinner's environmentalism as the theoretical basis, which posits that all human actions are the products of one's environment, the paper intends to show that the manifestation of Machiavellianism is not autonomous of the political sphere of the Nigerian society, as we can see the reflection of this ideology speaking loudly in other aspects of the lives of the citizens of the nation. A close look at every section of the country reveals the reflection of cunning, dubious and immoral ways of achieving personal goals without making moral recourse to the ideal and stipulated means of getting things done. This implies that Nigerian society is not hostile or allergic to immorality. If the

system and ideology are friendly to lawlessness, politics cannot be an exception, and if people are morally inclined, immorality will not flourish in Nigerian politics.

Thus, the focus of the paper is to establish that Nigerian society is favourable for the adoption, acceptance and advancement of this erroneous political idea. This will be unravelled as we pay attention to some areas of life where the exhibition of the major Machiavellian teaching is displayed. The summary of the teaching given by Machiavelli is that any means could be adopted, including immoral way, to achieve one's target; the important thing is to ensure that the aim is achieved irrespective of the means. It is believed that the end will justify the means. The piece employed historical methods by using archival materials to demonstrate how this ideology runs through most aspects of Nigerian lives, which invariably grants its permission in the political scene of the country.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper adopts Skinner's theory of environmentalism that posits that human behaviour is influenced by the environment he lives and that the course of action is highly determined by what is obtainable in one's society. Thus, according to Skinner, most human actions are the products of one's environment.<sup>1</sup> He, as many other psychologists, views the term environment broadly as comprising natural environments, social settings, built environment, economic system and information environment of a particular place. Although, the radical form of environmentalism, as presented by some scholars, opposes the concept of hereditary and innate ideas as explanations for human actions<sup>2</sup>, its moderate form contributes to the understanding of the factors responsible either for moral or immoral actions of man. This explains why the theory is known as scientific factors in some quarters, for it presents one of the vital variables that contribute to the determination of morality in human actions.

By implication, an environment that has low sense of morality will accommodate every form of

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<sup>1</sup> J. I. Omeregbe, 1993. *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, Lagos: JERPL, 41

<sup>2</sup> A. O. Taiwo, 2005. "Psychology: Man and his World" in S. K. Balogun and A. O. Taiwo (eds.) *Introduction to Basic Concepts in Government, Society and Economy: A Textbook for GES 103*, University of Ibadan: General Study Programmes, 15-16

immorality and it will be prone to different vices. Such an environment will feature lawlessness, corruption, embezzlement, violence, malpractices and every kind of immoral act as the 'normal' way of life. While society with moral inclination will be hostile to vices and inhuman behaviours, the sense of orderliness and respect for the rule of law will characterize such a nation. It is obvious that where there is moral consciousness there we can witness peace, justice, loyalty, honesty and love manifesting in the dealings of the citizens of that country.

Therefore, this theory is relevant to the subject under discussion in this piece because the manifestation of immorality of different kind in Nigeria makes the nation a victim of Machiavellianism. The notion that one can do wrong thing and escape its consequential punishment is rightly obvious in Nigeria. This occasions the continuous record of violence, kidnapping, robbery and rape. Since the perpetrators know that they can escape with such act as this is evident in the inability of the nation to bring to book many of those who have indulged in such evil before. In the light of this theory, we are studying Nigerian environment as a factor that promotes immoral acts in the political sphere of the nation, rather than viewing the nation's politics as the only sector where immorality manifests.

This is more obvious when we view the politics as the product of the environment where it is practiced, and the politicians as the products of their society. This suggests that it is only the moral society that will produce morally conscious and patriotic citizens that will advance the economy and general welfare of the nation through the political activities, while a society with immoral inclination will only produce citizens with selfish and kleptocratic interests to participate in the politics, hence the manifestation of different immoral acts in the sector. Environmentalism as a theory is suggesting that the corrupt politicians we have in Nigeria are the products that the society could produce based on the level of moral inclination in the nation for now. Thus, we need a moral society to produce moral politicians.

### III. CONCEPTUALISING MACHIAVELLIANISM

Machiavellianism is a philosophy derived and developed from the thinking of Niccolo Machiavelli, especially from his advice penned down in his popular book *The Prince*, that political power should be grabbed by all means including unethical way, and that the same means should be used to retain the power. This kind of thought have come to be tagged "Machiavellianism." According to Adegboyega, "Machiavellianism" means the practice of Niccolo Machiavelli's socio-political philosophy. He further explains that what runs through the mind when we study Machiavelli's book, *The Prince*

is the presentation of politics in an amoral sense.<sup>3</sup> It has become a common cliché associated with any government that operates without sufficient moral scruples. The concept has come to mean the crooked way of achieving one's goal or desire. To be Machiavellian means to be cunning. It describes one with a penchant for manipulating people and feeling no remorse. Man is naturally and ontologically configured to live moral life, but because of selfish reasons and egoistic interest, man took the axiom "the end justifies the means" as the basis of his action. Men would kill, steal and destroy to achieve any goal, if they thought it possible and worthy. Systems over the centuries were put in place to curb these excesses of human nature, that espoused "might is right" and "only the strongest survive" principles.

