

REVOLUTION FOR REGIME CHANGE: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF ITS BASIS AND MORAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Revolution is a significant factor for regime change. A close observation of any society whose political system has undergone a meaningful change, reveals some forms of revolutionary movements to that effect. Revolution can be described as an earnest yearning for a systemic change in the social and political order of a society, targeted to bring about positive changes in governance. It occurs when people revert against the government for many reasons, including a tyrannical, authoritarian, and oppressive rule that rigs the people out of value and relevance. Revolution, therefore, is a way citizens respond to the government; it is a mark of responsibility and sensitivity of dissatisfied citizens. It is not about violence and breakdown of law and order, but rather the creation of opportunity for the realization of citizens' common good and national development through the removal of irresponsible government and the institution of good and responsible leadership. This paper is therefore a philosophical analysis of the relevance of revolution for regime change. It argues that revolution is one of the ways of removing a tyrannical government that has shown with impunity reckless manifestation of gross marginalization, insensitivity to the plights of the people, corruption, and leadership ineptitude, to engender good governance and national development. While discussing the moral implications of revolution, the paper concludes, as, against the view of many, that revolution is morally justified as it brings about changes in the socio-political, economic, and cultural institutions of a society.

Keywords: *Revolution, regime change, good governance, responsible leadership, national development.*

Introduction

The concept of revolution, no doubt, has continued to elicit mixed reactions and a variety of tendentious interpretations by scholars and even revolutionaries themselves. Among

the scholars, there are discrepancies and controversies in their definitions and descriptions of the phenomenon of revolution. The revolutionaries on their part, who have dedicated their time and energy in explaining the purpose and aim of their struggles, are also in apparent disagreement concerning the aim of their actions. This illustrates how diverse the experience and understanding of revolution can be. Revolution is a very important concept of discourse. Its importance cannot be underestimated as it plays a very significant role in the development and transition of any society from one stage to another. With regards to society and politics, revolution is well known, especially in societies characterized by abuse and misuse of political power and positions. Although some other terms appear to be synonymous with the concept of revolution, such as *coup d'état*, treachery, sedition, etc. the difference lies in that, a revolution is usually a spark by the people from the people; a mass mobilization of individuals of society standing up against a corrupt system of injustice while a coup or treason could be the organization of a selected few targeted for their personal and sometimes selfish benefits, not necessarily because there is a decay in the political order of the day nor a consideration for the betterment of the people, a common good.

A revolution is usually aimed at bringing about political or regime change in government that would impart positively on the citizens in terms of equity, justice, and development of individuals in a society. A revolution could begin as a peaceful march or protest, strike actions, or any order form of civil protest to draw the attention of the government to the issues of concern to the notice of the society and government, however, a peaceful march can turn out into a violent march that could lead to the loss of life and destruction of properties; situations like this may be due to some form of resistance perceived as a threat or attack on the protesters, they would take on any means available to defend themselves. It is in situations such as this that the moral correctness of such movements is questioned. Questions of when it is right and how it should be done. An unstable society cannot progress. However, throughout history, notable changes in world power and systems came as a result of revolutionary movements, even the world war, and Nigeria civil war, although they escalated into wars, which was not the original plan they began with, if these movements never started, the world will either be at a standstill or characterized by what I call, political bigotry.

A revolution like we pointed out above involves a regime change; it does not leave the constitution unaffected. It nullifies the legal order of a country and replaces it with a new order. The change bought about by revolution may be through peaceful or violent means as can be witnessed from different revolutionary events or movements like the French revolution (1778-1779), which had the slogan – liberty, egalitarianism, and fraternity some of which were peaceful and bloodless, whereas some were violent bloody and destructive; the American revolution of 1776, which aimed at freedom and

emancipation from British colonial rule; and then the Industrial revolution of the 19th century, which aimed at ameliorating the working conditions of workers. There are other revolutions like the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England, which is seen by many as non-violent and constructive. We also have the Velvet revolution, which launched Havel in the Presidency of the United States of America in 1989; and then, the Rose revolution of 2003 in Georgia State in the USA, which displaced Edward Shevardnadze as governor; the list is endless

Generally, two different attitudes to revolution loom large: those who see nothing good about revolution and thus, opposed to it; and those who approve of revolution as a solution to the problem of tyranny and bad government. This subsequent position, nevertheless, constitutes the thesis of this paper. Thus, this paper argues that revolution is a necessary ingredient for regime change with certain moral implications posed by revolutionaries.

