

HUMAN PERSON AND SOCIAL CONTRACT EXPERIENCE IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FROM JOHN LOCKE

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Abstract

Social contract in civil societies visible in periodic elections predicates on protection and preservation of human lives and properties. But consistent absence of this expectation in Nigerian state shows that successive governments have no regard for this contract. Instead, these governments engage in policies and governance that foster their personal aggrandizement and threaten human lives, properties and survival. This paper analytically examines social contracts in Nigerian state proposing John Locke's theory as that which will be functional in Nigerian context. The study finds that the problem with Nigeria is that of poor leadership. And this has encouraged a culture of neglect in almost every sector of the public service. The paper believes that application of John Locke's social contract theory will enhance a better understanding between Nigerian government and the citizenry. The paper therefore concludes that John Locke's social contract theory has all it takes to make every government functional. This is especially the civil disobedience aspect of it which is a kind of revolution that topples governments, as well as an option left to the citizenry when the social contract is renegeged by their representatives.

Key words: Human Person; Social Contract; Government; Good Governance

Introduction

It is an overstatement to state that Nigerian government has renegeged the tenets of social contract. This is based on the fact that there is no evident protection of human life and properties, nor promotion of the wellbeing of the citizenry. In social contract as seen in periodic elections, individual Nigerian citizenry surrender the right to protect himself, property and promote his wellbeing to their representatives and the body that form the government. The main thrust of the social contract theory therefore is for government to exist at the behest of the citizens; to protect and to promote their wellbeing (Ajayi, n.d.).

Unfortunately in Nigeria, successive governments do not accomplish this task for which the people give up some of their rights in order to get the benefits of

living in civil society. Rather these governments turn around to exploit and kill the people. On this note, Okwuagbala (2020) laments, It is so sad to hear that the government, which is set up to build the country and fight any form of corruption, is now stealing from her own people. In fact, Nigerian government is likened to an organized crime syndicate that illegally organizes every decision to be in their favour without offering anything to the people that gave them their mandate. They use coercion to make people pay money to them for their personal aggrandizement. They are very corrupt, and reap where they did not sow. Even when the governed do what the government ought to do, instead of them hiding their faces in shame, they sought for a way of forcing them to pay taxes on them. Most times the tax payers' money is used in frivolous activities and inanities even to the extent of using it to sponsor terrorism and all manner of hardship!

Many foreigners will find it hard to believe that in Nigeria almost everything that the government ought to provide to the electorate is provided by the electorate themselves. For instance, security that suppose to be provided by government is provided by the individuals, good education that the government suppose to provide are done by individuals, people give themselves water, roads to their various destinations, electricity (power), housing, health care, etc. What the government does is only to collect taxes on these essential responsibilities that the people have taken over from them. Against these backdrops, there seem to be no agreement between the citizenry and Nigerian successive governments. It is based on these that this paper seeks to consider John Locke's social contract theory as a way of remedying the Nigerian dilapidating socio-political condition

Conceptual analysis

It is pertinent that some concepts are clarified and explained here especially as it is apt in the context here for easy comprehension of our discourse. The concepts that shall be elucidated here are those that formed the key words of this paper.

Human person: Human person is seen as “an individual substance of a rational nature” Boethius (cited in F.C. Copleston, 1950: p.92). Loyola University Chicago (2020) sees the human person as physical being, as knower, as responsible agent, as a person in relation to other persons, to society, to God, and to the end, or purpose, of human life. Human person is a being of inestimable value; that everything done in the globe ought to be in his favour. For our purpose here, the human person could also said to be that social and political being for whose sake social contract is made in order to protect his right to property, and ensure his peace, safety, and his good. Human person is that end to which all other things in the world should serve as a means to satisfy his comfort. May we also say here that the human person

is the being for which social contract is entered into for his protection, comfort and wellbeing. It is the being that all things that is done in government and governance ought to favour; a being that government was established to manage his affairs which is the reason he surrendered some of his rights and freedom to the magistrate/sovereign. Oguejiofor in Odumegwu (2008) concurs:

.... The whole of ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophical anthropology, existentialism, etc are branches of philosophy among others that concentrate squarely on the human person and his operations in the world.... Philosophy is in its tradition, all embracing. But it is also true that the human person stands at the center and at the root of the whole enterprise since without it, there would be no philosophy at all. (ix)

Social contract: Palmer (1991) talking from Hobbesian perspective says that:

Social contract is the agreement of individuals in a state to transfer their right to violence and their right to sovereignty over themselves to a mutually agreed upon sovereign (a parliament or a monarch), who now has absolute and political authority over them. In exchange for absolute power (including an army), this sovereign promises to pass laws that create a state of peace.... The sovereign promises to restrain and punish anyone who breaks the initial part of the contract and uses violence against any other member of this newly created artificial body, state. (p. 326)

From Locke's perspective, Palmer (1991, p. 334) sees social contract as "the consent of citizens to submit to political state their political authority only with the condition that such political authority will do whatever is necessary to protect their natural right". These rights include right to life, property, equality, etc. He went on to opine that the citizen is bound to contract only as long as the government upholds its end of the contract. For Moore & Bruder (2002, p. 272), social contract is "thus an agreement between individuals who, for the sake of peace, are willing to make this absolutely unconditional and irrevocable transfer of right and power to the sovereign or Leviathan.... It is the contract that delivers people from the evils of the natural state to civil society and a state of peace. From point of view of Lock, Moore & Bruder (2002, p. 276) holds that "social contract is individuals' agreement among themselves to establish a state to govern them, because the state, chiefly

through its laws, offers the means to protect the right to property, and ensure ‘the peace, safety, and public good of the people’”.

Government: Government is the body empowered by the people to see to their day to day management and every order thing that will ensure their well-being and safety. Oxford English Dictionary (2010) sees government as the system or group of people governing an organized community, often a state. The Columbia Encyclopedia sees government as “a system of social control under which the right to make laws, and the right to enforce them, is vested in a particular group in society”. Way, holds that government is the agent, or instrument of political society of which the government is a part. Governance involves interaction between the formal institutions and those in civil society. For British Council, government refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence and enact policies and decisions concerning public life and social upliftment.

Good governance: Healey and Robinson define good governance as “a high level of organizational effectiveness in relation to policy-formulation and the policies actually pursued, especially in the conduct of economic policy and its contribution to growth, stability and popular welfare. Good governance also implies an act of accountability, transparency, participation, openness and the rule of law”. Good governance for Tamayao (2014), is the exercise of power or authority by political leaders for the well-being of their citizens or subjects.

The state of social contract in Nigeria

The government indeed has failed the Nigerian human person in so many areas. The first area that the government of Nigeria has failed the human person is security. A government must control the people it seeks to govern and protect. According to Way (n.d.), “the government must maintain *internal peace*--i.e., peace among individuals and groups within the society”. However, there is general insecurity in Nigeria. Day in day out, Nigerian’s lives are cut shot by different criminal groups such as Boko Haram, bandits, kidnappers, herdsmen, etc. Indeed, Okwuagbala (2020), affirms that the bombings, kidnappings, and other violent acts of Boko Haram prevent many Nigerians from feeling safe. The precarious condition of human life in Nigeria are therefore the rationale behind the Global Peace Index ranking of the country in 2016 as the fourth country in the world with the highest number of “international conflict deaths.” According to the 2018 Global Terrorism Index report however, Nigeria again maintains the third position in terrorism for that year. Boko Haram is a well-known agent of destruction in Nigeria. There are even rumours in some quarters that the Nigerian government is the one sponsoring some of these criminal groups to unleash mayhem on her citizens. Most of the soldiers sent to fight some of these criminal groups are also not motivated. Sometime in March 2020 there was a video that went viral on

internet where one of the generals that was sent to combat Boko Haram insurgents was complaining that they were not well equipped and that ammunitions were in short supply to them while the insurgents were well equipped. Instead of the government to hearken to his complaint and act accordingly they rather changed him after two days. There are also many instances of Nigerian security operatives being the ones abusing and in some cases killing the citizens that they were meant to protect as the social contract demands. This why Obiano (2020) laments:

In any civilized society, there are rules of engagement, especially when it comes to the military interruption and face-off with the people, the civilians. However, in Nigeria it is anything goes.... The sad reality is that it is not new to see men on uniform, so arrogantly exercising powers that they shouldn't. The men of Nigerian Army are at the fore front of this mess. They aren't alone; lately also, men of Nigerian Police, attached Special Anti-robbery squad, SARS unit are guilty as well....The members of SARS intimidate, abuse, assault and even so recklessly, use their fire arms, many have died because of the foolishness of the men of SARS unit.... The men of Nigerian Army are sadly also, in the habit of so recklessly abusing and torturing Nigerians.... In Warri, Delta state, people were chased like thieves, abusively flogged, ruthlessly tortured, asked to swim in dirty mosquito-infested gutter water. Who does that? How can someone ask another to swim in swamp and ditch? Well, men of the Nigerian military did that, in the video that went viral....

The above lamentation of Obiano is one of the so many Nigerian security brutality on the citizens that willingly entered into agreement with government with the anticipation of protection in exchange. In a nutshell, the Nigerian crime problem gives many citizens in the country sleepless nights. In many places, people feel they can no longer walk around their own neighborhoods unharmed. Public safety is the most fundamental responsibility of any state, and Nigeria has failed in this regard (Okwuagbala, 2020).

Another area that the government of Nigeria has failed in keeping to its own part of social agreement is in the area of social welfare. Social welfare according to Way (n.d.), consists of government programs through which

assistance is provided to the poor. These programs are designed to alleviate existing poverty, providing aid to particular categories of persons who are unable to adequately support themselves, due to circumstances widely perceived within the society to be beyond the control of the indigent persons. The categories of persons eligible for public assistance generally include (1) women with dependent children in families where the father is absent or unemployed and (2) persons who, though aged, blind or disabled, are not covered by social-insurance programs and are therefore ineligible for benefits under them. Unfortunately, in Nigeria the reverse is the case. Instead of the government providing these set of people with assistance they impoverish them the more by using the money that ought to be used in carrying out these social responsibilities as security vaults and payment of sundry allowances to the politicians. This is why Okogie (2020) observes:

we continue to run the affairs of our country with a constitution that impoverishes and disables the citizens by establishing offices that do not serve the people.... the humongous basic salaries and allowances of our political office holders should become a thing of the past...government in Nigeria is embarrassingly big, sinfully expensive, prone to corruption and scandalously inefficient.

Indeed, it is not news again that more than half the population of Nigerians make and survive on less than \$2 per day. In fact, about same half population manage to do two square meals per day. The rate of joblessness in Nigeria is one getting up to high heavens. Many Nigerians survive on daily pay jobs. There are no good and coordinated access to soft loans and grants from lending institutions for small and medium scale enterprises....Therefore, no miracle can sustain Nigerians, except when the government rises to the responsibility (Obiano, 2020). The money to sponsor this social welfare everyone know is available but the problem remains that those at the helm of affair always corner it for their own personal aggrandizement. Falaiye & Okoregbe (2016) Politicians and public officers therefore turn government into a “cash cow” for personal aggrandizement. Consequently, a culture of neglect in public service gradually creeps in, and there is utter neglect for the provision of basic amenities and infrastructure that promote the good life. (p. 11).