The fact that the wicked are seen to flourish or that immoral courses appear to pay has never been very remote from the consciousness of mankind. The popular Hobbesian State of nature explains how men were using power to snatch property of their neighbours, even including their wives. This shows the extent man could go in their bid to satisfy their urges, self-interest and its satisfaction were the only rules of action in the state of nature, whatever satisfied anybody's appetite was for him good action.<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that the condition and situation of State of nature were controlled with the institution of laws, man is still, to some extent, egoistic, and likes to possess the whole world if it were possible. The untamed ego and selfish desire could make man to lord it over his fellow-men in order to achieve his dream through dubious and unscrupulous means. Whenever this happened, the person has yielded to the advice given by Machiavelli that unguarded desire could be attained by any means, including immoral ways.

One can, to some extent, agree with Jeremy Bentham that "man is by nature a pleasure-seeking and a pain-avoiding animal,"<sup>5</sup> but in the process of seeking the pressure, man could go an extra mile even to the extent of inflicting pains on another man. The hedonists hold that all human actions are directed towards the search for pleasure, and that behind any action that anybody performs, there is the desire and the search for pleasure. While one may not absolutely agree with this position, it is obvious that man wants what are comfortable, pleasurable and ego-boosting for himself. While we can argue that there is nothing bad in desiring comfort and pleasure, we should also consider the means by which we get all these achieved. This is what

<sup>3</sup> O.O. Adegboyega, 2015. "Political Corruption and the Future of Nigerian Politics" in *International Law Research*; Vol. 4, No. 1, 179

<sup>4</sup> J.I. Omoregbe, 1993, *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, 195

<sup>5</sup> J.I. Omoregbe, 1993, *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, 233

Machiavellianism ignored in its teaching, holding that any means could be used to achieve our desire; the most important thing is to get the goal achieved. Machiavelli unceasingly teaches that man should abandon the lawful way of dealing with fellowmen, though he recognises that force should be used among the beasts, he equally recommends it for anybody who want to have his or way among men. Thus he opines that:

...there are two ways of fighting: by law or by force. The first way is natural to men, and the second to beasts. But as the first way often proves inadequate; one must have recourse to the second. So, as a prince is forced to know how to act like a beast....one must know how to colour one's actions and to be a great liar and deceiver. Men are so simple, and so much creatures of circumstance, that the deceiver will always find someone ready to be deceived. A prince...need not necessarily have all the good qualities...but he should certainly appear to have them.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from the use of force to get mission accomplished, from the above assertion, it is clear that Machiavellianism holds that one should live life of pretence in order to achieve his desire or goal. The proponent of the theory, Machiavelli posits that one should pretend to be compassionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, devout and patriotic. Whereas, according to him, these qualities will undermine his dream and ambition. He should pretend to be all these in order to win the confidence of the people.

Machiavellianism as a political ideology is predicated on what man 'is' rather than what man 'ought to be,' this is because the Machiavelli's political idea is hinged on man's wickedness. It is believed that men are wicked and if you want to succeed with them in your dealings, you too have to be wicked. The sum of Machiavellianism is given by Agulanna as follow:

The sum of Machiavelli's ideas is that the leader is not bound by the norms of traditional morality in the discharge of his duties or in the dispensing of social advantages of his subject. All that matters in politics is the maintenance of the ruler's political estate against opponents who are at all times changeable, dissimulators and ever "eager for gain."<sup>7</sup>

From the foregoing it is obvious that the kind of politics where the ruler is only concern about how to guide his political estate against the opponents will produce vices and immorality as by-products. The endorsement of immoral acts in the politics as suggested by Machiavelli cannot produce a kind of governance that will bring about social, economic and political growth in the society.

