

## AKPABIOISM AS A SOCIO-POLITICAL THEORY AND CONTEMPORARY MACHIAVELLIANISM

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines Akpabioism as a socio-political theory and contemporary Machiavellianism. Akpabioism, a popular nomenclature coined after the former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Chief (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akpabio (May 2007-May 2015) means many things to different people depending on the camp and prism of perception: uncommon transformation, good governance, responsible leadership, thuggery, violence, profligacy and ostentation. Using the descriptive cum analytical methods, the work presents Akpabioism as a socio-political theory with so much emphasis on uncommon transformation and politics of inclusiveness etc. In akpabioism, ideas and passion for excellence precede integral development which when properly harnessed can serve as master keys for effective distribution of the common good and/or dividends of democracy. The paper also maintains that although there may be elements of Machiavellianism in Akpabioism, the latter cannot be reduced to the new version of the former. The paper finally calls for the adoption or integration of the basic elements of Akpabioism into contemporary politics as this could foster integral development and spread of the common good especially when effectively harnessed.*

**Keywords:** Akpabioism, Machiavellianism, political theory, uncommon transformation

### **Introduction**

The business of good governance as well as responsible leadership does not just happen in a vacuum. It is an art which has to be cultivated, learnt and practiced with a view to harnessing both human and material resources for the promotion of the common good and integral development of the people. The history of political thoughts has witnessed the evolution of different theories and systems of government- Communitarianism, Cosmopolitanism, Totalitarianism, Marxism, Consciencism, Welfarism, Machiavellianism, Democracy, Aristocracy etc with their concomitant pros and cons.

Akpabioism -coined after the former governor, Chief (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akpabio(May 2007- May 2015)- primarily designates 'Uncommon Transformation'. Akpabioism, from the outset, may not have been merely intended as a 'theoria', rather, a 'praxis', a pragmatic programme for the execution of uncommon transformation and integral development agenda of his administration. It accentuates inclusive politics along the lines of gender, religious and ethnic divides.

This work presents Akpabioism as a socio-political theory and partly as a neo-Machiavellianism. It does so through careful analysis of the tenets of Akpabioism, the idea of politics and socio-political theory as well as the exposition of Machiavellianism as a political thought which fundamentally emphasizes the arts of power acquisition and maintenance of same through any means fair or foul.

### **Chief (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akpabio**

Although this work is not merely a treatise on the biography of Akpabio per se or his developmental strides in the state during his administration as the executive governor (May 29, 2007- May 29, 2015), yet, it is also true and reasonable that no work of this kind will be complete without a brief recourse to his background from where, supposedly, he derived so much influences, passion and impetus to excel in all spheres of his life and responsibility.

Chief (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akabio, CON was born in December 19, 1962 in Ukana Ikot Ntuen in Essien Udim Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Making reference to his humble background and maternal upbringing, he once said:

I am a working person's person. After the death of my father when I was just six months old, my mother brought me up to believe that anything was achievable. Some of you belong to labour by employment; I belong to labour by birth.

(Extracted from an address presented on the occasion of the 2010 May day celebration held at Ibom Ground IBB avenue, Uyo on Saturday 1 May, 2010)

He attended Methodist primary school, Ukana, essien udim LGA and federal Government College, Porthacourt, Rivers state during where he held the post of a general senior prefect and speaker students' parliament. He later proceeded to the University of Calabar, Cross rivers state where he studied and obtained a degree in law. He is married to Mrs Ekaete Unoma Akpabio, the founder of family life enhancement initiative (FLEI), a non-governmental organization

providing platform for redirecting developmental efforts to family with a view to achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs).

Akpabio served briefly as a teacher and a partner with Paul Usor and co , a law firm in Nigeria. He also worked with EMIS telecommunication limited in Lagos where he rose to the position of director/ chief executive officer of the company. As a lawyer and seasoned politician, Akpabio was appointed commissioner during Governor Victor Attah’s administration and between 2002 to 2006, he served the state as commissioner of petroleum and natural resources, local government and chieftaincy affair, land and housing. During this time distinguished himself as a charismatic and committed servants with lofty ideas and innovations so much so that when other of his colleagues were relieved of their responsibility for various reasons, Akpabio was simply reassigned to other ministries.