Furthermore, accountability and transparency are like two sides of a coin; both have gone on holiday in Nigeria. Information in Nigeria is exclusive of those in power. Any attempt by any individual or group to bring the government to account or make them be open to the citizen are frowned at; and many ways have been devised by the government ranging from use of force to

legislations all in the bid by them to evade accountability and transparency. So many things are done in secrecy in Nigeria. It is on record that Nigerian government through the National Assembly has tried severally to pass anti-information bill. They have suggested severally for banning of social media under the guise of hate speech and all what not while other nations of the world are passing information bill law in their countries. If not for the international outcry, social media may not be in existence in Nigeria by now. So many journalists are in custody today because they exposed the evil activities of the government. In Nigeria, the government is the harbinger of misinformation and deception while they ought to be the right source of information and accountability because accountability is said to be a key requirement of good governance (Sheng, 1997). Apart from the use of force, intimidation and legislation, Nigerian government has devised so many other means of evading accountability to the citizens. Okogie (2020) captures it thus:

On prime- time television, we witnessed the spectacle of naira notes, and a minister of the Federal Republic was doing the distribution. But government could and ought to have used this moment to encourage Nigerians to open bank accounts. A more transparent means of giving out the money would have been to ask each person for his or her bank verification number and to send the money into their accounts. Apart from the fact that it would have encouraged more Nigerians to open bank accounts, it would have made it possible to account for every naira that is given out. In the same vein, we have heard how billions of naira was being donated to government without government telling Nigerians how the donation will be spent.

The above observation by Okogie was confirmed as some people set the Accountant General of the Federation's office ablaze on Wednesday 8th April, 2020, nine hours after the request by the National Assembly to give account of two trillion naira that they claimed to have disbursed to the poorest of the poor to cushion the effect of COVID -19 pandemic. On Thursday 9th April, 2020 the finance minister Zainab Ahmed told Nigerians that 700 billion naira was lost in the inferno. The above is one among so many other means the government has failed in the area of accountability and transparency as part of keeping to and honoring their own end of social contract.

Equity, inclusiveness and justice as the strongest tenets of social contract theory are not found anywhere in practice in Nigeria; not minding that it is enshrined in our constitution. Equity, inclusiveness and justice mean that all

the members of the society, especially the most vulnerable ones or the grassroots level, must be taken into consideration in policy-making. Everyone has a stake in the society and no one should feel alienated from it. Particularly, those who belong to the grassroots level must not only be the subject of legislation but they must be given the opportunity to participate in decision or policy making. Equity also refers to a kind of justice that gives more opportunity to the less fortunate members of the society. It is based on this principle that those who have less in life should have more in social law (Tamayao, 2014). Nigeria is made of more than 250 ethnic groups which mean that all of them ought to be involved in whatever good thing that come into the country but unfortunately caution is thrown to the wind and the opposite is the case. Justice, equity and inclusiveness are now seen as a privilege and no longer a right in Nigeria which is against the tenet of social contract. Currently offices are allotted based on nepotistic and religious ground. Once you are a northerner you are good to go. What happened with the appointment of the security service chiefs is a very good example, where almost all of them were selected from the same tribe, ethnicity and religion not minding their poor performances in securing the nations and heterogeneous nature of the country even when insecurity is at the point it has never gotten before in Nigeria. In fact, the neglect of equity, inclusiveness and justice has graduated from discriminating against an individual to the level of discriminating against a region or an ethnic group. The recent 22.7 billion dollars that the government wanted to borrow is a very good example of what this paper is saying. The loan was to be shared among every other region excluding the south-east. This is a loan that they are expected to contribute in repaying. If a whole region is discriminated against, just imagine what can happen to minorities and individual, especially the vulnerable ones in such a country.

Infrastructural provision is another area that the government of Nigeria has failed woefully. Infrastructure is important that no country can make serious progress without it. One will wonder little why Nigeria remain underdeveloped irrespective of all the resources both mineral and human that it is blessed with. In Nigeria the power sector is corrupt and mismanaged, and many workers in the electricity sector are not equipped with the proper skills or training. Domestic production suffers under these conditions; many foreign companies also find it difficult to conduct business in Nigeria because of frequent power failures. This problem keeps Nigeria a third world country year after year (Okwuagbala, 2020). Business suffers without a dependable road system. Corruption and the embezzlement of public funds keep roadways in disrepair. Many road accidents in Nigeria that have claimed a lot of lives of the citizens of Nigeria would not have happened if the roads are well fixed. It is because our Federal Government failed to fix federal roads that make some of these accidents happen. They do not fulfill their function to protect lives