#### IV. SOCIO-ETHICAL SITUATION OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY

That most Nigerians are living below moral standard of any ideal society is an understatement. The reality of this assertion is established in several ways. It could be established in the recurrence of immoral acts in the nation which manifests in form of violence, robbery, kidnapping, murder, corruption and fraud. Lamenting the reality of corruption in Nigeria, Isiramen submits that:

Corruption is evident in our academic environment, public institutions, the armed forces, the Judiciary, the business sphere, political settings, business outfits, and even within the religious establishments.<sup>8</sup>

We can also prove the level of low moral inclination in the Nigerian society through the launching of different programmes towards instilling moral discipline into the citizens of the country which has produced little or no enduring effects. One of such initiatives was the campaign for Ethical Revolution under Shagari administration with minute effects on the society.<sup>9</sup> Another one was the War Against Indiscipline policy (WAI) initiated by the military government under General Muhammadu Buhari, which was aimed at bringing back the sense of decorum to the civil society. The effect of this programme on Nigerians is described by Dzurgba:

The principles of WAI were being enforced by all Nigerians. Nigerians accepted it as a public duty of every Nigerian to remind the erring citizens of WAI. It was done by simply shouting, 'WAI, WAI, WAI', and the number of 'WAI' said depended on the degree of resistance by the recalcitrant and intransigents. Thus, the people began to resist an act of jumping the queue in public transactions.<sup>10</sup>

The major achievement of WAI is that it has deepened Nigerians' understanding of the need for public moral consciousness and behaviour in their national life. However, its effect disappeared almost immediately the administration was truncated. The current one is the President Muhammadu Buhari's "Change begins with me", a programme that was flagged up on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2016 with the goal to instil discipline and patriotism in Nigerians. The argument is that, if it is not glaring that Nigerian society has low moral sense of morality, there would be no reason for programmes to sensitize the citizens for moral sensitivity. Again, if the programmes have been

<sup>6</sup> N. Machiavelli, 1961. *The Prince*. Trans. By George Bull. London: Penguin Books, 56

<sup>7</sup> C.O. Agulanna, 2014. "Moral & Political Education as Foundation for a Reasonable Social Order in Africa" in F.A. Adeigbo et al, *Ethics and Publics Affairs*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 9

<sup>8</sup> C. O. Isiramen, 2010. "Corruption in the Nigerian Society: Suggestions for Moral Rearmament" in C. O. Isiramen et al, *Religion and the Nigerian Nation: Some Topical Issues*, Ibadan: En-Joy Press & Books, 70

<sup>9</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 1986. "Preface" in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, v

<sup>10</sup> A. Dzurgba, 2008. *Nigerian Politics and Ethical Behaviour*, Ibadan: John Archers (Publishers) Limited, 50



effective, there would be reduction in the rate of immorality in the society on the other hand.

Nigeria is a country where an individual believes he can do whatever pleases him without considering the effect of such action on his fellow citizens, immediate environment and the nation at large. Any country where personal pursuit is put above the national unity, integrity and progress, such will witness retardation in every aspect, including human development. This is because in any given moral society, inclination of every form may have to be suspended to give way for actions exhibited out of pure respect for the moral law.<sup>11</sup> The attachment of prestige and sense of satisfaction to materialism escalated the individual pursuit in the nation of which its by-products are immoral acts. The fact that the people are planning individually for themselves rather than the government rationally plan for them erases the sense of belonging and unity in the nation and invariably encourages dubious ways of achieving goals.

The conducts of some people in Nigeria show that they have no protection of the image of the nation in mind. The societal values that could bring about human and social development are no longer cherished. Many are very allergic to work; they no longer regard work and duty as virtue to inculcate, instead, how to become wealthy without any serious and productive job is the target of many Nigerians. This has bred various vices in the society, and it has also made it difficult to put an end to the menace. We are now living in the environment where stealing and fraud are euphemized as “business” and often seen as normal engagement. The sense of moral judgment to frown at the immorality is declining in the society, and we are fast losing cultural values and national integrity even among the comity of nations, little wonders that citizens of the nation are finding it difficult to travel to some countries, because of the thorough investigation they will be subjected to. We may not lay blame at the corridors of these countries, because the displays of those who exported immorality from Nigeria to their resident nations call for insinuation that all Nigerians are corrupt.

The agencies that are directly concerned with the inculcation of morality and national value have collapsed. The elders in the society are no longer living as custodians of morality; instead, many of them are the encouragers for the perpetrators of evil in the society. How can we explain the attitudes of parents that were advising their children in official positions to utilize the rare opportunity to enrich their pockets? They were invariably telling them to embezzle government money. Many of the religious leaders who are to teach morality have not distinguished themselves, as most of them are caught in one misdeed or the other, while little is to be

said about the immorality displayed by the law enforcement officers in the country.

It has gone so bad that Nigerians know the corrupt citizens in the nation, but instead of punishing and humiliating them, they are celebrating the immoral people. Many of those who were arrested, tried and jailed were later celebrated after served their terms in the prison. Notable cases that come to mind are that of Bode George and James Ibori. The former organized and invited friends, relatives and general public to celebrate his release from the prison and even went to church for thanksgiving without iota of moral conscience. While the latter returned from United Kingdom where he had served jail term for money laundering, and his relatives, friends and political associates saw this as cause for an accolade where a ‘hero’ should be celebrated. It is obvious that they took these steps to remain relevant in the socio-political scene of the country, but this can only take place in a society where most of citizens are morally corrupt; this is against what any ideal society stands for, especially, a society with moral inclination.<sup>12</sup>

The situation in the country encourages immorality and this manifest in every sector. What we have just done in this section is to establish that wall of cultural value and pole of morality have collapsed in the country, hence the invasion of vices, corruption, violence and murder into the country. This will lead us a bit further to consider the various ways by which people exhibit Machiavellian teaching in social space of Nigeria.

