

INSECURITY AND DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA: A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

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Abstract

There are great insurgencies, uprisings, revolutions, kidnapping, terrorism, economic and political instabilities in Africa. These problems were caused by exclusive types of governments that are not people centered, governments that failed to involve the people in the process of governance and failed to protect the basic rights of people. This research examines the reasons for the occurrence of terrorism in Africa. Terrorism is a concept that connotes threat and a tendency to create fear and chaos. However, the causes and effects of terrorism are more worrisome when juxtaposed with the principles and values of democracy. Hence, one is tempted to believe that democracy occasions terrorism or it has failed to discourage the acts of terrorism because terrorism is mostly witnessed in democratic countries. The likely questions bothering us now are why and how do democracy give room for terrorism, if democracy is supposedly based on respect for human dignity, freedom, tolerance and dialogue. In view of this, this paper employs analytical method of philosophy so as to proffer solution to the democratic and security problem in Africa. This paper adopts a pragmatic and committed social policies and welfare for human development in solving insecurity problem.

Keywords: democracy, leadership, terrorism, insecurity, Nigeria.

Introduction

Man's basic need is his well-being. The question of his well-being is most daunting and intractable in the annals of history. For its sake, societies, associations, friendships, marriages etc were formed or dissolved. For its sake, every political system that gave hint of success: monarchy, aristocracy, oligarchy, theocracy, dictatorship, tyranny, military rule, gerontocracy, democracy etc. was

tried, tested and found wanting in one way or the other. But of all these systems, the one less problematic and more promising regarding the attainment of man's well-being through governance is democracy. Democracy promises good governance. Most African leaders do not feel warm about democracy. Hence they have ensured it never takes root in most Africa's political soil.

Africa is facing myriad problems and one of them is lack of good governance. Without mincing words, Africa is gradually cutting a picture of a failed continent, becoming a point of reference to anything bad, wrong, ugly and becoming equally a butt to anybody or any nation that cares. But why is this calamity? Why has good governance eluded Africa? These questions and some others are what this paper intend to address, applying philosophical approach. So, the position of the paper is not to lay blame on leaders and citizens for the failure of most African countries to experience good governance, but to examine the causes and proffer solution to the problems of Africa.

Concept of Democracy According to Ademola K. Feyemi

The concept of democracy was born in Greece, but it did not come to maturity in that culture, mainly because of their poor concept of equality. The American declaration of Independence, together with the prototype of the foundation documents of all modern democracies. It was based on the assumption that man has a God-given rational nature guiding his free will as self-ruling. So, it places reason before will.¹

To the Greeks "Demos" means the people, "Kratian" means government or rule. Since the period of ancient Greek city states, scholars and practitioners have defined democracy variously. To some, it is a government by the people in which the supreme power is vested in the people, exercised and directed by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. To others, it is the institutionalization of human freedom. The former president of USA, Abraham Lincoln defined democracy "as the government of the people, for the people and by the people".²

Accordingly, the pillars of democracy include: sovereignty of the people, government based upon consent of the governed, majority rule, minority rights,

free and fair elections, equality before the law, constitutional pluralism, values of tolerance, cooperation and compromise.³

Democratic rule on the other hand is a situation where the government and the governed exercise freedom in adult suffrage and participation in an equalitarian way in the working of democratic government, predicated on a free, frank, fair and cordial dialogue of every person within a geopolitical entity. Democratic rule therefore exists in an environment where there is efficient and effective electoral body, registration of voters, conduct of free, fair and periodic elections, provision of social services and maintenance of existing infrastructural amenities like tap water, good roads, good schools and sound education, electricity, employment opportunity etc.

Leadership

According to John P. Kotter:

Leadership is defined simply as an exercise of authority over a person or group of persons. Governance and leadership are closely related in their relationship with the nation or state. Anyway, they may be closely related but it appears there is a shade of difference between them. Governance may be generally defined as a process involving traditions and institutions by which authority in a state is exercised. While leadership itself, is the act of exercising that authority. As it can be seen, governance and leadership in a state, analogically speaking, are twins but not identical ones⁴.