The Anatomy of Revolution and Regime Change: A Conceptual Reflection

The term revolution is derived from the Latin word *revolutio*, which means *a turnaround*. It was originally an astronomical term, which gained increasing relevance in the natural science through Copernicus work: *De Revolutionibus Orbium coelestium* (On the Revolution of Celestial Bodies) published in 1543. From its Latin translation, it was referred to as the regular, lawful revolving motion of the stars. And from its original meaning, it implies a process that spells a definite end of an old order and brings about the birth of a new world. It is in this context that revolution is said to mean restoration.¹ Revolution has been described by political scientists as a fundamental and relatively sudden change in political power and political organization which occurs when the population revolts against the government, typically due to perceived oppression or political incompetence.² Revolution has been described by Padre Peregrino as an overthrow or repudiation and the thorough replacement of an established government or political system by the people governed.³

From a sociological point of view, revolution is a radical and pervasive change in society and social structure, especially one made suddenly and often accompanied by violence.⁴ The political scientist describes revolution as a fundamental and relatively sudden change in political power and political organization which occurs when the population revolts against the government, typically due to perceived oppression or

¹ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963, p.43.

² <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution>, (accessed June 5, 2020).

³ Padre Peregrino, *Revelation and Revolution*, <https://padreperegrino.org/2020/06/vigpost1/> (accessed September 2, 2020).

⁴ <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/revolution>, (accessed June 5, 2020).

political incompetence.⁵ Jeff Goodwin gives two definitions of revolution, which according to him, has to do with any instances in which a state or a political regime is overthrown and thereby transformed by a popular government in an irregular, extra-conditional, and or violent fashion. He goes further to state that "Revolutions entail not only mass mobilization and regime change, but also more or less rapid and fundamental social, economic and cultural change, during or soon after the struggle for state power."⁶ Gauba described revolution as "A sudden or very fast change in the social system which may affect all aspects of social life, e.g. power structure, economy, ways of living, norms and beliefs, and so on. It may be the outcome of mass uprising, mass mobilization, discovery, and inventions, etc."⁷ Revolution, as opined by Jack Goldstone, is "an effort to transform the political institutions and the justification for political authority in society, accompanied by formal or informal mass mobilization and non-institutionalized actions that undermine authorities."⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich are major proponents of the theory of revolution. They developed the theory which proposed that conflict stems out of different positions in the economic structure- 'class struggle' between the bourgeoisie - capitalist who own the means of production, and the proletariats- the laborers. Karl Marx's theory was a dialectical materialism theory whereby a perfect society will secure all the necessities of life to the satisfaction of all its members. But according to the dialectic concept, perfection comes through a very long process. Society, since its inception, has always been subject to internal stresses and strains. Unsatisfied needs are, therefore, the result of the defective modes of production. A continuous stretch and strain in Marx's view lead to a revolutionary change.

Philosophically, revolution is like a protest against the ills and decay in systems and operations of any government, which is based on a rational and logical evaluation by the ruled. The outburst of revolution is usually characterized by insolence, autocracy/anarchy, basically, a failed or failing system which is accompanied by a strong desire for change, characterized by courage, rebellion, anger, and protests, which most times result into a crisis of violence and war. The revolutionary movements that led to the Great War brought about the fallouts of dynasties and the emergence of new world identities to suit the needs and demands of each group involved, a new order it was. However, we see also how it led a number of these entities into economic depression and a social-cultural loss, not to mention also the millions of soldiers and civilians whose lives

⁵<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution> (accessed June 5, 2020).

⁶ Jeff, Goodwin, *No Other Way Out States and Revolutionary Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 5.

⁷O.P.Gauba, *Introduction to Political Theory*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 2009, p.6.

⁸ Jack Goldstone, "Towards a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 4, 2001, Pp. 139 – 187.

were lost through the whole period, leaving permanent scars on the people. Need more to say that a revolutionary movement needs thorough examination before execution.

