

## A Philosophical Analysis of Political Participation in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Political participation refers to the direct or indirect involvement of citizens in the governance of their country. Political participation can be broadly divided into two groups, namely, conventional and unconventional political participation. Conventional political participation is concerned with one's involvement in political campaign, public hearing, recall, referendum, running for public office, voting in election among others. While unconventional political participation has to do with one's involvement in public protests, civil disobedience, political debates, community development, strike action among others. Using historical, analytical and evaluative methods, This paper makes an assessment of the level of political participation in N The paper makes a historical analysis of the level/extent of political participation in Nigeria from independence in 1960 till date. Noting that a lot of problems affect political participation on Nigeria, some of which include: religion, ethnicity, gender inequality, violence, godfatherism etc., the paper considers possible solution to the problems of political participation in Nigeria with particular reference to some philosophical theories.

**Key words:** Political participation • Democracy • Society and development

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### INTRODUCTION

This work is premised on the idea that political participation is fundamental to the development and sustenance of the democratic culture. This very point has been consistently made by political theorists from Plato to John Rawls. Irrespective of their various points of divergence, they ultimately tend to agree that the human person is by nature a social being and as such can only discover, develop and actualize his/her potentials and lead a happy and healthy life in a society. The implication of this is that the human person is by nature a being with others, hence is naturally inclined to desire fellowship with others. It is thus and certainly trite knowledge that man's existence and well-being to a large extent depends on the activities of others [1].

In line with this position, John Locke in his *Two Treatises on Government* anchored the emergence, governance and sustenance of an ideal civil society on political participation. For Locke, a civil society that can protect the fundamental rights of every human being to life, liberty and estates and ensure their common wellbeing must be one that emerged through and is governed by the voluntary decisions of all individuals involved. This is because Locke sees the right of

individuals to self-determination as inalienable. Buttressing this point, [2] in his *Second Treatise on Government* asserts:

The only way whereby anyone divests himself of his natural liberty and puts on the bonds of civil society is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties and a greater security against any that are not of it.

The point on prominent relief here is that an ideal civil society is produced and governed by the consent of the citizenry. Political participation is therefore the foundation and necessary propeller of a virile civil society towards its ultimate goal which is the protection of human life and property.

Regrettably, in Nigeria, although theoretically it claims to be an example of a civil society and as such its goals as enshrined in the constitution (1999: Sect 15-17) claim to ensure the maximal protection and promotion of the common good of all Nigerians,' but the historical, existential and factual experience of its emergence and governance right from the 1914 amalgamation show that Nigeria cannot realistically lay claim to being a civil society where political participation has been protected, promoted and preserved.

**Democracy, Political Participation: A Conceptual Clarification:**

Democracy: The etymology of the word 'democracy' is from the Greek words 'demos'- the mob, a people etc. and 'kratein' to rule thus a ruling by the people (Democratic). Democracy in the 5th century BC was used by Herodotus as a rule by the people, which was characterized by equality before the law. This equality emphasized here demonstrates the very character of democracy, which brings it down to the common man. No wonder then why people conceive of democracy as the best system of government since it appears to orchestrate freedom and independence. This was made clearer by St. Augustine, who insisted, according to [3] "That by Law of nature, man has no right over man seeing that his power stoops short at things and animals, men have of themselves logically only the right to command themselves and no human being can of himself impose any authority on others" [4]. No doubt, man's dire need for freedom necessitates the desire for democracy; a system where everyone is free to express himself/herself without fear of punishment.

Accordingly, democracy is said to be practiced where political authority is used for the good of the masses in a polity. It was based on this principle that Pericles of Athens explained the Athenian constitution saying that it is called democracy because power is in the hands not of the minority but of the whole people... [5].

Democracy is characterized by individual empowerment whether economic, political, social or religious, in a sense, the intrinsic freedom governing democracy makes it possible for individuals to participate freely and actively in the developmental process be it religious, economic etc. Democracy is expected to lead the people to prosperity and socio-political excellence. Democracy in sum could be said to be best described by Abraham Lincoln (brainyquotes.com n.d) as "the government of the people by the people and for the people".

