

John Locke's Social Contract Theory and Insecurity in Nigeria: A Study of Imo State (2015-2023)

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the state is rooted in humanity's fundamental need for survival, safety, and co-existence, as encapsulated in the concept of the social contract. This philosophical framework, particularly John Locke's Social Contract theory, underscores the role of government as a protector of citizens' well-being and security. However, the pervasive insecurity in Nigeria, especially in Imo State from 2015 to 2023, reveals a significant failure in fulfilling this obligation. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing historical research design, documentary analysis, and content review of secondary data sources such as archival materials, publications, and legal documents, including the 1999 Constitution, which serves as Nigeria's social contract. Findings indicate that ineffective leadership is a primary factor contributing to insecurity and instability in Imo State. The government's inability to uphold its contractual responsibility to protect lives and property undermines the principles of the Lockean social contract. Furthermore, foundational issues within the Nigerian State hinder adherence to these tenets. The study concludes by recommending a renegotiation of the social contract to align governance with the consent and expectations of the people, in accordance with Locke's theory. This research aims to provide insights and strategies for addressing insecurity and fostering stability in Imo State and Nigeria at large.

Keywords: John Locke, Social Contract Theory, Security, Insecurity, Imo State, Nigeria

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INTRODUCTION

Early political thinkers were confronted with a lot of questions basically on political theories such as; what is the origin of state? Have men lived under some form of political organization? If they have not, what are the causes that brought about the original establishment of government (Appadorai, 1974). These political theorists were unable to provide answers to these fundamental questions hence divergent views and postulations on the origin of state namely: the theory of evolution, matriarchal theory, the divine right theory, patriarchal theory, social contract theory, the force theory and a host of others. However, these theoretical conjectures pointed salient

observations on the origin of state and government but for the course of this study, discussion on the social contract theory takes preeminence. The theoretical underpinning of Social contract theory is that what we refer to as state today was not in existence before. Prior to the emergence of the state there were no laws, to be enforced by a coercive authority. Men just lived in what was referred to as state of nature in which they were only subject to such regulations as nature prescribed without any human or authority enforcing those natural laws and regulations (Appadorai, 1974). Subsequently, these men in the state of nature decided to set up a government with the

agreement to part with their natural liberty to obey the laws prescribed by such government. Though the proponents (Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau) of this theory differs on how men lived in the state of nature without the coercive influence of a government, why they decided to establish a government, who were the parties to the contract and other salient issues raised by the theory; they are in harmony with the central idea of the theory which emphasizes that the state is a human creation and the result of a contract (Locke, 1689).

In the year 1690, John Locke released his seminal work, the Two Treatises of Government. Locke shared a similar viewpoint to Hobbes regarding the harsh realities of the state of nature, acknowledging the necessity of a social contract to maintain order and tranquility. However, Locke diverged from Hobbes in his interpretation of the social contract. In Locke's perspective, the social contract was not merely a pact among individuals, but rather a covenant between the people and the ruling authority (Raimi & Boroh, 2018). According to Locke's philosophy, the inherent rights of individuals served as a check on the authority of the monarch, indicating a departure from Hobbes' notion of absolute power. Locke contended that the role of the government was primarily to uphold and safeguard the natural rights of its citizens. This principle has laid the groundwork for modern democracies worldwide, where the government is tasked with ensuring the safety of its people, allowing them to pursue their lives without fear. Additionally, Williams posits that security primarily involves mitigating risks to cherished values, particularly those that jeopardize the existence of a specific entity (Williams, 2008). In line with the above, Ogaba (2010) states that:

Security pertains to the safeguarding of a nation's capacity to safeguard and advance itself, uphold its cherished principles and lawful concerns, and improve the welfare of its citizens. Consequently, internal security can be perceived as the absence of any factors that may jeopardize internal unity, the collective existence of a nation, and its capability to sustain essential institutions in order to uphold its fundamental principles, socio-political and economic goals, and fulfill the legitimate desires of its populace.

Security pertains to the mitigation of potential risks to individuals and their cherished assets. Buzan, Waever & Wilde (1998) argues that security entails the absence of threats and the capacity of nations to uphold their distinct identity and operational integrity in the face of perceived adversarial influences, with survival as its ultimate objective. From the aforementioned discussion, security is commonly understood as the assurance of safety from harm, fear, anxiety, oppression, peril, impoverishment, safeguarding, protection, and conservation of fundamental principles and the risks posed to them (Bodunde, Ola, & Afolabi, 2014).

