

Politics and Conflict: Re-Living the Heraclitean Philosophy in the Contemporary Nigerian Socio-Political Society

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Abstract
In line with the philosophy of Heraclitus on the conflict of opposites, this paper attempts an exposition of his position on conflict as the very essence of existence and necessary for change in many ramifications. The major conflicts in the Nigerian political history to wit: the Civil War, the Niger Delta crisis, the Boko Haram assaults, etc are examined in the light of Heraclitus' philosophy of conflict of opposites. A position is established that each of these conflicts has something positive to add to the growth of the Nigerian politics, and are hence, not altogether a disaster. Thus, Heraclitus is commended for his development of the idea of the conflict of opposites as a necessary phenomenon for progress.
Keywords: Politics in Nigeria, Heraclitus, Conflicts of Opposites, Niger Delta, Boko Haram, and Nigerian Civil War.

Introduction

Conflict is hardly a strange phenomenon to the human experience. Globally, mankind is faced with diverse forms of strife especially armed conflicts. In point of fact, the story of mankind from time immemorial is nothing short of a historical record of strife and spectral conflicts, punctuated only with occasional sprints of peace. In Africa, just like any other continent of the world, wars and conflicts can be said to be coterminous with her historical experience. Conflict is the template of action running through the labyrinth of Africa's political history from the pre-colonial, through the colonial and to the post-colonial era. And Nigeria, being a typical example of an African country where conflict has made a home and in fact, paradoxically constitutes an elixir of progress in all sectors of her life right from the very beginning of her nationhood. Whenever the issue of politics in Nigeria, for instance, is raised, the thought of an utterly befuddled sector, shredded by the menacing forces of conflicts, readily comes to mind. The spiral upsurge of conflicts that defines the socio-political sector of the country in recent times, however has more than ever, and attracted the attention of not a few scholars and thinkers to the phenomenon of conflict in public life.

The festering situation now seemingly aggravated by the emergence of sectarian violence and bombing by the Boko Haram sect, has not only created a sense of hysteria in the nation, but offers ground for deeper reflection on the issue of conflict in the nation's politics. Many reasons have been adduced as causes of conflicts in Nigeria, and no less the way forward. But whereas some thinkers see these conflicts as distempers of progress and needless epidemic which have turned Nigeria into a pathetic caricature in the face of her lofty hopes and dreams, and have blamed it on man; others, in the light of the Heraclitean theory, are willing to accept these conflicts as the very condition of life, without which the country cannot move forward. The concern of this paper thus, is an attempt to justify the latter in the light of Heraclitus' position on conflict in human existence. Following from this perspective, this paper shall expose the Heraclitus' notion and the place of conflict in life and argue in furtherance of the position that the conflicts we experience in our political life as a nation today are not necessarily a calamity, as some would think, but as the permanent condition of all things in life. In this case, efforts should be directed to creating or finding some good out of these seemingly undesirable situations. In other words, positive change and progress can be achieved in Nigeria through a proper mind-set that accepts the challenges of the day and works to conquer them, and also ensure their effective management and/or resolution.

Historical Background of Heraclitus

Heraclitus is one of the ancient Ionian philosophers. The dates of his birth and death are unknown though some thinkers like Copleston (1985:121) put them at 338-315 BC. However, Composta (1990:33), argues that Heraclitus reached the peak of his fame around 505-500 B.C, during the period of Ionian anti-Persian activity. Heraclitus came into the scene when his homeland, Ephesus, was involved in the political turbulence that provoked his anger and caused him to accuse political leaders of abdicating leadership to the masses. His attacks were also directed at certain poets and thinkers, such as Hesiod, Homer, Pythagoras and Xenophanes. This notwithstanding, Heraclitus is believed to have been highly intoxicated by the doctrines of some philosophers like Anaximander (Composta, 1990:33). Heraclitus' entire philosophical conception is dominated by a profound sense of reality which to him, is shrouded in ephemeral fragility. For this reason, he was also called the "crying philosopher". In this way, he detached himself from the rest of Ionian philosophers and established himself as a solitary figure of ancient thought (Kirk, 1954: 68).

About the writings of Heraclitus, Composta (1990:34) tells us that Heraclitus wrote a volume entitled *On Nature*, which was divided into three parts, namely: cosmology, politics (anthropology) and theology. The style of his writing is difficult and intentionally obscured; hence the name obscurity is attributed to Heraclitus. He is said to have placed his work on the altar of the goddess, Archimedes; the protector of the city, so that it would not become the subject of profane reading. However, Heraclitus had commentators, readers and admirers throughout antiquity. In his "Rhetoric", Aristotle (2000:612) complains about lack of punctuation in most if not all of his works. Philo, the Hebrews scholar, is said to have been inspired by Heraclitus while reading his doctrine on the "logos".