It is important to state at this point that revolution does not imply war, and its aim is not necessarily targeted at stirring up violence or a state of crises. The idea is to bring about change in a deteriorating and decaying system that threatens the peace and wellbeing of the people and the development of a country. When revolutionary movements begin to spring up in any society, it is usually as a result of gross misconduct and incompetence in the overseeing of affairs by the government of the day. It is hinged on the hopelessness of the people in the ability of the political system to bring about desired results, the tiredness of the people is constantly witnessing abuses of political power and offices for selfish benefits as opposed to the general benefits of the masses. However, the need to thoroughly scrutinize the underlining aim and principles of any revolutionary movement lies in the fact that some unscrupulous elements in the society also seeking personal interest could seize the advantage of a people's strong desire for a change in political order to perpetuate violence which most often leads to crisis and a defeated purpose. It is also in this kind of situation that the issue of justification and moral correctness of any movement is questioned. To what end or benefit do they desire changes and for whose benefit? Individual or the whole pack? What means or to what extent are they willing to go to achieve their desires? The principle that whatever is good for the goose should also be good for the gander lies in the fact that for progress to be achieved, everyone has to be carried along. Now to the question of what extent revolutionary movements are for the general good, can easily be answered based on the unity and stand of the people. This does not, however, eliminate the possibility of a hijack as a result of misunderstanding and misinformation of purpose.

On the other hand, regime change involves an overthrow of a government or regime considered illegitimate or tyrannical by an external force and its subsequent replacement with a new government according to the concept of political regime legitimacy promoted by that force. It is an alteration of the socio-political order. It may relate to social change; for, social change refers to the notion of social progress or sociocultural evolution, the philosophical idea that society moves forward by evolutionary means. Social change may be driven through cultural, religious, economic, scientific, or technological forces.⁹ It is important to note that regime changes are sudden changes in the structure and nature leading to social change. The term *social change* is highly controversial particularly among sociologists because the object is a social phenomenon, a social process that tends to have diverse dimensions and facets, unfolding

⁹ Social change. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/social_change. (accessed September 2, 2020).

at different levels of generality¹⁰. Regime change is as old as human society, and as human society has changed over time, so also a social scientist and social philosophers have propounded several explanatory theories to regime change.

Revolutionary Theories of Social Change

Revolutionary social change is a change in the socio-political system that occurs suddenly, drastically, and sufficiently. It is not slow and gradual change; it affects the whole socio-political order, including the lifestyle and conduct of the people, social structure, and social system. The French, Russian, Chinese, and American revolutions are some of the revolutions that brought about social changes. This form of revolution brings about changes in human interaction and interrelationships; this is very important because society is a web of social conditions and relationships. There are theories of social change, which include evolutionary theory, diffusion theory, and cyclic theory.

The theory of evolutionary change was borrowed from biology. This theory was popularized by the natural scientist Charles Darwin who in his *Origin of Species* postulated that "all life forms including the human race had gradually evolved from lower orders of life as a result of progressive adaptation to the environment through the survival of biological forms best adapted to a competitive struggle."¹¹ The application of the evolutionary approach was favored by early sociologists including Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, and Emily Durkheim, etc. For Auguste Comte, human society and civilization progress through a natural and inevitable course and which forms the basis upon which humans and their societies are organized. Comte divided society into traditional and modern societies. The traditional society is military in orientation, characterized by wars and conquest of empires with all social institutions serving the needs of the military. Modern society on the other hand is characterized by the dominance of the economic system induced by the industrial revolution. Comte's idea of revolution is the progression of human society from the military (primitive) to modern society. His traditional and modern society dichotomy is similar to Durkheim and Spencer's.¹² This theory has received criticisms for being overly one-sided, that is, it supposes that change is only as a result of internal forces, dispelling the possibilities of external factors such as cultural borrowing, assimilation, and acculturation. Another theory of social change is the diffusion theory, which suggests that social change is as a result of the diffusion of cultural patterns and practices of other societies, which is a function of the spread of

¹⁰ Morariu, Corina and Ignat, George. "Social-Economic Theoretical Connections: Theories of Social Change." In *Journal of Social Economy*, vol.1, 2011, Pp. 26-48.

¹¹K. A. Anele, *Social Change and Social Problems in Nigeria*, in Sibiri and Ekpenyong (eds.), Major Themes in Sociology: An Introductory Text, Mase Perfect Prints, Benin City, 2017, Pp.491-526.