**Political Participation:** Political participation refers to the direct or indirect involvement of citizens in the governance of their country. Political participation can be broadly divided into two groups, namely, conventional and unconventional political participation. Conventional political participation is concerned with one's involvement in political campaign, public hearing, recall, referendum, running for public office, voting in elections among others. While unconventional political participation has to do with one's involvement in public protests, civil disobedience, political debates, community development, strike action among others.

Accordingly, [6] gave a lucid clarification of the concept of political participation in his *An Introduction to Political Theory* when he explains that:

In short, political participation denotes the active involvement of individuals and groups in the governmental processes affecting their lives. In other words, when citizens themselves play an active role in the process of formulation and decisions, their activity is called political participation. Conventional mode of political participation includes voting, standing for office, campaigning for a political party or contributing to the management of a public park... interestingly an act of opposition or public protest also involves political participation. For example, signing a petition, attending a peaceful demonstration, joining a protest march... etc. come within the preview of participation... they are the manifestation of a strong awareness of public interest.

Subject to the foregoing analysis and citation, one discovers that political participation is an important paradoxical and delicate political theory. The theory obliges individuals to form and support a given government or the implementation of a given policy base on certain grounds.

**Historical Analysis of Political Participation in Nigeria:**

Since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, Nigerians have not been given the opportunity to participate actively in the governance of their country by their various leaders. From its inception in May 29, 1999, the Obasanjo led federal government made political participation to be an exclusive reserve for the wealthy. Joe Achuzia ([www.nairaland.com/.../handed-biafra-ov...](http://www.nairaland.com/.../handed-biafra-ov...)) observed this when he said; "...power goes to those that can produce the financial wherewithal. It does not matter how they come about the money..." The dominance of the sphere of political participation by the wealthy and the attendant for closure of the vast majority of Nigerian citizens who are not wealthy' explains the, ills of the Obasanjo led administration.

The April 2007 general election conducted by Obasanjo administration was marred by widespread fraud, violence and open ballot rigging. However, Umaru Yar Adua won a land slide victory on a PFD ticket and was sworn in as the first president to assume power from a previously elected leader through the ballot box. Reacting to the 2007 election Nasir El-Rufia [7] noted:

Yar' Adua came into the presidency through an election which observers

Within and outside Nigeria have condemned as the worst in our history. For some of us in President Obasanjo's government, the elections were disappointing,

but the best candidate won. We have elected our first university graduate as president...

Concerning political participation which happens to be our main concern in this work, there was no popular political participation in Yar' Adua's administration, what the nation experienced was the recycling of some of the very old hands as key

government officials by the Yar' Adua led administration, for instance in the downstream oil sector, Alhaji Rilwanu Lukman (73 year old) who had been minister for petroleum for three times in this country's history was again appointed into that same office, Kingibe (then 62 years of age) an old-breed politician, Obasanjo's appointees for secretary to the government of the federation and national security adviser were retained by Yar' Adua. Nasir noted that since: "All the three appointees were older than Yar' Adua and the promise of generational shift began to lose credence" (5). All these are cases of doing something in a particular and same way and expecting a different result which is not practically possible.

Due to lack of popular political participation, Yar' Adua led administration lacked the political and administrative will to implement his Seven Points Agenda with the zeal it deserves to make the country the largest economy by the year 2020 and consequently, the Yar Adua's vision 2020 ended up as other catch phrases like vision 2010 and education for all by the year 2000 and a host of others which did not solve the problems that necessitated those policy pronouncements. Comparing Obasanjo's administration to Yar' Adua's, Nasir [8] concluded thus: "From Obasanjo to Yar' Adua, Nigeria has changed so much, mostly for the worse, that one wonders whether Obasanjo's successor was handpicked, of the same party and of the highest level of education than any leader has ever had".

Yar Adua's ill health however, prevented him from fully executing his powers and shortly before his death, the national assembly passed a resolution to enable vice president Goodluck Jonathan to act as president. In addition parliamentarians used a common law rule, the "doctrine of necessity" to underline the move which had no precedent and was not explicitly backed by the constitution.