Heraclitus' Notion of Conflicts of Opposites

Heraclitus is popular for his view that change is the law of nature and the condition of all things; for all things, according to him, are ceaselessly changing. According to Stumpf (1988:13), Heraclitus is famous for the saying that, "all things are in the state of flux". He also expresses this concept of constant change by saying that: "We enter into the same river twice, yet we do not enter, we are and we are not". He also declares "One cannot enter twice into the same river, nor can one twice touch the same mortal substance in the same state ..." Just as the water in a river is ceaselessly changing so are all things in the state of flux (John, 2009: 2). Heraclitus is of the view that this flux must apply not only to rivers but all things, including the human society. Nothing is permanent in this world, nothing is constant or stable, and everything is always in process of change. For Heraclitus, however, not only is there perpetual change in the world, there is also perpetual conflict, perpetual strive, for the universe is a universe made up of conflicts and clashes of opposites (Omoregbe, 1990:76).

According to Heraclitus, men are distressed by what appears to them to be meaningless or disorderliness in the world. That means, mankind is overwhelmed by the presence of good and evil and therefore longs for peace. But to Heraclitus, that desires for endless peace would bring an end to strife. Thus, Heraclitus sought to account for strife or conflict in the world by saying that conflict or strife is the very essence of change itself, or the very condition of life. Heraclitus does not only perceive of perpetual change, he equally postulates a world of perpetual conflict, strife, war and clashes of opposites. This clash of opposites, to Heraclitus, is not a chaotic one, but of order. In this way, conflict of opposites is the very condition or system of existence. For it is only through conflict or war that things come into being and remain in existence. This conflict of opposites is not contradictory but complementary. That is, life is brought into existence and is also sustained by this conflict. Existence manifests in opposites: male and female, hot and cold, light and darkness, wet and dry, good and evil, negative and positive, etc.

Accordingly, strife is the eternal order of existence, which must continue if existence itself must be preserved and meaningful. In Heraclitus' opinion, the endless strife or conflict between beings in existence must be seen as the very condition of life and progress (John, 2009:27). Hence, for Heraclitus, the conflict of opposites is not a calamity but the permanent condition of all things, which makes progress possible in life. If we could visualize the whole process of change, we should know, says Heraclitus, that, "war is common and justice is strife and that all things happen by strife and necessity" (Omoregbe, 1990:23). From this perspective, Heraclitus maintains that, "what is in opposition is in concert, and from what differs comes the most beautiful harmony" (Stumpf, 1988:15). Even death is no longer a calamity, for "after death, good things await men which they do not expect or imagine" (Stumpf, 1988:15).

Throughout his treatment of the problem of strife and conflict, Heraclitus emphasizes again and again that many find their unity in the One, so that what appears to be disjointed events and contradictory forces are in reality intimately harmonized. For this reason, he says that "men do not know how that which is at variance agrees with itself ..." (Stumpf, 1988:15). With this mode of thinking, it is not surprising then that Heraclitus believes in war and conflict as a necessary condition of progress. Without war and conflict, there would be no progress as implied in his statement that "war is common to all and strife is justice". Heraclitus, therefore feels that Homer was wrong in praying for an end to war and strife among men, for if war and strife were to end, that would be the end of universe.

However, although the universe is a universe of conflict, strife and the clashes of opposites, it is nevertheless not a chaotic universe, for it is governed by an immanent law, a universal law or principle of reasons and order called *logos*. The *logo is* the cosmic principle of intelligibility, the principle of order and harmony and the universal law. It is this *logos* which brings order and harmony out of the conflict of opposites in the universe. This theory of the conflict of opposites rests upon Heraclitus' major assumption that nothing is ever lost but merely changes its form, and that everything moves with measured pace following the direction of reasons or the logos, and that change requires opposites and their conflict.

The Relevance of Heraclitus' Philosophy to the Nigerian Socio-Political Situation

We shall investigate the relevance of Heraclitus' philosophy to the Nigerian political situation from two major shades, namely: the pre-independence conflicts and post-independence conflicts.