## V. SOCIAL MANIFESTATIONS OF MACHIAVELLIAN PRINCIPLE IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Though Primarily Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* as a piece of advice for rulers, where he gave the admonition based on what he thought would be the best way of holding to power by whosoever desired to rule successfully, one can deduce social dimension to his philosophy, especially when all what he proposed in the book has to do with how a ruler could get his goal achieved. Socially, the ways many people are relating with one another in every facet and sphere of life reflect the teaching of Machiavellianism. It is obvious that in interpersonal relationship, many people have jettisoned morality and replaced good and virtuous behaviours with wicked, callous and cunning exhibition. Though many could use religiosity and moral pretence to deal unscrupulously with other people, the truth is that they have exhibited Machiavellianism in that regard, for majorly, Machiavelli holds to cunning and immoral

<sup>11</sup> K. Oyedapo, 1986. “Relativism and Ethics” in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 16

<sup>12</sup> S.K. Olaleye, Interview Respondent: African Traditional Religion Scholar, 29/08/2016.

means of reaching targeted goals. This implies that we can have another version of this theory apart from its famous political interpretation that it is purposefully meant for.

The manifestations of this immoral idea are witnessed in the family level of our society. The increase number of divorce cases could be linked to act of pretence on part of one of the partners. In a situation where one of the partners lied concerning certain issues that are imperative to the relationship like health status, financial status, religious affiliation, etc in order to win the heart of the partner in marriage can only be explained as a Machiavellian display. How can we explain the increasing daily record of rape in our society today if not an act of jettisoning morality from sexual affair? It is now rampant for men to use any mean to get at ladies sexually in Nigeria of today not minding its emotional, psychological, social and ethical implications.<sup>13</sup> May be as a result of their declining on love proposal, women are facing risk of being raped on daily basis because most men want to satisfy their sexual urge at all cost and by all means. This act is in agreement with Machiavellian teaching that all means should be used, even if it is unethical, the target aim has to be achieved.

Another area of Nigerians' social life that depicts Machiavellianism is the involvement in immoral business in a bid to get riches quickly. This has been explained as a struggle for the limited resources in the society<sup>14</sup>, which makes many to enlist their names in the book of illicit business. The latest ill business in town now especially in Nigeria is kidnapping. Many Nigerian youths want to be rich without serious effort, therefore they will cunningly arrange for how a friend, relative or wealthy person will be kidnapped with the aim of releasing him or her with a ransom. Recently in Nigeria, the abduction of politicians, their relatives, traditional rulers, foreigners and other important dignitaries is rampant and all efforts to curb the menace are yet to be productive. It is good to be rich, but how justifiable is the money gotten from ill source or how can we reconcile our riches with the evil means from which it is generated? This get-rich-quick syndrome is against Kantian argument that man should not be used as a means to an end; rather, he should be treated as presents by Omoregbe:

...so act as to use humanity both in your own person and in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end, never simply as a means. Thus, moral law, according to Kant, forbids any man to be used simply as means to an end.<sup>15</sup>

It is obvious that Machiavellianism is against this Kantian maxim, especially when we consider its teaching on how we can do anything to attain our targets. Kidnappers, robbers and assassins' desires are to be rich and famous, but they have thrown away morality in their pursuits of their goals. Every business deal that does not involve morality is simply done in line with the Machiavellian principle; this can therefore involve killing, destroying, maiming, kidnapping and every other immoral act.

Little is to be said about fraudulent business that has been given different nomenclatures in Nigerian society today. Some people euphemize fraud by calling it *419*, some refer to it as *yahoo-yahoo*, while some call it *brain*. The increase in fake, substandard and adulterated goods, including food and medicines that are dangerous to human health in the country is alarming.<sup>16</sup> Although the level of unemployment has been identified as one of the reasons for the increase in the rate of frauds in Nigeria, the fact still remains that many people are into the fraud 'business' because of their allergy to legitimate job. They could pretend to be dealer of a particular product in order to defraud their victims, while it is possible for many of them to practice imposture and impersonation to deceive people for financial gain. All these have moral, social and financial effects in the society, but which can be 'justified' by Machiavellian philosophy that any means could be adopted to get one's goal achieved. The concern of those are morally conscious is that the means of doing this is not only wrong it also has negative implication on the society. Though, riches and wealth could be amassed through this unethical way, one cannot justify the immoral means by seemingly good end.

