

## **SARTRE'S EXISTENTIALISM AND PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE: A SYNERGY FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Discontent, tension and disaffection are usually created when the well being and the existential realities of the individual are neglected. This situation can lead to a breakdown of peace and stability of a country. Anyone who is in doubt should look at the recent happenings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and a few other countries in the Arab world. The panacea to these as this paper perceives it, is to appraise the life conditions of individual citizens of a state, evaluate their existential realities and ensure that their lives are worth living. A philosophy, which focuses on the individual's existence is existentialism. From the perspective of Sartre's existentialism, which focuses on commitment, responsibility, choice, freedom, decision making, subjective understanding, authenticity, constant appraisal, consciousness, bad faith, and transcendence, this paper aims to analyze the Nigerian context. The paper forges a link between Sartre's existentialism and participatory governance with a view to showing that both work in synergy for peace and stability in Nigeria. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is used as a case study of the negation of the existentialist ideals.*

**Keywords:** Existentialism; participatory governance; stability; Niger Delta, Nigeria.

### **Introduction**

It is common knowledge that what is seen as good governance is understood in terms of good and efficient service delivery. This in common political parlance is known as dividends of democracy, meaning that the basic needs of the people in terms of food, clothes and shelter, a healthy environment for actualization of one's potentials, health and security and above all the provision of job opportunities, are made available to the citizenry. On the contrary, the feeling of alienation and exclusion from mainstream political participation by the people hinders the success of these objectives, which ultimately ensure the peace and stability of any government.

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which claims that individual human beings create the meaning and essence of their lives. It is a movement or revolt against traditional philosophy, its method and concern. Simply, existentialism is a movement that believes in subjective choosing over objective reasoning, concrete experience over intellectual abstractions, individuality over mass culture, human freedom over determinism, and authentic living over in-authenticity. For Lescoe, existentialism is a type of philosophy, which endeavors to analyze the basic structures of human existence and to call individuals to an awareness of their existence (Lescoe, 1974: 9). It is also seen as an attitude or outlook. It was in this sense that Harold uses it. According to him, existentialism is an attitude, which emphasizes human existence and the qualities, which are distinctive in individual person rather than man in the abstract or nature and the world in general. Specifically, the existentialists reflect and assert that the neglect of this human condition could disrupt the peace and stability of an existing government. The civil and violent uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and some other countries in the Arab world appear to buttress this point. Flowing from the existentialist view point are themes such as dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment and nothingness. Some major existentialists include: Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Maurice Merleau Ponty, Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, and Soren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism. There are several strands of existentialism. However, regardless of the strand one is dealing with, one idea remains thematic, namely, concern with the basic facts of human existence. It is in this connection that the popular dictum of this movement "existence precedes essence" makes sense.

Following this, Martin Heidegger highlights the importance of human environment in his existentialist postulations. Basically, the dictum "existence precedes essence" is an existentialist formula, which signifies that we make ourselves the individuals we are (Ted, 1995: 257). Heidegger uses the formula to indicate that for each "Dasein" its 'being' or 'essence' is the way in which it shapes its life, its manner of existence. The term 'Dasein' is used by Heidegger as his terminology for man,

and is characterized, by some basic features, namely 'Facticity', 'fallenness', and existentiality' (Azenabor 1998: 268).

Bryan Magee (1998: 210), in analyzing Heidegger's existentialism says that Heidegger believes that we all have immediate awareness of our own existence. He makes the point that we cannot have this conscious awareness unless there is some sphere of activity for it to be happening in "Being" and some sort of world, are therefore, inseparable. Magee's comment reveals that Heidegger, following Husserl's phenomenology, observed that the individual is not separate from the world but is integrally fused together, a marriage of consciousness and its objects, recognition of man and his existential condition. This picture gives us as in Gestalt psychology, an idea of a unified relationship between the individual and his environment.

Basically, the above analysis points to the awareness of existence, our own existence as first and foremost and in which a disjunctive analysis would prove negative, and showing a togetherness of man and the world that is inseparably wonderful. For Heidegger therefore, the way to address ourselves to the problem of existence is to try to carry out a phenomenological analysis of what it is we are aware of when we are aware of our own existence. This implies that any attempt to bring a causal separation between the individual and his environment in existential parlance, runs riot of our common sense conception of man and his existence. To try to block this relationship or to negate the other of the duo in this partnership could have untoward consequences for the society.

