



## **Lying and political realism: An analysis of contemporary political trends**

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**Abstract:** The rate at which conflicts are breaking out in different parts of the world these days is alarming. The consequences of these conflicts are deaths resulting from outright war, protests, and manifestations. Political instability, bad governance, and insurgency seem to be killing more than any pandemic has ever done. It is becoming difficult for philosophers and political scientists to fold their arms and watch this global political mayhem. In this article, we try to find out why it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to live together in peace and harmony. We argue here that the cause of this chaos is the dominant presence of lying and intentional deception in political action across the world. Political actors have gotten so used to the system of misinformation and distortion of facts that they have not noticed that the world has evolved such that it is becoming relatively easier to carry out fact-checking. Even from the comfort of one's bedroom, one can painlessly verify information that is given in public space and debunk it with ease. This means that lying no longer has a place in global politics. When people find out the truth, they are bound to revolt, and the result is conflicts and deaths. Here we suggest that lying is no longer effective in politics, and so politicians should be realistic and adopt the ethics of truth, which demand honesty, respect for human rights, and responsibility.

**Keywords:** Lying, political realism, ethics of truth.

## **1 Introduction**

Political instability, bad governance and insurgency seem to be killing these days more than any pandemic has ever done. One cannot help but wonder what is wrong with the world today. In the course of this reflection, it is easy to observe the inadequacy and unconformity between official government speeches and policies and their actions. Africa seems to have suffered a fair share of governance-related crises in recent years. Some of the cases still fresh in mind include the Burundian constitution crises which led to the Nkurunziza protest and registered untold deaths in 2015, the controversial reports on the assassination of the Libyan ex-president Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 following a civil war movement and military intervention of NATO, the Egyptian political revolution which brought down Muhammad Hoseni Mubarak in 2011, the Boko Haram insurgency which registered untold deaths in Nigeria, Cameroon Chad and Niger since 2009, the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon and the military coup d'état in Burundi and Gabon, Mali Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger. These events and more have brought untold suffering on the people and death rates have skyrocketed alarmingly. In an attempt to get to the causes of these ills across the continent and beyond, one gets a common denominator; bad governance, characterized by lying, manipulating of public opinion, ruses, embezzlement, corruption and the killing or imprisonment of people with dissenting voices. A careful observations of the African political landscape especially the military rule that is gradually taking the lead in the French-African countries, the sudden rise of anti-French feelings, the role of terror and post electoral violence reveals that frustration resulting from effects of deception and bad governance is the underlying problem. It is becoming clear that lying and manipulation as a means of governance is not doing good for Africa or to say the least is not working well.

This, however, is not the exclusive reserve of Africa. A careful reflection on the campaign speeches delivered during the presidential elections in the United State of America with the most recent being the speeches of Donald Trump and France, especially those related to war and foreign policies, leave one in a state of muddle. One would hardly understand how we preach international peace and equity against a backdrop of "America first" as indicated by Donald Trump. Not much of what is said matches or corresponds with what is done. This is a pointer to the fact that even the west is not free from lies and manipulation in governance. This seems to be the order

of the day all over the world. Thus, it is right to argue that the world is governed by lies.

The most dissatisfied and disgruntled are the electorate who vote people based on the promises they make and the policies in place and end up with an action plan which is completely divorced from the initial promises. The worst part of it is that the electorate has no means to seek redress legally since all legal instruments are being controlled by those who deceive the electorate. That way, what seems to be the only way out or the last resort is civil disobedience, open rebellion or insurgency. This seems to have been the case with most countries in the world where we witness political instability. While it is more severe in some countries, going as far as creating war, in others it is only uneasy tension that makes people live in constant fear of the unknown.

This state of things demands a serious reflection on the means of governance employed by contemporary leaders. It will be important to reflect on the following puzzles; is lying realistic in governance? Can the use of lying and manipulation in governance actually lead to a better society? These worries, though of a very contemporary and actual order, are not so new in global politics. One of the philosophers who has reflected on similar issues is Hannah Arendt. In her book "*Crisis of the Republic*", she clearly articulates the dangers of lying in politics and shows how such acts could destroy the republic. It is against the backdrop of her work that we shall be staging our case against lying as a means of governance.