In 2006, Akpabio aspired, contested and won the governor’s seat in Akwa ibom state under the platform of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) with the campaigning slogan ‘Let Godswill be done’. He served as governor between 2007-2011 and in 2011 was re-elected to serve till 2015. In 2015, he contested and won the Senate Seat of Akwa Ibom North west senatorial district under PDP and was unanimously nominated as the senate minority leader.

To attempt to recount the achievements of Akpabio’s administration will require a trilogy of encyclopaediae of inestimable size and this is not within the scope of this essay which focuses on Akpabioism- theories, principles, ideologies and philosophies behind the uncommon transformation of the State. However, mention could be made of free and compulsory education from primary to secondary schools, completion of Ibom international airport which he met almost at the site clearing level, quality and massive road construction across the state including federal government roads, construction of a brand new state of the art Governor’s lodge, construction of e-library to ease academic research, construction of flyovers to ease traffic congestion at strategic locations within the state, initiation and implementation of free health care services for children form 0- 5 years, expectant mothers and the elderly, initiation and construction of underground drainage in Uyo and Abak, construction of World Class business and entertainment resort- the tropicana, construction of Godswill Akpabio International Stadium, improved workers welfare packages including payment of ‘Akpabiomber’ (the 13<sup>th</sup> month salary) just to mention only a tip of an ice beg.

## AKPABIOISM

Akpabioism means different thing to different people depending on the camp and angle of evaluation. For instance, Akpabioism has been erroneously

perceived by his opponent as the government of the oppressor for the benefits of few cabal, for the kidnapping and killing of the people especially those who dare to challenge and question the *raison d'etre* of his administration. It is any form of government that imposes rather than allows the freewill of the people to prevail. Describing Akpabioism, Essien (Oct 12, 2014) in *Thewill* Newspaper in an article entitled “Akpabioism: The Beginning of the End” claims:

Within the past seven years (2007 till date) Akpabio has become the biblical equivalent of Goliath.... [However], unlike Goliath, Akpabio did not have the physique to intimidate the people but created fear and terror in the people by kidnapping his opponents, assassinating those whom he perceived as opposition and those he could have but did not kidnap or murdered, he paid the police to arrest them under trumped up charges and went further to twist and pervert justice. It did not take long for Akpabio to succeed in subduing the people of Akwa Ibom State.

Such claims by Essien is apparently baseless, the fruits of rumours probably emanating from those from the opposing camp. There are no concrete evidences or substantial statistical data to back it up. Akpabioism is a household name for the state and national politics used to designate uncommon transformation and sustainable human cum socio-political and economic development through good governance. Akpabioism stands for consolidation and integral development. In Akpabioism, the dividends of true democracy, responsible leadership and compassionate governance speak volumes rather than ‘*flatus vocis*’ (mere empty words) expressed in the manifestoes and heard only during campaigns so much so that if people will accuse you, your good works will excuse you.

### **Basic Tenets Of Akpabioism**

Akpabioism, first and foremost, encapsulates and accentuates ‘**Uncommon transformation**’ and integral development of the human person. It designates good governance, servant leadership and a ‘revolution’ against unjust ethnic, economic and socio-political structures that stand on the path of development and progress of Akwa Ibom people. **Akpabioism is welfarism**. It aims at the common good in all its policy formulation and implementation. In one of his speeches, Akpabio himself remarked: “We intend to make the welfare of Akwa Ibom person the centre-piece of all our efforts and actions as a government” (cited in Essien, Ukpe and Iniodu...). This is a re-echo of Cicero’s “*salus populi suprema lex* - Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law” (cited in Essien, Ukpe and Iniodu, 50). Welfarism is initiated not only in the free and compulsory

education but “the massive rehabilitation of educational infrastructures. The administration has built over 500 new classroom blocks and rehabilitated over 1500 others. It has built/constructed over 500 classroom blocks, dormitories and laboratories across the state and rehabilitated 1800 others. Employment of teachers and the absorption of more than 2000 primary school teachers who were initially employed by the federal government universal basic education scheme” (Essien, Ukpe and Iniodu, 51-52). Here, we want to unravel the basic principles governing the uncommon transformation agenda- Akpabioism.