Kierkegaard, rather centers his philosophy on truth and subjectivity. For him, truth is personal, subjective and not objective. The reason is that logic and abstract theories cannot make decision for individuals because there are personal, subjective choices. He revolted against rationalism and systematization and adherence to a society oriented outlook. He opted rather to search for individual truth by which he could live and die (Kierkegaard 1968: 7). He is concerned with the lonely individual against an objective and science oriented world. His existentialism is aimed at directing the individual to his authentic, passionate, honest life, repudiating the temptation to find our meaning and identity in institutions and abstractions. Kierkegaard seems outraged by every mode of thinking and behavior that dehumanizes the individual, level him, render him anonymous, or rob him of his supreme worth.

Kierkegaard's position is a radical departure from that of creating the abstraction of the faceless, anonymous 'public' associated with Hegelian philosophy. Omoregbe (1991: 155) explains it thus: "the abstract objectivity and systematization of Hegel ignores the importance, the uniqueness and the individuality of the human person. Against Omoregbe's position, it is argued that philosophy in all its ramifications is all about man. So, in logic, metaphysics, epistemology, idealism, realism etc, we find the message directed to man. Hegel therefore, in his sublime idealism was not writing for the gods but for human consumption. However, the conclusion one draws from Omoregbe's submission is that we may try to understand man from various angles, but if we must maximize the profits from philosophy, then we have to direct our search light to the concrete human individual. It is in the physically existing man that we can make meaningful deductions and arrive at meaningful conclusions based on personal experience.

Considering Kierkegaard's philosophy and given the fact that the world is in great trouble, moving towards self-destruction due to over population, destruction of nature, pollution of food, air, water, ozone layer, climate change, can one say that governance through rationalization, theoretical programs and thingification of the individual, has achieved the desired objective and increased the lot of the common man? Should decisions and actions, research efforts and programs of action not be based on the human condition, which reflects the reality on ground? These questions are addressed by Sartre's existentialism.

It is important to mention – when talking about governance and existentialism – that the notion of existence is fundamental to any government because, existence implies consciousness and consciousness involves knowledge and responsibility. This probably explains why it is commonly said that a philosopher's existence forms the background of his or her philosophy.

Karl Jasper affirms that the concrete circumstances of one's existential situation constitute the fertile ground on which the relevance of philosophy of life is drawn. According to him: "the man who loves mankind does not love at all, but one who loves a particular human being does" (Jasper 1971: 173). Jasper's statement in this regard, points to reflective consciousness on concrete

phenomena of life. This enables us to know that the real is what is and what is, is the real as against the implication of Hegel's philosophy that "the real is rational and the rational is real."

Paul Roubiezek (1964: 10), in explaining existentialism, makes the point that "existentialism is a rejection of all purely abstract thinking, of a purely logical or scientific philosophy". The inference one draws from the above is that for the existentialist, what matters is not what is reasonable but what is meaningful and what is meaningful is what is real and tangible and can be appreciated. Similarly, while explaining Maurice Ponty's existentialism, Sahakian, (1969: 340), holds that "the world is not what I think, but what I live through". This implies that to think means to resort to rationality and this is far from what existentialism stands for, that is the known concrete phenomena as they appear.

Actually, Sahakian's comment could raise some doubts from a number of individuals who may suggest that one must first think to decide how to live through, otherwise the idea of living through would be directionless. Against this view however, it is argued that thinking itself is a product of something, and that thing has a base that is man in the world, and like the Marxists would say; man must eat before he can think. So, the individual person underlies every other thing in the world he lives through.

The issues or points raised above are the concerns of Sartre's existentialism and this paper aims to articulate them to show their relationship with participatory governance. It is germane at this juncture to point out that the activities of government that tend to exclude the individual from mainstream political participation, usually lead to political instability. It was in this connection that Ucheaga, (1996: 153) makes the point that the approval ratings of governments on the part of the majority of the citizens in Nigeria are linked with welfare: in terms of how a particular government has managed state affairs to create a conducive atmosphere for people to meet their aspirations in respect of adequate food, housing, education and health facilities. Any government that neglects these stands the chance of either being overthrown by a military group, (who uses them as excuse) or stir up revolution among the people. Precisely, negation of social justice leads to instability in the society.