## **2 Is lying realistic in governance**

For us to be able to answer this question, it is very important that we start by understanding what lying and realism mean. This will permit us to check their compatibility in politics or governance.

### **2.1 Meaning of lying**

The word lying is the present participle of lie. It consists of an act of making false statements. According to Mearsheimer (2011, 198) "lying is when a person makes a statement that he knows or suspects to be false in the hope that others will think it is true... lying can involve making up facts that one knows to be false or denying facts that one knows to be true." What we get from this definition is that lying is an action designed to deceive a targeted audience. So, it consists of man's imaginative ability to establish deceit which can be in the form of falsehood, deception or concealment

capable of making people believe or disbelieve what is or what is not. In short, it consists of saying that something is when it is not or saying that something is not when for real it is.

In politics, lying is being expressed in different forms such as deception, falsehood, concealments and defactualisation. It is in this light that Arendt presents the totalitarian government's idea according to which, politics consisted of two things; that is, creating imagination and making people believe in it. She considers political lies as an aptitude as she writes "*une aptitude à déformer, par la pensée et par la parole, toute ce qui se présente clairement comme un fait réel*" (Arendt and Durand 2002, 9)

That is, an aptitude of reforming or deforming everything that is presented clearly as real fact through thinking and talking or communication. This is to show that her treatment of this notion is purely political. Hurbert Mono Njana likens the aspect of lying to the falsification of one's attitude or behavior. He defines it as: "*la fausseté d'une attitude ou d'un comportement qui consiste à donner le change, à faire illusion ou à se donner l'apparence de ce qu'on n'est pas, et même l'apparence du contraire de ce qu'on est*" (Mono Ndjana 2006, 5).

According to Ramsay (2000, 3), lying can be defined as "a statement intended to deceive others, telling a lie is not simply the opposite of telling the truth because telling the truth and being truthful are not the same thing, nor is this saying that what is false is necessarily to deceive". Ramsay (2000) from this we understand that, the decision to lie or not lie depends solely on the intent of the actor. That is why Maureen further affirms in line with St Augustine's statement that, "a person is to be judge as lying or not lying according to the intention in his own mind and not according to the truth or falsity of the statement" (Ramsay 2000, 3).

What is Hannah Arendt's focus here? it is as Roger Huard puts it, "officials tell lies and citizens remain ignorant or fail to understand what from a political perspective is going on about them" (Huard 2007, 33). In this text *Crises of the Republic*, officials use deception, defactualisation, concealments, and image making and the aim of all these is to acquire and preserve political power. Lying can also be defined as the inadequacy between speech and act or the non-correspondence of thoughts with facts, the negation of what is or the affirmation of what is not, to deceive an audience.

It is in this line of reflection that Paolo thinks that Aristotle likens lies to separation of thoughts from facts.

### **3 Meaning of realism**

The notion of realism seems to be getting more complicated and twisted in the eye of the politician. The concept is taken from the English word real meaning that which is or that which exist or is possible. Firstly, realism can be defined as the faithful and accurate representation of a person or object, capturing its true essence. This definition, although straightforward, is suitable for the intended purpose of this work. Realism, in this context, pertains to the pursuit of truth, honesty, and adherence to factual information. Secondly, realism can also be understood as the mindset or approach of acknowledging and accepting a situation as it truly is, and being prepared to handle it accordingly. The second view seems to have over emphasised and twisted the meaning in a way as to promote inequality and justify injustice and cruelty in political practice. This second meaning is also seen in the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (4th Edition) (2013). It holds that realism is a cognitive and behavioural approach that relies on factual information and feasible outcomes, rather than wishful thinking about improbable events. In this sense, a realist is one who thinks and acts in ways that are most likely to succeed. Political realism then will mean engaging political strategies based on facts which can make success possible. Our meaning of political realism will rather tie with our first understanding of realism; political realism here will mean the quality or facts of representing political ideas and facts in a way that is accurate and true to life. This is the definition that has been hidden by most political theorists who are more interested in justifying coercive policies that protecting and promoting the welfare of the people. From this equation of realism to possibility of success, we are obliged to find out what politics is and what political success means?