Almost immediately after Yar Adua's death Jonathan was sworn in as executive president of Nigeria. Against all odds, Jonathan finally became the presidential candidate of the ruling P.D.P, which since has experienced deepening divisions. Jonathan won the April 2011 presidential election and was sworn in as elected president in May.

Goodluck Jonathan came on board with his Transformation Agenda which was based and draws its inspiration from vision 20:2020 and the first National Implementation Plan (NIP). The agenda is based on a set of priority policies and programmes which will transform the Nigerian economy to meet the future needs of our people. The cardinal elements of the transformation Agenda of the Goodluck administration include constitutional and electoral reforms and transformation of the budgeting process. Others will include overcoming the current security challenges through ensuring peaceful co-existence, tolerance, employment generation, poverty alleviation and job creation for our youths.

In terms of political participation, the Jonathan's administration may not have met up to the standard of popular political participation, but it has done far better than all other general elections, there was a certain level of political participation. For instance, the ruling PDP primary election was campaigned for and contested competitively, nobody was compelled to step down for another, in fact the elections in both primaries and general elections were relatively free and fair. Unlike the general election in 2007, which was marred by widespread fraud, intimidation and violence, the 2011 election which brought Jonathan into power was relative! peaceful and well organized, at least peoples vote counted to some extent. Though there was post-election violence which in my own view is more religious than political.

The civilian administrations have not improved participation in the electoral process because there has been outright disregard for the rules and regulations that are supposed to guide the process. The process has not been able to create and promote conditions conducive to the holding of free and fair elections by facilitating an orderly voter registration exercise culminating in the publication of a final voters register prior to elections, carrying out a programme of voter education; providing adequate voting materials, ballot boxes and screened voting compartments; ensuring an open collation process and preventing voter intimidation and bribery. All these shortcomings of the electoral process deny the electorates the right of the value of their vote in democracy because the entire process is being hijacked by few people in the political class especially the ruling party.

Hence the need for an enduring and transparent electoral process which will be open, competitive, free and fair. This cannot be achieved if INEC still remains under the presidency that controls its budget and appointments. In all, elections must be credible, free and fair because that is what will guarantee popular participation and the ejection of those that fail the electorates.

Generally, in almost all cases up to the present administration, elections have not been properly conducted and given these severe constraints in the quality of elections, the government cannot be considered fully democratically elected.

**Basic Implications of Locke's Theory of Political Participation:** Locke's theory of political participation has a lot of implications that are relevant to the setting-up/development of a viable and egalitarian political society. In relation to this point, some of the most glaring and significant implications of Locke's theory that have, are and would continue to accelerate peaceful co-existence and sustainable development in different societies include: the need to recognize and respect the sacredness, dignity and inalienable rights of every human being; the rule of law; the sovereignty of the people; majority rule/representation and the right to private possession. These principles are acknowledged principles of liberal democracy. Little wonder Locke is usually hailed as the progenitor, if not the father, of liberal democracy. But is there actually a link between Locke's theory and these principles?

Indeed, there is a very strong link between Locke's theory and the principle of the sacredness of human life, the inalienability of fundamental human rights and the sovereignty of the people. Locke's theory is firmly anchored on the view that all human beings are essentially free, equal and have certain fundamental rights that are inalienable. Thus, the human person is an end in itself and should be treated as such, and not as a means to other ends.

This point implies the idea of sacredness, dignity and inalienability of human life as well as of every human life. Moreover, Locke's political philosophy maintains that human beings decided to form the political society in order to protect their dignity and enhance their common good. The import of this is that the people are the sovereign in Locke's political philosophy. This is buttressed by the fact that for Locke the aim of the political society is the protection of human rights, dignity and the pursuit of the common good and any government that digresses from this noble aim can be dissolved by the people. In a very succinct manner, [9] in politics and morality", attest "The main function of government in Locke's philosophy is to enforce morality and protect the fundamental human right of individual citizens. The government is the servant of the people. The people are sovereign and they reserve the right to remove any government that fails to perform its duty properly.