John Locke's Social Contract theory is a constitutional

contract that is aimed at protecting the people's life, liberty and property. To Locke, the people form the government to protect their rights and when the government reneges, the people have the right to revolt and change the government (Locke, 1689). In Locke's perspective: the powers of the government are not absolute but defined by the constitution and the people who equally reserve the rights to check the government. The people hand over their rights to protect, judge and fight for themselves to a constituted authority but reserve the right to remove erring leaders.

Security is fundamental to governmental existence. In the history of the empires that rose to greatness and suffered eventual decline, insecurity was usually a precursor to other factors that predisposed the empires to both decline and eventual collapse. Usually seen as a crack within an internal order, it is this that causes weakness which exposes the state to external interference or attack. Insecurity in itself, historically speaking germinates on the fertile soil of governmental lapse, indiscipline, luxurious and lackadaisical life, insensitivity encapsulated in impunity-ridden corruption (Dike, 2015). The entity Nigeria has in more recent times been synonymous with insecurity; it has multifaceted manifestations such as Boko Haram terror attacks, banditry/kidnapping, herdsmen/farmers clashes, religious tensions, secessionist movements, agitations for resource control, piracy, organized crime, etc. hovering the entire nation. These security threats have metamorphosized into "unknown gunmen"; who have perpetuated various heinous crimes in the country and thus, increased the crime rate. Michael (2023) stated that Nigeria ranks 6th in the African Crime Index and global ranking with a crime rate of 7.35 after Democratic Republic of Congo. In view of this, the Global Peace Index of 2023 ranked Nigeria 144th out of 163 independent states in the world (Arogbonlo, 2023).

Therefore, the emergence of the "unknown gunmen" has constituted a threat to the peace, security and stability of the country by heightening the security issues in Nigeria. These "unknown gunmen" are people who perpetrate crimes but whose identity remain unknown. Though, it has been argued that these persons are known but are yet to be discovered by the authorities or are being protected by the public or authorities, the idea behind the name "unknown gunmen", came from the fact that these gunmen are believed to be unknown. Hanatu (2021) however argued that these criminals are known but their crimes are most times dismissed and simply labeled as "Unknown Gunmen", perhaps due to "political correctness" or ineptitude on the part of the security personnel's or reasons that are not known. Onifade et al., (2013) stated that the security issues in Nigeria may be connected to the increased ethnic hate, religious bigotry, political rivalry, a growing population of disgruntled citizens who feel that they have been marginalized and government's failure to deliver public goods to citizens (Igbuzor, 2011).

In the build up to the General election of 2019, there was

a rift in the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Imo state between the then governor Rochas Okorocha, who wanted his son-in-law, Uche Nwosu, to become the party's candidate, and the other camp which sponsored Hope Uzodinma, who cross carpeted from the People's Democratic Party (PDP); in the process, Hope Uzodinma emerged the party's sole candidate which forced Uche Nwosu to contest under the Action Alliance Party. The battle line was drawn. They both lost in the governorship election to Emeka Ihedioha of the PDP, but Hope Uzodinma approached the High court to be declared as the rightful winner of the election and persisted till the Supreme Court granted his prayer and was sworn in, in January 2020 as the legally elected governor of Imo state. Since that time, insecurity has dominated the entire gamut of Imo state.

Recently, the level of insecurity in Imo state has become alarming with several reported regular occurrences of shooting in the area involving unknown gunmen, bandits, and security operatives - a situation which is undoubtedly affecting both social life and the local economy. For this reason, the Social contract theory of John Locke is used as a framework to understand the nature and character of insecurity in Nigeria, specifically focusing on Imo state from 2015 to 2023.

The State

There is no single universally acceptable definition of the State. Scholars from the two major ideological strands of Liberalism and Marxism have neither agreed on a universal definition of the concept of State. Even within these major conceptions (Liberalism and Marxism), different authors perceive the State not exactly as the other (Shaapera, 2009, p.20).

Liberal thought provides another possible teleology of the state. According to John Locke, the goal of the state/commonwealth was "the preservation of property" with 'property' in Locke's work referring not only to personal possessions but also to one's life and liberty. On this account, the state provides the basis for social cohesion and productivity, creating incentives for wealth creation by providing guarantees of protection for one's life, liberty and personal property (Locke, 1690/1990; Maduekwe, Mbah & Ojukwu, 2019).