Pre-Independence Conflicts

The history of Nigeria's political life, as earlier noted, has been the history of strife and conflicts. However, when viewed in the light of the Heraclitean position on conflict as stated above, it can be justifiably observed that these conflicts have not necessarily been a disaster to us, but the very essence and agent of change and progress in our political life. On October 01, 1960, the British Union Jack was lowered just as the Nigerian flag was raised, signaling the end of the British colonial rule on the one hand, and the Nigeria's political independence on the other. However, the said political independence did not come on a platter of gold. It was preceded by many years of bitter struggles, strife and conflict as spearheaded by the country's nationalists. Many of the nationalists staked their comfort and happiness and placed their lives on the line in pursuant of this cause.

One only has to agree with John (2014:21) that no human disaster can equal in dimension of destructiveness the cataclysm that took the entire African continent as a result of colonialism. Jean-Paul Sartre in his "Preface" to Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* tells his fellow whites that they should pick up the book and read to be able to discover the incalculable harm they have done to the black race in colonialism. In his very words, Sartre declares: "No matter what the whites think about their victims at colonialism our victims know us by their scars and by their chains, and it is this that makes their evidence irrefutable" (Fanon, 1968:13). John (2009:107-114) has succinctly shown the pathetic negative effects of colonialism on African continent which though not limited to but include: linguistic problem, crisis in traditional political authority, crisis in African cultural values and identity, and economic crisis.

Colonialism was synonymous with material exploitation, cultural expropriation and anthropological impoverishment (Ehusani, 1991:18). With neither consultation nor regard for the Africans, the European nations came together and shared the African continent among themselves as people would share a piece of cake at the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 1885. Odey (1996:54) maintains that the West not contented with this socio-political aberration, they turned Africans into slaves in their homelands in the name of colonialism and at last ended up in laying the foundation of Europe on the dead bodies of Africans and nourishing it with their blood.

Under colonialism, Africa's God-given natural resources were carried away to Europe and American by the whites, while Africans were made to lick the boats of these same white predators in our homeland. Vast populations were uprooted and displaced, while a whole generations disappeared, European descended like the plague and diseases, decimating both animals and people; family networks disintegrated, kingdoms crumbled, the thread of cultural and historical continuity were so savagely torn asunder that today one would have to think and talk of two periods in African history: the one before and the one after the holocaust. Nigeria and indeed the entire African continent were left in a state of socio-economic and political desperation; that is, colonialism in its extreme form of violence; and as Fanon argues, "since colonialism in its natural state means violence: it will only yield when confronted with grater violence" (1968: 61). The greater violence with which the base of colonialism was confronted and destroyed in Africa was the nationalistic movements. And the forceable conflict that ensured led to the independence of African countries from the whitemen's rule and political hegemony. The nationalist struggles which were a produce of colonial situation and frustration on the part of African, was essentially a direct conflict. Yet, it was necessary for a change in the socio-political conditions of Africans. Without this conflict, many, if not all African countries would perhaps still remain under colonial rule till today.

In Nigeria, the struggle for independence had her initial step in the formation of the National Congress of British West Africa. This was preceded by the strife and struggle for the introduction of the principle of election in 1922 by the Clifford Constitution. As a result of this and other constitutional advancements, political parties sprang up and newspapers created deeper and greater awareness of the ills of colonialism, and called for political independence of the country. The product of all these struggles and conflicts was the political independence which Nigeria gained from Britain on October 01, 1960, which marked the end of the dark period of colonialism in the country. According to John (2009:102), certain names such as Hebert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, S. L. Akintola, etc are often associated with the nationalistic struggles for Nigeria's political independence. They stimulated the necessary conflicts which resulted in our political progress. As Heraclitus said, conflict is no disaster, but necessary for change and progress, the conflicts engineered by these nationalist in the struggle for Africa's freedom was by no means a disaster, but the only necessary way to change the unfavourable condition brought about by the whitemen on us under colonialism, and to guarantee our political freedom and progress.

Though to Heraclitus, conflict is the very essence of the universe. In other words, it has its roots in nature, but one may wish to differ slightly from this position here. That is to say that, even though conflicts occur everywhere in the world and even leads to progress, this however should not make conflicts coterminous with the human nature. Man by nature is not set for wars and conflicts. But these occur as a result of many factors most of which are embedded in the very structure of the society. Camara (1971:30) notes that injustice is the root of violence or conflict number one. Whenever the heat of this basic form of violence or conflict becomes too intensive, too oppressive, and too unbearable, it explodes in revolt, which he calls violence or conflict number two. At this stage, the oppressed, the victims of violence or conflict number one, decide that they can no longer

bear injustice silently. Thus, men usually come together and fight to put an end to injustice. This posture necessitates what Camara posits thus: "Violence attracts violence, injustice brings revolt, either from the oppressed or from the young, determined to fight for a more just and more human world … the only true answer to violence is to have the courage to face the injustices which constitutes violence number one" (1971:34-35). When humans are unjustly treated and forced into subhuman mode of existence by another, violence or conflict usually happens. Thus, injustice against the blacks associated with colonialism was violence number one, which needed to be countered through nationalistic struggles in other to defend the people's rights, re-established their self-esteem and demonstrate the fact that the blacks are also significant. In this way, the resultant conflict or the reactionary violence was a cleansing force necessary for the eradication of the cause of injustice to the Africans, namely, colonialism.