Furthermore, Locke is a strong advocate of the rule of law which no doubt the cornerstone of democracy. Locke's political philosophy reorganizes the supremacy of law over everybody including the legislature itself. For him, as [10] plausibly observed "the law is no respecter of persons and therefore enjoys total obedience and respect by all including the very operators of the law". Of course, this is evident in the fact that Locke frowns at absolute and arbitrary power. Thus in order to promote

Transparency, responsibility and adequate accountability, Locke bestows the power of legislation, execution and supervision on different persons or groups of persons. Commenting on this point, W.F. Lawhead states:

With brilliant insight, Locke suggested that the government should be divided into separate branches, each serving as a limit on the power of the other units. He called these executive, legislative and federative branches the latter would supervise the relations between the government and other foreign nations. He also mentions the judiciary, but it was [11] writing under the influence of Locke, who made the judiciary the third branch of government (291),

The point on relief here is that Locke's theory embodies the principles of the rule of law, separation of power as well as check and balance between the various organs of political power. [12] makes this point more explicit: "Locke's political liberalism is characterized by the legislative, executive and judicial functions of government be kept separate". The import of this is that the rule of law separation of power and check and balances are very essential ingredients for peaceful co-existence, good governance and the sustainable development of any given political society.

In addition to this, other viable implications of Locke's theory are the need to recognize and respect the right of every individual to personal possession and the idea of majority rule. Locke's conception of private property as an inalienable right encourages industry, enterprise and diligence. This is because for Locke, one only has the right to own the product of his/her labour. Yet one is not permitted to own personal possessions beyond his/her needs and in so doing deprive other people of the opportunity to also work, acquire their own property and meet their personal needs. In this regard, the issue of extravagance, exploitation and laziness are eschewed.

Locke argued for majority rule against the practical impossibility of getting all 'men at all times to participate in decision making. For him, if the consent of the majority

is not taken as the act of the whole, then that of every individual, would be needed. But [13] acknowledged the impossibility of all always being available as public assembly: "... the infirmities of health and avocations of business will necessarily keep many away from the public assembly". Thus, he argued that the majority could constitute government. This signifies that while the civil society is formed by the consent of all, the government which acts as a trustee of the people's right to secure their property is constituted not necessarily by the direct consent of each individual. Rather the consent of the majority suffices"" it is necessary the body majority".

With the foregoing elucidations, one can now see that there is an inseparable affinity between Locke's theory of political participation and the acknowledged principles of modern democracy - sovereignty of the people, fundamental human rights, majority rule, separation of power, the rule of law, accountability and the protection of human life and their property. Locke's theory necessarily implies these principles and plausibly maintains that any political society that observes, nay apply these principles will be fundamentally characterized with social stability, peaceful co-existence, good governance and sustainable development [14].

### **Some Problem of Political Participation**

**Culture and Religion:** Culture and religion are intertwined, hence the need to discuss the two together as one of the problems affecting political participation. For instance Muslims exhibit a Muslim related culture in everything including politics, likewise other religions. Some religions/cultures forbid certain category of people from political participation and even partaking in other social activities. This prohibition is sometimes based on sex, age etc. for instance, the Muslim doctrine of puda system (i.e. the seclusion of women), forbids women from participating in social and political activities.

**Violence and Insecurity:** Violence is an act against an individual or group, with the intent to cause injury or death. The major violence that affects political participation is electoral violence which is very common in Africa.

Electoral violence refers to the use of force by political parties or their supporters to intimidate opponents which can result to seizures of political power by the use of undemocratic means, such as force. Electoral violence takes man man) steps backwards and even beyond the original state of man (i.e. the state of nature) to a state of war because according to John Locke:

(1952:2<sup>nd</sup> treatise, 19) "force or a declared design of force upon the person of another...is the state of war..." Sometimes, violence is used to intimidate opponents not to even express their choices of candidates for political position in free open and transparent atmosphere. The effects or consequences of electoral violence range from constituting a major threat to national security, instills fear and causes low participation in elections by eligible voters and consequently casts doubt on the credibility of the purported 'elected leader's before the eyes of the local and international community. Similarly, it could affect the respect from the governed and this could further affect the general acceptability of the popularity of the government, amounts to stealing of genuine mandate from the voters, diminishes good governance and makes the people's hopes and expectations dashed and finally, it hinders or does away with public accountability by the so-called elected officers.

