



DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

One of the crucial indices of democracy is good governance. However, it is a fact that not all democracies provide good governance. The paper sets out to examine the meaning, nature and essence of democracy and good governance. It also attempts to interrogate the nexus between the two. Relying on content analysis as its method, it is discovered that proper practice of democracy can lead to good governance and the lack of that can create good governance deficits. The paper also discovered a strong nexus between democracy and good governance. Based on these findings, the paper concluded that good governance is a product of better and proper practice of democratic tenets. It recommended among others that everything possible should be done to encourage the practice and sustenance of democratic culture which, will ultimately lead to good governance.

Key Words: Democracy, Democratic culture, Democratic tenets, Good governance.

Abstrait

L'un des indices cruciaux de la démocratie est la bonne gouvernance. Cependant, c'est un fait que toutes les démocraties n'offrent pas une bonne gouvernance. Le document se propose d'examiner le sens, la nature et l'essence de la démocratie et de la bonne gouvernance. Il tente également d'interroger le lien entre les deux. En s'appuyant sur l'analyse de contenu comme méthode, on découvre qu'une bonne pratique de la démocratie peut conduire à une bonne gouvernance et que son absence peut créer des déficits de bonne gouvernance. Le document a également découvert un lien étroit entre la démocratie et la bonne gouvernance. Sur la base de ces résultats, le document a conclu que la bonne gouvernance est le produit d'une pratique meilleure et appropriée des principes démocratiques. Il recommandait entre autres que tout soit fait pour encourager la pratique et le maintien d'une culture démocratique qui, à terme, conduira à la bonne gouvernance.

Mots clés : Démocratie, Culture démocratique, Principes démocratiques, Bonne gouvernance.

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Introduction

The year 1999 ushered in the rebirth of democracy in Nigeria after several years of military dictatorship. Expectations were high from citizens at the beginning, but about twenty years after,



both scholars and citizens are questioning the validity of claims of democratic success in the face of flawed processes and policies. Although certain level of macro-economic achievements appears to have been made, it seems that crisis in citizens' welfare and insecurity in the country, especially in the Niger Delta, North Central and the North-Eastern regions of the country have thrown up issues on the quality of Nigeria's democracy, where good governance, accountability and transparency seems a distance dream. In short, poverty, unemployment, insurgency, killings, kidnapping, banditry, herdsmen/farmers clashes, intercommunity violence and general state of insecurity have gradually become the conspicuous features in Nigeria.

Judging by what is observable from democratic practices in other African countries, it appears that democracy tenets are far from being achieved here, especially, in Nigeria. In any good sense of the word, ability to bring positive changes to the living conditions of citizens, is still a debating issue, yet democracy is a form of governance that holds that the people are the most that matter. This implies that both civic engagement of citizens and responsiveness of the state to citizens' promptings and demands are key ingredients in any democratic setting. The paper sets out to examine the meaning, nature and essence of democracy and good governance. It also attempts to interrogate the nexus between the two

Conceptual And Theoretical Discourse

Democracy

Democracy as a concept is certainly not amenable to a single definition by scholars. In fact, it is remarkable that as a discursive category, democracy has attracted massive scholarly works due mainly to the diverse experiences of countries and the different stories following from these experiences (Kothari, 2007; Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005). It would appear that on a general note democracy is an idea and a political system that guarantees a role or participation of citizens in political processes. As an idea, it seems that democracy has remained an ideal worth striving for even amidst frustrating experiences of many societies where the social character of democratic institutions are questionable.