Uncommon transformation does not just happen; it begins with the passion for excellence and a revolution against uncomfortable status quo, the spirit of complacency and mediocrity. Akpabio, in many occasions, often said he was approaching development with anger. Anger is generally seen as a deadly emotion capable of generating dangers (d + anger =danger). It was looked upon as evil. “Morally we have been cautioned that anger is one of the seven deadly sins. We have learned, too, that being angry is not good for our health; anger raises blood pressure, interferes with digestion, strain the immune system. We fear social consequences even more. Anger sets us at odds with those we love. When angry behaviour turns brutal, people are hurt and relationships destroyed” (Whitehead and Whitehead, 36). At the same, it is also true that “anger’s irritation serves us well when it stirs us to repulse an injury and seek vindication. Anger’s arousal may provoke courage, revolution against unjust status quo for anger is a sort of disturbance of the heart to do away with threats to what we love.

Hence, when therefore, Akpabio talked of **approaching development with anger**, he does not imply destructive force but a metaphor for tremendous energy, progressive zeal and/or passion and burning desire to get things done and done well. Without this ‘passion for revolution’, no uncommon transformation would have taken place in the first place. As Mason (147-148) clearly puts it- “All progress is due to those who were not satisfied to let well enough done.... The biggest enemy of best is good. If you are satisfied with what is good, you will never have what is best”.

**Akpabioism emphasizes the politics of inclusiveness.** It seeks to justifiably and harness the different ethnic groups and socio-cultural organizations within the State to the center of development. This is clearly noticeable in the citing of State projects and appointment. Inclusive politics in Akpabioism is multi-dimensional: (i) political- power for all; no one group was born to rule and others merely to be ruled.(ii)Social- No alienation or subjugation of one group to

another as if they do not belong to the common entity called Akwa Ibom or Nigeria as the case may be (iii) Economic- The wealth of the society if for all, not some. Every person should enjoy some level of socio-economic security. (iv) it is also gender based- ensuring that people are not marginalized based on sex or gender. Perhaps as an Annang man, he was quite aware and must have been influenced by the beauty of togetherness as enshrined in the proverbs- “Eto isidagha ikpong ikapa akai; abobom adimme kúdim; afan adimme ke atuum; ema ebo ke ebok ade ano anyong itamma ase akene nagna eto akpete” (Umoh, 34). Akpabioism is a clarion call for inclusive politics as against all forms of divide and rule syndromes. At the national level, injustice, exclusion/marginalisation is instrumental to birth of violence and secessionist agitations from different ethnic and militia groups. MASSOB- Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra; MEND- movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta; MOSOP- Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People; OPC- Odua Peoples’ Congress, Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, Afanefere of the Yoruba people, etc. “These groups are not signs of progress but symptoms of what is wrong with Nigeria. They are not signs of contentment but frustration” (Uwalaka, 200), capable of generating tribal war and violence at the slightest perception of injustice and exclusion. Akpabio’s inclusive politics forestalls a replication of this frustration in the State especially among the reigning socio-cultural groups, namely, Mboho Mkparawa Ibibio and Ati Annang etc.

**In Akpabioism, ideas precede development.** Akpabioism strongly believes and emphasizes that development and uncommon transformation do not just happen by chance; they are fruits of ideas, mental calculation and priority of meaning over means, being over having and life over livelihood. “Ideas drive human progress whether the idea is about reaching marooned villages in the back waters of a third world country or conquering the moon, the first step needed takes place in human thought” (Akpabio, extract from a Punch Newspaper report/interview, december 4, 2008)

**Akpabioism entails ‘Godswillism’.** It believes that power and authority come from God despite human effort to make it happen. As Akpabio himself often echoed: ‘Let God’s will be done!’, a play on word, a belief, the mission and destiny of the Governor’s name ‘Godswill’. Politics entails both human and divine intrigues. In the faces of setbacks, Akpabio was able to combine his God’s given intelligence and the bravery of Annang persons who Umoh (50) noted are strongly built and whose physical statures are reflection of industriousness and diligence.

Akpabioism also emphasizes that **enlightenment is the beginning and the door of liberation** or emancipation of the people from intellectual and political ignorance which have kept majority in servitude for several years. Akpabioism vehemently believes, to use the words of (Uwalaka, 150), that “democracy, economic development, human development and progress will remain illusive (sic) unless the door of knowledge and enlightenment is opened to the people” and that “Education in Nigeria is an instrument par “excellence” for effecting national development” (National Policy on Education, 2014 edition). Akpabioism seeks to implement and carry out these words beyond mere theory to praxis as could be exemplified, in part, in the free and compulsory education at the secondary level across the state.

