

Talcott Parsons' Theory of Social Action and the Dialectics of Civil Disorder in Nigeria: A Theoretical Survey.

Chidi O. UKAEGBU and Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU,

Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA.

Abstract

The dynamics of social action and various shades of civil action and disorder arising from the nature and character of the variety of the social forces and groups in Nigeria has remained a recurring feature of the Nigerian state. Many of these social action and civil disorder dates back to the early days of British colonization and founding of the Nigerian state and has continued unabated to the present day. In many cases, the dominant class of the state have strategically placed their surrogates to condemn these civil actions. This study investigated the intersection of Talcott Parsons' theory of social action and the preponderance of such civil disorder in Nigeria. It interrogated how Talcott Parsons' principle of purposive action of individuals is critical in explaining the rise and expansion of civil disorder in Nigeria which extant literatures have not sufficiently analyzed. The study was anchored on the Liberal paradigm and specifically on structural-functional theory. Broadly, the study was anchored on qualitative research design but specifically we adopted explanatory research design. It relied on the documentary method of data collection, and on qualitative type of data while the secondary sources of data generation was used. The general analytic tool was adopted for the presentation and analysis of data generated for the study. Thus, logic based on Parsons' theoretical postulations formed the basis for concluding that man is motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfillment. If attention is merely paid to the social action (symptoms), it will provide the most superficial and temporary relief as the underlying reason for the social action and the expansion of civil disorder itself will still be left unaddressed. Accordingly, this study recommended that logical acts of disputation must be engaged to address systemic injustices to keep the continuous corporate existence of the Nigerian State paramount.

Key words: Civil Disorder, Preponderance, Purposive Action, Social Action and Social Forces.

Introduction

What is today called Nigeria has severally been described as serious geographic drama acted out by the colonialist who 'united' her obviously diverse people that have over the years proven 'ununitable'. In an article titled: 'the intriguing geography of Nigeria, Olanegan (2022), argued that, the geography and people of Nigeria are loaded with intrigues... made up of three major ethnic nationalities and multiple other minor groups; these major ethnic groups are still very much divided among and within itself and locked in all-time antagonistic relations albeit under the pretense of the 'one Nigeria' mantra'. Thus, the civil relations between the component units in Nigeria are likened to expecting a child, hale and hearty who is not asleep to remain calm...this phenomenon and its dimension in Nigeria requires theoretical explanation.

Disorders are characteristically inborn in man. As Ideyi (2019) noted, man wherever he is, shows signs of violence either overtly or covertly in words or in actions... Thus, "in over 3,530 years of recorded civilization in the world, only about 286 years have been spent without war raging some place in the globe. Yet during that same period, about 8,000 Peace Treaties have been signed" (Ideyi, 2019, Dawaki, 2005:117). As Odozi and Oyelere (2019) rightly noted, violent behaviour which has the capacity to

snowball into civil disorder if not properly managed by the state, has been part of Nigeria's chequered history. It has evolved over time and assumed varying degrees in different communities and regions in Nigeria causing a diversion of development efforts and attention from the things that count to those of civil relations, security and safety of lives and property.

Thus, various shades of social action and civil disorder becomes a collective endeavor to bring about desirable changes in the existing structure or prevent undesirable ones through a process of making people aware of the socio-political and economic realities conditioning their lives and mobilizing them to organize as the living force to work for their own betterment based on those factors that affect their collective interest and aspirations (Parsons, 1937, Dwivedi, 2018). It therefore seems, at first glance, that social action is associated with large number of people in active participation drawn by common factors that inspire their collective aspiration. Accordingly, the polarizing effects of ethno-regional federalism directly expressed in several other political tribulations that assailed Nigeria in the sixties, including: the 1962 declaration of a state of emergency in the Western region; the bitter ethno-regional dispute over the 1962-63 census; the 1964 federal election crisis; the 1965 western election debacle; the eventual overthrow of the First Nigerian Democratic Republic in 1966 following a bloody ethno-military coup; the fragmentation and politicization of the military establishment along ethno-regional lines; the attempted secession of the Eastern region, and, the eventual outbreak of the 30 months civil war, which claimed an estimated one million lives, mainly in the ill-fated Biafra may be traced to certain factors of civil disorder based on the argument that Nigeria is perceived as a deeply divided state which has since inception faced recurrent crises challenging its efforts at national cohesion, democratization, stability and economic transformation (Eghosa and Suberu, 2005, Dudley 1973; Eghosa and Suberu, 2005; Herbst 1996; Kirk-Greene 1971; Maier 2000; Melson and Wolpe 1970; Post and Vickers 1973; Soyinka 1997). To this end, what worries the present study is the dearth in a forthright theoretical explanation of the interface between the specific factors of civil disorder and the preponderance of civil disorder in Nigeria which extant literatures have not sufficiently analyzed.