It is important to mention that stability of any society is a product of Democracy, which is a system of governance founded in the people's political participation. This means that imposition of candidates for elective offices is alien to democracy. In line with this, Schumpeter, defines democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote" (Schumpeter 1954: 296). So, stability is ensured when people are given opportunity to decide what they want.

This is why it is often said that what makes a democracy a valuable system is that it furthers the development of individuals as individuals by proffering room for self expression politically. So where social and existential justice is in place, it forms the basis for participatory governance. Any government that takes this for granted prepares ground for conflict and instability. The case of Niger Delta militancy in Nigeria, and the revolution in the Arab world are pointers to this fact. Ikelegbe underscores this point in his view that most conflicts have a fairly high political content and are rather and actually precipitated by multifarious factors such as the patron based, predatory and personal rule, corrupt control of natural resources and the undermining of state institutions, social deprivation (Ikelegbe 2005: 208).

The aim of this paper is to forge a link between Sartre's strand of existentialism and participatory governance with a view to showing that they form a bridge to stability in governance especially in the Nigerian context. Issues such as welfare of the individual, responsibility, freedom, authenticity and in authenticity, decision making, choice, concrete experience, bad faith, constant appraisal of the individual's existential situation, characterize Sartre's existentialism. These basic issues of human existence are the pivot of Sartre's existentialism. The paper affirms that meeting the expectations of citizens in the above connection is the panacea for peace and stability.

To realize its main objective, this paper is divided into three sections. Section one looks at existentialism as adumbrated by Sartre. In section two, attempts are made to highlight the essential ingredients of participatory governance. Section three is devoted to forging the link between Sartre's existentialism and participatory governance and showing how efforts to manage these two aspects can guarantee peace and stability in the Nigerian polity.

## **Existentialism: Thematic Issues**

Jean Paul Sartre was a French existentialist, who was born in 1905 in Paris and spent a good part of his life there. Although contemporary existentialism could be traced to Soren Kierkegaard, Sartre is widely seen as the key apostle of existentialism. What is called Sartre's existentialism is the strand of existentialism peculiar to Sartre in which the human condition rather than human nature is supreme.

Lescoe (1974) says that "it is no overstatement to say, without qualification whatsoever, that the best known existentialist today is Jean Paul Sartre". It is the direction or focus of Sartre's existentialism that makes it relevant to human existence because it attempts to liberate man from the clutches of human predicament by being creative in survival techniques. Sartre's existentialism is dominated by individual subjectivism. Man has no human nature, and therefore, is the architect of whatever becomes of him, making himself different from a stone, chain or other objects. He possesses human dignity by the fact of his subjective life. Man, according to Sartre, has the capacity to develop and is conscious that he is doing so.

Sartre introduces two modes of existence, or modes of being, that is two antithetical modes or ways of being. These modes of being are captured in his idea of Being-for-itself (*L'etre pour-soi*) and Being-in-itself (*L'etre en-soi*). Relating these two aspects to the individual gives one the impression that persons share both these two modes of being. That is that the individual is just like a stone-*ensoi*, while the *pour-soi* indicates that he is a conscious subject. To be a conscious subject is to be placed constantly before a future. This means that the consequence of existence coming before essence, which is the motto of existentialism, is that man not only creates himself but that the responsibility of man's existence rests heavily on him.

Sartre associates these two modes of being with consciousness and unconsciousness. Being-for-itself is the being of consciousness associated with man. Other entities outside man are identified and denoted by the Being-in-itself which is the unconscious being. The Being-for-itself as consciousness of an object, is also associated with nothingness, emptiness, and negativity. These features constitute the very foundation of man's struggle and suffering in the world. The reason being that man is always in the process of transcending this ugly situation, in order to negate this emptiness and nothingness so as to perhaps reach fullness. Man is not a totality but is always in the process of totalization. So, we can see that the Being-for-itself becomes being simply by negating being by separating itself from it and placing itself away from it. So, the 'for-itself' is a being of nothingness and nothingness constitutes its very essence (Sartre 1953: 18).