and properties of the people through this channel. In 2011, according to Okwuagbala (2020), the World Bank reported that only 67% of paved roads and 33% of unpaved roads were in good or fair condition. Between 2001 and 2006, only \$50 million of the needed \$240 million were allocated for road maintenance. Similar issues of inadequacy and corruption can be seen in water resources, railways and education. At the time of writing this paper the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) are on strike due to government neglect, attempt to hoodwink them, and poor state of public universities. The government's failure to invest adequately in the health-care system is also evident especially during this era of COVID-19 pandemic. Based on this Okogie (2020), avers that "...COVID-19 is also revelatory, a blessing in disguise, because it has exposed Nigeria as a country where quality of leadership is of low grade. Okogie (2020) again observes that "rather than invest in good health care service delivery in Nigeria, we have a political arrangement that makes it possible, even encouraging, to waste Nigeria's money on government officials and health tourism abroad". Thus, the health services available are dysfunctional and inadequate which has led to high mortality rate especially on the side of expectant mothers, children and the aged people. It has also resulted to migration of talented doctors and nurses to advance countries; the remaining good ones are found in the cities, leaving Nigerians staying in the rural areas to their fate. The foregoing have been issues that have bedeviled Nigerians from the beginning of time and these infrastructural deficiencies are yet to end and the government never cares.

Effects of government irresponsibility to social contract in Nigeria

For every act of irresponsibility, there is commensurate repercussion, be it individually or generally. Along this line, the breach of social contract by Nigerian government has among other effects led to incessant revolt, endemic corruption, fear and mistrust.

Incessant revolt: Due to government failure in keeping their own end of the social contract, there are so many agitations in various regions of the country. These agitations are not strange but in line with the dictates of John Locke's social contract theory that call for revolution or change of government when they fail in keeping their own end of the contract that they willingly entered with the people. Locke (1964) captures it thus:

...government are dissolved, and that is when the legislative or the prince, either of them, act contrary to their trust....The legislative acts against the trust reposed in them when they endeavour to invade the property of the subject and to make themselves or any part of the community masters or arbitrary disposers of the lives, liberties, or fortunes of the people....Since

it can never be supposed to be the will of the society that the legislative should have a power to destroy that which everyone designs to secure by entering into society, and for which the people submitted themselves to legislators of their own making. Whenever the legislators endeavour to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people who are thereupon absolved from any further obedience. (233)

All the things that Locke said that can lead to rebellion have all happened in Nigeria. Hence, most people believe that Nigeria is sitting on keg of gun powder. The government has in all ramifications failed the citizens with no hope of any change in the nearest future. one will now wonder little why the Boko Haram are fighting in the North-East, Niger Delta militants agitating in the South-South, IPOB looking for secession in the South-East and others carrying out civil disobedience in respective zones. All these are the repercussions of the government failure in keeping to the mandate and agreement that they willingly entered with the people. And when tyranny and irresponsibility becomes the order of the day; social disobedience becomes an obligation. From the preceding subheading one could see that the government of the country has failed her people and there is nothing that remains than to agitate. It is even a thing of wonder that Nigeria still exist today as a nation because the irresponsibility and insensitivity of her leaders right from independent has gotten to an elastic limit.

Endemic corruption: another serious effect of government irresponsibility to the Nigerian human person is corruption. It is experienced in every sphere of Nigerian public and private existence. Be it in politics, education, judiciary, businesses, religion, police, legislature, banks, ministries, etc (Ugwuja, 2008). In Nigeria corruption has become a culture; to the extent that it is synonymous with her (Iloanya, et al., 2011, p. 242). Irrespective of the fact that Chapter II, section 15, subsections 5 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states thus; “*The State shall abolish all corrupt practices*”. Unfortunately, no one is adhering to this instruction. The government personnel who are constituted to abolish corruption are careless about what is expected of them. Also, the non-governing citizens who are also expected to be free from corruption are guilty of it (Okwuagabala, 2020). Indeed, Nigerian leaders have made life difficult that everyone is looking for a way of survival, Falaiye & Okoregbe (2016, p. 12). Nigeria has unjustifiably become a land of suffering, poverty, anguish, pain and hopelessness. It is all over the news that during the COVID-19 pandemic lock down, that the law enforcement agents