Nigeria's Post-Independence Conflicts

The experience of conflict in Nigeria's political system, however, did not end with the attainment of political independence. Conflict rather has remained a recurrent decimal in Nigeria's attempt at governance. And in line with Heraclitus' perception, conflict has been the major engineering force for change and progress in Nigeria's socio-political sector. Experience shows us that there have been innumerable spectres of conflicts that are dotting the post-independence Nigerian political landscape. However, due to space constraints, we will in this paper, limit ourselves to three major ones, namely: the Nigerian civil war, the Niger-Delta crisis, and the Boko Haram offensive. We shall discuss them in turn as fellows:

The Nigerian Civil War Conflict

Conflict can also arise as a result of greed, selfishness and intolerance and thereby serves as a cleansing force to eradicate these vices and to establish a just order. This was the case that precipitated the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), which unfortunately claimed so many lives and property in the country just six years after independence. Historically, this war was caused by the greedy desire of each regional parties to control the centre. The following unjust and oppressive measures were employed to meet this selfish desire: inflation of the population during census, rigged election with its attendant violence, and the introduction of the unitary government with Decree Number 34, which led to the massacre of many Igbos in the North (Olatunbosun, 1979:289). Another remote cause of the war was the desire by the Eastern region to control oil if it could not control all the entire nation - a thing the Federal Government of Nigeria did not allow. Hence, on March 31, 1967, Lt. Col. Ojukwu, the then military Governor of the Eastern Region issued an edict that all revenue due to the Federal Government of Nigeria in the East should be paid to the Government of the Eastern Region (Olatunbosun, 1979:288).

On May 27, 1967, General Yakubu Gowon, then Head of States, in an attempt to paralyze Ojukwu's move to lead the Eastern Region to secession, declared a state of emergency in the country and promulgated a degree which created twelve states in Nigeria. However, on May 30, 1967, Ojukwu formally led the Eastern Region to secession and proclaimed the Republic of Biafra. Expectedly, the Federal Government responded by describing the proclamation of Biafra as an act of rebellion which must be crushed. On July 06, 1967, war broke out between the Federal and the Biafran forces as a result of the determination of the Federal Government to crush the rebellion and maintain the territorial integrity of Nigeria. Though it naturally caused many loss of lives and property in the country, this conflict during the Nigeria civil war equally brought a lot of benefits resulting in the country's political growth and development. This growth and development were an improvement upon the factors that engendered the war, which inhibited the country's political growth. Among the political changes and progress precipitated by this conflict of the civil war was the creation of twelve states to replace the existing four regions. This creation of states was a step in the right direction towards solving the problems of the ethnic groups which the minority suffered in each region. This also fosters and ensures development in all parts of the country. Besides, the developments and powers that had formerly been concentrated in the four regional headquarters of Kaduna, Ibadan, Enugu and Benin were spread to the headquarters of the new states.

Again, the civil war successfully welded the various people and ethnic groups in Nigeria together. Furthermore, the ban placed on imported goods protected infant industries in Nigeria and goods made in Nigeria replaced imported once. On the whole, one can justifiably maintain that the Nigerian civil war was not altogether a disaster. It was conflict that created the sense of unity and strengthens the bond of a united Nigeria against all parochial and selfish desires of the regions and their local leaders to break the country up for selfish ends. The civil war became, in the light of Heraclitus' philosophy, an agent of progress in the Nigerian political stage.