Twins because the need and presence of governance necessitates the need and presence of leadership and a situation where one exists without the other has not been reported. But they are not identical twins because governance, figuratively speaking, is an object while leadership is a subject which uses the object to achieve whatever is the aim.

In the Republic dialogue, Plato outlines his view on leadership through a discussion on civic and political life in the polls, the Gracian city state. Apart from focusing on the meaning of justice, he also develops a framework on the nature of leadership in an ideal state⁵. Plato was dissatisfied with rulers who lacked knowledge and moral strength to act according to the common good - in other words, rulers motivated by self-interest were not strong leaders. Plato

proposes instead that states should be governed by philosophers and be lover of wisdom, which is the meaning of the Greek word *philosophia*⁶.

Leadership is a duty of philosopher kings who acquire the techniques and skills for the art of ruling. He said until those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands the troubles in the society cannot end. Only philosophers are morally and intellectually suited to govern and lead. Morally because they are interested in and have a passion for truth and learning while showing no interest in the temptations of gaining power for the sake of power. Intellectually because they are able to attain knowledge on the ideal forms of virtue, beauty and the good⁷.

The political philosophy of a nation will influence and shape the economic system in that place. It is the leadership of a nation that determines the kind as the citizens have the right to vote in any party of our choice and send out of office any party that refuses to see reality as we see it. Every society determines the kind of leadership it has. I mean selfless leaders who would be prepared to sacrifice their lives for the nation. Education alone cannot do it; moralizing will not suffice, there is need to add economic and political changes to these, if the desired impact will be realized. It is not surprising Bertrand Rusell says that economic systems “have a profound influence in moulding the characters of men and women”.

African Political Leaders and Democracy

Sekou Toure was a former president of Guinea. In 1959 he presented a paper with the above title at the second congress of Negro Writers and Artists in Rome. In it he says that the political leader is one who has the confidence of his people. He represents and defends the cultural values of the people. The political leader who is freely chosen by the people “maintains” a natural link between his actions and the culture, customs or traditions. This means that the way they think, the type of philosophy they have and their morals are expressions of their culture⁸.

The education dispensed to Africa by the colonialists was deliberately inferior and limited to those disciplines which would allow the better exploitation of the population. A number of African intellectuals who were educated in Europe or

America were influenced by the colonialists to justify colonial domination and to think that in order to acquire universal knowledge and become an educated man, one must disregard the moral, intellectual, and cultural values of one's own country and adopt those of the colonialists. This was the goal of colonial education, to keep Africans in a state of perpetual inferiority, to make people look down on their culture, their language, their nationality as inferior⁹.

Our incessant efforts will be directed towards finding our own ways of development if we wish our emancipation and our evolution to take place without our personality being changed thereby. It is not enough to write a revolutionary hymn or take part in African revolution; it is necessary to act in the revolution with the people. Dominated but not conquered, Africa is determined to deliver its special message to the world and to contribute to the human universe, the fruit of its experience, the whole of its intellectual resources and the teachings of its own culture. The understanding that democracy is continuity and transcends individuality is key to strengthening Africa's democratic institutions. We should realize that the president is not just the government alone. The office of the President is only a part of the institution. To make the president absolute is a movement in the backward direction of institutional leadership.

Democratic continuity does not destroy the hand works of previous government just to prove a point because if they do, they are in essence destroying the institutions. It is equivalent to a divorcee killing her children because she re-married another man. That is murder and stupidity. In democratic institutions, once one is in charge, one takes over the responsibilities of previous governments; one become accountable for completing what the previous couldn't or didn't complete. Most African leaders do complain of previous governments rather than claiming full responsibility of governance. It is worse in Nigeria today. The present ruling party, All Progressive Congress is always shifting their suppose responsibility to the previous government, People's Democratic Party. This is one of the factors delaying progress in Africa.