The major idea of getting things by all means has characterized Nigerian education as many students are using illicit means to get school certificate. It is disheartening to note that many students got admitted into higher institutions with the results got through examination malpractices. We have various forms of this malpractice, ranging from impersonation to bringing foreign materials into examination hall.<sup>17</sup> Such students are faithful disciples of Machiavelli, for after the admission, they would use the same method to sustain the studentship. This can be done by bribing the lecturers for getting marks or by using malpractices in the course of their studies on campus. This is not surprise, because the proponent of the theory asserts

<sup>13</sup> J. O. Kayode, 1986. "African Ethics on Sex" in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 52

<sup>14</sup> F. Ofor, 2014. "Social Justice, Democracy and the Crisis of Development in Africa" in F.A. Adeigbo, D. Irelu, and A. Udefi (Eds.), *Ethics and Public Affairs*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 95

<sup>15</sup> J.I. Omoregbe, 1993. *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*, 224

<sup>16</sup> C.J. Ekwealo, 2012. "Ethical Evaluation of Business Practice" in C.J. Ekwealo (Ed.), *Applied and Practical Ethics: A Simplified Course Text*, Lagos: African Environment Ethics and Values Research Group, 199

<sup>17</sup> O.O. Familusi, 2002. "The Examination Malpractices in the University of Ibadan: A Socio-Ethical Perspective." A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts for the Award of Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in Religious Studies University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 75

that the same immoral method used to achieve the goal should be used to sustain it. This same fact is responsible for the poor standard of education in Nigeria. Since Nigeria is only celebrating the certificate and not what the holder can perform as a result of the education he acquired, many are using illicit and unethical means to get certificates.

Many people could not stand before a large crowd because they are naturally shy to do this. In their efforts to correct this situation, many could resolve to taking of alcohol or becoming a drug addict. Some also take these intoxicating elements in order to be able to do what they could not have done if they are not high with the effect of drugs or alcohol. It is good to correct the error of shyness, but the means adopted could be disastrous as many people who take these drugs and alcohol usually get involved in social vices like rape, robbery, murder, disrespect of elders, incest and violence. All these are the by-products of drug addiction and alcoholism, but in Machiavellian principle this can be justified once they could be able to stand before a large crowd and also find relevance in doing what they could not do before, the effects of its by-products on the society as a whole notwithstanding. The social and moral effects of this habit are not in the consideration of Machiavellianism, the ideology of this philosophy is to see that the set target is achieved irrespective of those who are affected negatively.

Awarding of contracts in government parastatals in Nigeria of today could be stressful and the process could be tiring and cumbersome. To get the contract by all means, many Nigerians could borrow a leaf from Machiavelli, that is, all things should be done to ensure that they get the contract. Because it is always competitive, thus, awarding of contracts usually involve bribery, lobbying and nepotism. This makes transparency, impartiality and honesty to disappear in such dealings. The contract could eventually be awarded to the highest bidder among those who are pursuing it, even if he or she is not qualified to handle the project. This act is responsible for poor execution of project in Nigeria today. The money used to bribe in the course of struggling to get the contract would be realized; therefore sub-standard materials would be used. If such a person is queried for low quality of execution of project, he has Machiavellianism to fall back to; the teaching holds that the same method used to get the contract should also be used to retain its benefits. This implies that the person could easily bribe those who are to query him of poor execution of contract.

However, bribery for contract could take different forms; some do it in form of a gift to the receiver. The act of giving gifts in Nigeria signifies gratitude for favours received, which may take the form of money, property and so on. It shows a manifestation of gratitude on the side of the person that received the

favour or on behalf of the receiver by a loved one. Thus, a contractor who gets a contract from a government official might decide to take gifts to the politician who was so instrumental for securing the contract. In some other cases, giving of gift could be done while anticipating a favour in return, which could be seen in instance of contractors going to government officials who are supposed to be responsible for issuing them contracts, with gifts to reciprocate the favour shown to them often engender aspects of support for one who has given the gift. Here, the receiver is expected to offer some kind of favour in return. It is a popular step in Nigeria for people to dole out money to support electioneering campaigns of candidates. They gave out the money to secure chances of getting contracts when these politicians assumed office. As millions of naira was allegedly given out by many companies, like Nigerian breweries Plc, Shell Petroleum Company and some banks; while business men that owned big companies also doled out millions of naira as well for the sponsorship of many presidential elections in Nigeria.