### **4 Meaning of politics and political success**

The word politics is derived from the Greek word "polis", meaning "city-state", the activity or affairs of the state. That is activities that relate to influencing the government or getting and keeping power in a government. The online Merriam Webster dictionary, (1828) defines politics as "the arts or science of government" (Webster 1828). A precision made in this dictionary worth mentioning is the fact that, politics could carry with it a negative connotation closely related to activities



characterized by artful and dishonest practices. Furthermore, politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. It can also be defined as the arts or science of governing or the rational organisation of a group of people or the state. The Dictionary of Politics defines it as “the theory and practice of governance” (Collin 2004, 183).

According to Plato and Jowett (1977, 9), politics means the rational organisation of the state guaranteed by the notion of “the good”. He thinks that politics has as objective to establish justice among men in the society contrary to the deceptive position of the sophist as defended by Thrasymachus in the republic when he said, “the different forms of government make laws democratically, aristocratically, tyrannical, with a view to their several interests and these laws which are made by them for their own interest constitute the justice which it delivers to their subject” (Plato and Jowett 1977, 9) To Aristotle, politics consists of ensuring the happiness of every man in the society since according to him, all human actions are aimed at achieving a certain end which he called, happiness. He writes: “*toute cite est une sorte de communauté, et que toute communauté est constituée en vue d'un certain bien*” (Aristote 1995).

To Thomas Hobbes, politics consists of ensuring everyman’s security against violence and war since the emergence of the civil society has as objective to protect man from violent death that existed in the state of nature. To John Locke, politics mean, the protection of men and their property since the civil society’s mission is to ensure the protection of property. To Jean Jacques Rousseau, it consists of a rational organisation of the state to ensure people’s freedom. It is this rational organization of the state that gives right to some group of persons or one man to act on behalf of others. This means some people are being empowered to act on behalf of the group. This people who are being empowered possess political power.

From these definitions of politics, we gather that the sole aim of politics is to ensure the wellbeing of the people and their property. In other words, it is to establish justices amongst men. Hobbes indicates that politics consist of governing in such a way as to ensure everyman’s security against violence and war. This suggests that political success will mean governing in a way as to meet with the objectives of political action. That is, acting in a way that helps the governed to lead good and just lives and be free from violence.

From this understanding, political realism will consist of thinking or acting in a way that helps politicians to achieve the goal of political action. A political realist will be one who makes use of means of governance which will give him political power and at the same time help the electorate to lead good lives. A political realist then is not necessarily a selfish person who deceives people into believing what is not true or what works only in his own interest. Two things are to be gotten from a politically realistic action. First, it is an action which works and is based on facts. Second, it is an action which leads to a politically stable and prosperous society. The first characteristic of political realism seems to have overshadowed the second in political action today. Consequently the actions of most so-called political realists seem to be at the roots of political instability, injustice and violence across the world. A politician, nowadays, is only seen to be realistic in as much as his decisions and actions help in giving him power even to the detriment of the masses and the stability of the society. This workability, however, is very short-lived as the masses soon discover that what they thought to be true was actually lies. They soon realise that the course they believed would better their lives was only designed to better the life of the politician. This has been seen as the cause of almost all political crises across the world.

## **5 Is lying realistic in contemporary politics?**

This question is the same as asking that, does lying help the politician to achieve his goal? Again one would love to find out if lying works in politics and for how long? Does lying work in contemporary politics? The answer to this question is evident. If lying has been useful in the past, today it is the contrary. Telling lies to the electorate these days only puts people to slumber for a very short time. After that people quickly come to terms with the reality and their reaction is dangerous. Unfortunately, once trust is lost; it is difficult to regain it. It is more politically realistic these days to speak the truth and let people see how much effort a politician is putting in the right direction than to tell lies and people eventually discover the truth. Governance by deception is archaic and old-fashioned.

It has become so easy to access information verify claims these days that one who lies especially on public affairs simply stupefy himself in front of the masses. The latest development in the audiovisual sector and the social media services no longer allow space for people to be deceived for long. Unfortunately, most politicians have



not yet come to terms with this new reality especially in Africa where the greater part of the political class consist of the old people who are not versed with the developments in the domain of science and technology. They still cling so tide to their old system of lying and deception and keep wondering why it is not working any more. When they finally realise how difficult it is to rule the people with lies telling and false promises, they resort to violence. This is one of the major causes of political instability, wars and rebellious movements across the world and most especially in Africa.