In any case, as an idea, democracy is inherently protective of human rights, freedoms and liberties. In reality, scholarly works in the field in the case of Africa have been highly pessimistic about progress in realizing democratic ideals. The experience seems to have prompted a rethinking of democracy within the context of what is, against what ought to be. Kothari (2007) after reflecting intellectually and politically on the structure and processes of democracy in India and, on strategies for social and political change in several societies and political systems, for several decades, concluded that he has been disappointed with his initial expectation that democracy is a system of government that serves as means towards creating a caring society. His expectation that democracy would create a just social order has indeed been dashed. He further expressed deep concern with the failure of democracy, as a political system and idea in addressing basic social problems, especially with those at the lowest rung of society. Rather than use democracy to drive change that benefits the plurality of the Indian society, Kothari lamented that representative democracy in India divided the people into factions of interests. If this is a major flaw with modern representative democracies as Kothari claimed, it is because his understanding of democracy fits with the sense that democracy should have a social character and not merely be a system of politics that divide people into competitive and conflictive spaces on the basis of political interest as is now seemingly common with modern liberal multiparty democracies in many countries across the continents.



Schumpeter's (1976) definition of democracy as elites' struggle for votes from citizens speak volumes about democracy being a political system characterized by regular elections by which citizens participate in the political process. This minimalist understanding of democracy involves regular elections that are free, fair, inclusive and credible in the determination of succession. In a similar vein, Lansford (2010, pp. 391-392) argued that modern or full democracies —are those systems in which there are universal suffrage, regular elections, an independent judiciary, relatively equal access to power for all groups, and extensive civil liberties that are combined with protection for minorities and disadvantaged groups.

Robert Dahl is perhaps the most celebrated scholar on procedural notions of democracy on which modern representative democracy rests. In his famous book of many years ago, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, Dahl (1971) explained that two characteristic aspects of modern democratic practice namely, public contestation and participation. Following from Dahl's seminal contributions to the debate on modern democracy, it seems clear that democracy can partly be measured by the extent of freedom and liberty which groups or individuals are allowed in engaging competitively with rival political forces for power through the electoral process. Similarly, Leininger (2010) argued that besides procedural features of democracy such as the existence of civil and political rights, democracy requires substantive values or features of economic, social and cultural rights. This is noteworthy since the practice of democracy even in the so called advanced world has revealed that political elites driving representative democracies undermine substantive values of democracy.

According to Stokes (2002), the key concern of developmentalist democracy is the common good. It emphasizes the importance of citizens' rights to social justice as a resource for enhancing political participation. This means that citizens in developmental democracy have a wide assortment of rights which they are entitled to, ranging from political and civil to economic, social, security and cultural rights or welfare of citizens. This means that developmentalist democracy enhances citizens' exercise of their natural rights — civil and political and economic, social and security rights. An important supposition of this theory of democracy is the acknowledgement of formal methods of citizen political participation such as elections along with the participation of citizens in the informal, non-governmental, group or associational life of citizens in society as part of their political participation. After all, some of these groups can provide education in their organizations and serve as relevant sites for democratic processes. For this reason, developmentalists recommend the democratization of business

Governance and Good Governance

Generally, governance refers to the manner in which power is exercised (Amoako, 2003). Sometimes, such responsibility may be secured through elections, appointments and so on. On the other, governance is viewed as the steering or controlling of state affairs (Dwivedi, 2010, p.683). Fundamentally, governance is the process of decision making or procedure by which decision is taken by those who govern and are willing to improve the living conditions of citizens. Governance is distinguished from government, which means an institution made up of instruments through which the state governs itself by means of laws, rules and regulations implemented by the state apparatus. The quality of life of people in a democracy depends on the nature of governance in terms of how political and administrative arrangements accommodate or permit diversity of groups to participate in public decision making.



As a subset of governance, good governance depends on the basic values of accountability, transparency, justice, fairness, and equity as common in the more advanced democracies. Good governance should be the goal of any government interested in improving the quality of life of its people. Obadan (1998, p.24) thus argued that —good governance consists of five fundamental elements namely: Accountability of public office holders with regards to public funds; Transparency in public policy and decision-making processes; Predictability in government behaviour; Openness in government dealings and effective communication flow between government and the governed, and Adherence to the rule of law.