Political Obligation

According to Hannah Arendt, the active engagement of citizens in the determination of the affairs of their community provides them not only with the

experience of public freedom and the joys of public happiness, but also with a sense of political agency and efficacy, the sense, in Jefferson's phrase, of being "participators in government". In Arendt's view, only the sharing of power that comes from civic engagement and common deliberation can provide citizens with a sense of effective political agency. Her structures against representation must be understood in this light. She saw representation as a substitute for the direct involvement of the citizens, and as a means whereby the distinction between rulers and ruled could reassert itself. When representation becomes the substitute for direct democracy, the citizens can exercise their powers of political obligation only at election day and their capacities for deliberation and political insight are correspondingly weakened¹⁰.

Political obligation may be seen as any form of commitment or an allegiance a citizen has towards a constituted authority. Moreover, when this allegiance is withdrawn as a result of any perceptible injustice, civil disobedience is said to have taken place.

The obligation expected of the citizens is, however, not absolute and irrevocable. The citizens continue to bear true allegiance so far as the rulers continue to keep to the provisions of the contract if the state fails to comply with the stipulation of this contract, the citizens are morally justified should they resort to political disobedience, which should have been of paramount concern, suffer neglect¹¹.

The trial and death of Socrates in the spring of 399B.C, as contained in Plato's dialogue, *Crito*, remains one of the earliest known philosophical presentation of obedience to authority, though authority brought charges (heresy and corruption of youth's mind) against Socrates of which if found guilty, carried death sentence. Having pleaded not guilty to the charges, the biased jury remained unyielding and found him guilty at the end. His old and close friend, *Crito*, having put all arrangements in place, urged him to escape but to his greatest dismay, Socrates turned down the offer. Socrates contention was that escaping from prison, runs counter to the basic principles (Commitment, Agreement and fair play) of the obedience he owes to his state¹². From his argument with *Crito*, there is no doubt that Socrates was evidently referring to what has come to constitute the entire debate on the problem of political obligation.

Alertness of the people is essential condition for democracy without which the true idea of democracy cannot be realized. According to Bryce, "indolence and

indifferences on the part of the citizens are the two enemies of democracy". Political disinterestedness do not help the citizens to understand the economic and political problems of the day and contribute their service to the country¹³.

According to K. S. Coretta

When a state does not live up to its responsibilities, when it has violated the established rules on which it is founded, that is when citizens do not have equal access to opportunities that is open to all, when lives, liberties and properties of the citizens have been invaded and the judiciary - the hope of the common man fails in the face of these injustices; what shall be the last resort to the man? This basic question gives birth to the issue of resistance or civil disobedience¹⁴.

Citizens have a duty to demand of their government respect and recognition for all their fundamental human rights. Where a government fails, the people owe it to the state and themselves to tell such a government to quit or force it to do so¹⁵.

That's one of the advantages of democratic leadership. The body of minimalist democratic theory is drawn from several thinkers such as Adam Przeworski, Joseph Schumpeter, Karl Popper, William Riker and Russel Hardin. All these scholars share a viewpoint wherein democracy neither sets conditions for its outcomes, nor characterizes itself as anything other than an electoral system. Przeworski sees the essential value of democracy being in the peaceful transfer of power enacted through regular elections.

Terrorism and Democratic Values

Democracy and Capitalism are viewed as incompatible. In capitalism, few individuals own and control most of the means of production thereby leaving the majority in poverty and frustration. Thus, terrorism is a reaction to socio-economic conditions festered on them or their people.

Democracy as a system of government is widely held as the best form of government and this is due to its ideals and values. However, in spite of its wide acceptance, it is faced with terrorism and other forms of social --economic problems. What are the factors contributing to terrorism directly or indirectly? A

further reflection on the problem of terrorism in Africa shows that democratic values and ideals have contributed greatly to the rise and growth of terrorism in Africa especially in Nigeria. In other words, terrorist groups tend to take advantage of the increased opportunities and permissiveness of democratic systems. Democratic values such as freedom of assembly, freedom of expression gives opening for terrorism to rise and thrive.¹⁶ Some terrorist groups hide under such rights to carry out their evil agenda. The Niger Delta militants and Boko Haram sect at the initial stage of their formation hid under the claim of these freedoms and rights. Also, the legal system in Nigeria makes it difficult to "pursue and persecute potential terrorists because of constraints placed on them by civil rights".