Delivering a paper on "Nigeria: Electoral Violence and National Security", the onetime Inspector General of police, [15] notes that:

Electoral violence could in conjunction with other prevailing factors lead to anarchy and ultimately to political instability. The result has been that political opponents are either intimidated or outrightly killed or injured (<http://www.aceprotect.org/accessibility-info>. (10/03/2015).

The situation as indicated above by Balogun scares people to even come out during election to vote not to talk of contesting any election, given the risk involved due to violence and insecurity.

**Gender Inequality:** Attention is always on women whenever gender inequality is considered as a problem of political participation. This is because many factors hinder women, from active political participation especially in Africa. Some of such factors include: tradition, marriage, reproductive roles, lack of confidence, insecurity, money politics, education etc. Considering marriage as an example, many married women are being restricted by their husbands from active political participation for fear of losing their wives to other politicians due to the misconception that most women politicians are wayward. Also other family responsibilities like child birth, child upbringing and other domestic activities hinder women from active political participation.

**Political Socialization:** Political socialization is an endless thing and it involves the transmission of a people's groups or society's political culture from generation to

generation. It is a developmental process through which persons acquire political orientations and patterns of behaviour. Political socialization starts from childhood. Having identified political socialization as the transmission of political culture from one generation to another, if one must investigate the interplay of politics and socialization in political participation, the best place to commence is from the area of political culture which according to [16] "is a people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments and evaluations about the political system".

So one's participation in the political system is conditioned or influenced by the inherent political culture in the system. Some countries no doubt have more participatory culture than others, in which case they are more enthusiastic and proud in their institutions and are more effective in the role they play.

Political culture per se does not account for political participation, but, when this culture is transmitted through the process of socialization, it can then affect political participation. For instance, a child who is socialized in the culture of political thuggery, acrimonious rivalry, political assassinations and political contest fraught with election rigging and vituperations will tend to develop negatively or entirely discouraged participation.

Generally, unhealthy political culture discourages political participation. In Nigeria for instance the annulment of the June 12, 1993 general election has produced a lot of apathy to political activities in Nigeria. A lot of people still find it hard to believe in the sincerity of any transition programme in Nigeria, This has succeeded in reducing active political participation including voting in an election.

**Wealth and Godfatherism:** Godfatherism is a form of patron-client relationship in the political setting. It is a social problem. It has resulted in political insecurity and violence which are threatening participatory democracy, peace, political stability and consolidation of democracy. Former governor Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu State of Nigeria, (2003:45) defines political godfather from his own personal experience as: an impervious guardian figure who provided the life line and direction to the godson, perceived to a life of total submission, subservience and protection of the oracular personality located in the large, material frame of opulence, affluence and decisiveness, that is if not ruthless... strictly, the godfather is simply a self-seeking individual out there to use the government for his own purpose.

The political godfathers build an array of loyalists around them and use their influence, which is often tied to monetary considerations, to manipulate the rest of the society. They use their influence to block the participation of others in politics. The godfathers are political gatekeepers they dictate who participates in politics and under what conditions. The role of such people is highly injurious to the advancement of popular, participatory democracy.

**Solving the Problems of Political Participation in Nigeria Using the Social Contract Theory:** As Locke held, unlimited sovereignty remains with the people who have the normative power to void the authority of their government if it exceeds its constitutional limitations. To overhaul the radical contradictions which has surreptitiously crept into the Nigerian polity due to lack of popular political participation, there is need to rearticulate our concept and practice of sovereignty within the Nigerian society.

Locke in his political philosophy located sovereignty in the people. Government, according to Locke is held in trust only in service of the people. But in Nigeria the reverse is the case. Although the constitution recognizes that sovereignty lies in the hands of the people, but in practice, this is subject to manipulation. So even though the constitution recognizes the people as the source of sovereignty, the government is the actual source and influence behind the political scenario in Nigeria. This means that sovereignty in Nigeria is not located in the people. As such, the masses that are not in government have little or no hand in governance.