¹²K.A. Anele, *Op. Cit.*, p. 494.

practices from society to society. According to Linton, “we are a culture of borrowers.”¹³
Diffusion as described by Kroeber is:

The process usually but not necessarily gradual, by which elements or systems of culture are spread; by which an invention or a new institution adopted in one place is adopted in neighboring areas and some cases, continues to be adopted in adjacent ones, until it may spread over the whole earth.¹⁴

Diffusion theory has also been criticized for failing to account for differences in culture worldwide. In essence, the theory upheld the evolutionary principle which it tends to react against. Lastly, is the cyclical theory, which holds that civilization will go through cycles of growth and decay. Plato talked about eras of time when initially, hopes will blossom on to deteriorate as the era disintegrates. The pattern is that each culture will arise, develop, ripen, decay, and fall never to return. Sorokin suggests that social changes follow a trendless cyclical pattern i.e. like a swinging pendulum, culture moves in one direction and then back to another.¹⁵ Splenger in his view said that societies will go through periods of ups and downs often described as the cycles of life. According to him, culture is the living entity of people, and culture is housed in the civilization of that era.¹⁶

Causes and Prevention of Revolution

Revolutionary movement for regime change does not just happen; certain factors in society can propel it. Such factors ranging from suppression and oppression of some people in the society by a privileged few with positions of authority; a failure in the justice system and undue interference of some power drunks in the affairs of the different arms of government for purely selfish ambitions and reasons. As Aristotle said, "insolence and Avarice"¹⁷ in any government can spark up a revolution and as Marxist philosophy proposes that inequality in economic power distribution is a big threat to the stability of any society when injustice and inequality are perceived in an organized "civil" society, a strong desire for change in that will be desired.

Aristotle's connection between theory and practice in his book *Politics* brings to bear the very idea of revolution. He acknowledges varying degrees of revolution while

¹³K.A. Anele, *Op. Cit.*, p. 496.

¹⁴K.A. Anele, *Op. Cit.*, Pp.491-526.

¹⁵ Sorokin Pitrim, *Society, Culture and Personality*, New York: Harper, 1947.

¹⁶ Splenger Oswald, *the Decline of the West*, Trans. By Charles Atkinson, New York: Oxford University Press, 1932.

¹⁷Samuel Enoch Stumpf and James Fieser, *Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy, 8e.*, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., Singapore, 2012.

noting that revolution can take a form of a change of constitution or regime directed to bring about change in the policies of the government of such a regime or to get power into the hands of the revolutionaries. Secondly, revolution may make an oligarchy more, or less, oligarchic, or a democracy more or less, democratic, and leave the form of government otherwise unchanged. Aristotle argues that generally revolution springs from one-sided or perverted notions of justice that men entertain. For instance, Democrats think that because men are equally free they should be equal; Oligarchs think that because men are unequal in wealth they should be unequal.¹⁸ On the causes of revolution in particular kinds of states for instance, in democracies, oligarchies, aristocracies, and polities, Aristotle writes that democracies are usually overthrown by the excesses of demagogues, which lead the rich to combine against the government; or demagogues may set up a tyranny. Oligarchies are overthrown by either revolt due to their oppressive rule; or by a rivalry between the oligarchs themselves. On aristocracies, Aristotle writes that revolutions are sometimes due to the honours of the state being restricted to a too-small circle. Usually, however, the downfall of an aristocracy or a polity is due to the ill-mingling of the democratic and oligarchic elements. Polity tends to change into democracy, aristocracy into an oligarchy. But reaction sometimes turns a polity into an oligarchy, and aristocracy into a democracy.¹⁹

On the causes and prevention of revolution in monarchies and tyrannies, Aristotle says that revolution occurs when the people are humiliated; when there is a seed of mistrust among them; and when the powers of the people are taken away from them. Secondly, a revolution occurs when the tyrants rule more like a king. Aristotle emphasizes that prevention of revolution in this regime can only be achieved when:

The tyrants appear in the light of the father of the state, the guardian of the citizens, a man of moderate life, the companion of the notables, the hero of the multitude. Thus will his disposition be virtuous, or at least half-virtuous; and he will not be wicked, but half-wicked only.²⁰

In all revolutions, the conditions which lead up to them are the desire of the many for equality and the desire of the minority for effective superiority. The purposes with which they are set on foot are profit, however, or the avoidance of loss or dishonour. Other reasons for revolution are jealousy of those who have wealth and honour, official arrogance, fear of the law or of its abuse, personal rivalries, failure of the middle class to

¹⁸ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by T. A. Sinclair, Bungay: Penguin Books, 1962, (1035a29).

¹⁹ Ross, David, *Aristotle*, London: University Paperback, 1923, p. 262.

