

THE CLASH BETWEEN SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PREBENDAL POLITICS/PREBENDALISM

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Abstract

This undertaken basically considers the clash between social justice and prebendal politics. The researcher investigates social justice and the concept prebendalism in political milieu. The study employs archival/historical method of data collection by consulting various texts while solid, viable and virile extrapolations were made on the topic. Causes and effects of prebendal politics against social justice was also treated, after which recommendations were proffered in the research/undertaken.

Key Words: Prebendalism; Egalitarianism; corruption; distributive justice; social justice.

Introduction

The concept of social justice always expressly concerns itself with the ideology of equality, even distribution of commonwealth/patrimony within the society while prebendalism on the other hand is concerned with insatiable appetite of few/individuals in amazing public commonwealth for themselves and their chorines alone, doing this at the expense of the majority.

It is against this backdrop that the researcher is interested in discussing the topic, the clash between social justice and prebendalism, all because one is taken a lead at the expense of other, thereby making the society paying for it dearly especially in the developing /underdeveloped nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America where prebendalism is having an edge over social justice contrary to what operates in developed countries/nations like America, France, China, etc. where social justice is having an edge over prebendalism and therefore making them better off.

Conceptual Framework

Corruption: The word corruption, emanates from *latin corruptus*, the past participle of *currupere*, which means to abuse or destroy. According to the Zambia Anti-corruption Commission (ACC), Corruption is “The soliciting, accepting, obtaining, giving, promising or offering of gratification by way of bribe or other personal temptations of inducement or the misuse or abuse of a public office for private advantage or benefits. The Tanzanian prevention of corruption Acts states that, “Any person who corruptly solicits, accepts or obtains from any person

for himself or another person, many advantages as an inducement to or reward for or otherwise on account of any agent or not such agent shall be guilty of an offence(Laws of Zambia 2012, Act 3,PartI)”

Democracy: According to Adisa, O.P.(2011) Democracy is a system of government that empowers the electorates(masses) to hire and fire, (which means a system of government that give electorates the mandate “*power*” to determine their representatives among many contestants by voting-“*hiring*”, and when such a representative failed, they still have the power of “*firing*” voting him/her out of office through the same process of voting). To William M. Reisinger, he said that “The basic sense of democracy as a form of governance rests on its etymology as rule by the entire people rather than, as Shapiro puts it, by any “aristocrat, monarch, philosopher, bureaucrat, expert, or religious leader.” Beyond that, actual definitions of democracy come in all shapes and sizes. On the next page are a variety of others’ definitions for your perusal, presented in chronological order. Each emphasizes one or more things thought to be true about democracy: 1) it is a dangerous form of government; 2) it includes genuine competition for power; 3) it permits mass participation on a legally equal footing; 4) it provides civil and other liberties that restrict the sphere of state power within the society; or 5) it promotes widespread deliberation about how to make and enforce policy so as to promote the common good.” in Jonathan Turley (*Democracy in America: What Does it Mean? 2012*)

This is because it promotes widespread deliberation about how to make and enforce policy so as to promote the common good. Therefore, it means “

rule by the people” because it promotes majority decision about how to make and enforce policy so as to promote the common good.

Justice is a concept of moral rightness based on ethics, law, natural law, equity and fairness, Justice takes into account the inalienable and inborn rights of all human beings and the right of all people and individuals to equal protections before the law without discrimination on the basis of race, gender, colour, religion, age, wealth, disability, etc. **Ojukwu Chris 2016.**

According to John Rawls (1971), “**Justice** is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests”

For the egalitarians, Justice expresses equality, demand for the equality of opportunity and demand for equality of outcomes. Because to them, freedom and justice without equality are hollow and equality itself is highest justice.

Furthermore, for justice to be meaningful and complete it must portray the following traits/attributes;

- **DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE**- this connotes an impartial distribution of public goods and resources among all existing different groups that make up a particular society or commonwealth.
- **EGALITARIANISM**- simply expressing equality of advantages of all individuals irrespective of social, political, economic, religious, academic status, etc. This can be employment opportunity, educational, health, housing, pension, etc on a level playing ground for everybody. (www. Dictionary. Com.2017)
- Giving people what they deserve.- Meaning apportioning to each according to their needs without attaching any conditions to it.

- **FAIRNESS**-This also according to Ross, allocation of values which is devoid of privileged, personalities, social status and finally which also exclude selfness and bias.

For according to Augustine, true commonwealth can never exist if there is no real justice in the community. “But true justice is found only in that commonwealth whose founder and ruler is CHRIST... (JOHN 5 V 30; 8 V 16 AND ROM.5 V 1.) We cannot deny that it is the 'weal' of the community.

About Cicero's Roman commonwealth, Augustine holds that since it lacked justice., it could not be called fully common-wealth. But could only be called a commonwealth to some qualified extent. The only commonwealth, considered fully as such, is the commonwealth of Christ. Cicero's definition of commonwealth and of a people is therefore inappropriate if applied to Rome. For if the “weal of the people” is the true definition of the state or commonwealth as given through Scipio by Cicero, then Roman commonwealth never existed since the Roman state never represented the “Weal of the people” Cicero defined a people as “a multitude united in association by a common sense of right and a community of interest.” *“A state therefore cannot be without true justice, for right always implies justice. The same applies to human institutions. If they are unjust, they are not institutions of right. For Augustine therefore where justice does not exist, there could be no” association of men united by a common sense of right”* Ojelabi O.O. and Adisa, O.P.(2009)” A people actually does not exist outside justice. Also there is nothing like the weal of the people outside the people. What one could get is only a mob. But since commonwealth is the weal of the people and a people does not exist outside justice. That is, where there is no association by a common sense of right, then there could be no commonwealth. St. Augustine finally explains a people as a gathering of men into a community of interests. *The absence of justice could also be noted in the soul that does not serve God.* Such a soul cannot command the body. Augustine emphasizes

this relationship with God in the justice of the commonwealth.