### **5.1 Lying and political unrest in contemporary societies**

One would notice that in recent years there is increasing political unrest across the world. Some of the most recent consequences of lying in politics are the Russian versus Ukraine war, the Burundian constitutional crises which led to the Nkurunziza protest and registered untold deaths in 2015, the controversial reports surrounding the assignation of the Libyan ex-president Muammar Mohammed Gaddafi in 2011, the Egyptians revolution which led to the overthrowing of Mohammad Hosni Mubarak in 2011, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria which broke out 2009, the spread of Boko Haram activities to northern Cameroon, and the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Unfortunately, most political analysts have misconstrued the true reasons for the multiplication of these crises. Many either attribute it to inter-generational conflicts or the uncontrolled taste for power by overzealous youths. True as it may be that most of these movements are led by more youthful leaders, it is important to go beyond their ages and find out what motivates these youths to become so violent and aggressive against their long time leaders.

Fortunately, one does not need much reflection or research to see that lying and deception is at the back of most, if not all, of these crises. The youths have come to terms with reality. They have realised that their present leaders mean no good for them. Their future has been mortgaged and their lives have no value. There is no hope for a better future because what they have believed all through have been illusions. This discovery has put in place mistrust, hopelessness and lack of confidence in the leaders and the institutions they govern. This state of mind is the base of violent revolution. The youths on discovering the truth now believe that all they had has been lost already. Losing their lives in a revolution means nothing anymore because their entire lives seem to be a lie. They believe, as Marx and

Engels (1967, 79) puts it, that “the proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win.” This is the outcome of deception. This state of mind is at the base of all political unrest and revolutions that we find across the world and especially in Africa today. Looking at this state of things, one is tempted to ask again; is lying politically realistic?

If political realism means thinking and applying political strategies that works, can we say that lying works? Is it realistic? If it were, it will help us to progress, it will help the politician to achieve the welfare of his people and not to have them killed. If truly the goal of the politician is to secure the wellbeing of the society then surely lying is not one of the means to get to it. Lying has failed and is now the cause of political unrest. So what should do in order to free the society from this political chaos?

## **5.2 The ethics of truth and the humanisation of governance**

Why is Hannah Arendt against lying in politics and the conception of power in terms of violence, force or strength? We argue here that when power is being considered in terms of domination and the act of lying considered as a system or strategy of governance the whole essence of politics suffers from mistrust, distrust and loss of confidence which weakens the social fabrics and bring the nation to its knees. We agree with Hannah Arendt that lying is destructive in politics and that political power conceived in deception is the bedrock of future political unrest and wars. It is important to mention that she is against the politics of lying and the conception of power in terms of violence, authority, strength and force. Let us consider here some of the major arguments against lying in politics as seen by Hannah Arendt.

## **6 The strength of truth or factuality over lies**

It is important at this level to recall that lying was defined as an aptitude to deform in thoughts and in speech everything which could be considered as real facts. According to Hannah Arendt, it is true that a liar (in his lies) often have an added advantage over her audience, but it is also certain that, truth cannot be substituted completely. So, truth is like the principle of goodwill in Immanuel Kant’s ethics which cannot be substituted with any other good. Truth is good in “itself” and powerful enough to fight the influence of lies. That is why she thinks that, under normal circumstances, truth will always prevail. If truth cannot be substituted, it follows that it cannot be destroyed completely. Judging from Arendt’s explanation of the principle of lying which supposes that one must destroy what is there and create something

which seems to be, we discover that, since truth cannot be destroyed, it is difficult for lies to succeed over truth under normal circumstances. That is why she affirmed that:

No matter how large the tissue of falsehood that an experience lair has to offer, it can never be large enough even if he enlists the help of computers, to cover the immensity of factuality. The lair who gets away with any number of single falsehoods will find it impossible to get away with lying on principles” (Arendt 1972, 7).