According to John Ashcraft, "the spirited defense of civil liberties is a tactics that aids terrorists". The issue of total press freedom is another worrisome civil liberty in Nigerian democracy. Terrorist groups now record messages and send to media houses and online platforms. In an autocratic country, such acts would be very difficult to carry out because of the low level of tolerance.¹⁷

Poverty is another problem facing Nigeria, which has contributed to the rise of terrorism. A very high number of Nigerians are living in abject poverty even in spite of the fact that the country is abundantly blessed with human and natural resources. Consequently, the numerous conflicts and social unrest/tension in Nigeria can be attributed to the high level of poverty in the country. The level of poverty in the north is so high and alarming that it is encouraging terrorist activities. The core of this is that actions grow and thrive within a context of sustained grievances triggered by relative deprivation. Corruption is another major problem facing democracy in Nigeria and this contributes greatly to the rise and increase in terrorism. The problem and challenges caused by corruption is so grave because the masses are the worst hit by the consequences. It triggers poverty, insecurity, underdevelopment, unemployment, terrorism etc.

In addition, there must be respect for human rights and the rule of law. It is also a possibility that when governance is sufficiently democratic that is infused with the principles of participation, rule of law, transparency and accountability, among others, all things being equal it could go a long way towards improving the economy of a state. Development is not sustainable without transparent and accountable institutions and leadership discipline. Contrary to Kwasi Wiredu's view that the major problem confronting the present model of democracy in Africa is multi party politics"¹⁸, for me, the major problem of democracy in Africa is that of how the true will of the people can reflect in the results of

elections. Kimberly Pendergrass in his article, "Leadership Philosophies"¹⁹, listed nine leadership traits one of which is the democratic (participatory) leadership philosophy. He maintained that:

A Leader who practices this leadership philosophy offers guidance to organization of members while still being a part of the group. This type of leadership is democratic, considerate, participative and consultative. It focuses on creating and maintaining good working relationships that are supportive and interactive. Followers are encouraged to participate and engage with the decision making process and the input considered. This result in the group being more motivated and creative as a whole.²⁰

Corruption in any political setting represents gross betrayal of public trust. One of the greatest manifestations of corruption in African Democratic Leadership is the inability to ensconce a free and fair election. Even the judiciary considered the last hope of the common man is equally emeshed in collaborative corruption with the bigwigs. Thus it is possible within Nigerian Democracy for political moneybags to influence judicial decisions in order to install cohorts in power.

Evaluation

From the foregoing, it becomes pertinent to appraise the central objective of this paper, which is to demonstrate democratic leadership in Africa with special focus on the notion of some contemporary philosophers. The question to be raised thus in this section is how successful is democracy in Africa in providing happiness to the citizens. Happiness is becoming the centre of evaluating good governance all over the world today but transcending old dogmas but incorporating right, liberty, equality and security in right proportions in utilitarian sense. A democratic leader should set the moral ethical, social and motivational climate among his or her followers. Most countries in Africa claim to practice democracy whereas they go contrary to democratic principles. German's most important living philosopher, Juen Habermas issues an urgent call to restore democracy. He is worried about the mania for privatization and the widening gap between the few super-rich and the many poor in the world especially in Africa continent. During Habermas lecture in Jerusalem recently, he explained ways a nation can achieve peace by abiding to democratic rules.