Liberal theorizing on the State, as a concept, contends that the State is a political organization of human society that comprises organized attributes of contemporary institutions like the legislature, executive and judiciary, with respective roles. These are governmental institutions that make and enforce laws that are binding upon the people within a defined geographical territory. These laws, rules or regulations determine the basis of the supreme authority in the land (George-Genyi, 2005). Thus, Mahajan (2000, p.133) traces the origin of the authority of State to Machiavelli who expressed the idea as "the Power which has authority over men". Marx Webber captures the State, further, as "that authority which gives order to all but

receive from none". It is the State, therefore, that provides the structures through which people and resources in a society are organized and policy and priorities established (George-Genyi, 2005).

The foregoing arguments show, from the liberal point of view, that the State has a central role to play in any economy. The operational capacity of the State in an economy, for liberal scholars like Smith (1937), Dahl (1965) and others depends on the skills and loyalty of the citizens and the revenue available to the system. Liberal scholarship therefore sees the State as an institution for orderly progress of the society and an embodiment of justice for all, not just for a few (Bourgeois class). Liberal scholars regard the State as a neutral arbiter in the contending social classes in the society. This, for George-Genyi (2005), is obviously to curtail the situation described by Hobbes' "State of Nature", where the strong prevailed over the weak in a society and most often caused societal anarchy. Man sought to overcome this near anarchy situation of life by seeking security and self-preservation of life through the establishment of social contract, which is the State.

Marx initially buttressed that the State is an embodiment of law and freedom; that the State represents the general view of the society (Marx & Engels, 1975). The point of departure from the Marxism theorizing on the State occurred when Marx and Engels jointly expressed in the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" that "the executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie", mostly at the expense of the poor (Marx & Engels, 1975, p.37).

Classical Marxist view of the State therefore shows that it is an institution with established apparatuses purposely and directly meant to defend and maintain a class domination and class exploitation. Thus, the control of the State apparatuses by the ruling elites is for, and in the whole interest of the bourgeoisie (Abbass, 1990; Shaapera, 2009).

For Miliband & Saville (1965), both the economic and political powers of the State are merely the organized power of one class for the oppression of another. Lenin (1945, p.29) further views the State as the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Thus, Marx & Engels (1975) sees the capitalist State as where the means of production and other things exist in the private ownership, where both the working class and the peasants are into all or complete subjugation by the propertied class. Meanwhile, the idea of "democracy", universal suffrage, parliament, elections, policy measures, the fight for national unity and security, etc, are only presented or constituted in a disguise and invariably do not alter an iota of the essential character of the State in being oriented, controlled and directed by the ruling class, purposely used to dominate the other classes in the State (Abbass, 2010).

For the Marxian scholars, therefore, the development of the productive forces in the capitalist society produced surplus value and thus the appropriation of property for private use that necessitated the constitution of the State.

It is this State that, Marxist scholars argue, becomes an instrument in the hands of the powerful dominant class for accumulation and exploitation of the dominated members of the society. This kind of State, Hembe (2003, p.38) and Fadahunsi (1988) argue, is an organ of exploitation and is not capable of pursuing policies, or invariably politics, that would promote the interest of all. According to Alavi (1979), because of the absence of a fully developed indigenous class, the State (mostly in under-developed economies) has largely remained an instrument of the ruling class in the promotion of capitalist accumulation under the pretext of national development. Public policy is thus determined by International Finance Capital, using the local bourgeoisie in its formulation and implementation in the national economy (George-Genyi, 2005).

Nevertheless, the classical Marxists equally admit that the State sometimes enjoys relative autonomy and becomes „independent“ from and superior to all social classes as the dominant force in the society rather than instrument of the dominant class (Paulantzas, 1969, 1973, 1975 & 1981). This view (relative autonomy nature of the State), therefore, according to Hegel (1982), presents the State as a complete embodiment of the general interests of the whole society as the State stands over and above particular vested interests and consequently appears independent, neutral or autonomous of the ruling class. The question, however, is as to how autonomous or free is the State in choosing its policies in a class-divided society with already established vested economic, political, ethnic, religious and social interests, which are completely interrelated and interconnected? It is this problematic of the ambiguity in the relative autonomy of modern States that some scholars of Political Economy (Abbass, 1990, p.13) suggest a prior understanding of what the crucial functions of the State apparatuses or structures are meant to serve and capable of maintaining in the delicate and contradictory balances of political, social and economic relations. For other Political economists like Dunmoye (2012), the operational process of the State anywhere can only be understood from the Ideology of a State which is expressed in form of rule and authority that find formal operation in the Constitution and jurisprudence of the State. The State Ideology (Rule and Authority) thus points to why the State (such as Nigeria) behaves the way it does in governance, politics, law-making or policy formulations and implementation, etc.