**Akpabioism is a concept loaded with optimism and opportunism.** It emphasizes and sees problem and criticism, not as obstacles and defeats but tools for machinating greatness and an occasion for creativity and innovations. In brief, in Akpabioism every stumbling block is an opportunity, a stepping stone for greatness. It keys in the triple fold designs of see, judge and act where negativity is believed and judged can be transformed into something positive matched with suitable and realizable actions. 50 Cent and Greene (79) aver that “almost all great military and political triumphs are preceded by some kind of crisis. That is because a substantial victory can only come out of a moment of danger and attack. Without this moment, leaders are never challenged, never get to prove themselves”. Akpabioism is knowing how to navigate one’s way through failures, defeats and ethnic divides to the apogee of success.

**Akpabio’s optimism could be said to be influenced by his humble background,** bought up by his poor mother and taught to believe that he can make it despite all apparent and real barriers on his path. A cursory survey of the history of some great men often shows their low background formation and training by nature, their rising from lowliness to the zenith- for example, the biblical personalities like Moses who lead the Israelites out of Egypt was raised in basket near the river (Exo. 2: 3-4), David, the great defeater of Goliath was once a valiant herdsman fighting against lions (1 Sam 16:11; 1 Sam 17; 34-35) and Jesus Christ, the redeemer was born in a Manger (Lk.2:6-7) and brought up amid poverty and persecutions.

### **Machiavelli and Machiavellianism**

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) was widely acclaimed as Florentine diplomat, dramatist and political thinker whose political treatises especially the Prince have

earned him several derogatory labels such as ‘political immoralist or better still, amoralist’ and ‘a teacher of evil’ etc.

Machiavellianism designates the thoughts and political ideologies of Machiavelli which accentuate, among other things, the art of acquiring and maintaining power at all cost and by whatever means, the end justifies the means, seeming morality, a divorce between ethics and politics, pretenses in making and delivering political promises and manifestoes. As it is rightly noted, “in the Prince, Machiavelli posits a complex relationship between Ethics and politics that associates princely ‘virtu’ with the capacity to know and act within the political world as it ‘is’ and with the beastly abilities to dispense violence and practice deception. Behind this argument dwells the distinctly Machiavellian insight-politics is the realm of appearances where the practice of moral or Christian virtues often results in a prince’s ruin [and] where knowing how not to be good may result in greater security and wellbeing of both the prince and the people” (Dietz, ‘Machiavellianism’ in Routledge Encyclopaedia of philosophy).

The prince is noted to have influenced a number of politicians and world leaders notably among them include: “Benito Mussolini of Italy, Nicolae Ceausescu of Romania, Josef Stalin of Old Soviet Union, Kumuzu Banda of Malawi, Pol Pot of Cambodia, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (Democratic Republic of Congo), Fidel Castro of Cuba, Napoleon Bonaparte and Armand Jean Richelieu of France, Jean Bedel of Bokassa of Central African Republic, Idia Amin of Uganda, Friedrich Nietzsche and Adolf Hitler of Germany, Hafez al Assad of Syria, Samuel Doe of Liberia. Augusto Pinochet of Chile, Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Charles Darwin of England, Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida, Sani Abacha and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria who misapplied and misconstrued most, if not all, the recommendations of Machiavelli. Every one of these rulers was responsible for the deaths of thousands of their citizens, (decades of) torture and civil right abuses.” (John, 302). Can one, in recent times, dare to add Godswill Akpabio of Akwa Ibom State to the list? Is Akpabioism neo-Machiavellianism or put it differently- Can Akpabioism be said to be inspired by Machiavellian thoughts and philosophy?

In contemporary parlance, the concept of Machiavellianism captures the understanding of politics and governance as the domain and theatre of falsehood, self-interest, seeming morality, the acquisition and maintenance of power at all cost through the use of unethical attitudes and strategies since as it is said and believed- ‘the end justifies the means’, any means whatsoever.

### **Basic Tenets Of Machiavellianism**

Machiavellianism marks a radical departure from traditional political ideologies that situates politics and Ethics within the same province. This has been the tradition from “Plato’s Republic to John Rawl’s A Theory of Justice” (Omoregbe, 189). Machiavelli separates politics from Ethics and maintains, instead, that the states of affairs in Florentine Politics do not warrant such if and only if the prince is to acquire power and maintain it. Politics has a complete different and independent autonomy from Ethics. In the Prince, Machiavelli (48) states his position vividly as follows:

The gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done moves towards self-destruction rather than self-preservation. The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must learn how not to be virtuous and to make use of this or not according to need.