were asked to monitor the people and restrain them from moving around. But as usual they collected money from Nigerians and allowed them to move around, even from one state to the other. This is one among many instances of corruption in Nigeria. According to Watch tower (2000 p. 4), “This endemic corruption is as a result of selfishness and greed” of Nigerian leaders. When the leaders out of greed and selfishness violate the social contract by embezzling the common wealth, the citizens out of frustration engage in any means be it by hook or crook to secure some economic, political, financial or other advantages of their own so as to approximate some of such privileges flaunted by the leaders (Iloanya, et al., 2011 p. 247). The corruption of the government makes them have lukewarm attitude towards matters of corruption knowing fully well that they are guilty of the same offence, hence, making corruption to escalate. Iloanya, et al. (2011) aptly put it:

The lukewarm attitude of those who are supposed to enforce the laws of the land (judges, police officers and public officials) could lead people to engage in corrupt practices, knowing full well that they would get away with it. The weakness of institutions established to interpret and enforce laws against corruption exacerbates and institutionalize corruption in Nigeria. (249)

More so, the current ruling government just like the previous ones is not performing its functions as promised, and officials are too busy filling their pockets instead of governing effectively. Transparency International (2020) deemed Nigeria one of the most corrupt nations in the world with 148th position as the highest in 2017 and 134 as the lowest in 2014 respectively. In 2019 ranking Nigeria came 146th in Corruption Perception Index out of the 180 countries measured. This shows that Nigeria was the 34th most corrupt country in 2019. The above instances show how endemic corruption is in Nigeria following the failure of the government to keep to their own end of social contract they willingly entered with the Nigerian human person.

Mistrust: This is the height of repercussion of government persistent and consistent failure in keeping to their end of social contract. Nobody in Nigeria takes the government serious, the same with anything coming from them. Following years of disappointment, failed campaign promises, unfulfilled state programmes, large-scale corruption and failure to deliver on the dividends of democracy; Nigerian citizens largely distrust the government. In a 2016 Afro barometer survey on the level of trust citizens hold for their governments in 36 African countries, Nigeria recorded the least score with a mere 31 per cent indicating a positive attitude towards the government. In addition, in 2018, the World Economic Forum (WEF) found that Nigeria ranked 130 of 137 countries for citizen distrust of government officials

(Onapajo & Adebisi, 2020). Consequently, anything the government wishes to do for the people is looked at with suspicion even when they have genuine intention. The fear and mistrust in government is instantiated in Onapajo & Adebisi (2020) thus:

In the wake of the rapidly spreading novel coronavirus (COVID-19), with its debilitating effects on humanity, the Nigerian government launched a social distancing campaign, restricting movements in certain parts of the country.... A major aspect of Nigeria's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the prohibition of gatherings that exceed 50 people, including worship places and all forms of social events... With much surprise, many Nigerians have continued to defy the state directives. As at last week, churches and mosques opened their doors for worship, fun-lovers continued with their normal parties and clubbed like nothing was happening around them. When questioned about their refusal to follow precautionary measures established by the government, most of them dismissed the reality of the disease. One of the reasons being that several Nigerians perceived the virus to be an attempt by political elites to create an emergency and siphon public money. For example, a middle-aged respondent confidently told reporters with *Legit.ng* that he is a scientist and can confirm that, 'Nigeria's weather is so harsh for Coronavirus to survive...no individual has the virus in the country...there is no trace for the so-called confirmed cases...it is an opportunity to steal our money.'