It is important to note here that truth is a principle of factuality and it is this fact that Hannah thinks that it is difficult to lie on facts or replace it with anything in the world even with the help of computers. Based on the experience that she has had from the totalitarian governments and her reflection on American foreign policy in Vietnam, she thinks that, the totalitarian rulers and their frightening confidence in lying, their ability, for example to rewrite history again and again to adopt the past to the political line of the present moment and to eliminate data (defactualisation) did not fit their ideology and worse of it is that all those data that did not meet up with their ideology were either neglected or ignored. What the lair fails to see is that when data is neglected or ignored in a logical historical narrative, the whole edifice loses consistency naturally and the whole edifice collapses on its own accord. Thus to know the truth a good logical analyst needs nothing more than the story told. Its inconsistency and illogicality betrays it and the truth surfaces naturally.

To illustrate this, she argues that, in a socialist economy, to say that there is nothing as employment means that, the unemployed are simply considered as non- persons. This is because saying that there is nothing as unemployment in such societies logically implies that, everyone is employed. The second argument she restates here is that lies cannot last for long. This means that, it cannot give us long term pleasure; its own pleasure is short-lived. She (Arendt 1972, 7) argues that:

There always comes the point beyond which lying becomes counter-productive, this point is reached when the audience to which the lairs are addressed are forced to disregard altogether the distinguishing line between truth and falsehood in order to survive. Truth or falsehood- it does not matter which anymore, if your life depends on your acting as though you trusted. Truth that can be relied on disappear entirely from public life and with it the chief stabilising factor in the ever-changing affairs of men.

What she means by counterproductive here is a state where the audience to which it is being addressed are forced to deny, reject, ignore or disregard the relation between truth and falsehood in order to survive. In the light of lies advanced by the public relation managers in government, this stage is reached when the manipulated population start resisting. Hannah describes it as the state wherein, “the same people who perhaps can be “manipulated” to buy a certain kind of soap cannot be manipulated- though, of course, they can be forced by terror to “buy” opinion and political views” (Arendt 1972, 8). In our reading of the nature of lying, we discover that, in the case of the Americano-Vietnam war, the North Vietnamese had been a stumbling block to the United States when they discovered that, they could not be convinced anymore to stop the fight on grounds that they (North Vietnam) could not win. Hannah is convinced that, such doctrine cannot determine the way people form their opinion about something neither can it prevent them from acting according to their own light of understanding. This is a very dangerous stage in the political life of a people. When people no longer give value to government action, they are at the stage of social and political abandonment. It does not matter what the leaders say or do, after all no one believes in them and no one acts in accordance with what they say except under coercion. This is the start of the collapse of a state and it is a result of lying in politics.

In relation to the counterproductive stage, she addresses her criticism to mysticism, what she called the “*arcana imperii*” otherwise known as the mystery of governance. That is, the operation of politics on secrecy. The weakness of this method in governance according to her is that, the actor will soon forget the facts which he is trying to cover up. The state of forgetfulness can be likened to the counterproductive stage that she indicated. This is imminent in her analysis on the role of the United States in Vietnam. She explains that, this method failed even the actors themselves as they forgot their concealment. This means that, they will come a time where they will not still remember the initial goal in their game of deception; we saw this under the divergence in facts where goals became short-lived. It is from this point of view that she (Arendt 1972, 31) stated that:

If the mysteries of governance have so befogged the minds of the actors themselves that they no longer know or remember the truth behind their concealments and their lies, the whole operation of deception, no matter how

well organised its “marathon information campaigns”, in Dean Rusk’s words, and how sophisticated its Madison Avenue gimmickry, will run aground or become counterproductive, that is, confuse the people without convincing them. For the trouble with lying and deceiving is that, their efficiency depends entirely upon a clear notion of the truth that the liar and the deceiver wishes to hide. In this sense, truth even if it does not prevail in public, possesses an ineradicable primacy over all falsehood.

The idea of forgetfulness here is very significant and reminds us of the intrinsic relation between lies and truth. For one to lie successfully s/he must know and remember the truth they intend to conceal. It becomes very difficult when a liar does it for so long that he forgets the truth and starts himself believing the lies he tells. For a lie to remain alive we always need another lie to cover the previous one. This puts us in a situation where one other lie ends up revealing the truth which the original lie intended to conceal. This happens when one forgets the truth and does everything to defend a long lasting lie. At this point lies become counterproductive and the people are able to see clearly the truth.