Although Machiavelli separates politics from Ethics, he, however, encourages ‘seeming morality’ - the politician must appear to be virtuous even when, in reality, he is especially where such appearance or pretense is to his own advantage. This is mostly seen in making and keeping of campaign promises and party manifestos. The prince is not duty-bound to keep his promises. Machiavelli’s seeming morality takes advantage of the attitude of most people are prone to appearances rather than how the real situations of things: “Men in general judge by their eyes rather than by their hands; because everyone is in a position to watch, few are in a position to in close touch with you. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few experiences what you really are” (Machiavelli, 56). An example is given of a certain ruler, presumably Ferdinand of Aragon, who never preaches anything except peace and good faith and who was, in reality, enemy of both.

Machiavellianism is chiefly concerned with how things ‘are’ rather than what they ‘ought’ to be and analyses the situations or states of affairs taking cognizance of past political experiences and with a view to avoiding their pitfalls. Machiavelli is “not interested in abstraction about what we ought to do or how we ought to act. He is interested in how men act and get things done, how great and successful men in history achieve their aims” (Omoregbe, 189)

Politics as the art of Power acquisition and maintenance of same at all cost and by whatsoever means are among the central the tenets of Machiavellianism. The phrase ‘at all cost and by whatever means’, in Modern Nigerian politics, could

mean all manners of malpractices- vote buying, decamping, re-decamping, character assassination and even including murder of opponents and ardent supports. According to the tenets of Machiavellianism, “everything else religion, morality, law etc that people associate with politics has nothing to do with this fundamental aspect of politic unless being moral will help one get and keep power. The only thing that counts in getting and maintaining power is calculation; hence, the successful politician knows what to do or what to say for every situation” (John, 309).

Machiavelli explains some ways by which a prince acquires or must acquire power, namely; by prowess (abilities or qualities), fortune (or inheritance), violence or crimes and finally by election or what Machiavelli (30) calls “Constitutional principality”. Any of them is justified provided it is successfully acquired and maintained. Machiavelli (27) illustrates it with Agathocles in Ancient Sicily who, though from an indigent background, rose to power through crimes:

Agathocles, the Sicilian, not only from the status of a private citizen from the lowest, most abject condition of life, rose to become king of Syracuse. At every stage of his career this man, the son of a potter, behaved like a criminal; none the less he accompanied his crimes with so much audacity and physical courage that when he joined the militia he rose through the ranks to become the praetor of Syracuse. After he had been appointed to this position, he determined to make himself prince and to possess by force and without obligation to others what had been voluntarily conceded to him. He reached an understanding about this ambition of his with Hamilcar the Carthaginian, who was campaigning with his armies in Sicily. Then one morning he assembled the people and Senate of Syracuse, as if he meant to raise matters which affected the republic; and at a prearranged signal he had all the senators, along with the richest citizens killed by his soldiers; and when they were dead he seized and held of that city without encountering any internal opposition.

Besides, Machiavelli has it that a prince who wants to successfully acquire and maintain power must combine the strength of a ‘lion’ and the craft of a ‘fox’. Both qualities should be carefully utilized at all times; fighting with the courage and strength of a lion and crafty to escape traps or know when to withdraw momentarily and pretentiously. In the process, he is not bound by any law or morality. The laws of the land and morality are meant for citizens, not the ruler.

Machiavellianism is sort of consequentialist philosophy. The end justifies the means used to arrive at it. If critics 'accuse' you of the means, the ends or results will 'excuse' you. Hence, the ruler must use what he has to gets what he wants anytime anywhere. Whether an action is evil or not is judged or measured by what it meant to achieve and whether it genuinely and successfully achieves it as hitherto estimated.

One of the twentieth century legendary writers whose thoughts are similar to Machiavelli's or could be rightly referred to as contextualisation of Machiavellian principles is Robert Green. In one of his masterpieces, *The 48 Laws of Power*, Green (ix-xi) enumerated and contextually explained with imageries some laws of power which are akin to the fundamental tenets of neo-Machiavellianism. Some of these laws include: (1) do not outshine your master. (2) Do not put some much trusts in friends (3) Conceal your intentions. (5) Much depends on reputation - guard it with your life. (7) Get others to do the work for you but always take the credit. (11) Learn to keep people dependent on you. (13) When asking for help, appeal to peoples' interest. (15) Crush your enemies totally. (16) Use absence to increase respect and honour etc.