The Niger-Delta Crisis

The Niger-Delta crisis and its ensuring violence is in line with May's (1972:191) observation that when people are consistently subjected to subhuman conditions with nobody to listen to or care about their groaning, violence or conflict may psychologically become not only inevitable but a "life giving" force as well. Accordingly,

Martin Luther King (1968:111) observes that as long as people are ignored, as long as they are voiceless, as long as they are trampled upon by the iron feet of exploitation, there is the danger that they, like children, will have their emotional outbursts, which will break out in violence and conflict in the streets. The crisis in the Niger-Delta is precipitated on this feeling of subhuman treatment meted unto the Niger-Deltans, whose groanings have been ignored by the government that exploits and reduces them to a state of destitution while carting aware their resources for the development of other parts of the country. Successive governments have exploited the oil resources of the region to develop other parts of the country. This has resulted in rebellion in the Niger-Delta which manifests in essence, a restiveness of a people who want "to reclaim their right to human dignity, justice, equity and fair play" (Nwagbu, 2005: xiii).

The youths of this region have taken up arms against the government. They have placed the Nigerian government and the multinational oil companies operating in the region in judgment as being overtly concerned with profit and failing to take their boarder responsibilities seriously: to defend the human rights, and to protect their environment. Hence, in their struggles, the Niger-Delta youths denounce bureaucracies of all types, demand the transformation of the Niger-Delta area with the oil money that rightly belongs to them, and the propose a structural development in line with distributive justice so that the region can be uplifted from its present squalour. Violence is therefore employed to attack the insensitivity and callousness that characterize past and successive governments. It was at the heat of this crisis and conflict in the Niger Delta that President Umaru Musa Yar'dua proposed the amnesty programme for the militant youths of the Niger Delta region. This programme included among other things, drastic and/or rapid development of region by the Federal Government and active attention to the welfare of the people of the region.

As a result of this programme, there is an on-going training of thousands of ex-militants from the region (who were hitherto abandoned) and had no access to education and other means of capacity development. The Ministry of Niger Delta has also been created to oversee the structural development of the region and to create ways of cushioning the hazardous effects of oil exploration in the region. In a sense, we can say that today, the Federal Government is waking up to her responsibility as far as the issues of the development of the Niger Delta region which generates over 90 percent of her revenue, is concerned. All thanks to the conflict masterminded by the Niger Delta youths. Nowadays, hope has been raised in the region as there is an established agreement between the Federal Government and the multinational oil companies, which emphasizes the administrative role and increased share of gross profits for the State governments in this region from the sale of oil, and a revenue policy which must favour the general welfare of oil communities.

The progress so far recorded in the Niger Delta, would most certainly not have been made without this crisis and conflict. Thus, we can say that the conflict in the Niger Delta, a protest begun by Ken Saro Wiwa, and carried on by other militant leaders, members and their militia forces is a struggle of those whose rights have been stolen by corrupt politicians and their cohorts over the years. It has been a conflict necessary for the growth and development of the region, hitherto neglected and abandoned. In the light of Heraclitus' philosophy, the Niger Delta crisis is a conflict which has paved way for political growth and development in Nigeria. However, the truth remains that lingering conflict and controversy in the region will continue until the federal government definitively solves the problems which beget the crisis in the region.

The Book Haram Offensive

One of the contemporary specters of conflicts haunting the nation's political life is the sectarian violence created by the Boko Haram, an Islamic fundamentalist religious sect. The Boko Haram, meaning: Western education is bad or sinful", has created acute tension in the country and wreaked havoc in their attempt at what they called "purification" (Akinnaso, 2011:64). Just as the al-Qaeda terrorists view western practices as harmful so does the Boko Haram views other Nigerians as infidels and Western education as a pollutant. That is why its members think that the imposition of Sharia law would cure all ills in the society. And they are not contented with propagating their beliefs by peaceful means, but by killing, maiming, and destroying property in the process through serial and devastating bombings and other lethal means. Presently, they Islamic insurgents want to turn Nigeria into an Islamic country by violence.

However, this sort of conflict is counter productive and a misdirected one. It is equally an unnecessary one because it has no just cause and is not directed in defense of vital good of the community. A necessary conflict is established by the need to destroy an unjust system that impacts negatively in the community. But on the contrary, Boko Haram conflict is aiming at destroying the common good and whatever is of value too the society. Hence, even if it is viewed through the prism of Heraclitus' notion of conflict, the Boko Haram assault has little or no place. Boko Haram, whose method gets more and more deadly by the day even as its sphere of operation extends beyond its base in recent times, is quite a needless conflict, dragging the nation to the precipice of collapse and political waterloo without any just cause. It is true that the ecology of the Niger Delta has been disturbed by oil exploration, leading to environmental degradation and unquantifiable loss of the means of livelihood for million of people. The conflict in this Niger Delta region is justified and in fact necessary to

create a just situation. Contrarily, there is no public service component to Boko Haram's militancy and no institution has disturbed the religious sect in any way. Thus, Boko Haram is an unnecessary offensive that has value to add to the nation's political life.