Furthermore, the conscious being always experiences a gap, a vacuum, an emptiness and nothingness, which the 'for-itself' attempts to fill by negating itself. In this way, the very traits of the 'for-itself' lie at the base of its power of negation. The incomplete nature of man brings about the senselessness of his existence and he strives to accomplish this project of self-fulfillment, a process of totalization which ironically cannot reach totalization because man is not and cannot be a totality. This shows that man is always in a state of becoming and potency which shows that Being is meaningful at the level of the 'for-itself'. Again Sartre, says that, this transcendence of the 'Being-for-itself', is made possible by the tool of human freedom with its heavy load of responsibility. Thus, the Being-for-itself cannot have a steady identity and cannot be captured in anything in any permanent manner. The entire existence and happenings of the 'for-itself' constitute a mammoth project for it to conquer nothingness and emptiness which negates itself in a consistent way. So, the 'Being-for-itself' is not what it is and is what it is not. The implication is that nothingness cannot be overcome since it is the very foundation of being, and negation comes from nothingness. In this case, the reality of the individual human being is possible by a perpetual negation of being.

In contrast to the 'Being-for-itself', the 'Being-in-itself' does not have nothingness and negation within its being. It cannot have anything other than itself; it is simply there and full of itself and nothing more. Following this, the Being-in-itself is incapable of becoming something else other than itself. It is itself indefinite, and exhausts itself in being. It does not lack and therefore, needs no association with the other, it is what it is and is subject to temporality, Sartre, explains further.

This Sartrean idea of polarized beings could be used in explaining most actions of man, and man's struggle and conflict in life could be discerned from the totalization process of the Being-for-itself. Sartre's 'Being-for-itself', is man conscious of the environment. This is the basis of social



consciousness, which plays a prominent role in the stability and instability in any government.

There are certain terms in Sartre's existentialism that shall be used to address the issue of participatory governance in Nigeria these themes give us insight into the level of government commitment towards the people. We have positive and negative terms. The positive terms are the terms that must apply in a situation at any given time and show the necessity of such terms, while the negative terms are the ones that must be avoided if we must solve any crisis, problem and misunderstanding in our daily lives. The positive terms include commitment, responsibility, fundamental choice, freedom, decision, subjective understanding, constant appraisal of a situation, consciousness of self and environment, authenticity. The negative terms include: self deception, bad faith, avoidance of decision, postponement of decision, in-authenticity etc. These terms are determined by human facticity and transcendence, which is the root of our freedom. One explains the meaning of facticity and transcendence in the course of this paper.

It is germane to mention that these thematic issues: neglect of the environment, lack of government concern for social conditions of individuals, checks on freedom, postponement of key decisions, avoidance of the concrete realities on ground and a show of in-authentic living constitute the major causes of instability in Nigeria, particularly, the Niger Delta region of the country, where militants challenge the government to address the issues of environmental degradation-land, water, air pollution, and a lack of care for the suffering indigenes of this area.

### **Participatory Governance**

Participatory governance is a process emphasizing the broad participation of the constituents of a state or nation in the direction and operation of the political system (Wikipedia 2011). This implies that a greater majority of the populace has a say and input in government decisions and policies.

Participatory governance requires that those who control the institutions and machineries of government must carry the people along, for without this, the exercise of political power would be arbitrary and illegitimate. Also, participatory governance requires of those who exercise authority to ensure that individuals are politically and economically empowered through useful participation in material resources of the state for a life worth living. The political system through good governance must necessarily create conditions for the achievement of the good life. Owolabi (1991:8), has said in this connection that "participation of citizens in a democratic society involves all the citizens in the society; it includes the activities they carry out in order to make the government pursue their interest both as individuals and as a group."

Good governance is achievable when the following characteristics are observed: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effective leadership and efficiency, accountability. This is possible when democratic rules are respected by the government. Democracy, as rule of the people is characterized by the idea of participation of the people and accountability of the rulers. Participatory democracy or government/governance demands a radical change in the nature of public sphere. Basically, it refers to a process emphasizing the broad participation of constituents in the direction and operation of political systems. Susan makes the point in this connection that participatory government strives to create opportunities for all members of a political group to make meaningful contributions to decision-making and seeks to broaden the range of people who have access to such opportunities (Susan 2011: 2).