The Purposes or Functions of the State

The purpose or end of the State has been a subject of endless debate among political philosophers. The question of what purposes does the State exist to serve has been asked many times in every age since human existence; and as Anifowose (1999, p.98) rightly concords, “it is indeed the fundamental question of politics” which seeks to examine whether the State should do certain things or refrain from them. Different answers have been proposed by individuals and groups according to their

interests. For Aristotle, in Anifowose (1999, p.98), the purpose of the State is “to ensure good life”, while Locke postulates that “the great and chief end of men uniting into common wealth and putting themselves under government is the preservation of their property” which is expressed as lives, liberties and estates (quoted in Smith, 1776, p.272). Smith (1976), therefore, identifies three purposes for which the State exists to include the duty to protect society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; the duty to protect subjects from injustice, by establishing a system of justice; and the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and institutions that will cater for the wellbeing of the subjects. Thus, as equally pointed out in Appadorai (1974, pp.40-42), the essence of the State is connotative of the centrality of the State in improving the lives of the generality of the masses in a society under its control. Furthermore, Herbert Spencer cited in Anifowose (1999, p.98) and Appadorai (1999, p.78) posits that the State is nothing but a natural institution for preventing one man from infringing the rights of another.

For Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the best known exponents of the Utilitarian school of thought, the purpose of the State is to provide the greatest happiness to the greatest number of individuals under its jurisdiction (cited in Shaapera, 2009, p.29). Similarly, Harold Laski, like John Locke, Adams Smith and Spencer, in Anifowose (1999, p.98), expresses that the State is not an end itself but merely the means to an end. The State, thus, exists to enable the mass of men to realize social good on the largest possible scale. It exists to enable men to, at least, realize the best in themselves. According to Laski, as cited in Appadorai (1974, pp.40-41), therefore, men can be enabled to realize the best in themselves only if the State provides rights, such as the right to work, right to education, right to basic freedoms of speech, press, association and religion; the right to vote and be voted for, etc. In the words of Anifowose (1999, p.99), broadly, therefore, we may summarize the purposes and functions of the State as being the establishment of order, protection, provision and secular common welfare and participation in the International State-system

State Formation in Nigeria

It is widely recognized that before the establishment of the British colonial government in 1900, there was no entity referred to as Nigeria. The diverse ethnic groups that currently constitute Nigeria coexisted independently, though they were not entirely unaware of one another. However, they were unaware that their harmonious existence as separate nations was on the brink of transformation due to significant economic developments occurring in the distant West.

Capitalism, as an economic and political framework that prioritizes a free market, significantly reshaped the Western world during the industrial revolution. This period marked a pivotal shift where machines began to supplant

human labour in the production process, leading to unprecedented changes. Before the industrial revolution, human labour was integral to production; however, the advent of machinery elevated production capabilities to remarkable levels. The introduction of machines altered the production-to-consumption balance, resulting in production outpacing consumption. This shift led to two major challenges: first, Europe faced difficulties in sourcing essential raw materials for its industries, and second, the surge in competition within a limited market necessitated the exploration of new markets.

It was thus this search for new frontiers that brought the Royal Niger Company to the shores of what is now known as Nigeria. The first motive for searching for new territories was purely imperialistic (economic control). But with the need to secure captured territories from other European powers, the British government officially came into the country in the year 1900; that marked the official commencement of colonialism (political control). Despite the territory we now refer to as Nigeria being under the British government, the different ethnic groups were still independent of the other until 1914 when the Northern and Southern protectorate were amalgamated.

In January, 1914, the British government unilaterally created Nigeria by uniting the Southern and Northern protectorate through the process of amalgamation. This was a defining moment in the history of the country, as it was the first time that the once independent regions were assuming a common name; Nigeria. Although the British had colonized Nigeria since 1900, it treated the different regions as separate entities. The decision of the then colonial Governor; Lugard to unify the Southern and Northern protectorate was largely for administrative convenience. The vast land mass and the shortage of colonial officers ensured that unification became the only convenient way to administer Nigeria. As noted by the British Broadcasting Corporation, "Britain wanted empire on a cheap." Nigeria remained under British rule from 1914 up onto the 1st day of October, 1960 when she was finally granted independence from her colonial master. Ever since then, the country has fought a nefarious civil war, but has remained as one to this day.