Rather, it is a form of violence which must be crushed with a greater violence to safeguard the people's rights to education, self-dignity and religious freedom. However, it has offered Nigerians the opportunity to appreciate the error in religious fanaticism, which leads to the imprisonment of the mind and the development of warped world-views that deceive fanatics into believing that theirs is the only way to salvation. More so, it offers the government the opportunity to live up to her responsibility by protecting the lives of her citizens and re-affirming the secular nature of the Nigeria State. In this way therefore, the Boko Haram can be seen to have some positive value as a conflict which can mid-wife some form of progress for the political life of the country. The government has failed in this responsibility for a long time now. It has at least 30 years to put ethno-religious violence under control since the Maitatsene riots of 1980-1982, which claimed over 10,000 lives and destroyed property and infrastructure worth billions of naira. Between the Maitatsene and Boko Haram, there has now been countless cases of ethno-religious violence in different parts of the country, each one claiming lives and property at incalculable rate, while the government has been busy sleeping. The Boko Haram has become an eye opener to this effect, and indeed a conflict with an incidental consequence of jerking the government out of her dogmatic slumber and to waking her up to her responsibility. Now the plans are on in view of this recent challenge posed by insurgency. In this way, we can say that the Boko Haram conflict can indirectly add some incidental value to the Nigerian political life.

Causes of Conflicts in Nigerian Socio-Political Setting

In Nigerian socio-political setting, conflicts of various kinds have become part and parcel of the game. However, our concern in this section is on the possibility of identifying the causes of these conflicts. Before we delve into this onerous task of pinpointing the causes, it must be noted that conflicts in Nigerian political climate are not innately or divinely decreed; but rather they are man-made. And chief among these causes is ineffective leadership. Nigerian leaders since the time of political independence in 1960 to date lack the technical know-how. Their leadership style is highly questionable as it has failed to create the desired atmosphere of peace and harmony. They seem to glory in selfishness, myopic and senile mind-sets. This explains why Chinua Achebe describes Nigerian leadership thus: "In spite of the conventional opinion, Nigeria has been less than unfortunate in its leadership; a basic element of this misfortune is the seminal absence of intellectual rigour in the political thoughts of our founding fathers, a tendency to pious materialistic wooliness and self-centred pedestrianism (1998:13).

This deficiency in Nigerian leadership structure is what John (2009:140) appropriately, describes as lack of technical know-how. According to John, this leadership infantilism by the Nigerian leaders is a serious one. It is so serious in the sense that it has in turn created multiple other problems for the country. Thus, Nigerians should blame their leaders for inequality, social injustices, hunger, poverty, general backwardness, etc because they lack the wherewithal to handle, solve or eradicate them. Nigerian leaders are corrupt and they are incapable of fighting corruption because they lack the moral courage to do so. What is going on in Nigeria is the survival of the fittest. And in such an atmosphere, one cannot rule out conflicts or violence of any kind. This is because the masses are neglected, oppressed, exploited, victimized, discriminated, marginalized and overtly dominated. Everyone is on his or her own.

The above picture shows that tribalism and ethnicity are but manipulated negatively. In other words, most conflicts in Nigeria are both operationally and characteristically tribalistic. This is why in Nigeria, tribalism has come to define the patterns of employment, political appointments, elections and the sitting of projects. It is not surprising to any sane mine why the minority are neglected and dominated by the majority in Nigeria. And if by political accident, a minority is saddled with political power, he would use same as an instrument of reducing the majority to an "ineffective majority". In the absence of proper social engineering by questionable leaders, the ones or people at the receiving ends must surely react or, simply put, resort to violence for survival or self-determination. Another by-product of bad leadership that causes problems for or conflicts in the Nigerian nation is ignorance, both on the part of political and religious leaders as well as the followers. Ignorance has led to blind fanaticism especially among religious adherents. Unexplainable and un-remedied ignorance has accounted for lack of toleration of opposing views by some religious devotees in Nigeria, most especially from the Islamic extraction. Thus, Nigeria has witnessed wide-spread violence that destroys uncountable lives and properly. This "whole-sale" destruction of lives and properly can be checked if there is a balanced view of life through proper education. This flaccid mind-set has also become a major index in leadership placement and choice; and as a result, square pegs are forced into round holes. The outcome of such political triviality is exactly where Nigeria is presently at.

