

# Reaction, Reform and Revolution in Governance

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## ABSTRACT

The issues of reaction, reform and revolution have continued to occur and re-occur in the art of governance globally. The quest to obtain better ways of doing things has made reaction, reform and revolution readily and willing tools in the hands of those who apply any of them in solving identified problems around them. Thus, reaction, reform and revolution are means of effecting changes especially in government. A sitting regime may adopt positive reaction or reform in order to serve people well. Again, a sitting regime may be removed if the people are no longer comfortable with its leadership style through revolution, which is often seen as a great social change of a ruler or political system by force. Reaction and reform are seen as moderate means of effecting changes but revolution is an extreme effort applied as the last resort.

**Keywords:** Revolution, Reaction, Reform,

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the advent of government whether direct democracy, representative democracy, monarchical or any other form of government our societies/states are faced with the issue of change in form of reaction, reform or revolution. This is geared towards achieving a better way of governance that would care for the yearnings and aspirations of the people at a given period of their political life. Reaction, Reform and Revolution have come to stay in our today's political leadership because of the way some political leaders conduct the affairs of government in which they occupy.

Reaction in our every day usage means a change in people's attitudes or behaviours caused by disapproval of the attitudes of the past. That is to say, people may chose to disobey a particular government's (administration) actions/ policies because of betrayal of trust or something very important to them. On the other side, a given government may decide to react to people's demands or react against some unacceptable behaviours of the public. Reform simply means to improve a system, an organization, a law etc by making changes to it.

Globally, reforms are carried out by governments in order to improve upon what is on ground. Thus, reform entails purposefully planned changes aimed at doing things better when compared to former ways things were being done. For instance, a given administration may decide to carry out political or economic reforms so as to serve the masses better. Again, a new administration may decide to carry out reforms so as to correct the mistakes of the past administration. Revolution according to our every day usage means an attempt by a large number of people to change the government of a country. Revolution could be described as a great change in conditions, ways of working, beliefs, etc that affects large numbers of people.

Reaction, Reform and Revolution are all geared towards effecting positive changes. The major difference in the above three behaviours (actions) is that while reaction and reform are moderate in their overall effect. Revolution is very extreme in its overall effect. For example, a sitting government can carry out reform or react to some situations on ground but no sitting government can carry out political revolution against itself.

The above attitudes/behaviours can occur as a result of many variables amongst which are political instability, dictatorship, one-man rule, bad economy, unemployment, poverty, electoral malpractices etc. Today, people come to power through diverse processes and many a time the means through which a particular leader/regime emerged may trigger reaction, reform or revolution (Bierenu-Nnabugwu, 2005). For example, Nigeria's former president; late Alhaji Umaru Yar'Adua in his inaugural address during his swearing-in ceremony criticized the process that brought him to power and he thereafter promised to carry out electoral reform so as correct the past mistakes. Again, the people of Imo State voted out their former Governor; Ikedia Ohakim in a manner described as political revolution in the last general elections. In Anambra state the likes of Senator Chris Ngige, Chief Ifeanyi Uba and Dr Andy Uba have gone to seek redress in the court of law over the manner in which the election that brought Chief Willy Obaino to Power as governor following complications and controversy with some of INEC's key members of staff. Again, the people of Ekiti state voted out their incumbent governor Dr Fayemi Kayode and gave their mandate to Mr Ayo Fayoshe. It is also on record that there have been various reactions globally following the missing Malaysian flight MH370 and the over 200 girls abducted from a secondary school by boko haram in Chibok-Borno state of Nigeria, reactions could turn revolutionary if all peaceful means have been exhausted.

In order to properly examine the issues being discussed, we shall make effort to proffer answers to the following research questions; why do people react against a given regime? Why do people call for reform? Is peaceful transition of political powers always easily obtainable? Why do leaders refuse to quit when there is

popular call for such? Do actions of a particular regime require reaction? Does revolution achieve goals faster? What are the conditions/factors that cause the application of either reaction reform or revolution? Has either of the above behaviours being able to solve people's problem of bad government?

Sequel to the above mentioned research questions, its pertinent to state that the study shall be guided by the hypothesis, which states that bad leadership/government makes reaction, reform or revolution inevitable in any given society or state.

For a proper handling of the subject matter, this study is divided into five parts namely, part one; introduction, part two; conceptual and contextual analysis, part three; theoretical framework of analysis, part four; types of reaction, reform, and revolution, leadership styles and part five; conclusion.