Theoretical Framework Broadly, this study is anchored on the Liberal paradigm. Thus, the study is specifically anchored on structural-functional theory and group theory of politics. Structural functional theory explains the basis for the maintenance of order and stability in the society and the relevant arrangements within the society which maintains the said order and stability and by the same token, expose the reasons why disorder occurs in such society (Haramlambos and Head, (1980) cited in Ifesinachi, (2010). The theory originated in the Biological and Mechanical Sciences as part of systems analysis but was adopted as a mode of analysis in Sociology and Anthropology as evident in the works of Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. It was developed for political analysis by Gabriel Almond. According to S.P Varma, in Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2004), the main thrust of the theory revolves around two main concepts—functions and structures and raises three basic questions about any social formation and political system in particular. These questions are:(a)What basic functions are fulfilled in any given political system? (b) By what structures are these functions performed? (c) Under what conditions are these functions performed?

While functions deal with consequences –involving objectives as well as processes–of patterns of action, structures deal with arrangements within the system which performs the function. Thus, the basic assumption of the structural functional theory is that all systems perform functions within the system necessary for its persistence. From the foregoing, the study, even as rightly claimed by Gabriel Almond, assumes that all political systems, irrespective of the type or the period of their existence must perform specific tasks if they are to remain in existence. This study avers that these functions are not only performed by structures which are primary to the state but also by others which are not overtly recognized or even a combination of structures. To this end, it is right to assert that the theory shifts our focus away from observable institutional political mechanism to any other area where the actual performance of the functional requirements of the system is located; whether in purposive actions of

individuals or that of groups which is a single testimonial of the fact that the rational views of individuals leading to his action within the system have acquired general meaning leading to group action as postulated by Talcott Parsons. This group action then constitutes input into the political system and it is on the basis of this input and the response of the structures to it that we compare one system with another or one political epoch with another or one case of civil disorder with another. From the foregoing, it is clear from our theoretical framework that purposive actions do not stay with individuals or groups. They are relayed to the political system as input from individuals and other sub-systems like pressure groups, ethnic groups, schools, families, political organizations, etc. When the input is made, it behooves on the system to respond. The way and manner of this response and its impact on the groups is the basis for the emergence of disorder and its ultimate preponderance if not properly managed. Thus, civil disorder is defined as the gap and dynamics between input and output in any political system.

Review of Related Literature

Talcott Parsons' Purposive Action and the Conceptualization of Civil Disorder The concept of civil disorder approximately called civil disobedience has enjoyed extensive intellectual attention from scholars and social scientists in particular. Henry David Thoreau who through his writings and personal experience made all others heirs of creative protest did provide insightful foundational x-ray and prognosis of the concept as far back as 1849. According to him:

Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislation? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward... It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right... It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience... There are therefore thousands who are in opinion opposed to slavery and to war, who yet in effect do nothing to put an end to them; they will wait, well disposed, for others to remedy the evil, that they may no longer have it to regret. (Thoreau, 1849:1).

The term is herein conceived from the understanding that governments in general (which is the only modern mode which the people have chosen to execute their will), and the Nigerian government in particular is liable to be abused and perverted warranting the people to act through it. It draws its strength from the practical intention of the citizens to put to rest passivity of those who call themselves no-government men. Its target is to raise men who ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. It calls every man to make known what kind of government would command his respect, and civil disobedience will be one step toward obtaining it.

Civil disorder is a term that is typically used in law enforcement to describe disorders caused by a person or group of people (Schurink, 1990). It is typically a symptom of, and a form of protest against major socio-political or economic problems in a state. In Nigeria, civil disorder would include: parades, sit-at-home, sit-ins, road barricade, disruption of human and vehicular movements and other forms of obstructions like rallies, marches, riots, sabotage, among others though this generalization has fallen short of what is recognized in the literature. Civil disorder is typically intended to be a demonstration to the government, but can escalate into insurgency as seen in recent past (Black, 2007 and Ladan, 2012).