There is need for a change from this ugly situation. The level of poverty and under development in Nigeria, the level of marginalization of the various regions of the country and the spate of corruption among the rulers necessitate the need for this change.

Hence contextualizing Locke to imply a re-location of sovereignty in the Nigerian people entails the convening of all interested groups of citizens to participate in the formulation of an autochthonous constitution which would empower the people to judge, monitor and or replace an erring representative as well as dissolve the entire government if found wanting. And this empowerment of the masses to judge or dissolve government makes representation in Locke significantly different from the representation of an unquestionable/self-seeking few of the Nigerian politicians.

**The Rule of Law:** The rule of law is essential in any society where human rights are to be protected. It acts as a safeguard for human rights first by guaranteeing them legally and second by providing a means for redress when violations occur. The rule of law, comprising the principles of equality and due process, exists in different forms in each country. It may be contained in the power of judicial review, the separation of powers, the doctrine of ultra vires (prevents state organs from proceeding beyond their scope), principles of equality and statutory interpretations [13].

Locke according to [14] laid down several principles of the rule of law:

Firstly, the same law must exist for the favorites at court, end the country man at plough. Secondly, Laws should be designed for the good of the people. Thirdly, the state cannot raise property taxes without the consent of the people, Fourthly, the legislative may not transfer law making power to any other body.

Theoretically, in Nigeria under civilian rule, the function of the rule of law is performed by a supreme constitution which ensures fair hearing of trials in all cases. and guarantees the preservation of rights through the subjection of all classes and persons including government and its agencies to its provision. But the rule of law in Nigeria seems not to be practically in force as government officials are often regarded as sacred cows and therefore commit crimes and go free without being tried in the law court, even when tried, they are hardly punished.

However, Nigerian laws are deliberately punctuated with loopholes so as to serve the interest of successive ruling elites. The social cognitive theory explains the path-ways through which leaders in government perpetrate their guided dictatorship in the name of democracy, as well as why the leadership elite may never surrender to popular democracy as anticipated by Locke's theory of political participation.

The rule of law implies equal subjection of all before the laws including those people are being detained without court warrants and timely trials for fair hearing. Nigeria is yet to become a democratic, egalitarian society where every citizen is equally provided for and protected by the law. Explaining the reason behind this. [15] avers: this is because, from the formulation stages, the laws were skewed to favour successive leadership cabals and protect their local and international interests and

institutions. These laws were deliberately punctuated with loopholes to enhance easy manipulation and multiple interpretations, so that the same law can acquit a friend and convict a foe.

All these problems notwithstanding, the rule of law could still be reappraised in Nigeria in the light of Locke's theory against the haphazard observation of the principle in Nigeria. Presently, the judiciary in Nigeria might not be validly said to be totally free from executive manipulation.

When the people are truly made to wield political power, their fears would be allayed and the judiciary would become really independent to adjudicate even between the executive arm of the government and individuals. Appropriate adherence to the rule of law would really make the judiciary not just the defender of the citizens but the weapon. In the hands of the people to checkmate arbitrary powers of the trustee (government). It would further strengthen the people's will as the law of the state thereby making the trustee (government) which is an agent to respect the law which is the will of its principal-the people. It was in this sense that [16] stated in the case of Governor of Lagos State Vs Ojukwu that: "the law is no respecter of persons, personalities, governments or power and the courts stand between the citizens and the government, alert to see that the state government is bound by law and respect the law".

Such enthronement of equality before the law would ensure equal trial and sanction of all members of the society in both torts and felony without any immunity for any class. Most corrupt government officials in Nigeria hide under the umbrella of official immunity to commit certain crimes and go free. This, for us is a cheat on the people who are the actual possessors of sovereignty. If any immunity were to be given to shield any class of people from the law, it should be to the people and their stewards. Our view is that the enthronement of the rule of law would guarantee a sense of purpose among the elected public office holders and a commitment to the good of all in the state.