### **Akpabioism As A Socio-Political Theory**

To understand Akpabioism as a socio-political theory, it is necessary to clarify the concept of socio-political theory. 'Socio' means 'relating to the society'. Politics comes from the Greek word 'polis' meaning 'city' and 'techne' meaning 'art, know-how' of weaving the state. Politics is the harnessing both human and material resources with a view to promoting the common good and integral development of the people which reflect in both policy formation and implementation. A true politician, therefore, has the common good (not private good) and interest of the people at heart. He is- to use Homer's description of the legendary figure, Agamemnon - "The true shepherd of the people" (Stone, 22).

Although the business of politics seems to be connatural, understanding it as an art could be said to begin with Plato in the *Republic* where it is emphasized that the duty of governance is for 'philosopher-kings' or 'king-philosophers'. The state is tripartite in nature: the rulers (philosophers), the guardians (soldiers) and the artisans (who provide the materials needed for the state). Justice in any polis consists of harmony of the three. For Aristotle, (*Politics* Bk 1. CH.2, p.1129), man is a 'zo on politikon' (political animal) and every state by nature is prior to man:

The proof that the state is a creation of nature and prior to the individual is that the individual when isolated is not self-

sufficient.... He who is unable to live in the society or who has no need of the society because he is sufficient for himself must be either a beast or a god.

The aim of politics is for Aristotle is the common good of the citizens since no man is an island. For the Stoics, man is a citizen of the world (cosmopolitanism), not just a particular entity carved out by nature which we label State.

The understanding of politics and socio-political theory thus portrayed is different from popular conception in Nigeria where politics is misconceived as a 'dirty game' and politicians as 'liars', 'thieves', 'looters' and 'pretenders' etc. Onyeocha (11) recounts his encounter with his Mechanic whose perception of the politician is not different from crooks: "The only difference between a politician and a crook is in the spelling. Politician and crook are spelt differently but they mean exactly the same thing as far as I am concerned. They tell you one thing and mean the very opposite".

Socio-political theory involves a system of thought that governs the art of harnessing both human and material resources with a view to promoting the common good of the people in the society. Essien, Ukpe and Iniodu (34) use political theory and political philosophy interchangeably and go on to define it as "a branch of philosophy which focuses on the formulation of the principles and theories by which the state is governed (or simply put)- it spells out the principles, scope and method of government". As earlier pinpointed, Akpabioism contextually put in practice, among others, such principles as welfarism, inclusiveness, optimism and opportunism. As a socio-political theory, Akpabioism primarily designates 'Uncommon Transformation'.

Expressing admiration for Akpabio's charismatic leadership and uncommon transformation, John (110-111) says: "He is a man of style or in the popular parlance- a pathfinder in uncommon transformation. Since the creation of the state, he is the first Governor who has actually explored the untraversed(sic) socio-political, cultural and infrastructural vicinities of the state. By his ingenuity, he has come to re-define governance in the state. He has set new parameters for others". Akpabioism as uncommon transformation is a watershed in Akwa Ibom political history such that one can now convincingly measure development in terms the historical trilogy: pre-Akpabio, Akpabio and post-Akpabio. In the Scripture, Jesus Christ declares those who were fortunate to see him blessed: "Blessed are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear! In truth I tell you many prophets and upright people longed to see what you see and never saw is; to hear what you hear and never heard it" (Mt. 13:16, The New Jerusalem Bible). In like manner, Plato (230) in the Republic expresses

his gratitude and satisfaction for finding himself in the era of Socrates as follows: “I thank God that I was born a Greek and not a barbarian, freeman and not a slave, a man and not a woman but above all, that I was born in the age of Socrates”. There are many in State who, irrespective of ethnic sentiment and party affiliation, the elites likewise the ‘hoipoloi’ (common masses) thanked and will still continue to thank God that they were born in the era of Godswill Obot Akpabio especially when they experience myriads of road construction in places that were hitherto impassable for years.

Uncommon transformation is not a transformation of nothing. Akpabio was not a political demiurge who merely gives form to existing matter or a sort of supernatural entity who created things ‘ex nihilo’ (out of nothing). Hence, Akpabioism as uncommon transformation begins with consolidation of existing projects from past administrations and then moving forward rapidly in multi-faceted paths of developmental excellence as can be seen in diversifications of works and constructions across the state. This is a serious challenge to most situations in which a politician jettisons the project of the past administration or continues slowly and shabbily and sometimes for selfish interest.