The detrimental effects of the British decision to merge the regions without adequate consultation began to surface soon after Nigeria achieved independence. The founding fathers, who took over from the colonial rulers, did not grasp that they were now representatives of a singular nation, Nigeria, rather than their respective regions. A clear sign that the populace did not identify as Nigerians was the establishment of political parties based on ethnic affiliations. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) was linked to the North, the Action Group (AG) to the West, and the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) to the East.

The rhetoric of our founding fathers supports this assertion. Those who fought for the nation's independence did not envision a future characterized by unity, as evidenced by their statements. For instance, Chief

Obafemi Awolowo, in his remarks on Nigeria's unity, strongly asserted that Nigeria is not a nation but merely a geographical entity. He described the term "Nigerian" as a label used to differentiate those residing within Nigeria's borders from those outside. He further emphasized that the differences between Western and Eastern Nigeria are as pronounced as those between Ireland and Germany, and that the North is equally distinct from both, akin to the differences between China and the others (Awolowo, 1947). Similarly, Tafawa Balewa, who would later become the first Prime Minister, expressed similar sentiments while addressing the legislative council in 1948:

Since 1914 the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite. Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country.

Nnamdi Azikiwe, the former leader of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) and the inaugural president of the Federal Republic, also made significant remarks that resonated with the prevailing sentiments. He was quoted as saying, "It is better for us and many admirers abroad that we should disintegrate in peace and not in pieces. Should the politicians fail to heed the warning, then the prediction that the experience of the Democratic Republic of Congo will be a child's play if it ever comes to our turn to play such a tragic role" (abaisgood.com/2015/12/3-powerful-quotes-from-3-founding). The aforementioned statements, despite their shocking nature, merely highlight the reality that the populace has never perceived itself as a unified entity. Throughout history, various regions have sought to secede at different points. Unfortunately, even after years of coexistence, the nation continues to struggle with a sense of unity; groups such as the NDA, OPC, Arewa, and IPOB have all advocated for either secession or a reconfiguration of the federation.

Social Contract Theory of John Locke on State Formation

In 1689, Locke published three great works: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, the Two Treatises on Civil Government and the Letter Concerning Toleration. John Locke's theory of Social Contract is different from that of Hobbes. According to him, man lived in the State of Nature, but his concept of the State of Nature is different as contemplated by Hobbesian theory. Locke's view about the state of nature is not as miserable as that of Hobbes. It was reasonably good and enjoyable, but the property was not secure. He considered State of Nature as a "Golden Age". It was a state of "peace, goodwill, mutual assistance, and preservation". In that state of nature, men had all the rights which nature could give them. Locke justifies this by saying that in the State of Nature, the

natural condition of mankind was a state of perfect and complete liberty to conduct one's life as one best sees fit. It was free from the interference of others. In that State of Nature, all were equal and independent. This does not mean, however, that it was a state of license. It was one not free to do anything as one pleases, or even anything that one judges to be in one's interest. The State of Nature, although a state wherein there was no civil authority or government to punish people for transgressions against laws, was not a state without morality. The State of Nature was pre-political, but it was not premoral. Persons are assumed to be equal to one another in such a state, and therefore equally capable of discovering and being bound by the Law of Nature. So, the State of Nature was a "state of liberty", where persons are free to pursue their own interests and plans, free from interference and, because of the Law of Nature and the restrictions that it imposes upon persons, it is relatively peaceful. Be that as it may, Locke observed that greed and confusion might set in, in executing the punishment by each individual in the society, and by implication, war and anarchy may set in. So to avoid this state of war, made effort to leave the state of nature out of their own volition and freewill and form a political society, thus submitting their natural rights of self-defense, rectification of injustice and so on to a common, central public authority.