**Separation of Powers:** In the 17th century, the doctrine of separation of powers was developed by John Locke, who saw in it a way of freeing mankind from the injustice and oppression which resulted from an absolute system of government. He argued that it would be unwise to give any arm of government power to do the duties of the others since they might use their powers to exempt themselves from the law they had made for their fellow citizens. [17] however, contributed immensely to the

development of this doctrine and he did a lot to refine it so as to ensure justice and fairness in the running of the government. In his treatise titled *The Spirit of Law* he said:

Political liberty is to be found only when there is abuse of powers, but constant experience shows us that every man invested with powers, is liable to abuse it and to carry his authority as far as it will go... To prevent this abuse, it is necessary from the nature of things that one power should be a check on another... when the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person or body-there can be no liberty. Again, there is no liberty if the judicial power is not separated from the legislature and executive-There would be an end to everything if the same person or body, whether of the nobles or of the people, were to exercise all these powers.

The doctrine then explains that it will be foolhardy to give law makers the power of executing the law because in the process they might exempt themselves from obedience and suit the law (both in making and executing it) to their individual interest.

Locke saw the need to share government functions among different arms of government, which [18] interpreted to mean that:

it would not be proper for the same people to be vested with the legislative and executive powers. For if the same group of people both make and execute laws, self interest would dictate both the making and the execution of laws.

Against the executive manipulation of the other arms of government., the influence of political power, if allowed to flow from the people as Locke recommended would create a conducive atmosphere for the three arms to operate objectively.

Under the 1979, 1989 and 1999 presidential constitutions, there was a greater separation of powers in a manner similar to that of the United States of America. Under all these constitutions, section 4 vested legislative powers in the National Assembly, section 5 vested executive powers on the president and governors and the powers subject to other constitutional provisions or laws made by the National Assembly, be exercised by them directly or through the vice president, ministers or officers of the public service and by virtue of section 6, judicial powers were vested in the courts established by the constitution [18].

Now the big question is: all these provisions of the constitution, are they being adhered to in practice? The answer is No. Separation of powers in Nigeria could be said to be a misnomer. This is so because there is no

actual freedom of the legislature and the judiciary from the executive arm of government. Instances abound where the executive attempted to manipulate the legislature or judiciary. An example was the Obasanjo led government attempt to manipulate the legislature to approve the third term against the provision of the constitution. It is our opinion that the separation of powers between the tiers and arms of government in Nigeria should be clearly defined and protected in line with Locke's political theory. These various arms and tiers of government should be made to be accountable to the people instead of the executive arm. This would remove the undue fear and desire for executive gratification which often influences the judiciary either directly or indirectly. When the three arms are made to be accountable only to the people, then,

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the fear of being blacklisted for financial neglect and or the desire for better appointments and favours by the executive would be removed.

This would enable the legislature to make laws in line with the people's will and desire as contained in the constitution, for the day to day administration of the country. It would also empower the legislature to ratify the executive bill and their general functions in line with the people's will without any executive manipulation.

**Censorship Right and Impeachment:** Government is a contract between the leaders and citizens. Citizens will surrender some liberty to create a government that allows them to overcome the inconveniences of the state of nature. This implies that citizens have the right to abolish governments that do not protect the common good of the citizens. Locke emphasized the citizens' right to judge the performance of government since the very existence of the state and civil government depends on the consent of the people. Also, "... the natural rights of life liberty and property to the individual limit the just power of the community" [15]. This is because the people merely gave up their right to enforce the law of reason alone, for the preservation of their property.