Similarly, Dwivedi (2010) contended that good governance is governing well. In other words, the essence of good governance is in the involvement of governmental and nongovernmental groups in decision making process of the government. Dwivedi (2010, p. 683) has listed ten values on which good governance is based, namely: Cultural pluralism, which points to the need to be sensitive to the cultural diversity of a democratic state in public decision making; legitimacy, which requires that the government be seen to be legitimate in the context of what is constitutional or acceptable by natural and positive law; Consensus in public decision making is required among those competing for power in a democratic state, and public participation in decision making or policy formulation, rule of law to guarantee fairness and eschew partisanship, responsiveness of government to the needs of divers stakeholders or groups in the society, efficiency and effective accountability of institutions of governance is necessary, transparency to construct faith in the state to deliver services to the people, transparency in action to build faith in others, and moral governance. This means public service and ethics in public decision process.

From the forgoing, the nexus between democracy and good governance cannot be overemphasized. In fact, it would appear that good governance is an all-embracing concept that incorporates several democratic values including representation and effectiveness (Colomer, 2010).

Modern representative democracies require representatives that are effective at public decision making, without which, the ensuing crisis of legitimacy and worsening social conditions of citizens will often result in conflicts involving groups and the state or groups against groups that could have been avoided. By simple logical extension, good governance refers to the effective, transparent and accountable way in which such responsibility is carried out. Conversely, bad governance refers to misrule or maladministration in the discharge of responsibility.

Democracy and Good Governance

The performance and measurement of democracy no longer stand differently from good governance. The connection between both concepts and in short, success in the practice of democracy lies strongly in the understanding that democracy, understood as good governance carries with it the capacity for improving society and welfare of its citizens. This thinking is appreciable if we reflect on how every country in Africa today claims to be democratic or at least practicing democracy with increasing outcomes of poverty and decadence in the political and socio-economic health of citizens.

Addressing this question in practical governance and in ways that match reality with theory must begin with the seeming indeterminate nature of the concept of democracy which appears to have remained essentially insurmountable. For scholars, its definition defies consensus, especially in relation to its operation (Akindele & Ajila, 1992, pp. 85-86; Akindele



& Obiyan, 1996, p. 84). Hence, Olowu (1995) posited that democracy as a "concept of governance has become all things to all men". This explains why politicians in different countries of Africa would label every political system a democracy to suit their predilections. It has been a case of gross abuse and misinterpretation of the concept. Strangely, during the days of military regime under General Ibrahim Babangida, one heard of —military democracy. In the 1980s, scholars simply linked democratic politics with development without any insistence or inclusion of the aspect of good governance. Linz and Lipset at least drew this connection so sharply, incurring the wrath of Africanist radical scholars who began to question the basis of such connection in the circumstances of absence of tangible development (Southhall, 2003).

Notwithstanding the spurious claims by several African states to the status of being democratic, Akindele (2002, p.185) empirically proved the linkage between democracy and governance. He contended that "it was analytically discovered that, practically, political animals, all over the world and, particularly in Nigeria attach serious importance to democracy as a mechanism of political governance". Apparently, this is the missing link in the case of African countries like Nigeria.

Democratic Scenarios in Africa

Two types of scenarios are easily discernible in most of Africa where democracy is claimed to be in practice. The one, where politicians are insensitive to the needs of citizens, irresponsible and disrespectful of the rule of law. Besides, politicians devise and use violence to shoot themselves to power. Thereafter, they use such power as a means for the brazen acquisition of wealth and the perpetration of an assortment of unconstitutionality. Citizens and their welfare are neglected with impunity. Political killings, witch-hunting, insecurity and fraudulent electoral practices characterize such states.

Apparently, in such African states, there is a semblance of democracy but what exists in actuality is the flagrant disenfranchisement of voters and the disempowerment of citizens in the process of decision-making. Corruption is endemic, unemployment and underemployment are rife, majority of the citizens are poor and unable to access the wealth of the state; while the bulk of the state's wealth are appropriated by a few numbers of persons who are either public office holders or their cronies. There is a zero-sum approach to the struggle for political power and public office by politicians. In addition, public office is privatized and state power used with impunity due to the non-consolidation of public institutions. Political parties take on the shape of cultic organizations and are glaringly, deficient of the liberal colour upon which free citizens should seek to control state power for the benefit of the entire citizenry.