Modern participation in governance is representative. This is made possible by genuine democracy. Hermes (2004: 367) alludes to this in his view that a fundamental factor of democracy and good governance is the attitude or readiness of the people, (both the ruler and the ruled) towards the values and principles of democracy in so far as the people decide what and who will rule and so what and who they will accept. Following this, participatory governance is governance that is tailored towards the needs of the people and which attempts to involve the people in its programs and is constantly tuned towards empowering the people politically and economically. It is associated with notions like freedom, responsibility, change, accountability, constant appraisal of events, and fairness. These conditions are achievable if the economic structures of the state are democratized and the people have control over them even if this is minimal (Irele 1993: 92).

Another dimension of participatory governance, which Michael Walzer (1989: 192) highlighted years back is consensus and understanding. Walzer captures this in his idea of what he described as a consensus process that includes political struggle, negotiation, and compromises, law making, law enforcement, socialization in families, schools, economic transformation, cultural creativity of all sorts.

### **Sartre's Existentialism and Participatory Governance: Synergy for peace and stability.**

Stability is said to be the product of peace, but what is peace? The IPCR-UNDP National Peace Policy Project, organized by the institute of peace and conflict resolution in Africa, defines peace as a state of harmonious co-existence occasioned by presence of fairness, justice and equality. In the National peace policy draft document, the following are considered as peace guarantors: Individuals, groups and institutions that could serve as the vehicle through which peace objectives can be achieved (IPCR-UNDP, 2007).

From the existential perspective, the most important is the individual, not just the individual, but the condition of the individual, which could cause peace to be or not to be. That is why Jean-Paul Sartre, lays emphasis more on the existential situation of the individual. So, conflict management begins first with the recognition of the concrete aspect of the human person. Hence the need to bring in existential philosophy into conflict management to ensure peace and stability.

Conflict denotes a moment of crisis. The magnitude of such a crisis moment depends largely on the factors that are responsible for it and is worsened by how the conflict is managed. So, what is important in conflict is not its occurrence as such, but how it is dealt with, that is its management. This is where key terms in Sartre's existentialism such as choice, decision, commitment, deception, bad faith, authenticity, play important roles.

The approach of the Nigerian authority to conflict management issues, reflect only a formalistic and static approach that leaves much to be desired. Consequently, agitations are treated as security problems that should be arrested and dealt with without respect to justice issues. This has been the approach of the Nigerian government in the oil rich region of the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta crisis centers on issues of underdevelopment, ecological crisis, and the ravaging effects of oil exploration, which include the destruction of farm lands, fishing and hunting resulting in unemployment and youth restiveness (Ncha: 2010). This culminates in poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and a severely fractured cognition for generation (Oshita 2007:113). Wunmi (2002) argues further that such conflict situations are as a result of a systematic, calculated and structured sense of political, economic, and social exclusion of groups in the distribution and share of national advantages and privileges. The point being made here is that a lot of conflicts arise due to debilitating existential condition and that in dealing with such no efforts should be spared in investigating what role neglect of the human condition has to play in the conflict. This is existential justice, which forms part of Sartre's existentialism. Any attempt to ignore this is bad conflict management strategy. Thus, it can be affirmed following the above that not all conflicts should be addressed using military option for this is out of tune with the requirements of participatory governance. It was in this connection that Ucheaga (2008) affirms regarding the problem of minorities including the Niger Delta conundrum in Nigeria, that equipping the armed forces is necessary, but it becomes a repressive approach when examined in the context of the issues at stake. This amounts to treating the symptoms rather than the substantive causes.

Jean Paul Sartre, based his existentialism on issues such as freedom, responsibility, choice, commitment, choice, and decision making. These ingredients compare with the ones of participatory governance. For any government to be participatory, it must translate these benefits into individuals' comfort and convenience by targeting the individual human condition. This existential condition is the focus of Sartre's existentialism. The idea of existential justice as foundational justice originates from here. A famous social theorist John Rawls, lends credence to this existential justice that touches on the human condition. It gives a picture of the concrete realities that are highlighted by Sartre's existentialism. Rawls defines justice as "fairness". This involves an atmosphere where the less privileged must be recognized irrespective of their status. It is germane to point out that what Sartre, calls the human condition or existential condition is what Rawls, calls the basic structure which is the primary concern of justice. The basic structure refers to not only a set of legal rights and duties, but also social, political, and economic institutions, and functions to distribute the benefits and burdens of social cooperation among the members of any society. The benefits of social cooperation include

wealth and income, food and shelter, authority and power, rights and liberties. The burdens of social cooperation include duties, obligations, and liabilities.