In this light, Arthur Schlesinger describes the United States’ policy of lying as, “the policy of one more step’- each new step always promising the success which the previous last step had also promised but had unaccountably failed to deliver” (Arendt 1972, 32). It is from this perspective that we can conclude that the nature of the relation between lies and truth and the failure of the political project of lying in American politics constitute a fundamental point of Hannah’s critics of lying in politics. This means that lies must not be considered as an indispensable or an ultimate tool in politics.

### **6.1 The effect of lying on the liar**

Now let us consider the concept and danger of self-deception on the perpetrators or practitioner of lies. If we understand deception as the ability to cover up facts and trying to convince an audience believe in the non-existence of such facts or vice versa, self-deception will consist of believing in it to be the case. To Hannah, deception is inter-connected with self-deception. This means that the act of deception keeps the deceived and the deceiver alike in the dark. In other words, it means that, he that practices the act of lying will end up believing in it. She likened this to medieval anecdote wherein, a sentry on duty to watch and warn people of a town of

the approach of the enemies, jokingly sounds a false alarm and also found himself rushing to the walls to defend the town against his invented enemies. From this analysis, she concluded that, “the more successful a lair is, the more people he has convinced, the more likely it is that he will end by believing his own lies” (Arendt 1972, 34).

At this level, deception is inter-connected with self-deception since the deceiver ends up believing in his lies. This was the case in the pentagon papers, she explains that, the confrontation in this report was between people who did their best to manipulate and to win the minds of their people but failed to create and convince the audience that they could then join themselves. The criticism Hannah Arendt is advancing here is the dependency of decision makers, the public relation managers and the professional problem solvers on theory and the deliberate neglect of facts from the field. She (Arendt 1972, 35)states that:

They were so convinced of overwhelming success, not on the battle field, but in the public relation arena, and so certain of the soundness of their psychological premises about the ultimate possibilities in manipulating people, that they anticipated general belief and victory in the battle for people’s minds.

This is a unique description of their concentration on theory and the neglect of the practical approach to the problem on the ground. The effect of this dependency on theory and the neglect of factuality is that it caused them to pay little or no attention to those facts that their audience refused to be convinced of than to other facts present on the battle field. It is on this basis that she considered the later argument on self-deceptions to be a dangerous tool in the arsenal of totalitarian politics. In this line of reflection, she (Arendt 1972, 36)stated that:

In the realm of politics where secrecy and deliberate deception have always played a significant role, self-deception is the danger par excellence, the self-deceived deceiver losses all contact with not only his audience but also the real world, which still will catch up with him because he can remove his mind from it but not his body.

What Arendt is trying to demonstrate here is the characteristic function of what happened with the problem solvers. They know the facts but failed to admit or eliminate it. The danger of this self-deceptive act is that it contributed to their losing sight of the real problems which was the logical outcome of their utmost



concentration on deception for the sake of deception. Her criticism here is that the goals of the politics of lying as had been the case with the United States is exclusively psychological, that is, a matter of the mind. Added to this is the fact that, the problem solver did not judge but instead, they calculated, and their calculation was based on mathematical and pure rational truth which were not important to the problem at hand. It is because of this that, they failed to think about the risk of decision making process on Vietnam. It is in this line of reflection that she (Arendt 1972, 37) confirms with Barnett, who posits that:

The trouble with our conduct of the war in south Vietnam was that, no such control given by reality itself ever existed in the minds of either the decision-makers or the problem-solvers, it is true that American policy pursued no real aims, good or bad, that could limit and control sheer fantasy, neither territory nor economic advantage has been pursued in Vietnam, the entire purpose of the enormous and costly effect has been to create a specific state of mind.