The truth is that Nigeria is in dire need of surgical operation by way of proper political education for our leaders and would-be leaders. That means, something reasonable must be done urgently to arrest the already

battered Nigeria's socio-political setting as the entire atmosphere is charged with conflicts and violence; just as the whole environment is polluted with insecurity and corruption. Nigeria needs a new leadership regime, that is, visionary and selfless leaders. In other words, Nigeria needs leaders with the fear of God and the capacity to turn things around for the general well-being of the masses, irrespective of tribe or religion. Until Nigerian leadership is consciously and properly structured to do what ought to be the case at all time, there can be no end to hunger, insecurity, inequality, social injustices, poverty, etc that has given birth to conflicts and violence.

Evaluation

We have endeavored through the pages of this paper not only to expose Heraclitus' notion of conflicts of opposites and the basic condition of life necessary for change and progress, but also to view the conflicts in the Nigerian politics through this prism. Heraclitus certainly deserves commendation for this philosophical sagacity in developing a mode of reasoning about conflicts of opposites in nature, which eventually became a guiding principle for subsequent philosophers who took up the issues in their analysis of reality. Hegel, for instance, which developed his principle of dialectics around this Heraclitus' idea of conflicts of opposites, had himself observed that "Heraclitus foresaw the discovery of dialectics as the principle of becoming" (Composta, 1990:36).

Nevertheless, for identifying conflict with nature without giving it an external base, Heraclitus made man a warring animal by nature. This does not seem a very correct conception of man; for if this were so, and then there would be no need to strive for peace and just order, which alone can ensure peaceful co-existence. Conflict is not necessary connatural to man, but is generated by external factors. This observation is further supported by the analysis of the causes of conflicts in Nigeria as earlier shown. But in evaluating Heraclitus' philosophy of conflicts of opposites, we are not necessary advocating for inevitability and unavoidability of wars and conflicts, but that some conflicts are for the betterment of the society and progress of life. According to John (2009:343), it is a truism that the abnormal, the strife, the unorthodox, the irreverent, and the heretical have their optimum merits and attractions as well as demerits and distractions. In the first place, conflicts command immediate and powerful attention. That may have been the singular reason that the former French President, Charles de Gaulle said: "I respect only these who resist me, but I cannot tolerate them" (Ekpu, 1992: 9). Wars or conflicts may not be tolerated by De Gaulle or by anyone else, but they command attention, they compel immediate action. They ask to be noticed and they are noticed.

In the second place, the truth about conflict is that what people conventionally call inhumanity is simply humanity under pressure. And the great advantage of a violent protest is its compelling force, its capacity for reaction which it generates; its compulsory self-advertisement and its force of oratory. The drawbacks of conflicts may include the disruption of the normal life, its capacity for reversing societal gains, its penchant for misdirected aggression and the tyranny of its will. However, thinkers like Machiavelli and Nietzsche maintain that none is worth comparing with its great and overwhelming and super-splendid advantages of strife. To them, therefore, the doctrine of conflict takes into consideration issues of aberration and self-contradictory equation. It states that in a chaotic system almost identical starting points may evolve into radically different end points because of extreme sensitivity to initial conditions.

In Nigeria, our position is that extreme armed conflicts should not be accepted. Nigerians must be challenged to finding effective solution to strife and conflicts; or how to manage it effectively as all strife is not usually violent, thought. The philosophy of doing nothing can be as effective and devastating as the philosophy of doing something. In fact, doing nothing is something, because it is a way of withholding service. This also is reminiscent of Edmund Burke's famous line: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing". If good men will not resist evil men, then evil men will prevail in the world. Hence, preventing strife or violence by whatever means can also be seen as a political necessity from any prospective. Strife and conflict are different ways of responding to different situations; another way of saying "no" to an aggressor, and "no" to the miscarriage of justice. This goes to confirm what Ronald Sider means when he opines, "desperate people to desperate thing" (1997:69). Thus, if those whose duty it is to attend to it disregards a peaceful form of protest, the negligence or levity creates an incentive for other non-peaceful forms of response. Ray Ekpu holds that "the truth, the other truth, is that the logic of rebellion, violent rebellion, is vitiated by its own logic" (1992:9).