The Social Contract for John Locke actually constituted the introduction of the state or what one can call the political society construed as a way out for the shortcomings of the state of nature. The state is an arrangement that makes for the submission of the personal right of reasoning of the individual and the right of protecting life and property given to the individual by the state of nature, Lloyd-Thomas (1998) captured this in his reflection in this words, "so to accept that a state has authority is to accept that you have a moral obligation to obey it". Thus Locke (1689) submitted that "the only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceful living". Property plays an essential role in Locke's argument for civil government and the contract that establishes it. According to Locke, private property is created when a person mixes his labour with the raw materials of nature. Given the implications of the Law of Nature, there are limits as to how much property one can own: one is not allowed to take so more from nature than oneself can use, thereby leaving others without enough for themselves, because nature is given to all of mankind for its common subsistence. One cannot take more than his own fair share. Property is the linchpin of Locke's argument for the social contract and civil government because it is the protection of their property, including their property in their own bodies that men seek when they decide to abandon the State of Nature. John Locke considered property in the State of Nature as insecure because of three conditions; they are:

1. Absence of established law;

2. Absence of impartial Judge; and
3. Absence of natural power to execute natural laws.

Thus, man in the State of Nature felt need to protect their property and for the purpose of protection of their property, men entered into the "Social Contract". Under the contract, man did not surrender all their rights to one single individual, but they surrendered only the right to preserve/maintain order and enforce the law of nature. The individual retained with them the other rights, i.e., right to life, liberty and estate because these rights were considered natural and inalienable rights of men.

Basically people unite together so as to ensure the adequate protection of lives and property. What Locke had in mind when he was speaking about property where namely: lives, liberty/freedom and estates. Brandishing the state of nature as an ugly situation, he enumerated some major objectives of forming a civil government. This could be summarized in the following three points.

- a. Instituting a common law by common consent, to determine right and wrong.
- b. Electing a known and indifferent judge with authority to deter all differences according to stipulated laws.
- c. Instituting an executive power to carry out right judgments.

Having created a political society and government through their consent, men then gained three things which they lacked in the State of Nature: laws, judges to adjudicate laws, and the executive power necessary to enforce these laws. Each man therefore gives over the power to protect himself and punish transgressors of the Law of Nature to the government that he has created through the compact. According to Locke, the purpose of the Government and law is to uphold and protect the natural rights of men. So long as the Government fulfils this purpose, the laws given by it are valid and binding but, when it ceases to fulfill it, then the laws would have no validity and the Government can be thrown out of power. In Locke's view, unlimited sovereignty is contrary to natural law. Hence, John Locke advocated the principle of "a State of liberty; not of license". Locke advocated a state for the general good of people. He pleaded for a constitutionally limited government. Locke, in fact made life, liberty and property, his three cardinal rights, which greatly dominated and influenced the Declaration of American Independence, 1776.

Features of John Locke's Idea on the Organization of the State

Consent: the real hallmark and interests of the individual is considered in the organization of the state as elucidated by Locke.

Constitutionalism: this according to Locke entails putting in process a document that regulates the conduct of

individuals in the society based on consent of all and sundry.

Tolerance: the ability of the system entrenched to accommodate even conflicting opinions in the society.

Individual liberty: this entails the dignity and worth of the human person and the freedom accorded in all perspectives.

Stability: this according to Locke must come to bear as only a stable system can ensure individual liberty and effective governance.

Ownership of properties: Locke's idea on liberty and liberal democracy emphasizes the existence of the actualization of self-worth even in terms of individual ownership of properties.

The Nature and Character of Insecurity in Imo State, 2015 – 2023

The understanding of election related insecurity is basically made easier by examining the contending forces involved. This is critical toward confronting this challenge. It is in this connection that this research argues that election-induced insecurity has dominated discourse in Imo State since the 2018 All Progressive Congress (APC) governorship primary where the then incumbent governor, Rochas Okorocha wanted his son-in-law to emerge as the flag bearer, but current governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, with the backing of powerful external forces was drafted from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to wrestle the position from Okorocha, Hope Uzodinma was announced as the APC flag bearer. This set the stage for a political crisis. Obialor & Ozuzu (2019) argued that "elections in Nigeria have been generally described as a 'do-or-die affair', where every contestant tries at all cost to undo his perceived political rival". They further argued that the consequences of this mannerism have always manifested in arson, high profile killing of opponents, maiming of electorates, snatching of ballot boxes and election materials and destruction of properties.