What she is trying to explain here is a further explanation on the fact that America failed to understand that great power is limited power. Amongst all the other objectives or goals, the only finite of all is to create a state of mind. This state of mind is what she qualified as image making the yearning to manipulate people's mind. (Arendt 1972, 37) describe the attitude as, one of:

the deadly combination of the "arrogance of power- the pursuit of a mere image of omnipotence as distinguished from an aim of world conquest, to be attained by non-existent, unlimited resources with the arrogance of mind, an utterly irrational confidence in the calculability of reality.... (Idem)

From this presentation, a new idea comes up, that is, "deadly combination of the arrogance of power". Power becomes very arrogant when it is espoused with violence and orientated towards domination. This highlights the problematic of political power in relation to the question of lying in politics. Whether political power should be grounded on lying, deception, concealment or falsehood is the question at stake.

## **6.2 Political revolution and the ethics of truth or honesty**

The concept of revolution and the ethics of truth we propose here find expression in the works of the Cameroonian contemporary philosopher, Hubert Mono Njana. In his book entitled *Revolution and Creation*, he defines revolution as "a change of position.

One thing replaces another. In the place of one thing which ceases to exist, another thing immediately comes into being" (Mono Ndjana 1991, 14). He further thinks that this revolution must be genuine and what determines this genuineness and positivity in the decision to substitute one thing with another where one thing is destroyed and replaced by another in the same process. So, the process is dynamic and non-static. What we advocate for in this sense is a radical break from the past and the replacement of lying in politics with an ethics of truth and domination with liberalism since he thinks that, politics is a serious matter that concerns the whole community. Unlike the demi-politicians who conceive politics as a game of interest; Hebert Mono Njana thinks that, politics is not a game; it is a serious affair that concerns a whole community and human destiny. This means that, it is an affair of all for all and not all for one and vice versa. Consequently, it necessitates the intervention of all through the exchange of ideas which must be communicated in a public space provided by statesmen as Arendt earlier on stated. Mono Njana highlights in this line of reflection that, *"C'est dire qu'une éthique de vérité doit soutenir l'éthique de la communication pour que cette dernière acquière de l'authenticité"* (Mono Ndjana 2006, 34). This means that an ethics of truth must support the ethics of communication so that it acquires authenticity. According to him, the ethics of truth is the condition sine qua none of the extermination of falsehood from politics and it finds expression in the domain of communication.

The practice of falsehood in politics is a vice which must be dealt with since no political institution had ever been successful on such basis. That is why he adds that: *"D'expérience historique, aucune société ne s'est bâtie sur ce modèle. La rationalité d'une échange politique véritable exige l'égalité et la liberté des discours, donc la cohérence du vrai peut alors se transformer en cohésion sociale"* (Mono Ndjana 2006, 35). This is exactly Hannah Arendt's conception of politics where she projects her criticism on deceptive politics and the totalitarian regime which operates on violence, terror and domination demonstrated through expansionist strategies such as wars.

The spirit of social cohesion that Mono Njana is proposing here must take into consideration the role of an edifying communication to avoid misunderstanding since to him misunderstanding or the absence of understanding is the bedrock of civil wars and international conflicts. The ethics of truth that Mono proposed is to be realized

through education, a good educational system granted by dialogue which to him is the base of democracy. He adds that; “L’éducation apparait ainsi comme une fonction essentielle en regime démocratique, qui permet au citoyen de comprendre les tenants et les aboutissants d’opérerque de choix en connaissance de cause et d’apprécier les situations les plus diverses” (Mono Ndjana 2006, 36). As an essential tool in democracy, education remains an effective regulator of human consciousness in the formation of rational needs to produce rational communication. From this point of view, the imperative expressed is the formula “not every truth should be told” or “must be said”, is not imposable at all.

The role of education is the total emancipation of the person and the reinforcement of the respect of human rights. Mono Njana writes; *“l’éducation doit viser au plaine épanouissement de la personnalité et au renforcement du respect des droits de l’homme et des libertés fondamentales. Elle doit favoriser la compréhension, la tolérance et l’amitié entre toutes les nations et tous les groups raciaux ou religieux...”* (Mono Ndjana 2006, 35-36). Education should define the ways of training and training is indispensable in acceding to this ethics of truth as he thinks that trained individual can hardly be a problem to a society. He affirms that. *“L’homme forme et prépare ne peut nullement s’offusquer, ni se révolter, ni s’évanouir, décourager quand ils comprennent bien le sens de la vérité communiquée [...] D’où la nécessité même de l’éducation politiques et de la formation intellectuelle comme base de la démocratie”* (Mono Ndjana 2006, 37).