For him justice only exists where the one supreme God reigns over a loyal City that worships only him. (EXODUS 20 V3-5; JERM.35 V 15) Thus following this, the true justice did not exist in the Roman state, therefore no commonwealth, for if there were no people, there would be no weal of the people (Ojelabi and Adisa.2009)

At this juncture what is *social justice*?

According to **Ojukwu (2016)** Social justice is the demystification of self-ego for the commonwealth/betterment of the general populace.

What do we mean by *prebendalism*?

This concept was first used by Richard A. Joseph, director of The Program of African Studies at [Northwestern University](#), using the term to describe patron-clientelism or neopatrimonialism in [Nigeria](#). Since then the term has commonly been used in scholarly literature and textbooks.

Joseph wrote in 1996, "According to the theory of prebendalism, state offices are regarded as prebends that can be appropriated by officeholders, who use them to generate material benefits for themselves and their constituents and kin groups..."

Prebendalism:- refers to *political systems* where *elected officials*, and *government workers* feel they have a right to a share of government revenues, and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their *ethnic group*. The term is commonly used to describe the patterns of *corruption in Nigeria*.

Having properly understood what social justice and prebendalism mean it becomes imperative to now consider the causes and effects of insert 'the' clash between social justice and prebendal politics in Nigeria.

Many factors have been responsible for clashing between social justice and prebendal politics. To start with, Cicero, said "*the greatest incitement crime is the hope of avoiding punishment*". Therefore, other factors to be considered are;

1. Greediness
2. Irreligiosity/ ungodliness
3. Envy
4. Self perceived need
5. Perceived social expectation
6. Perceived lack of sanction
7. Deprivation
8. Perceived frustrating transactions

9. Perceived intimidation by prospective benefactors
10. Unclear and uncertain transaction protocols
11. Self-perceived cultural and tip syndrome.

Manifestations of clash between social justice and prebendal politics

For ascertaining the claim that truly there is clash between social justice and prebendal politics, manifestation must have been clearly seen and observed by all sundry, such as;

1. Soliciting and accepting bribe before the discharge of lawful duties;
2. Nepotism;
3. Appropriation and privatization of state properties for private ends;
4. Abuse of official position;
5. Miscarriage of justice;
6. Lower taxes;
7. Sexual harassment in schools and establishments;
8. Electoral bribery/fraud;
9. Inflation of government contracts;
10. Examination malpractices;
11. Absenteeism from work without genuine reason or permission.

Effects of clash between social justice and prebendal politics

In order to establish and affirm that the clash between social justice and prebendal politics is a negative phenomenon that does not blow any society any good, the negative effects must be conspicuously seen on and at every facet of the society; some of these are presented as follows;

- ✓ Destroys the socio-economic life of the society generally;
- ✓ Makes economic planning very difficult;
- ✓ Creates political instability and undermines the integrity of the state;
- ✓ Concentrate wealth in the hands of a few corrupt individuals;
- ✓ Promote inefficiency, incompetence and breeds nepotism

- and unhealthy rivalry in governmental administration;
- ✓ Stunt economic growth, private investment and development;
 - ✓ Promote widespread poverty and large-scale unemployment;
 - ✓ Promotes inflation and destroy efficiency of public institutions, including electoral process resulting in key offices and positions being held by charlatans and political jobbers;
 - ✓ Promotes inequality in the distribution of wealth;
 - ✓ Destroys ethical and democratic values;
 - ✓ Causes a reduction in the quality of goods and services, available to the public;
 - ✓ Create unfair, unjust and inequitable environment in which the rule of law is undermined;
 - ✓ Encourages and promotes crimes and large scale fraud;
 - ✓ Discourage honest effort and valuable economic activities; and
 - ✓ Upset ethnic balance and exacerbates the problem of national integration.

Precautions and way out

As long as this undertaken have identified the causes and effects of clash between social justice and prebendal politics, the work will be incomplete if some recommendations are not proffered. In doing so the researcher now proffered the following recommendations as some of the way out to the menace;

- ❖ To start with, politicians need to abide by the rules of the game which stipulate free and fair election in order to boost the chance of political stability and emergence of credible candidates who can work for the betterment of the commonwealth of the country;

- ❖ Secondly, the administrators at the helms of affairs at all levels be it elected, selected, appointed or employed must be an epitome of good behavior for their followers, by living an exemplary life;
- ❖ The issue of abject poverty which is smelting and have produced garment of financial imbalances for greater percentage of Nigerians deserves urgent attention by the government.
- ❖ Another solution is the provision of mass employment or job opportunities for the teeming unemployed Nigerian youths after many years of graduation that are still roaming about as job seekers, situation which as turned almost every one of them to become criminals.
- ❖ Inculcation of moral values is another indispensable and indisputable needed ingredients at this time, so that attitude of moral uprightness of hard work and dedication to duty rather than cutting corners will be order of the day.
- ❖ Regular provision and access to infrastructural amenities such as quality education, health services, communication and transportation, pipe-born water, constant electricity, etc should all serve as panacea to the menace.
- ❖ Conclusively, all the anti-graft agencies such as EFCC and ICPC need to be more empowered,

made independent to carry out their legitimate functions without fair or favour, uninfluenced to the extent that government of the day will not also have any sacred cow among any body alleged to be investigated or finally prosecuted if found guilty, in order to serve as deterrent to any would be offenders.

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