The displacement of Okorocha's interest in APC made the emergence of Emeka Ihedioha of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the governorship election much easier as he was declared winner. However, Hope Uzodinma of the APC who came fourth in the election approached the Supreme Court which granted him his request to be declared winner. Since his swearing in as the governor of Imo State, this has escalated the activities of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and the 'unknown gun men. There has been threats to lives and property and governance most times were stalled by the seemingly atmosphere of insecurity. Moreover, the imposed sit-at-home order by the IPOB, a separatist organization on Mondays has crippled the economy of Imo State and the South-East in general.

The reason for this sordid situation has been attributed to irreconcilable differences during the APC primaries and the displacement of the PDP led government by the APC. Government infrastructure and the general welfare of citizens are threatened daily leading to loss of lives and property and the escalation of economic crisis and poverty. All these have threatened national security as violence has conceptualized the entire gamut of governance in Imo State.

The general insecurity in Imo State have been attributed to the poor management of the APC primaries which polarized the party and both groups lost the general election to the People's Democratic party whose candidate, Emeka Ihedioha was declared winner by INEC. However, the APC flag bearer, Hope Uzodinma, went to court claiming that his votes were suppressed in so many areas and should be declared the winner of the election. This prayer was granted by the Supreme Court, thus, the court sacked Ihedioha of the PDP and this twist in judgment created a two-pronged opposition to the new governor. According to Iwundu (2024):

Imo State has always been known for dirty politics; the process of recruiting leaders has never been fair and transparent. Since 1999, those that nobody expected have emerged as flag bearers of major political parties because of interference from Abuja and the godfathers.

The outcome of primaries engendered bad governance because these governments were never chosen by the people. As a result, disgruntled politicians always recruit the army of unemployed youths to wreak havoc on the state. As regards current insecurity, both internal and external forces challenged Uzodinma's legitimacy through covert means which gave birth to the dreadful unknown gun men attacks on government facilities and individuals. Orji & Uzodi (2015); Soeze (2011) and Anifowose (1982) corroborate this gory situation with what happened in the old Western Region in 1965 when unacceptable election was announced and violence and breakdown of law and order reigned in the region. This gave rise to the infamous 'Operation Wetie' – an atrocious practice of dousing political opponents in petrol and setting them ablaze. In Imo State, the perpetrators were not known but the government and the police accused IPOB, whereas politicians created opportunities for increase in kidnapping, armed robbery and political assassinations. Prominent indigenes who visited their communities were killed, including those targeted along airport road. In fact the chairman of the infamous APC primaries that produced Hope Uzodinma, Ahmed Gulak, was murdered along airport road in Owerri, while on a private visit to the state. The wave of violence intensified fear and indigenes living outside resisted the temptation of visiting their ancestral homes during burials. In fact, extra security has to be provided for citizens to visit their ancestral homes.

These criminal activities limited social life, demoralized economic activities and creating opportunities for the

members of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra to establish its sphere of influence in the State. The climax of insecurity was the abduction of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, in Kenya by Federal Government sponsored operation, and incarcerated in DSS cell in Abuja. The organization had to introduce the defiant sit-at-home strategy to defy the Federal government and the State Government. This was imposed on the rest of the South East, particularly on Mondays and other days that their leader would appear in court. This has dragged on and there is tension in the state, which has hindered smooth running of government; lives and property are threatened daily and innocent citizens bear the brunt. Ohale (2024) argues that citizens no longer trust politicians because the lives of citizens no longer matters.

The nature of insecurity in Imo State since 2019 revealed that the unknown gunmen attacked both government and private property; there were incidences of kidnapping citizens from workplace, worship centres and roads with the state being militarized with the activities of security personnel and criminal gangs. Assassination of high profile persons and abductions of the high and low; and the destruction of property have characterized the nature of insecurity in Imo State. Data revealed that insecurity had become the trademark of both state and non-state actors. The consequences have been unbearable as Beland (2005); and Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, (2013) agree that insecurity depicts a state of fear due to lack of protection or inadequate freedom from danger and the state of being exposed to risk. This state makes a person vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. These scholars aptly captured the situation Imo citizens have found themselves. Unknown gunmen have become masquerades that security agencies are incapable of demystifying and as such they have been consistent in their operations. Insecurity has resulted in extortion, unlawful arrest and maiming of youths in the guise of fighting terrorism. Data further revealed that the sit-at-home order established by the IPOB in solidarity with their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, have made life miserable in Imo State. Local councils, INEC offices, and some traditional rulers were killed in Orlu, including the APC stalwart Ahmed Gulak.