The above quotation is talking about the corona virus, a deadly pandemic that is raving the whole world. Just that the information on the necessary precaution to be followed to stay safe is coming from the government of Nigeria. The people chose to die because of their previous experiences in the hands of the government. Also, the current donations made by some Nigerians to cushion the effect of Corona Virus pandemic is already believed to be cornered by the government for their private aggrandizement. Little wonder some people like Pastor David Ogbueli the General Overseer of Dominion City church and Apostle Johnson Suleiman of Omega Fire Ministry refused to make any donations to the government, but rather reached out to the

citizens themselves. The reason is because they believe that the government will not do justice in ensuring that their donations will get to the poorest of the poor whom it is meant for. Moreover, majority of Nigerians are of the same view because of consistent and persistent failure of the government in keeping to their own end of social agreement. The fear and mistrust in the government is not just observed in the economy but also in other aspects of their responsibilities. Once more, our past experiences with nationwide threats provide enough examples. In 2015, the country got to know that most of the money meant to fight insurgency—about \$2 billion—in north-eastern Nigeria was actually pocketed by a few individuals. This was despite official assurances that Nigeria was committed to fighting Boko Haram and that the terrorist group would soon be confined to history. In December 2015, six months after assuming office, President Muhammadu Buhari declared that Boko Haram had been ‘technically defeated’ and claimed displaced people in the epicenter of the conflict zone could start returning to their homes. Among the Buhari-led government’s campaign promises was to ‘kill corruption before it kills Nigeria’. Many Nigerians rejoiced over the statement and voted for President Buhari in 2015. However, since President Buhari emerged as president, the reverse has been the case. Corruption continues like before. One will now wonder little why the mistrust in Nigerian government.

John Lock’s Social Contract Theory: an antidote to Social contract violation in Nigeria

Rufus & Eyo (2017) avers that in every social phenomenon the easy part has always been identifying the problem whilst the difficulty lies in proffering a solution. This paper having depicted these failures seeks to proffer solutions, hence, the position of John Locke’s social contract theory as an antidote.

Locke’s social contract theory is deemed very apt in arresting the persistent bridge of social contract by Nigerian government because it is the model for every modern state in dealing with her people to ensure that common good is achieved. Nigeria being one of the modern states needs strictly to adhere to it. In Locke’s social contract theory, the responsibility of the government is well spelt out while the obligations of the citizens were spelt out too, all geared towards the achievement of common good of all the parties in the contract. Palmer (1991) opines, “The function of the political state is to guarantee our moral state.... The citizens consent to submit to political authority only with the proviso that such political authority will do whatever is necessary to protect our natural right”. (p. 334) According to Locke (1997), contract was an agreement of each with all, a surrender by the individual of his personal right to fulfill the commands of the laws of Nature in return for the guarantee that his rights as nature ordains them life, liberty and property should be well-maintained. The end for which this contract is made is the protection and preservation of property, in the broad sense of the word, that is,

life, liberty and estate-against the dangers both from within and without the community (civilserviceindia.com).

From the above one could vividly see that the reason for entering into social contract everywhere is for the society to have a strong institution that will ensure everybody's survival. Unfortunately as could be seen in the case of Nigeria the reverse is the case. But with Lockean social contract theory being posited as the template for an ideal social contract the Nigerian leaders will see that the contract is not entered just for their self aggrandizement. Rather, it is for the purpose of forming a formidable society where all that gave them their mandate can survive, their property protected and their lives saved. When this is well understood, it will enable our government to eschew the heightened culture of impunity that encourages incessant high level official rascality and dubious unconstitutional devices deployed in the steering of the state, and think on how to work for the good and safety of everyone in the state.