The basic structure is very important because, according to Rawls, it exerts a profound influence on individuals life prospects, desires, aspiration and self-image, and that the influences of the basic structure on individuals are present at birth and continue through out life. This may be why Rawls says that “the justice of a social scheme depends essentially on how fundamental rights and duties are assigned and on the economic opportunities and social conditions in the various sectors of the society (Rawls 1979: 7).

So, participatory governance is premised on existential justice that reflects the condition of the individual, which is the concern of Sartre. Existentialism therefore, encourages the government to face challenges, fear and convictions, in a manner that is devoid of “bad faith” or deception. ‘Bad Faith’ is a term used by Sartre, to denote a state of mind in which an individual indulges in falsehood and lies telling exercise. Sartre explains more. “To be sure, the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth. Bad faith then has in appearance the structure of falsehood (Sartre 1993: 49).

The major problem we have about governance in Africa, and Nigeria in particular is that of deception, lack of commitment, and unnecessary postponement of key decisions. This situation was a dominant feature of Abacha regime and this culminated in the deception or bad faith that led to the killing of the famous play Wright and environmental activist, Ken-Saro Wiwa, and eight of his kinsmen. It was also evident in the political logjam that marked the end of the late Nigerian president, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua. These examples run riot of good and participatory governance principles. On the contrary, an injection of existential ideas, from the Sartre’s perspective can go a long way in securing the much needed peace and stability of Nigeria’s democracy.

### **The Notion of Transcendence**

The basis of democracy and by extension, governance is the individual’s freedom. Every other thing is subsumed in the freedom of the individual. In Sartre’s existentialism, the notion of transcendence is of utmost importance to the human person, because it is the root of our freedom, for it refers to the fact that we define ourselves by our own possibilities and by all the ways in which each of us is continually creating our own future in terms of our choices, plans, our dreams, and ambitions. Governance going by this should mean transcending our problems by first embracing them and secondly moving over for solving them (Law head, 2003).

Good governance does not solve the peoples’ problems’ by shooting them down with guns or making them to face undue hardship like the ones witnessed in Libya, Egypt and a number of other Arab countries. These actions amount to deception or bad faith in existentialism. As a philosophy of action, it enables one to face ideas, issues and realities that are challenging, intoxicating and life enhancing. This is the touch of freedom and responsibility, and freedom in existentialism must be reconciled with facts of our experience, hence we are condemned to be free.

In Nigeria, the salaries of legislatures have been topical in the editorials of most Nigerian newspapers. The law makers (so-called representatives of the people) allocate fat salaries to themselves while the majority of the populace cannot meet their basic needs. From Sartre’s perspective, these issues form the substratum of good governance, participatory governance, and participatory democracy.

In view of the foregoing, it can be affirmed that participatory democracy or governance can achieve success when freedom, which is its foundation is understood from the angle of Sartre’s existential transcendence as a tool for resolving issues of conflict and crisis, and as a philosophy, which teaches that man’s success in life is not dependent on anything other than the individual in a participatory manner.

This paper argues that participatory governance can achieve the above, if its policies, decisions and choices are based on existential philosophy or justice. This is the Sartrean existential justice that is proactive, pragmatic, practical and truthful. Existential justice is a broad concept encompassing all other types of justice. It is foundational justice. The reason is that the basis of justice is the existential condition of the individual. It is basically justice of the concrete realities of

life. Existential justice is one that determines the contents and purposes of legal, distributive, social, moral, commutative and environmental justice. It denotes an atmosphere in which the existential situation of man is highlighted and amplified in order to guide all actions, decisions, choices, in terms of policies, laws and rules concerning the individuals. It is basically characterized by positive change that involves reinvention, reorientation, repositioning, readjustment, renewal of all the levels in man's existential journey defined by choice and responsibility. It is the fundamental condition for individual progress, peace and stability.