Civil disorder in Nigeria has often grown beyond its civil limits to assume the form of insurgency. This according to Ladan (2012) is 'a violent move by a person or group to resist or oppose the enforcement of law or running of government or revolt against constituted authority of the state or of taking part in insurrection or attempting to overturn/overrun the religious, socio-economic and political modus operandi of a state'. According to Inchi, (1996) and Ladan (2012), when this happens, civil unrest

and its resultant disorder becomes an offense, at least in the Nigerian context because: (a) It constitutes an attack on unarmed civilians resulting in injuries, loss of lives and property as well as forced or massive internal displacement of people out of their habitual places of residence; (b) It drives local and foreign business/investors away from the nation; (c) It constitutes the elements of treasonable felony, terrorism, murder, crimes against humanity and genocide. Whenever it occurs, the effects usually are crimes, human right violation, internal disturbances and tensions; serious problems of public safety and order and or situations that threaten the life of a state to push the government in power to proclaim a state of emergency to curtail such situation (Ladan, 2012).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the concept of civil disorder is obviously a product of the age long 'just' and 'unjust society' debate that scholars over the years have dissipated so much mental energy on. Thus, like John Rawl (1971) noted, a theory of civil disorder is constructed with the understanding of a near just society in which serious violation of justice nonetheless occurs. This state of near justice requires a democratic regime and the place of civil disorder to bring such legitimately constituted civil authority back to the path of justice... Ordinarily, civil disorder, unrest or disobedience would mean, a form of noncompliance in human relationships or exchanges that is reactionary to policies and actions of a supra body considered inimical to those within that web of relationship. Thoreau (2001) defines civil disobedience as an act of deliberate and open violation of the law with the intent, within the existing framework of the prevailing form of government, to protest a morally unjust wrong or to initiate change for a vital social purpose.

Igwe (2001:62) defined civil disorder 'as a form of making the state "ungovernable" through the unarmed and theoretically non-violent mass resistance of authority as an instrument of struggle'. In the view of Igwe (2001), 'civil disobedience is a veritable weapon that can effectively contest either authoritarian or undemocratic rule or an invasion or occupation by a foreign power'. For it to succeed, he argues that the civilians or leaders of such movement must: (a) Properly conscientize the people and have them unite to pursue the clearly defined objective (b) The civilians must be in considerable control of the national bureaucracy (c) The reformist or revolutionary leader must be close knit, well organized and impossible to penetrate or divide. (d) There must be provision for peaceful political settlement or if need be, a transition to a higher phase of conflict such as armed struggle.

Civil disorder is considered by many as insufficient to bring a government down. The argument is rooted in the fact that civil disorder is nothing more than a tool for policy rethink and adjustment. Its central objective is to correct policy abnormally, to redirect government and the need to give political decision human face. As such, it is not a quantum force or social dynamite capable of bringing down a duly constituted administrative or political mechanism, in form of a government. That is to say, civil disorder for this school of thought is more or less a protest movement against an unjust law that is none the less non-violent. It is usually the elementary degree of non-violent action by a group. Igwe (2001), disagrees with this line of thought. According to him, no government is stronger than the people as long as they are united for the course which they seek. To him, civil disorder has class overthrow as its central thrust. To this end, it has actually brought down governments that once thrived in authoritarian and unjust rules. This line of thought seems to suggest that all civil disorder has regime change and class overthrow as its main objective. If this argument is taken wholly, it would literally mean that what is termed civil disorder in Nigeria excludes such events like the sabotage on oil supplies and installations, protest for poor electricity supply, orchestrated propaganda, hike in fuel, ASUU, NASU, SSANU, NAAT and COEASU, JUSUN strike action, protest by ethnic groups against government actions, outcries on marginalization etc is practically handful or non-existent in all instance yet they have not actually led to the overthrow of the class in power. Regime change in Nigeria is usually democratically or militarily initiated which has never been achieved by what is recognized in extant literature as civil disorder in Nigeria. This argument is furthered by the fact that most acts of civil disorder in Nigeria are

high risk game that attracts hail of bullets from the regime that is bent on clamping down on the minutest mass opposition as exemplified by the APC governments.