Furthermore, such African 'democratic states' are characterized by acute shortage of social infrastructure and basic amenities of life such as good roads, good public transport system, electricity, water, schools and hospitals. More often than not, they are predatory rentier states typified by clientelism, patrimonialism and repression (Gilbert, 2010). Public policies and decisions of public office holders reflect the interest of the ruling few and always flow from top to bottom. Politicians impose laws, public policies and decisions that have no bearing with the real needs of citizens. Even so, implementation of laws, public policies or decisions are selective, often in accordance with the interests and intentions of corrupt politicians. Some scholars classify such societies as transitional democracies, perhaps as an escapist attempt to be able to still wear the label of democracies. But in actuality, they could be described as muddled and undemocratic democracies. Of course, the new wave of democratization affects all of these states but without substance, when it comes to positively affecting welfare of citizens,



consolidation of democracy, respect for human rights and political stability. Countries such as Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gambia, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Togo and Zimbabwe fall in this category.

The second scenario presents a situation where deep respect for democratic principles and rights offer opportunities for individual and collective welfare. In such society, politics has redeeming values, especially in relation to its responsiveness to the demands of citizens. This implies that both civic engagement of citizens and responsiveness of the state to citizens' promptings and demands are key ingredients. The processes of determining succession are transparent and guided by democratic principles.

What happens thereafter, in respect to post-election activities of both politicians and citizens presents the active involvement of citizens in major public policy making. Indeed, citizens occupy decisive position in politics and governance and are able to articulate issues and grievances through non-violent legitimate avenues to provide the oversight over government activities. In most cases, the outcome of the political process in such societies is that of responsive, accountable and transparent democracy where the living conditions of citizens is the priority for governance. Such states have been inadvertently referred to as operating working democracies. In the African context, Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania are the relevant examples of this group.

Cognizant of the size, resources and supposed "historic mission and manifest destiny of Nigeria on the African continent" (Azikiwe, 1960, p.71), one would have expected that she should have conspicuously stood out in the second category as one of the countries in which democracy is working in Africa. But sadly enough, the reverse is the case. The sad development has raised several questions concerning the missing link in Nigeria's democratic practice since 1999. What matters is finding a basis to interrogate the gap and what accounts for the difference. In doing so, two propositions will suffice: that good governance determines the effective performance of democracy in contemporary societies; and, that democracy devoid of good governance is a harbinger for the collapse of democratic institutions in any society, including Nigeria.

Good Governance: The Missing Link in Nigeria Good governance is the missing link in the case of Nigeria's democracy. In short, Nigeria's democracy is faced with the following challenges:

1. Rigging of elections
2. Lack of effective participation of citizens in the political process
3. Poor management of elections
4. Culture of impunity
5. Political violence
6. Guided nature of democracy
7. Lack of independent election management institutions
8. Lack of neutrality of external and internal monitors
9. Insecurity - terrorism
10. Ineffectiveness of the Nigerian Police force
11. Weakness of political parties
12. Lack of credible opposition to challenge incumbent political party
13. Corruption and lack of accountability



14. Overbearing influence of the executive over other organs of government.

These challenges account for the poor performance of democracy in even if one limits it to the period between 1999 and now. It explains the traditional gap between what is expected in terms of socio-economic and political benefits to citizens and what is in reality. The above diagnoses, fits neatly into the common arguments of democracy and good governance issues already found in literature compared to democracy in the developing South.

Two areas of emphasis in discussing the missing link in Nigeria's democracy are discernible here. They are welfare and succession.