The level of unemployment in the society has made people to device various means of ameliorating its effect. One of the designed means of quenching its effect but which may be questioned ethically is what can be tagged "Employment Agency." What this agency is developed to do by those who designed it, is to search for available jobs and 'purchase' it by bribing the officers who are to shortlist those who apply for the work advertised. The agents will now illegally draw people to themselves with the assurance of helping them to secure jobs if only they could comply with the terms and conditions given. The conditions attached to these employments by the agents vary based on the financial values of each of the works. The common one is to sign that the first six month salaries will be paid to the agents that facilitated the work, while in some conditions, usually because of the huge amount of remunerations, certain percentage will be payable continuously to the account of the agents. Apart from the fact that the act of artificial hoarding done by these agents is not ethical, the conditions laid for their benefit are also outrageous. Not minding the conditions, the desperate employment seekers usually patronize these illegal agents with the aim of getting the employment by all means. This is where Machiavellian principle comes into this matter, this is because ordinarily the few available jobs will be competitive, while some people are very ready to use any means to get the job irrespective of the cost. Immediately the work has been secured through this dubious means, many people agreed to sustain it through the conditions laid down; some could go to the extent assassinating the agents in order to sustain the work without honouring the agreement.

This issue of getting things done at all cost is also present in the religious setting. This is common in

the prophetic ministry where those who claimed to be called of God based the foundation of their ministry on falsehood. They loved to be addressed as prophets, but they do not possess the prophetic gifts and qualities of the office. Therefore their targets, which are the fame and benefits of the prophetic ministry, will be realized by claiming divine revelation of how God called them to be a prophet. This self-adduced office will be sustained by giving people false prophecies. Many claimed miracles are arrangements between the prophets and the persons healed just to tell the world that they are divinely called as prophets. This responsible for how many people who have been paid to claim to be under the influence of demon, or to be suffering from different types of diseases like HIV/AIDS, deafness, strokes etc., are easily delivered in many crusade grounds. We can only explain this kind of arrangement in line of Machiavellian principle that any means could be used to attain the level one is targeting, while all things should also be done to sustain it.

Though it is a fact that Nigerians are predominantly religious people that practising three major types of religions, one cannot also deny the fact that the social manifestation of Machiavellianism depicts that Nigerians have not been following the ethical principles in these religions.<sup>18</sup> This lack of regards for the teachings of religions has been identified as the factor behind the disorderliness in the society. Oshun supports this view when he opines that:

As a result of sheer disregard for God and his laws which form the basis of life, human society finds itself in a situation of chaos and disorder. The Pauline outcry in Romans 1: 24, 26, 28 is quite apposite. The country, as a whole, presents a picture of a lawless society in which civility has no place (Judges 21:25). It is loathsome.<sup>19</sup>

We are not oblivious of the fact that Machiavellianism as a socio-political philosophy is popular in the political sphere, but its core teaching and idea of separating morality from the means of getting one's goal achieved is implied in other aspects of lives of people in the society, especially in Nigeria. It can be argued that Machiavellianism is flourishing in Nigeria because the society is receptive to immorality; this suggests that immorality in politics is the extension of the unethical behaviour in every other sphere of the society. We are forced to agree with Mala that it is an open secret that there is no aspect of our national life – social, religious, economic, political, and judicial – which

is not bedevilled by hydra-headed problems.<sup>20</sup> What makes this argument convincing is that Machiavellian politicians are products of the society, this implies that if the society is morally inclined, there is a great tendency that it will produce moral politicians that will promote morality at every stage of political enterprise.

## VI. THE IMPLICATION OF IMMORAL SOCIETY FOR NIGERIAN POLITICS

The fact that politics and politicians are products of the society where they are found makes it difficult to independently appraise or condemn either of the two without making recourse to the society. The level of moral inclination in a society determines how every activity, politics inclusive, will be carried out. Thus, if immorality is manifesting in form of cheating, corruption, murder, violence and robbery in domestic, economic, religious and educational sectors of the country, how could we have an exception in the political activities of the country? If saints are not found in a society, one wonders how the product of such could be a good politician. Hence, the selling and buying of votes in Nigerian elections,<sup>21</sup> because the ideology of getting one's target through immoral means has been in operation in other sectors of the country. One can only explain this as the collapse of public morality which could have engendered orderliness and tranquillity in the country.