²⁰ Ross, David, *Op. Cit.*, Pp. 263 – 264.

maintain a balance, etc. On the prevention of revolution, Aristotle writes that the most important and effective thing to do is to maintain the spirit of obedience to and respect for the law. The rulers must be loyal to the constitution, have administrative capacity and integrity. They should not rely upon decrees to deceive the people rather they must be in good terms with their subjects, never to wrong them especially in matters concerning money, ambition, or honour. They must rather infuse the spirit of accommodation or share in the rule and adopt elements of democratic institutions. According to Aristotle, rulers should have no opportunity of making money out of their office. Aristotle, therefore, did not condemn or disapprove revolution in its entirety, but rather warns that if there must be a revolution the reason for such revolution must be morally justified. This means that such a revolution must be used to effect change in a regime. There must not be a revolution without a just cause, otherwise, it becomes a de-ordination and a crime. Some people have argued that without a just cause, revolution is a violation of the natural law and since natural law is rooted in the eternal law of God, such a revolution is invariably a rebellion against God.²¹ However, just as we have emphasized above, revolution can be as a result of a tyrannical regime. Aquinas puts it thus:

A tyrannical regime is never just because it is ordained not to the good of the people but that of the ruler himself ... and therefore, to disturb a regime of this kind is not sedition ... rather it is the tyrant who is guilty of sedition by sowing discord among the people so that his dominion over them may be secured.²²

Moral Implications and Justification of Revolution and Regime Change

Morality has to do with issues of right and wrong as the basis of human actions and activities. The issue of right or wrong is germane within the construct of a state as, without it, judgments of good and bad leadership or system of government would be unfounded, and appropriation of human conduct would be impossible. The question as to how we distinguish revolution from resistance, rebellion, and secession, all of which involve the opposition to existing political authority has compounded the moral issues posed by revolution. These issues are both practically important and theoretically complex. The term revolution is also seen as an extra-constitutional attempt to replace one government with another. Revolutions can escalate to full-blown war; this is usually called

²¹ Osudibia, K.C., *Nigeria: The Case of Fragmentation*, Aba: Guinea-Chim Industries Ltd., 1995, p. 103.

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, translated by A. Pegis, New York: Random House Inc., 1944, p. XLII.

revolutionary wars. Wars come with a lot of anguish and displacement that would often make one wonder the necessary good in it.

Some prominent western philosophers like Augustine in his *City of God* and Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* both condemned rebellion and hence revolution. Both unambiguously urged obedience to the powers that be. While Suarez held that only “lesser magistrates” had the authority to try to overthrow an existing government, with the implication that revolution by those who do not already occupy official roles was never justified; Hobbes explicitly denied that revolution could ever be justified. He held instead that a subject could only rightly resist government authority as a matter of self-defense and then only when the perpetration of lethal harm against her was imminent.²³ From the foregoing, we see two rationales from the rejection of revolution. One of which is to avert the possibility and perceived risk of violent anarchy posed by the attempts to overthrow a government (this argument is called the 'undue risk argument'). The second view is the condition that the requirements of rightful authority cannot, as a matter of logical necessity be met in the case of a revolutionary war (this is known as the 'conceptual argument'). John Locke did not take to either of these arguments considering them as extreme positions. Locke expresses that governmental oppression may not be universal but instead may target only certain groups within a society, for example, religious or ethnic groups, etc., and that even if it were universal oppression, there may not be a sufficient spontaneous mobilization of forces to overthrow the government. Thus the real moral issue should be addressed to (1) whether revolution to end special as opposed to general oppression is justifiable, and (2) what means may those committed to revolution employ to mobilize enough others to participate in a revolution to make success possible.²⁴ Locke’s position was more favorable to the cause of revolution as opposed to the medieval philosophers. He admits the right for revolution when he writes:

The people, being always the supreme authority in any state have a right to dispose of (a ruler). It is their sacred duty to overthrow any individual who seeks to make his power over them absolute and despotic.²⁵

Edmund Burke, a reformer and a Whig provided condition for the justification of non-violent revolution, which according to him revolution can be justified when it is used to preserve the country from total collapse as a result of the illegal usurpation of a tyrant

²³<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/revolution>, (accessed June 5, 2020).

²⁴<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/revolution>, (accessed June 5, 2020).