These basic tenets of Sartre's existentialism are in tandem with the principles of good governance as given by the United Nations paper on Good governance. These include accountability, consensus-oriented, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness, participation, responsiveness, rule of law, and transparency (UN Paper, 2006). When you combine these ingredients of good governance with Sartre's existentialism, what you have is a people oriented government. Since participatory governance lays emphasis on large involvement of the people in governance; one can therefore say that participatory governance strikes a balance between executing economic policies and the duty of ensuring the welfare of individuals. Good or participatory governance should not just be interested in ensuring increased foreign reserve, Gross Domestic Product, Deregulation of petroleum products, or land use laws, etc when individuals are languishing in inhuman conditions. This point is underscored by the Nigerian Finance Minister, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, in a BBC interview, when she said that, it is not benefiting for a country to be growing economically, when such growth cannot carry people along in terms of job creation, and other essential goods and services (Okonjo-Iweala, BBC interview, 2 December, 2011).

Therefore, using Sartre's existential tool of transcendence, the government can achieve its participatory objectives by ensuring the following needs of the people as highlighted by Ucheaga: provision of food, prevention of attacks and hijacks, shelter from eviction, protection against food and unemployment, ensuring good education for children, and health care (Ucheaga 2009: 107). These are the indices of good and participatory governance. Participatory government must avoid ambiguous terms, - 'the public', 'populace', 'citizenry' 'per capital income', 'Gross Domestic Product', which are targeted at enslaving people through dangerous economic programs and political slogans that only ensure the interest of a privileged few.

For participatory government to ensure peace and stability, it must encourage justice at all levels and must place the individual's situation in perspective while making policy decisions. That is why Sartre's existential justice focuses on the concrete aspects of justice as opposed to abstract notions. This may be why justice Aguda, says that the concept of justice in the abstract is nebulous, but when applied to individual cases, it takes on the garb, so to say, of flesh and blood and can be felt and seen" (Aguda 1995: 7) Government therefore, must be careful with the use of abstract notions mentioned above.

Further, participatory governance must avoid strict legalism as existential justice abhors strict legalism. This is because over reliance on extreme legalism usually brings negative consequences namely, strict adherence to rules in a situation that requires constant appraisal of the concrete realities of life, encourages injustice and real violation of human rights instead of protecting it, this is what must be looked for in participatory governance.

Thus, a government driven by the existentialist logic is one that is constantly engaged in the Sartrean process of totalization, a project of negating "nothingness" and overcoming its negativity. It requires a subjective and honest approach. This "nothingness" is seen in the objective circumstances that trigger conflict and disturbance. It was in this respect that Ucheaga's (2008) view that what is needed to guarantee the elusive perpetual peace in the Niger Delta, an oil rich region of Nigeria, and a trouble spot for militants is progressive elimination of the objective condition makes sense.

The proclamation of amnesty for the militants in the Niger Delta, by the late Nigerian President, Umaru Yar'Adua, was a step in the right direction given that it was aimed at eliminating nothingness and integrating the ex-militants into the society. From the existentialist point of view, it meant functional and active participation in the life of the Nigerian society instead of fighting against it. The introduction of training and retraining of ex-militants and their integration into the society is in line with the postulates of existentialism of the Sartrean genre. Sartre stresses the need to confront the problem and to take fundamental decisions as well as make choices. This positive response must be constantly reviewed so as to be in touch with the reality on ground. Following the foregoing,



participatory governance, therefore, becomes a government that listens, gives attention, delivers the good and responds to emergency and provides pragmatic answers to socio-economic challenges of the individual citizens. In this way, it becomes the elixir for ensuring peace and stability in Nigeria.

### Conclusion

Our task in this write up has been to examine the relationship between existentialism and participatory government and how this could achieve a level playing ground for the individuals' involvement in governance and politics, and as a stimulant for peace and security. From our analysis above, we can see that governance driven by the existentialist logic could bring about economic, social, political and cultural blessings. Specifically, it translates to the populace having food on their tables, good access roads, potable water, housing, basic education, functional health facilities etc. These are the things people use to assess the performance of their governments. By making these parts and parcel of his existentialism, Sartre has provided the key to participatory governance and the panacea to peace and stability in our troubled states.

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