As a socio-political theory, Akpabioism could be likened to Awolowo’s nationalism, Azikiwe’s neo-welfarism and Pan-Africanist ideologies such as Kwame Nkrumah’s consciencism, Leopold Senghor’s negritude and Julius Nyerere’s socialist Ujamaa. Akpabio did at the State level what they did at the national and pan-African levels. They tried to put within African context some political ideologies which they thought would emancipate Africans from their predicaments. “Every aspect of their efforts”, in the words of Oguejiofor (117), “can be traced back to a prior condition created by some aspects of African predicaments. The overall quest for emancipation of African people, their effort to outline this quest into political theories and the specific results of these theories have all arisen because of the peculiar situation of the ambience of their struggles”. Akpabiosism is, as it were, a struggle for inclusiveness (inclusive politics) against all forms of marginalization along gender, political, ethnic, language, cultural and religious divides in Akwa Ibom State politics and beyond. This was uniquely perceived in unbiased spread of political appointments and democratic dividends. The free and compulsory education, which many hitherto thought would have been or was meant only for Akwalbomites was actually for all persons of secondary school age living in the State irrespective of States or ethnic origin. This is not the practice in many state of the federation where people are treated differently based on their origin, for instance, those from the state will pay a certain school fees and others outside something higher; those (e.g corp members) from the state will receive a certain amount of ‘allowees’ and

others something 'lower'. During Akpabio's administration, many graduates longed to serve in the State. He was bent on making Akwa Ibom destination.

### **Akpabioism As Contemporary Machiavellianism**

More often, Machiavellianism, for most people, as earlier pinpointed, is a euphemism for immorality, brutality, wickedness, deception, despotism, cleverness, violence, tricks as well ruthlessness etc. In his introduction to Machiavelli's masterpiece, *The Prince*, George Bull says that "traditionally the prince is a book inspired by the devil" (ix) and preaches ruthlessness, glorifies wickedness and bloodshed and Machiavelli is seen as a deliberate teacher of immorality and an evil counselor. Machiavellian approaches or strategies may signify manipulation, tactics and diplomacy. Those who merely reason this way have failed to recognize that 'evil' is 'live' spelt backward and that the contents of the *Prince* which have attracted many criticisms should be read and understood within context; it was not intended as such as a general rule for everybody everywhere but as thought by experience or prevailing circumstance was based on expediency rather than proficiency. The prince is fascinating, frightening and at the same time very instructive. Machiavelli was not interested in idealizing politics but with finding solutions to political situations. Attempting to abridge this missing link is a positive contribution of Machiavellianism to contemporary politics.

Akpabioism may share in Machiavelli's vision of acquiring and maintaining power but may not agree or share completely in the strategies of getting it done. Therefore, it is the position of this paper that it would be misleading to label Akpabio Machiavellian or completely reduce Akpabioism to neo-Machiavellianism. Machiavellianism emphasizes seeming morality and how to be shrewd or deceptive in the art of acquiring and maintaining power but Akpabioism thinks more of the welfare of the people even in power politics.

However, there are some saying and quotes of Akpabio which could be indicative of the rebirth of Machiavellianism. For example, during the campaign for the emergence of his successor, Udom Gabriel Emmanuel, as Governor of the state, Akpabio was often heard to utter with unwavering confidence - "Utu ke ayen abia ibok akpa, yak mfang akwegne k'ikot" (literary translated as- instead of the death of the herbalist's son, let the leaves in the bush be exhausted). The 'leaves' here could be (mis)interpreted as 'money' politics and getting power by all means (fair or foul) in line with another saying of his "What money cannot do, more money can do", an exThere is a price for every prize and superior quality attracts high cost.

Recall that Machiavellian had advised the prince on ways of getting and staying in power. One of them was the use of violence. The recent comment made by Akpabio in 2019 during the funeral mass of his grandmother- in- law at Christ the King Parish, Aguobu-owa Ezeagu Local Government Area, Enugu State and shortly before his uncommon defection from PDP to APC had given him many labels such that to call him Machiavellian and his political ideology neo-Machiavellianism would be saying the least:

When they asked Hitler’s minister of information how was the war in Poland? He said Warsaw saw war and war saw Warsaw... We can’t talk politics in the church but in 2019, Warsaw shall see war and war shall see Warsaw. The return will be victory.