Historical Overview of Civil Disorder

The principles of civil disorder have remained the same over the past 2,500 years. The goals, persons involved and tactics deployed might differ, but the principles remain constant across human groupings and societal settings. According to Thoreau (2001), the earliest ever recorded collective civil disobedience occurred in the Roman Empire when unarmed Jews gathered in the streets of Jerusalem to prevent the installation of pagan images in their holy temple. Others include -Plebeians, who had no rights as citizens, refusing to enroll in the legions of Rome and early Christians resisting Roman attempts to make them accept pagan worship. In Athens, for example, quite some 500 years before Christ was born, men began for the first time to seriously consider the relationship between the judgment of the individual and the manners the laws of the society were made and enforced. There, members of the society openly rejected the trajectory of injustices visited by the sovereign of the people. For instance, Titans defied the decision of Zeus (King of the Olympian gods), to wipe out human race. In this instance, Zeus appears as the established and tyrannical authority while Prometheus stands as the prototype of the civil 'disobeyer' because of his sense of human wellbeing and justice. In the 20th century, civil disobedience became a tool that the Pro Ayatollah Khomeini forces (1900-1989) of Iran used to remove Shah Pahlevi (1919-1980) in 1979. It was the tool that brought down the authoritarian Philippines' regime of Ferdinand Marcos (1917-1989) in 1986. Civil disorder that graduated to a revolution also led to the crumbling of the dictatorial anti-socialist regime of former Congolese (Zairean) President, Mobutu Sese' Seko, 1930-1979 (Igwe (2001).

Historical evidence shows that all forms of governments have at various points suffered resistance in the form of civil disobedience or disorder from the people and Nigeria's experience since the period of British colonization till data amplifies this truth. In the monarchical system for instance, under the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, many religious rebels held to and suffered for their beliefs against the ruthlessness of the Tudor state. As Thoreau (2001) noted, the people dissented from legally organized religious practice and refused to conform to laws which severely penalized those who chose to defy the establishment. Charles 1 had also relied on the divine rights of kings as advocated by the Church Fathers to impose tax on his subjects. This was fiercely rejected. In fact, his parliament refused to vote him the money and those members of parliament who refused to pay the tax were imprisoned. This is similar to the anti-tax riots in several parts of Southern Nigeria notably among the Egba and in Warri Province which reached its peak in the Women's Riots wide spread in the Eastern part of Nigeria in 1928 and 1929 (Nwanunobi in Olisa and Clark, 1989:138). Other instances of civil disorder in Nigeria includes: the Abeokuta Women Revolt of 1947, the Ali Must Go Riot of 1978, the Anti-SAP Riot of 1989, the June 12 Protest of 1993, the Occupy Nigeria Protest of 2012 and most recently, the End SARS Protest of 2020. Recent reports (Olanegan, 2022, European Asylum Support Office, 2021, Ideyi, 2019), also show that Nigeria is inundated with contradictions and shreds of growing tension among its social forces and groups and this poses the danger of a surge in civil disorder cases in Nigeria.

In the first instance of civil disorder in Nigeria (Aba women resistance, 1929) for example, the women stood against the Colonial policies of Britain (Evans, 2009). The colonialists had relied on the right of conquest through a divide and rule policy to impose taxes on the eastern region. The roots of the civil disorder evolved from January 1, 1914 when the first Nigerian colonial governor, Lord Lugard instituted the system of indirect rule in Southern Nigeria. This resulted in the appointment of warrant chiefs who within a short time became increasingly oppressive. They seized properties, imposed draconian regulations and began imprisoning everyone who opposed or openly criticized them. This anger was aggravated when they became informed of the planned imposition of taxes and rates on Igbo market women who supplied food materials to the growing urban markets in Calabar, Owerri and other

Nigerian cities. These women feared the taxes would drive them out of business and the proceeds of the tax not used to develop their area. Thus, in November, 1929, thousands of women congregated at the native administration centre in Calabar and Owerri and other smaller towns to protest both the warrant chiefs and the imposed tax that was of course alien to them.

Their strategy included inter alia, censoring of men through all night songs and dance of ridicule, and the outright forcing of warrant chiefs to resign their positions. They equally attacked European owned stores, and Barclay Banks and the breaking of prison and the release of prisoners from the prison. They also attacked native courts administered by the colonialists and burning the colonialists (Evans, 2009). Of course, the colonial police representing the state intervened in the interest of the State.

Both Parsons (1951 and 1953) and Thoreau (2001) believes that 'the broadest and most prevalent error requires the most disinterested virtue to sustain it. The slight reproach to which the virtue of patriotism is commonly liable, the noble are most likely to incur'. Those who, while they disapprove of the character and measures of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support, are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform. To Parsons, "man is pragmatic and motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfillment". This need-disposition represents the integrated components of his personality consisting of "motivation, gratification-deprivation balance; primary viscerogenic and social-relational needs, cognition and learning, and the basic mechanisms of cognitive and cat hectic-evaluative learning and adjustment. Thus, he argued that goal-seeking is a special case of action that takes into consideration the influence of culture patterns and role-expectations. Accordingly, there is no doubt that unjust laws exist in every society especially when viewed from its relative perspective. It becomes fool hardy for a large chunk of the population affected by such unjust laws to be content to obey them. It is also questionable for those affected by the unjust laws of the state to continue to push for their amendment while obeying them until they have succeeded in amending them. Herein lies the justification for civil disobedience and disorder as it were.