In conflict and in strife, "all is fair" has become a sacred anthem. Wale Akin-Aina asserts, "Chaos theory insists that there must be a method in madness" (1994:9). Speaking like Heraclitus, Nietzsche refuses to call conflict a method but an order and harmony. According to him, "out of conflict and war we have order, harmony, geniuses and supermen" (John, 2005:76). That means, conflict may necessary be a means to our happiness. After all, weariness resulting from the wars of religion led to the growth of belief in religious toleration, which was one of the sources of the movement, which developed into eighteenth and nineteenth century liberalism. Conflict, thus, should not be viewed as entirely evil since it manifests itself in the battle between sexes in nature's processes. It becomes necessary that the individuality of one must be breached by the other for the propagation of species. Is conflict inevitable and unavoidable as men and women are propelled

inexorably towards one goal, namely, the propagation of species? Etuk (1994:6), while reflecting on why nature has chosen, with the help of innate drives and impulses, to so guarantee the continuation of the race holds it as "a great mystery". Without looking for a way to demystify the puzzle, Etuk goes on to say that any attempt to think that men could dwell alone and be contented, and allow women also dwell along and be contented would have amounted to talking nonsense. As with Heraclitean strife, Etuk states that life without conflict, strife or war amounts to foredooming existence.

From the above, conflict appears to be the key mode of operation in nature's processes; and therefore conflicts between the human beings are unavoidable, inevitable, and even necessary. All conflicts however, do not always end in violent nor in the loss of life. If it did, nature's purposes would have been defeated many centuries ago. At the same time, all conflicts cannot be unavoidable and necessary. Conflict expresses itself in different ways: anger, oppression, domination, love and friendship. The conflict between the two sexes has been generative of love-songs, poems, chivalry, and not the least, babies. It has been generative of beauty, manliness, and the highest ideals of self-sacrifice.

Some conflicts are unavoidable and some are not everywhere: but the desired one is seen and felt between the husband and wife. The undesired ones are seen and felt between states and nations, regions and clans, Christianity and Islam, etc. From any dimension, violence or conflict is generally seen as something bad, unwanted, undesirable and evil; possibly, because of its drawbacks and distractions. But where strife or conflict is to be unavoidable, it is hoped to be regretted. One does not need to ask: whether it is good or bad, and, correspondingly, whether it ought or ought not to be continued; for the simple reason that what is inevitable in nature, like death, will happen regardless of how men feel about it. What any effective government should do is to find solution to the problem. And, in the face of the inevitable, one has to accept it when it comes, adjust to it, get reconciled and be adaptable to its reality. Reason may also endeavor to discover some good out of what is a "necessary evil" (Etuk, 1994:7). For instance, post-war experience always brings with it the regenerative power. War like a dark night always ushers in a bright and beautiful morning. Jesus Christ rightly observes: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abideth alone: but if it dies, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24).

Post-war experiences in South Korea, Japan, and Nigeria, just to mention but a few, give credence to this argument. One now appreciates the reason behind Hegel's words that everything important takes the form of conflict. Hegel also believes that conflict is the catalyst through which history unfolds its purpose. In Hegel's opinion, a man could only be a hero if he is a military conqueror. Hence, Hegel concludes by saying that "man must accept war or stagnate" (Russell, 1945: 739). And since no man would want to stagnate, the question of desirability therefore becomes obvious. The required issue then is the way to its effective management. Conflict is a natural activity. As such, man does not even need to desire for it, for it must surely happen.

The value of Heraclitus' philosophy if carefully harnessed can be appreciated and positively applied for greater national development and security of lives, property and sovereignty from the internal and external aggression. Truth about any theory of aggression, according to Walzer (1977:59) is that it restates the same old, simple doctrine of a just war: it explains when fighting is a crime and when it is permissible, perhaps even morally desirable. Also, the mind-set of Nigerians needs proper orientation. This this is because, the larger the number of people in Nigeria whose sensibilities are redefined through education and interactions, the better the quality of lives in the country and the prospects for the expansion of the frontiers of civilization.

Any attempt to blindly adopt Heraclitus' philosophy will result in total unconduciveness. But the beauty will be noticed and appreciated if it is being balanced with a radical mental empowerment. The example of Sparta and Athens bears one out on that score. Sparta had awesome military might while Athens had wonderful intellectual might. But today, in the language of John (2009:351), the contributions of Athens have served to expand the frontiers of total civilization while not many people even know that Sparta was a super-power. This kind of consciousness will cause Nigerian leaders to understand that it is not the quantity of natural resources of a country that makes it economically or strategically important in the comity of nations, but the mental quality of its people, that is, how much the people can convert their potentials into economic power.

Conclusion

Suffice it to say in conclusion that as Heraclitus proposed, conflict is necessary for change. The Nigerian socio-political landscape is littered with instance of conflicts as we have discussed above. Yet, these conflicts have a way of contributing to the socio-political progress of the nation. To this effect, not only was Heraclitus correct, he was also great and wonderful for maintaining that only through conflicts can significant progress be made in life.

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