## 2 CONCEPTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The word reaction with regards to event or situation means what you do, say or think as a result of something that has happened. Again according to common usage, reaction can also be seen as change in people's attitude or behaviour caused by disapproval of the attitudes, etc of the past. Reaction can only take place after action has taken place over an issue or event. Thus, reaction is as a result of action that has happened in the past. Reaction may be either positive or negative depending on the event that brought it. Here, we see reaction as action driven.

The word reform simply means to improve, make or become right. It means a social action which does or should improve conditions, remove unfairness etc in a society. In all situations reform is targeted at achieving a better result. Reform may be carried out by both an incumbent administration and an incoming regime. Reform could be economic, political, religious, cultural, etc but in the context of this research study, reform is viewed at from the political point of view.

Revolution according to Rejai (1979) is an abrupt, 'illegal, mass violence aimed at the overthrow of the political regime as a step towards overall social change. Unanka (2001) saw revolution as a socio-political concept; it could be an abrupt illegal, mass violence that turns the society round, aimed not only at the overthrown and replacement of the political order, but also to change in the social, cultural and psychological structure of the society. Oxford Concise Dictionary of politics defines revolution as the overthrow of an established order which will involve the transfer of state power from one leadership to another and may involve a radical restructuring of social and economic relations.

Goldstein and Pevehouse (2011:451) wrote that poverty and lack of access to basic human needs are prime causes of revolutions, especially when poor people see others living in affluence. The duo was of the view that most revolutionary movements espouse egalitarian ideals - a more equal distribution of wealth and power. From the above assertion of Goldstein and Pevehouse, it is evident that socio-economic and socio-political conditions of people could trigger revolution in a given society. Karl Marx described revolution as the locomotives of history. Thus, for him, revolutions were caused by the development within a mode of production of a contradiction between the social forces and the social relations of production, with the latter acting as fetters upon former Karl Marx's opinion may not always stand in the sense that a revolution in a given society may have nothing to do with means of production of the people rather it could be purely as a result of despotic tendency found in a leader. For the purpose of this study, revolution is defined as great social change, especially the changing of a ruler or political system by a popular uprising (force).

## 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

In view of our topic of discourse, we shall use **conflict theory** as propounded by American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) and German Sociologist Ralph Dahrendorf (1929). Unanka (200:54) writes that the conflict theory is essentially a conceptualization of development as the product of an interaction of opposing forces. Thus, conflict theory maintains that every society is in a state of flux and that conflict between and among groups is an inevitable feature of the process of changing and development. According to Tumin, (1967:10) the conflict theory first and foremost, sees society as a collection of institutions and groups that are more often than not poorly integrated with each other. Thus, the theory envisages a situation where there is unequal distribution of property, power and prestige among the people. Vanfosen (1979:22) opines that concerned with the problems of social inequality and the differential access to scarce resources and scarce power within nations, the conflict theory believes that the potential for class conflict is inherent in every differential society. Reaction, Reform and Revolution are means through which groups or society seek redress over their condition of living.

## 4. TYPES OF REACTION, REFORM AND REVOLUTION

### TYPES OF REACTION

There are at least two types of reaction; Viz positive reaction and negative reaction.

i. Positive reaction simply means that the change in behaviour is done with an objective mind frame rather than to victimize the people or distract the smooth running of administration.

- ii. Negative reaction is targeted at victimizing those opposed to the action taken by the government or is targeted against government by the people because of unbearable/unacceptable policies and programmes of the government.

#### **TYPES OF REFORM**

- i. **Political Reform:** It entails the act of revisiting political actions and policies of the government with the intention of improving upon the current state of affairs so as to give a better account of the leadership.
- ii. **Economic Reform:** This is a type of reform that concentrates only on ways of improving economic related issues of the government so as to make the economy flourish.

#### **TYPES OF REVOLUTION**

- i. **Social revolutions:** - It involves political and social transformations, class/struggle and pressure for radical change from below. Thus, this mobilization may be manipulated by other factors to achieve their own objectives which may be opposed to those of the popular classes. An example of this type is the current revolutions going on in the Arab nations.
- ii. **Political revolution:** It produces changes in the character of both state power and personnel. Thus, it lasts until the monopoly of control and force of the old is broken and a new hegemonic group reconstitutes the sovereign power of the state. Example; French/American revolutions, the activities of former president Taylor of Liberia who supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (Bert, 2006:57), etc.
- iii. **Industrial revolution:** It brought in its train the large scale factory productivity, Nwizu (2002:16). It started in England in the second half of the eighteenth century as a succession of mechanical invention and later spread to other parts of Western Europe. According to Appadorai (1975:231) industrial revolution in the economic sphere, substituted machine production for hand production.