In other words, APC invasion of Akwa Ibom State will be like Hitler’s invasion of Poland: Warsaw saw war; war saw Warsaw. History has it that about 6 million people were massacred in the Second World War provoked by the Nazis (Accattoli, 49). When therefore, Akpabio made this comment which was first asserted within the context of war in history, newspaper headlines and various individuals criticized him as masterminding violence in the upcoming election in the state in 2019. “When about 80 years later, when those who experienced the brutish savagery of the Nazi German occupation forces were beginning to put that memory behind them or had even died then Akpabio brought up suggestion of repeating the same brutish savagery on his people” (John Edet, Viewpoint 24.8.2018). This kind of interpretation, no doubt, could classify Akpabio as Machiavellian who suggested that the ruler should grasp and maintain power even if by cruel means. While not trying to be defensive or exonerate him and irrespective of the historical antecedence, the question is: did Akpabio intend ‘war’ and ‘violence’ as apparently painted in the Warsaw quote? If yes, why did such not escalate to an uncontrollable magnitude before, during and after election even after his ‘uncommon defeat’? In the sacred writ, Jesus Christ made such comments that are suggestive of war and violence even when he was acclaimed as the prince of peace: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth; it is not peace I have come to bring but sword (Mathew 10;34). From the time of John the Baptist up to the present the present time, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent take it by storm (Mathew 11;12)”. Perhaps, Akpabio, Like Jesus Christ, did not intend violence as seen at the face value. The exegesis of war from Akpabio’s comment is the brain child of opponents who were all out in search of grounds to discredit him. Hence to christen Akpabio ‘Machiavellian’ based on this is subject to controversy.

On the other hand, Akpabioism is a sort of neo-Machiavellianism. Machiavelli, as noted earlier, often accentuated the fact that the ruler should live and behave in such a way that when they 'accuse' him, his works should 'excuse' him and speak volumes for him. Many of those who accuse and tend to label Akpabio many derogatory names or identify Akpabioism with violence, thuggery and cultism in the open may be for few political gains from the current administration often turn back in private to give him some pats on the back for the massive transformation of the State embarked upon by him.

### **Evaluation and Conclusion**

Chief (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akpabio, CON may not have been a 'saint-politician' in the true sense of the word; he may not have touched or impressed all persons just as he may not and cannot be appreciated by all manners of persons but he had, undoubtably and in an unprecedented manner, displayed charismatic leadership and good governance which translated into the integral and uncommon transformation of the State especially in the areas of education, health, agriculture, massive road constructions, aviation, empowerment, sports and entertainment etc.

This work has attempted to synthesis the concept and understanding of Akpabioism judging from the many verbal expressions and written documents or addresses as well as Akpabio's actions as a person which clearly speak volumes. Akpabio and Akpabioism have no written corpus but as it was the case with most great men in history; they wrote, not on paper and with ink but on people with their lives and deeds and others are fortunate to encounter them speak about and write volumes. Such was the case with Jesus Christ and Socrates etc. Akpabioism, perhaps, was not from its outset intended as a mere socio-political theory but a pragmatic programme for the realization of the uncommon transformation agenda with serious emphasis, inter alia, on inclusive politics, the priority of passion and ideas over development (that is development begins with passion for excellence coupled with sagacious and tenable ideas).

As earlier noted, some persons tend to see Akpabioism as a negative concept and the man Akpabio as a progenitor of violent crimes, kidnapping and killings of innocent persons especially political opponents. This paper dismisses such claim as baseless and an attempt to drag his image in the mud. Perhaps, if one must admit, that can only be inferred logically and indirectly and even at that no without some idols of reasoning.

One cannot completely reduce Akpabioism to neo-Machiavellianism or doubt the presence of the elements of Machiavellianism in Akpabioism. Akpabioism, like Machiavellianism, exemplifies power acquisition and maintenance of same by all means. Some of Akpabio's verbal expressions like 'what money cannot do, more money can do', 'utu ke ayen abia ibok akpa, yak mfan akuegne k'ikot' lend credence to this claim. However, Akpabioism, unlike, Machiavellianism does not emphasize false ostentation, pretense and deceit which are typical of a Prince but, truth be told, some elements of these seeming virtues are sine qua non especially judging from human political psychology and the peculiarity of Nigerian political scenarios.

Notwithstanding its limitations, this work calls for the adoption, adaptation and proper harnessing of basic elements of Akpabioism into contemporary politics with a view to fostering good governance, responsible leadership, State/nation building and uncommon integral transformation.

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