Eze (2024) assessed the situation, in 2020, was so turbulent that we all thought that the end had come. Everybody woke up to something that looked like gun battles in Owerri; the police headquarters was attacked and all the vehicles parked there were burnt while another group blew open the gate of the correctional/prison centre just few metres from the police headquarters and Imo State Government house. Just after these incidents, there were regular gun duels along Amawusa on Douglas Road and Mbaise road, in Owerri. Police stations in all parts of Imo State suffered from attacks with their buildings burnt and many police personnel killed. Kidnapping has been on the increase with many citizens abducted daily. Prominent Imo state people and Alhaji Ahmed Gulak, who headed the APC primary, have been murdered, including those close

to the government of the State. Anybody found to be related in one way or the other to the government has had his property destroyed. Government and security agencies have intensified the fight against the unknown gunmen and members of the IPOB. Youths are murdered in Orlu, Orsu and Njaba areas by both security agencies and the State owned Ebubeagu. Lives and property are destroyed in these areas if not daily but on weekly basis. The State is continually threatened and movement, social life and the economy have suffered. Poverty has increased resulting in armed robbery and other criminal activities.

Managing Insecurity in Imo State Nigeria: Towards Reinventing the Contract Terms and Restructuring the State

In every social phenomenon the easy part has always been identifying the problem whilst the difficulty lies in proffering a solution. Thus, this study looks at possible solutions to the Nigerian problem by reinventing the contract terms and restructuring the State. This research 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, p.334) 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". 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. However, with Lockean social contract theory being posited as the template for an ideal social contract, the Nigerian leaders should 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 (Iloanya, Bosah, & Okoye, 2020).

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, p.124) the end of people's unity or living in the society is to build a commonwealth, preserve human life and properties. 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 (Iloanya, Bosah, & Okoye, 2020). 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 favour 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** (Iloanya, Bosah, & Okoye, 2020).

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, p.334) 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.

The above quotation is typical of the situation in Nigeria. And considering the nature of Nigeria, it seems that it is only civil disobedience that 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 social contract was established out of rationality. After weighing losses and benefits, it was realized that it is worthwhile to establish a government. A governed society was esteemed over anarchy. The latter proved to be detrimental to human freedoms, property and life more than the former. In the contemporary era, Nigerians pursue the social contract through periodic elections where they choose a government to govern over them. The government adopts a constitution and signs international covenants that promise to safeguard civil and political liberties of its people. Inversely, citizens pay taxes to their government and abide by the laws. They also transfer part of their rights so that their leaders can impose sanctions

and penalties on transgressors. In brief, the social contract represents a reciprocal deal between society and its government. However, Nigerian government largely violates the social contract. They arrest citizens arbitrarily, subject them to forced disappearance, torture and inhumane treatment. Most of the civilians' property, freedoms and lives are not guaranteed by the government. The leaders disregard international conventions, the constitutions and promises made to the voters and abuse their powers. Under such deplorable circumstances, citizens unsuccessfully try to revolt or change the government. The media and civil society organizations expose the deficits of authorities and appeal to courts. Meanwhile, the voters attempt to change leaders through elections to no avail. The incumbent governments co-opt or suppress civil society organizations, repress opposition parties and rig elections. They also subvert and sabotage the judicial system. Nigeria is living in falsehood, as the constitution does not reflect the will of the people. Thus, the Nigerian state and its actors has not fared well in ensuring that sovereignty which was surrendered to them by the people has been adequately appropriated by those concerned to maximum benefits in terms of security and welfare of the populace. It was observed that despite the extant provisions of the law, there is a continuous abdication of this extant provision by the Nigerian state against all odds. If the country is to progress from this hopeless state in which she found herself, then she must be ready to revisit the basis of the contract terms of her union that will ensure that the government exists for the good of the people; and as such should depend on their consent. Given the nature and status of the Imo State appraised in this study, it is recommended that;

a) 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.

b) According to Locke, social contract theory is based on consent and other clear objectives and obligations, the people should always be eager to withdraw their consent whenever the government fails in her own obligation as the case in the Nigerian state presently by withdrawing their legitimacy and questioning the status quo. The sovereign powers of the people as provided for by the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (As Amended) have to be active to checkmate the encumbrances of the Nigerian state and its actors who have constituted themselves a clog in the collective will of the people to enjoy what actually gave rise to the Lockean social contract in the state of nature.

c) 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 off today.

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