The relationship between the state and its subjects is such that disallows a one-time leap into transgression or absolute disobedience of unjust laws or disorder. Such an attempt would usually be misconstrued as a direct affront against the state and its apparatuses and would ordinarily be clamped down on. African leaders with traces of autocratic tendencies prefer such reactions to showcase the exigencies of state power. When this happens, it becomes subjected to misinterpretation as an overt expression of hatred against the sect, group or region that perpetuated the supposed deviant act. This is partly due to the fact that there was an agreement or pact entered into by the rulers and the ruled that resulted in the giving up of rights and privileges such as existed from creation and the commitment on the part of the state to discharge duties that would have ordinarily been carried out by the citizens as individuals.

As Thoreau averred, men who live under unjust laws made by a government think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter such laws. Civil disorder for them, then becomes a mass movement that would fail unless it enjoys the support and approval of majority of those affected by the laws and acts of the state. Thus, two things keep them away from active and passive resistance: the fact that they need to gather the approval and support of a large percentage of the population and the fact that, should they resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. Thoreau (2001) opines that, the later does not excuse the government either since it is still the fault of the government itself that the remedy *is* worse than the evil. The former on the other hand, accounts for why civil disorder is relatively scarce, rare and impotent under the present government especially when compared with the volume of injustices visited on the entire political system since 2015.

A combination of these factors drive government to its extreme state of bestiality and this has been one of the greatest banes of affective reforms and transformation of states in Africa and Nigeria in particular. From the arguments of Thoreau (2001), it is clear that Nigeria represents such a society where

civil disorder is ineffective. Consequently, the majority of those affected by state policies and programmes do not cry out and resist before it hurts. Since Nigeria does not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, it becomes difficult if not impossible for it to do better than it would have were those errors pointed out and accepted in good time.

Thus, Parsons and Thoreau opined that a deliberate or institutional and or practical denial of civil disorder makes injustice part of the necessary friction of the machine of government that continues to wear the comfort and progress of its citizens. Certainly, the machine will wear out leading to the failure of the state itself. This explains in part why Nigeria have arguably been described as a failed state especially between 2015 and 2024. In his words, Thoreau noted that:

If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn. As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone... It is not my business to be petitioning the governor or the legislature any more than it is theirs to petition me; and, if they should not hear my petition, what should I do then? But in this case the state has provided no way: its very constitution is the evil. This may seem to be harsh and stubborn and unconciliatory; but it is to treat with the utmost kindness and consideration the only spirit that can appreciate or deserve it. So is all change for the better, like birth and death which convulse the body... (Thoreau, 1849:8).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Nigerian state has injected into itself the procedures and mechanism for handling the injustices that it perpetuates. These injustices are wrapped in its policies and actions and often times deliberately unleashed on the people by those who operate the machinery of the state. When unleashed, they are handled by the institutions it established. Thus, the state as it were, merely serves the interest of the dominant class per time. The reason for this perhaps, is to reduce to a minimal level the amount of civil disorder likely to come from the governed who should at all times be on the alert as regards their rights and privileges in the pact. Thus, members of the state are simply asked to seek constitutional means of pointing out political and leadership errors and use the same medium to ensure that there is a redress. This is one serious obstacle to civil disorder because for one, the citizens would still fall back to the institutions of the state to interpret what is right and what is wrong in a way and manner that most times fits into the whims and caprices of the dominant class who perpetuated the injustices. In many case, the dominant class of the state have strategically placed their surrogates at these institutions to ensure that they often times justify the actions of the government relying fully on the constitution which again is the central action pad of the state that consolidates state power when achieved by a dominant class.

According to Nnoli (2001), 'when state power is acquired, the new ruling class does everything to consolidate it gains and to avoid the use of force in achieving legitimization'. Thus, it strives to convince the population of how it intends to constitute its government, its various organs, the links with the organs, their performances, their rights and how it is to be maintained to determine their relationship with the government. As such, socialization and appointment of people with similar values and orientations to help sustain the values of the new ruling class becomes important.