#### **LEADERSHIP STYLES**

Leadership styles is the characteristic behaviours which the leader exhibits in the performance of his role (Ogunna, 2004). Thus, these characteristic behaviours are solidly informed by values attitudes, norms and orientation. There are at least three basic leadership styles. They are;

- i. Authoritarian leadership style
- ii. Democratic leadership style
- iii. Democratic leadership style
- iv. Laissez faire leadership style

- (i) **Authoritarian leadership style:** This exemplifies a leader who gives out all the instructions and expects all the obedience from his subordinates without questions. Again, authoritarian leader is always aloof from the group which he leads and issues commands and orders in the process of accomplishing his leadership role. An autocratic leader does not give opportunity for or permit the application of members initiative in the performance of their duties. In the above leadership style, the application of negative reaction as well as revolution become the only possible way to get rid of the leadership. In Nigeria we did experience military dictatorship and the masses reacted appropriately. Again dictatorship can also encourage external invasion; the attack on Benin Kingdom was not only punitive, it was also hegemonic, and typical of the innumerable other military and non-military campaigns carried out by various European powers in order to subdue or bring portions of African people and their natural endowments under effective European control (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2005).
- (ii) **Democratic leadership style:** This is the type that shares and incorporates his subordinates into the decision making process as well as in execution of policies/programmes of the government. Thus, the leader consults widely with the people on many issues concerning them and he also informs them on problems, tasks and goals that face him and the people as a whole. This can be seen why President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria called for an expanded security council meeting following the terrorist attack on defenceless civilians at the Nyanya Park in Abuja on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, 2014. Again, the reaction from World leaders over the abduction of over 200 girls from a government school in Chibok-Borno state attest to the fact that reaction from citizenry can go a long way in determining the government policies. It is imperative to state that the leader sees himself as a member of the group, he also delegates powers if need be. He sees himself as the leader not as ruler. Democratic leadership style attracts positive reaction and reforms. Thus, the likelihood of revolution occurring is zero because the leader respects the laws of the land and allows popular will to prevail. Here, there is a periodic free and fair election and processes of effecting changes are highly respected. Examples of this are what obtained in some countries like USA, UK, France, Canada, South Africa and Ghana.

- (iii) **Laissez faire leadership style;** It could be said that this type of leader lacks focus or any sense of direction. That is, to him anything goes. In this type of leadership, the leader allows his subordinates to set the pace for him to follow. It may be as a result of lack of self-confidence or the will to act and take wise risks as the situation may demand. There is a high level of individual or group participation but for the leader, it is a minimum participation. Laissez faire leadership gives effect to reaction (i.e negative reaction) reform and revolution. Thus, when the leadership is found to be too weak it may encourage revolution so as to affect better leadership of people. Examples include, Nigeria's second Republic regime, Ghana before Jerry Rawlings, Libya before Gadhafi, etc.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Globally in the affairs of mankind there is a constant phenomenon called change. In government whether democratic, dictatorial, etc change is inevitable. A change in the public affairs of the state/society could come through either, reaction, reform or revolution. The sole aim of applying either of the above three behaviours is to make things better than before as well as integrate/empower people who were until then at the receiving end.

Worthy of note is that proper application of reaction, reform or revolution in the state affairs helps people to achieve economic growth/development as well as political emancipation. But on the contrary, it could snowball into political instability, civil war or threat to corporate existence/survival of mankind in any given society.

Poor state of things especially governance does encourage the application of reaction, reform or revolution. Again, reaction, Reform or revolution are tentative efforts/activities made by the people so as to checkmate or correct perceived underserved, unbearable and uncomfortable state of things by those at the top (government). Reaction and reform are geared at effecting changes in human activities especially in government with moderation. Revolution is the resultant effect of making peaceful change impossible by particular regime. Thus, revolution encompasses complete turn around of situation/event.

It is recommended that those at the helm of affairs should carry their subordinate (people) along while performing official duties so that needed changes can be effected through reactions and reforms rather than revolution.

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