Welfare

The issue of welfare of citizens, of course points to the idea of good governance. Good governance in Africa has been rare, but, conceptually it is directly connected to social, political and economic progress and outcome. Democracy in Nigeria clearly neglects the welfare of citizens. Nothing else best explains this situation than the issues of governance. Essentially, politicians have conducted themselves in manners that are devoid of accountability, transparency and responsiveness. Apparently, only good governance can assure citizens of equal access to opportunities that guarantee citizens self-actualization. This absence of welfare, for which politicians have at best become rhetorical about, is a deficit in Nigeria's democracy (Okeke-Uzodike & Allen, 2005). If democracy promises accountable government, it is only logical that such accountability will translate into good governance.

Both institutional designs and behavioral elements account for poor welfare. The later, here, will help to answer questions on how politicians are constitutive of failed democracies with regards to the improvement of the welfare of citizens. Current politicians appear to be predators who have hindered responsibilities of democracies towards citizens (Sindzingre, 2006). This is making many doubt the ability of liberal democracy to improve the living conditions of citizens (Drury, Kriekhaaus & Lusztig, 2006).

From the experiences of countries with oil deposits, apparently, the source of revenue and funding of the state in democracies affect the quality of governance, and in turn, performance of democracy. Where the state depends on the tax payers' money, accountability is more easily demanded by citizens. This of course can translate into good governance capable of improving the living conditions of citizens. Rent seeking states that depend for revenue and funding of the state, unearned money, on natural resources such as oil, have more tendencies to be reckless with public funds. Citizens also lack the courage and will to demand accountability from the government in such states (Jega, 2003, p. 53; Gilbert, 2010, p.115).

Apparently, the welfare effects of undemocratic democracies have been negative on citizens. Indeed, one of the expectations of many Nigerians when elected political leaders emerged in 1999 in sixteen years after military dictatorship was the improvement of their already worsening economic and social conditions. Personal economic circumstances of unemployment, shortage of food, public safety, lack of clean water, inadequate health care, poor income level, and more, were on the sky high and negative on citizens (Lewis, Bratton & Alemika, 2001). twenty years after 1999, many are wondering how the governments have addressed basic national and personal economic problems in the country with poverty still very much prevalent. Incidentally, performance of politicians within the period is being questioned over their role in improving the welfare of citizens, and poor performance of democracy linked to their predatory disposition. There is no allusion in these arguments that present civil regime has achieved nothing, but the facts remain that populist programs are still lacking.



Succession

Orderly process of succession in liberal democracies is usually expected since democracy itself is accorded high regards for its supposed capacity for peaceful resolution of conflicts. This calls for credible good electoral governance. By electoral governance, we refer to the general manner in which those saddled with the management of elections discharge their responsibilities at the three levels of rulemaking, rule application and rule adjudication (Mozaffar, 2002). These three levels of electoral governance are fundamental to democracy and constitute important aspects of elections, with large-scale implications for their outcomes. Indeed, elections are considered important aspects of democracy. This is not only because of their role in determining succession but also as a basis for legitimacy and ensuring accountability and good governance from political parties that form the government (Allen, 2005).

Unfortunately, Nigeria, as with many other countries in Africa has had sad experiences and stories of badly managed elections with outcomes that have made nonsense of democracy. The use of election as an instrument of succession in Nigeria have always been fraught with litanies of woes. Defeating an incumbent government was a tall dream until in 2015 when card readers and permanent voter cards were used in Nigeria's democratic experience since independence. In the current Fourth Republic for example, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) has practically won all the presidential elections conducted until 2015. But this was not the case in Senegal in 2012, where the incumbent president Macky Sall defeated his immediate predecessor, Abdoulaye Wade in a free and fair election; and the succession was relatively smooth. Similar events occurred in Ghana in 2000 and 2012.