Thus, the content and implementation of the constitution is the most rational way of consolidating state power but it would always face friction and resistance so long as it excludes the ambitions of the class excluded from power by its rule. This at once diminishes the relevance

of the elite theory as a methodological tool for analyzing political activities in third world states and Nigeria in particular and validates the postulations of Talcott Parsons that: (a) Man is pragmatic and motivated by rational considerations of his wants and the situation which affects their fulfillment. This need-disposition" represents the integrated components of his personality consisting of "motivation, gratification-deprivation balance; primary viscerogenic and social-relational needs, cognition and learning, and the basic mechanisms of cognitive and cat hectic-evaluative learning and adjustment. (b) Goal- seeking is a special case of action that takes into consideration the influence of culture patterns and role-expectations (Parsons and Shils, 1962). (c) Social actions are related to and influenced by the attainment of the gratification or the avoidance of deprivations of the correlative actor, whatever they concretely be in the light of the relative personal structures that there may be. This he called the ego needs covering signs or symbols which become relevant to the organization of his expectation system. (d) All social actions proceed from mechanism which is their ultimate source. Beyond being connected with the organism itself, they are also connected with actor's relations with other persons' social situations and culture. (e) Once the process of the social action develops its symbols and the signs in the individual, it naturally acquires general meaning, a social system/action would then consists in a plurality of individual actor's interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect (Parsons, 1951, 1953). This is the social action chain described by Parsons.

From the above, it becomes clearer that the functioning of society as well as the engine of social change could be grounded in the purposive actions of individuals, taken in particular institutional and structural settings that shaped the incentives and thus the action. In the words of Parsons and Shils (1962:6-7):

The elaboration of behavior to which this conceptual scheme is especially appropriate, however, occurs above all in human action. In the formation of systems made up of human actions or the components of human action, this elaboration occurs in three configurations. First, the orientation of action of any one given actor and its attendant motivational processes becomes a differentiated and integrated system. This system will be called personality, and we will define it as the organized system of the orientation of action of one individual actor. Secondly, the action of a plurality of actors in a common situation is a process of interaction, the properties of which are to a definite but limited extent independent of any prior common culture. This interaction also becomes differentiated and integrated and as such forms a social system. The social system is, to be sure, made up of the relationships of individuals, but it is a system which is organized around the problems inherent in or arising from social interaction of a plurality of individual actors rather than around the problems which arise in connection with the integration of the actions of an individual actor, who is also a physiological organism. Personality and social system are very intimately interrelated, but they are neither identical with one another nor explicable by one another...systems of culture have their own forms and problems of integration which are not reducible to those of either personality or social systems or both together. The cultural tradition in its significance both as an object of orientation and as an element in the orientation of action must be articulated both conceptually and empirically with personalities and social systems.

Historically, the elite class is incapable and unwilling to drive any action against itself for the benefit of the masses or the class removed from the gains of political power (Nnoli, 2001). At best, resistance by some members of the elite class will lead to intra class struggle which does not at any time have the masses at heart. As such, the proletariat class on whom injustices are perpetuated will have no other option than to engage in civil unrest that might culminate in a revolt if not properly handled.

Thus, the reality of a constitution and citizens' responses depends on the socio political environment from which it emerges and to which it is applied. This response/action to Parsons is involuntary; it is behaviour directed by the meanings attached by actors to things and people informed by the tension the dynamizing and controlling forces.

Conclusions

Civil disorder has been part of all social formations in human history. One of its cardinal goal is to make the state just. In its most intense form (revolution), it is aimed at returning power to the masses who ab intio gave same to the dominant class represented by the government of the state. Sufficient evidences show that: the concern for the establishment of laws and actions that are compatible with human needs, justice and morality and which at the same time contradict dictatorship and the intoxication of power is not a twenty first century phenomenon that is peculiar to the Nigerian state and the status of those who initiated such civil disorder leads to some rather startling conclusions- that they were men who simply strived for the dignity and freedom of others and not just men driven by some evil spirit that desire the disintegration of the state. The method applied may be wrong, but the end which they seek should at least excuse them. Thus, civil disorder when viewed objectively, is a social tactics and tool for societal reengineering and transformation. As such, the deliberate or institutional and or practical denial of it makes discontent and injustice part of the necessary friction of the machine of government that continues to wear smooth the comfort and progress of its citizens albeit unknown to it. Certainly, the machine will wear out leading to the failure of the state itself.

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Biographical Note

Chidi O. UKAEGBU is a Doctorate candidate in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, NIGERIA. Email: au.chidi50@yahoo.com

Makodi BIEREENU-NNABUGWU is Professor of Political Theory in the Department of Political Science, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka NIGERIA.