²⁵ Locke, J. “Two Treatise on Government”, in R.M. Hutchins (ed.), *Great Books of the Western World*, London: William Benton and Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 35, 1952, p. 395.

ruler. As a reformer, Burke believes in evolutionary reforms rather than radical changes or revolution. John Milton, the 17th century English writer believes in revolution, which according to him has an inherent capacity to help society realize its potentials. He believes that society has the right to defend itself through revolution against the tyrannical rule and oppressive leadership, and create a new order or government that reflects the needs and aspirations of the people. Like Milton, Hannah Arendt sees revolution as a means of securing the freedom and happiness of the people. She writes in her book: *On Revolution* that,

But violence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution.²⁶

Cronin Martin did not deviate from Arendt's view, rather he lends support to it in his book *the Science of Ethics*. He sees revolution as a right that the people have to liberate themselves from the indiscreet rule and apparent injustice of a ruler. He avers that "the people have a right to resist and defend themselves against injustice and take all necessary means of defense, even the dethronement of the ruler". As for Kant, the 18th century philosopher, revolution is a force that is meant to be used to advance mankind. According to him, revolution is a "natural" step in the realization of a higher ethical foundation for society. Revolution, for him, is the only justification in an attempt to overthrow the existing political authority; it would have to be an expression of or authorization by the 'general will'; but then, only an existing supreme political authority can express or be an authorized agent of the 'general will'.²⁷ Hegel, a German philosopher and an important catalyst of modern revolutionary thought approves of revolution as a crucial avenue through which human destiny could be achieved or fulfilled. He sees revolutionary leaders as necessary to instigate and implement reforms. Fagothey outlines moral conditions for the justification of revolution to include that;

1. The government has become habitually tyrannical, has lost sight of the common good, works for its selfish aims to the harm of the people, with no respect for the change for the better within a reasonable time.

²⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1963, p.35.

²⁷ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/revolution>, (accessed June 5, 2020).

2. All legal and peaceful means have been exhausted to recall the ruler to a sense of duty.
3. There is a reasonable probability that resistance will be successful, or at least that it will secure a betterment proportionate to the effort and suffering involved in a civil war.
4. The judgment that the government is tyrannical should be accepted by such a large and well-distributed number of citizens as to indicate that it is truly representative of the people as a whole. It should not be a movement of a single faction or party, of one geographical district, of one social class or economic interest, especially should it contain a saner group and more substantial elements of the population.²⁸

Aaron also acknowledges the right of the people to use forceful means to dethrone any ruler who has constituted himself a tyrant. For him, a tyrannical regime is never a just regime and no tyrant is a just ruler. He submits that "Force must be met by force, lest the innocent should suffer forever and the people have the right to use force if necessary against their rulers."²⁹

From the foregoing, it is clear that revolutions are necessary agents for change, but can tend to also be an instrument for violence. However, it is important to note that, a revolutionary movement must not necessarily be violent. There can be a nonviolent revolution and also violent ones. The direction it tends to will mostly depend on the reception or resistance of the government. If there is a perceived violent resistance from the government, the people may result to any means for self-defense. And in cases like this, revolutions can be justified because self-defense is legal. The violent or nonviolent nature of any revolution could lie in the reception or resistance of the government and also the level of agitation from the people.

Conclusion

The thesis of this paper is that revolution is necessary to bring about regime change as well as changes in the affairs of government and policies. Revolution is an instrument of change in the hands of the citizens; it is, contrary to some views, citizens' politico-moral right. However, this right must be specified or justified only as a last resort when all attempts to redirect the ruler to the common good of the people fail. That is when the ruler becomes habitually tyrannical and oppressive against the people. The citizens have the right to revolt against an unjust leader as a way of self-defense. This means that revolution is also justified when it is used as self-defense against the unjust ruler and his

²⁸ Fagothey, A., *Right and Reason*, St. Louis the C.V. Mosby Co., 1956, p. 428.

²⁹ Aaron R. I., *John Locke*, London: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 283.

bad policies. The motive for revolution must not be for egocentric reasons; it must rather be for the common good of all. Revolution is not only necessary for regime change, it can also be used to force the government to correct its unjust policies and programmes that have negative consequences on the people. For instance, in January 2012, Nigeria witnessed what was close to a revolution with Tunde Bakare's led *Save Nigeria Group* (SNG), which was aimed not at regime change, but at protesting against the sudden removal of subsidy from petrol by government. With deep-seated discontent among the people, loss of confidence in the leaders, and loss of hope in the country like in the case of Nigeria, revolution is needed to set things right. Anyone who condemns revolution as intrinsically evil because people may lose their lives as a result of violence precipitated by it must understand that it is more an evil for individuals to stay aloof, fold their arms and allow unjust aggressors to continually afflict and beset them. Revolution aims at the constitution of citizens' freedom through the formation of a new body politic and the removal of a bad order, rule, or oppressive regime for the socio-political, economic, and cultural good of the people. For, the people are always the supreme authority in any state.

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