Again, Lockean social contract theory will go a long way in making the Nigerian government to buckle up on the areas of security. According to Locke (1690) the end of people's unity or living in the society is to build a commonwealth, preserve human life and properties. (p. 124) Unfortunately the Nigerian government has not lived up to this part of social contract. In Nigeria just as has mentioned elsewhere in this work there is always harvest of blood and destruction of property, people's wellbeing are not cared for and liberty is nowhere to be found. However, having Lockean social contract theory as a model, the government will be made to live to their responsibility of protecting the people. When this is done nothing or less will be heard of Boko Haram, herdsmen, kidnappers etc. that in the recent time have been thorns in the flesh of human persons living in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the incessant revolutions and agitations that occur in Nigeria will naturally disappear if the government and the leaders understand that their occurrences is due to their failure in keeping to their own end of social contract bargain, which the Lockean social contract theory will expose to them. Friend (n.d.) captures it thus:

When the executive power of a government devolves into tyranny... therefore denying the people the ability to make laws for their own preservation, then the resulting tyrant puts himself into a State of Nature, and specifically into a state of war with the people, and they then have the same right to self-defense as they had before making a compact to establish society in the first place. In other words, the justification of the authority of the executive component of

government is the protection of the people's property and well-being, so when such protection is no longer present, or when the king becomes a tyrant and acts against the interests of the people, they have a right, if not an outright obligation, to resist his authority. The social compact can be dissolved and the process to create political society begun anew.

Seeing that tyranny and no clear adjudication are among the remote causes of most revolutions in the country as exposed by Lockean contract theory; the government will now shun the manner at which they manipulate the constitution to their favor which left every one with the feeling that there is a lack of an established law known and acceptable to all. Secondly, the dependence of the judiciary on the executive which portray an absence or lack of an independent/impartial judiciary to adjudicate the law will be discouraged. Also the orientation that the Nigerian judicial system is weak and can be easily manipulated by the elite/ruling class thereby making the common man to resort to jungle justice at every slightest opportunity should be changed. And improved effort by the government to keep to their part of the contract by ensuring that the lives and property of the populace is secured will stop the people from resorting to self actions and responsibilities towards surviving and coping with insecurities.

Finally, John Locke's social contract theory will make it possible for the people to see and understand that the time for social disobedience and ousting of the present leaders in government is long overdue. Since the government has violated all the social contract agreement among which are: respecting the social contract, upholding the citizen's rights to life, health, liberty, and possessions. Palmer (1991) concurs:

The citizen is bound to contract only so long as the government upholds its end of the contract. Locke thought that the populace should not go lightly into a condition of revolt. Because of seriousness of such a condition, all sorts of attempts should be made to correct the abuses of power before a revolution is declared. But if the state not only fails to uphold the citizen's rights to life, health, liberty, and possessions but also becomes the violator of those rights, then revolution is justified. (p. 334)

The above quotation is typical of the situation in Nigeria. So the lesson learnt from Locke's social contract theory should encourage the people to revolt and not to shy away from it, since it is the basis for establishing most modern political state. Moreover, it will bring to the awareness of the people that it is

not a vice to overthrow an erring government and that it is the only option remaining for them to make Nigeria work like most developed countries of the world. Some of the countries that revolted in the past such as: France, England and America, etc. though paid heavily but they are better for it. And considering the nature of Nigeria, it seems that it is only civil disobedience will open up the corrupt leaders, tyrants and everything, hence, usher in the positive change that the Nigerian human person for long desired. Consciousness of the civil disobedience as an obligation in a country as Nigeria will enable all the tribes in Nigeria to understand that various agitations going on in different regions in Nigeria is not geared towards fighting each other. Rather it is geared towards their common enemies who are the politicians that do not have tribes, religion or sex when it comes to exploiting and breaching the social contract. Armed with this idea they will join forces to either oust them as the Locke's social contract theory demands or make them to be responsible.

Conclusion

The persistent and consistent failure of Nigerian government in keeping to their own part of social contract bargain is redeemable; irrespective of the fact that it has had so many negative effects on the people and has led to under development and frustration among human persons. However, as this paper projects, a strict adherence to the dictates of Lockean social contract theory will correct the anomaly currently experienced, because it has established the fact to Nigerians that the civil society is a collection of individuals and groups with visible leadership that take responsibility for the protection and security of the people and their property. It has also provided framework for the organization of socio-economic interactions, in such a way that if the various political structures are properly harnessed then human person's progress and security are better ensured. It is believed by this paper that when the needful as contained in John Locke's social contract theory are done the desecrated social contract of Nigerian human person will be amended.

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