The sense of public morality is immensely vital when we are discussing Machiavellianism as a concept, this is because the presence of the former will not create enabling environment for the latter. Public morality can simply be referred to as the principle of behaviour that is right and good, which ought to be exhibited and approved by society. When practised, it places the state or society on a ground of peace, orderliness and in the end achieves the good end, which is the ultimate goal for which the state is created. Sidgwick corroborates this position when he submits that:

Public morality helps in the enhancement of the security of the rights of individuals to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness by individuals without impinging on other people's rights. It is the prevalent opinions as to right and wrong in public conduct; that is primarily in the conduct of governments, whether in relation to the members of the state or by extension in its dealing with other states.<sup>22</sup>

From the above assertion it is obvious that public morality has to do with individual and the general public at large. It will ensure the protection of individual

<sup>18</sup> D. S. Ajayi, 2016. "A Religious Ethical Analysis of Machiavellianism in Nigerian Politics" A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts for the Award of Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree in Religious Studies of the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, 113

<sup>19</sup> C. O. Oshun, 1986. "Heavenly Rumour: A Pentecostal Looks at the Ethical Situation in Nigeria" in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 110

<sup>20</sup> S. B. Mala, 1986. "Tawba: An Indispensable Principle for Ethical Reawakening" in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 186

<sup>21</sup> D. S. Ajayi, 2016. "Towards the Enhancement of Morality in the Nigerian Politics" in *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* Vol. VII, No. IV, 10

<sup>22</sup> H. Sidgwick, 1987. "Practical Ethics". An Essay read on January 26, 1987, at a meeting of a Cambridge Essay Club called "The Erasmus." 5



rights and at the same time informs the acceptable behaviour in the society. But in a society where public morality is not given its place, the reflection will be felt in all facets and not in the politics alone. A by-product of a stable public morality is good leadership, which will help in putting in place good systems that will enhance sustainable development. Public morality is predicated on the fact that human nature is essentially egoistic and if not effectively managed, could work to undermine the foundation of a stable social and political order.<sup>23</sup> A morally inclined society therefore is a critical requirement in preserving and promoting the integrity and advancement of a political community. But if there is a lack of moral conscience which is the foundation for all healthy holistic development in any nation in the world, there will be retardation of political and social growth, as we are experiencing it in Nigeria today. This is buttressed by Jibril who asserts that public morality seems to be at its nadir in Nigeria today. He explains the level of immorality in Nigeria that:

We seem to have reached the stage when, if we lived in ancient times when God used to destroy nations that were beyond redemption in their moral transgressions, we would have been more than ripe for total destruction.<sup>24</sup>

Though Jibril also acknowledges that corruption and dishonesty, which are variants of immorality, are universal tendencies that have always existed in every land and clime and that they are neither Nigerian inventions nor exclusively Nigerian,<sup>25</sup> one cannot deny the fact that they are very rampant in Nigeria of today, and what gives cause for worry is the degree to which they are practiced by Nigerians and our openness and indiscretion in doing so. The orientation of doing things without moral consideration and consciousness is highly worrisome.

In line with Skinner's theory of environmentalism, one can argue that because Machiavellianism flourishes in other aspects of the society that is why it gains ground in the political activities of the country. The Nigerian society in general favours dubious acts; people take advantage of this to maltreat one another in the pursuit of personal goals. The reason Machiavellian principle is well known in political realm, apart from the fact that it was propounded for the ruling class, is that politics involves power struggle that cannot be hidden in the public place.

## VII. TOWARDS A MORAL SOCIETY FOR PRODUCTIVE POLITICS

The immorality in the Nigerian politics needs holistic approach; this implies that it is only a moral society that can produce good citizens who will be instrumental for the good governance that will bring about sustainable development. There should be moral revival in the nation as we are currently experiencing what could be tagged as moral deficit as a way of expressing the low ethical inclination in the country. The moral outlook of the society is nothing to write home about, as the little children are even behaving as if they actually inherited the trait of immorality from their parents. The syndromes of "getting it all", "getting it quickly" and "getting it now" are actively manifesting in exhibition of most Nigerians, therefore, the society needs ethical rearmament to be able to move forward in all aspects. This will actually start from the basis which is the individual homes, because the collapse of this unit of the society gave room for social vices in the society.<sup>26</sup> Thus, among many other agents that inculcate morality in the society, family must be able to set the priority right and imbibe in her members the sense of ethical behaviour. This will help to reduce the societal misbehaviours since each of those who act immorally in the society is a member of one family or the other.

The culture of national priority should be inculcated into every citizen; this will go a long way to instil in them the sense of belonging in form of patriotism. The current individuality and selfishness must give way for communalism and love which will engender orderliness and togetherness in the country. As a matter of urgency, Nigerians need re-orientation of value, it is high time we stopped measuring human success through materialism without considering the means by which wealth and riches are gathered. When moral values like truth, justice, love, transparency and loyalty are given their rightful places in the society, Nigerians will stop to celebrate the corrupt citizens who amass money for themselves through immoral means. It is obvious that Machiavellian principle puts personal achievement above the public orderliness and decorum, hence, the embezzlement, kidnapping, robbery, vandalism and money laundering in the country. Therefore, all hands must be on desk to change this negative orientation in order to create a moral environment for personal and national development.