We can now understand why Plato thinks that one does not do wrong voluntarily since knowing the good necessitates doing good and not vice. In this line of reflection, we see the necessity to discourage the commercialisation of power in Africa, a situation which has brought down the development of African state to its knees. The commercialisation of power has as effects bribery and corruption which Lucien Ayissi criticized in his philosophy. Hubert Mono explains his notion of the ethics of truth to mean, the ethics of responsibility; which is like Kant’s principle of duty. He (Mono Ndjana 2006, 39) explained that;

*L’éthique de véritévientdonc à être partisan de l’éthique de conviction, qui fait appel aux principesquellesqueroient les conséquences de cette option. L’éthique de responsabilité quant à elleregarded’abord les conséquenceset se*

*prier dès lors de dire la vérité, cette dernière peut entraîner de catastrophes, l'homme politique ici fait preuve de responsabilité et même irréaliste de la vérité.*

To crown this explanation Mono Ndjana (2006, 40) evoked Marx Weber who declared that:

Le partisan de l'éthique de conviction, ne peut supporter l'irrationalité éthique du monde, il est un "rationaliste" cosmo-éthique' [...] il n'est pas possible de concilier l'éthique de conviction et l'éthique de responsabilité pas plus qu'il n'est possible de décréter au nom de la morale quelle est la fin qui justifierait le moyen, si jamais on fait la moindre concession au principe.

The view of Mono Ndjana here is strictly in line with what we stand for. The ethics of truth does not lead us to an "I must win situation". On the contrary, it presents the leader as an honest person who speaks the truth and is ready to take responsibility for whatever outcome of his decision. He insists that the masses should be educated and should be fed with the truth. When people know the truth and can make clear judgments based on facts, they cannot blame the leader even when he fails out of genuine effort. Leaders are not superhuman beings. They can also fail but what people demand from them is honesty, accountability and responsibility for what they do. Lying to the people in order to look indomitable can be dangerous especially when people are made to believe in such inexistent powers only to discover in the end that the leader they thought was a god was after all just a mere human being with his own weaknesses. To overcome, we must educate the masses to be able to support or accept the consequences of telling the truth. Gorbatcher is right to have thought that truth contributes to social cohesion which is the bedrock for better development of our economy and democracy.

In his conclusion, he articulated that from a purely political stand point, it is necessary to respect and apply this principle of ethics of truth contrary to the practice of lying. It is necessary to get back to the Kantian reflection on the transcendental which is the basis of this ethics. He concluded with the most celebrated remarks of President Lincoln: "*on peut tromper une partie du peuple tout le temps, on peut tromper le peuple une partie du temps. Mais on ne peut pas tromper tout le peuple tout le temps*" (Mono Ndjana 2006, 43) This indicates the relative nature of lying and its inability to make it a universal law of nature as Kant will say.

## **7 Conclusion**

In this paper, we engaged in finding out why global peace and security seems to be collapsing. We observed that in almost all countries of the world nowadays, there is a conflict of one kind or the other with varied consequences, ranging from uneasy peace to outright war and untold deaths. Mortality rates are getting higher day by day with women and infant mortality increasing exponentially. This is a cause for concern especially at a time when we think people should be able to live longer thanks to the advancement in life supporting technological advancement. In this paper, we have diagnosed that the problem is bad governance characterised by lying, bribery, corruption, ruses, and all other forms of deformation of facts. People still think they can tell lies and push the people to slumber as they gain undue political power and enrich themselves on public funds. Unfortunately with the advancements made in the audiovisual industry and social media communications handles, it is becoming practically impossible for lies to last for too long. People come to terms with reality too soon and the liar is exposed sooner than expected. This leads to revolt and conflict. As a solution to these conflicts we suggest that the ethics of truth be adopted in politics. This is a system of governance based on truth, equality, liberty responsibility and the complete respect of human right. Once people are educated and are given the right information they will be more tolerant even to failures when they are sure that the leaders have made genuine efforts to succeed before failing. This will put an end to these multiple conflicts and the world would be a better place to live in. Realistic politics is not that which seeks to succeed at all costs but that which seeks to meet the true objectives of politicking which is human welfare.

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