Since the government power is being held as a trust, the people desire to see government perform what they were entrusted to do. To ensure the effectiveness of government, Locke (1952:240) maintained that the people shall play the role of censoring their performance. Using his words; "... the people be judge.... "

Locke by this gave the people a wider scope of political participation even to the extent of censoring the activities of their representatives/government. Locke declared that under natural law, all people have the right to life, liberty and estate, government is a social contract, the people could instigate a revolution against the government when it acted against the interest of the citizens and replace it with one that served the interest of citizens. Therefore in some cases, Locke deemed revolution an obligation. The right of revolution thus essentially acted as a safeguard against tyranny. For Locke, the people have a right to remove erring representative(s) and or even dissolve a bad government. This is because for Locke, as [7] rightly observes: The government derives its power from the people, a mandate to carry out the wishes of the people. If the rulers are not fulfilling the wishes of the people then the people reserve the right to remove them from power by rebellion and to elect new rulers who would carry out their wishes.

Locke supposed that the most likely cause of a revolution would be the abuse of power by the government itself.

Locke's view is of special relevance to the Nigerian state because the people's right to revolt would overcome government's resistance to change. Governments in Nigeria, like other African nations, are most likely to resist the people's attempt to dissolve it. The representatives in government positions are likely to use the security and military outfits against the people's attempt to dissolve any government. But Locke offers a way out through the relocation of sovereignty in the people. If the people are allowed to articulate their constitution, the control of the military would, be better exercise by the people through the legislature. In that case, the president would no more remain the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Hence the chances of the executive using the military against the people would be reduced.

Locke's view on revolution would therefore legalize such actions as the constitution would empower the people to revolt against bad government, dissolve and reconstitute a desirable government, without being guilty of treason. Revolutionary movements by the people have resulted to or brought a change in government to the people's desire in countries like Romania, Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Lybia, Egypt etc. Hence, the phenomenon of justifiable revolution in rebellion would equally be of help in Nigeria, With the legalization of rebellion, resistance, by the bad government would be difficult and unsuccessful. Thus Locke's option for and promotion of the people's right to revolution would greatly enhance the people's place and relevance in the re-organization of the Nigerian society as it would enable Nigerian to put the rule in to such hands which may secure them the ends for which government was first elected.

Revolution or rebellion in Locke's view is the final instrument in the hands of the people to safeguard their right to preserve their property. But the exercise of rebellion requires some fundamental enlightenment. And this calls for a thorough political education of Nigerians on the basics of civil life and right.

## CONCLUSION

So far, there has been a thorough examination of the extent and exercise of political participation in Nigeria to the conclusion that it is extremely determined by few individuals thereby foreclosing the chance of popular participation. We have also exposed the adverse

consequences of such mode of political participation on the nation and its people. Locke's view on political participation theory has equally been seen to be open to popular participation and the common good; owing to this, it becomes necessary to suggest a change in the mode of political participation and administration in Nigeria using Locke's theory as a theoretical framework. Supporting the imperative of a change in the nature of political participation in Nigeria, [18] wrote:

The Nigerian democratic project must ultimately involve no less than a revolutionary overhaul of our institutions, attitudes and ideas as well as fundamental restructuring of the Nigerian society economically, politically and socially...democratizing Nigeria will be a complex, slow, time consuming, expensive and contentious process encouraged only by the certain knowledge that democracy is undoubtedly the best suited and efficient system in satisfying the expectations of the largest majority of our people (4).

He went on to explain that such change would create room for the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria which in turn would engender the good of the citizens in general which is the objective of any democracy. Democracy entails "how to forge a developmental plan process which is simultaneously participatory for individuals citizens, sensitive to and protective of individuals rights, freedom and liberty" (Oyovbaire qtd in Uya 5). By this, Oyovbaire hold that participation in

politics should be accommodative of multiple and competing loyalties, generate economic growth and distributive justice. This entails the absence of dictatorship whether of a tyrant ruler or a godfather who uses his influence to determine the political pace of the state at will. It entails a polity of free and equal access to political participation, Locke's theory of political participation offers a chance for such a society by situating the political power of the state in the people; "the natural right of life, liberty and properties reserved to the individuals limits the just power of the communities" [2].

In Locke's theory, the people wield the actual political power. If we should implement that in Nigeria, our political history will change and our national objectives realized. It is obvious that the proper application of certain principles inherent in Locke's theory can help to improve political participation in Nigeria. These principles include: the sovereignty of the people, rule of law, separation of powers, censorship right of the people and right to dissolve bad government.

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