The sense of human value should be promoted which will guide against using man as a means to one's end rather than being as an end. Moral inclination will ensure conscious resolution and orientation to know that it is a moral offence against human dignity to use a

<sup>23</sup> M. A. Adeola, 2013. "The Politics of Accessing Leadership: The Nigerian Context" in *A Distinguished Annual Guest Lecture 2013 Series*, University of Jos, 2

<sup>24</sup> M. Jibril, 2005. "'Is there not, amongst You, A Righteous Man?': The Nigerian Factor and the Nigerian Condition" in S. Ogude (ed.) *Public Morality and the Nigerian Polity*, Ibadan: The Nigerian Academy of Letters, 56

<sup>25</sup> M. Jibril, 2005. "'Is there not, amongst You, A Righteous Man?': The Nigerian Factor and the Nigerian Condition", 57

<sup>26</sup> A. O. Malomo, 1986. "Religious Establishment and Ethical Revolutions in Nigeria" in S. O. Abogunrin (Ed.) *Religion and Ethics in Nigeria*, Ibadan: Daystar Press, 21

human being simply as an instrument to attain one's ends. Acts of rape, kidnapping, killing, child trafficking, money ritual, imposture and the likes that are rampant in Nigerian society are the manifestation of lack of human value.<sup>27</sup> It must be emphasised here that human life is the highest values that must be protected, and which must not be used immorally or unduly in a bid to get other (lesser) values. Thus, morality will serve as a check and balance for man when he is about to lord it over others or, simply put, enslave man for his own personal satisfaction, if not the society would be controlled by modern Hobbesian state of nature.

The condition of the agencies in charge of orderliness in the country must be visited in order to be able to control vices. How can we explain the use of the national uniform of the security agents for robbery, kidnapping and violence in the country? Are the agents who are to guide against vices also participating in the immoral acts? Are their uniforms stolen or forged to perpetrate this evil? Are they bribed by the perpetrators in order to carry out these inhumane activities unchecked? These questions and many more are crying for answers in the minds of those who view the rate of immoral acts from the ethical lens. The collection of token from drivers on the roads by Nigerian Police which often result to shooting of innocent people<sup>28</sup> and many allegations level against them should be checked, this will not only revive the integrity of the Nigerian Police, but also give the authority and audacity to arrest those who are breaking the laws in their bids to achieve their targets by all means.

Government should also put in place ethical programmes and systems that will have enduring influence on the behaviours of the populace, meaning that many of the good programmes are usually abandoned when the administrations that initiated them have left the office. There should be continuity of an effective programme that re-orientates people on how to behave morally in the society. It is also imperative for government to create an enabling environment for moral business and employment. This is a fact that is not debatable that when "good businesses" are not available, people could be tempted to involve in immoral ones through Machiavellian principle. In an environment where legitimate and licit works that can bring food on the tables of the citizens are available, there will be reduction in the social vices, because the available hands are engaged morally and legally and would not become devil's workshops.

The religious leaders as agents of inculcating moral values should also teach their followers how to tame their over-desires and over-ambitions and how to achieve things in a moral way. This is because the core teachings of the religions in Nigeria are against achieving things through immoral means. However, the religious leaders could only carry out their duties as moral agents and custodians who could correct Machiavellianism at home, business firms, education and in the lives of individuals, when they too are not falling victims of the wrong ideology in their pursuit of fame, materialism and position.<sup>29</sup>

If the society is giving morality its rightful place in all aspects, this will engender good politics in Nigeria. We will need to emphasise the point again that immoral society creates favourable environment for the adoption and advancement of Machiavellianism in Nigerian politics, since its core teaching is manifesting in other aspects of the society.

## VIII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Politics cannot be practiced in isolation of the culture, worldview and orientation of the people where it is being practiced, and the social and ethical conditions of that particular environment will go a long way to determine efficiency, productivity and development recorded in any political setting. Nigeria is witnessing corruption, violence, electoral malpractices and godfatherism in politics today because there is manifestation of immorality in every aspect of Nigerians social lives. Thus, for us to correct the Machiavellianism in Nigerian politics, we need to have re-orientation of values in country in general and to also develop moral inclination in all ramifications as suggested in this piece.

<sup>27</sup> O. A. Oyeshile, 2014. "Respect for Persons as a Principle of Governance" in F.A. Adeigbo, D. Irele, and A. Udefi (Eds.), *Ethics and Public Affairs*, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 81

<sup>28</sup> O. O. Familusi & O. P. Oke, 2015. "The Revival of Religious Moral Values as a Panacea for Insecurity in Nigeria" in J. K. Ayantayo & S. A. Fatokun (Eds.), *Religion and Security Issues*, Ibadan: Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, 324

<sup>29</sup> D. S. Ajayi, 2016. "Factoring Morality into Church Evangelism for Effective Witnessing" in *Christ Apostolic Journal of Biblical and Theological Studies*, Vol.1 No 1, 76