Although Marxist scholars in Africa degrade the role of elections in liberal democracies, elections have come to stay in the democratic progress of nations in Africa. Originally, a colonial creation for determining or legitimating forms of state power through the processes of decolonization (Cohen, 1983), elections in postcolonial Nigeria have taken the shape of state-regulated non-competitive model (Adejumobi, 2000). From the level of formulating rules to that of post-election adjudication, the process in Nigeria has nearly always been characterized by massive rigging by both incumbents and the opposition alike. And it now seems fashionable for civil autocrats in the guise of democracy to engage elections as mere formalities to attract international endorsement and aid without any substance of influence or role of citizens in determining who rules. Post-election adjudications are influenced by political forces of interest in ways that remove objectivity. This lack of good electoral governance almost withered all vestiges of popular sovereignty in the political system. Both the 2003 and 2007 elections in Nigeria were virtually characterized by situations that confirmed the notion of lack of autonomy for the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the thirty-six states Independent Electoral Commission. Traditional notion of liberal democracy exalts the role of elections in democracies but Nigerian politicians have continued to behave in ways that convey notions of irrelevance of voters in the process. This condition became worsened by the virtual absence of voters from the polling booths for fear of intimidation and violence during elections. Although rigging during elections begin from the pre-election periods of formulation of rules to the conduct of the elections, it extends to the post-election adjudication process and management. Liberal democracy as a system of limiting the power of the state against the citizens makes sense when democratic governance implies citizens' participation in the political system beyond voting to regular consultations in matters of public policy and decision making. The Nigerian experience is full of regrets, as the mass of qualified adult citizens neither get



involved in voting nor are consulted on major policy issues. The 2003 and 2007 elections in Nigeria were widely condemned for their level of electoral irregularities. There were no elections in many states of the federation, yet the election management body endorsed the outcomes of those elections. However, it is worthy of mention that the performance of INEC in the 2011, 2015 and 2019 elections was a lot better than in the three previous national elections (1999, 2003 and 2007) in this political dispensation. This gives some glimmer of hope that the credibility of elections in Nigeria would appreciate in the subsequent elections.

Policy Implications and Concluding Remarks

We have argued that democracy and good governance are virtually intertwined. It therefore implies that if it is so understood and practiced there will be marked differences in current claims of democracy in Nigeria where basic principles of democracy are absent. Both the process and outcome of democracy in Nigeria are negative on citizens' welfare on whom is the essence of democracy. The answer lies in good governance, which involves assumption of equal responsibilities for both the ruled and the ruler. To improve the structure of power relations in favour of citizens, political consciousness and action in forms of civil society oversight over the political process and procedure in democratic institutions need to be dynamic. It needs networking organically in ways that can constitute a source of insecurity for twisted politicians who have depended on fraud as a means of securing and staying in power.

Negative outcomes of democracy such as poverty, unemployment, post-election violence, and insecurity in Africa due to bad governance requires the institutionalization of development-oriented practices for change in the continent.

The institutionalization of the crusade against corruption remains the basis of ensuring good governance only if the anticorruption institutions will themselves be subject to democratic governance and the oversight powers of responsible civil society. Political corruption, which is the violation of democratic principles and procedures need to be viewed with seriousness and should be made to attract equal condemnation and punishment with other forms of corruption such as economic and financial crimes. Often, it is neglected because nearly all political elite in Nigeria is guilty of this. For example, the history of elections in Nigeria is filled with stories of rigging. The poor is manipulated by the political class. Post-election adjudication should not only be concerned with determination of who did and did not win in those elections, but should punish with imprisonment and fines in cases where it was established beyond reasonable doubt that political elite or their agents have violated electoral rules. This is because free and fair elections remain the theoretical basis of legitimacy, transparency and means for making leaders accountable to citizens.

The African Union should expand its peer review mechanism to include the imposition of some economic, social and political sanctions on regimes that are clearly undemocratic in practice. The emphasis on transition from military to civilian regimes in Africa is commendable but not sufficient. African democracies should be pressurised to work in line with the tenets of democracy, as seen elsewhere in the West. While the pace of democratization cannot take a hard and fast posture, basic principles of respect for the rule of law, credible free and fair elections and the implementation of policies geared towards the practical qualitative improvement of citizens welfare by political elites should receive adequate monitoring and review.



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