As Thabo Mbeki, one of the past president of South Africa said, is essential for an end to civil wars, violent conflicts and an end to the “deification of arms”. Africa will have to be liberated from all kinds of discrimination in race, colour, gender and religion. Africans have to take their destiny in their own hands now and bring about a rebirth, a liberation. This is necessary for peace, stability, prosperity and intellectual creativity. Robinson and Acemoglu said nations fail in Africa economically because of the extractive institutions which keep poor countries poor and prevent them from embarking on a path to economic growth. For instance, countries like Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Colombia, Argentina North Korea, Uzbekistan, Egypt etc have deep rooted extractive institutions in them. Nigeria cannot be left out.

How does it look that Malaysia which in the 1960s came to Nigeria and took palm seedlings today export palm-oil but we don't even have enough? Our budgets must as from now give pride of place to Agriculture. I envisage a nation that will have enough food for its citizens and others through mechanized farming. Most extractive institutions in Africa are founded on the greed of the elite class who design economic institutions to enrich themselves and perpetuate their power at the expense of the vast majority of the people in the society. Arendt's notion of political obligation is not in any way a criterion for civil disobedience because from her theory, civil disobedience is not easily determined by a set of criteria. She advocated for respect for civil authority and at a time gave an instance of Socrates as one who prefers to suffer wrong than to do wrong in the society.

Also, that the leaders exist for the protection of citizen's rights, means the citizens will have more power than the government. Since the people have more power, the government will not have much power to secure the citizen's rights.

More so, the right of the individual cannot always be preserved especially when it affects the public good. That one has freedom of usage of gun in US doesn't mean a mental or sick person seen with gun will still be allowed to move with it. We live in an age of democracy, but democracy has not yet discovered its appropriate institutions in Africa. Democracy may be a process not an event, it is a desirable ideal to which every country in Africa should aim, following the six-point principles of; holding periodic free and fair elections, respect for freedom of association, freedom of the press, effective separation of duties to the three arms of government, respect for the rule of law and accountability, transparency in governance.

In most African countries today, the afore-said separation of powers in the three arms of government is lacking. In Nigeria today, we observe the executive arm of government oppressing the other two arms of government. They are to act as check and balance among the arms of government. If the executive arm controls the judiciary and legislative arm of government, there is bound to be anarchy in the society. Governmental powers express itself in three legislations, execution or administration and judicial decision. The French writer, Bodin, pointed out in the modern period in the Republic (1576) that some separation was essential.²¹ To be at once legislator and judge is to mingle together justice and the prerogative of mercy, adherence to the law and arbitrary departure from it, if justice is not well administered, the litigating parties are not free enough, they are crushed by the authority of the sovereign.

The theory of separation of powers was, however, clearly formulated for the first time by Charles Montesquieu in the spirit of laws. When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.²² Again, there is no liberty, if the judiciary is not separated from the legislative and executive, were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would be then the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with violence and oppression. Rightly interpreted, therefore, the theory of separation of powers merely means that a different body of persons is to administer each of the three departments of government; and that no one of them is to have a controlling power over either of the others. Such separation is necessary for the purpose of preserving the liberty of the individual and for avoiding tyranny. There has been weakness of democratic governments in Africa due to the lack of faith in democratic principles and the inability of democracy to solve adequately the problems which it had to face.

Eduard Benes ably summarizes the deficiencies and weaknesses of the democratic governments in the inter-war years thus:

The deficiencies, weaknesses and of course great mistakes of the individual democracies which it was apparently impossible to avoid, are the third category of facts which played a specially important role in the downfall of European democracies. The slowness and inefficiency of democratic methods of work, leadership during times of crises and at

moments when quick actions and quick decisions were necessary; the partiality, corruption, deficiencies, mediocrity and mistakes of the democratic leaders.²³

This was particularly true of Germany and Italy. In both these countries, the democratic institutions were charged with incompetence and indecisiveness. It must be admitted, too, that those countries in which dictatorships were established like Italy and Germany, lacked democratic traditions which alone could enable them to preserve democracy.

Conclusion

Despite the many criticisms against democratic leadership, it has passed the test of time and remain better than other forms of government like Monarchy, a government in which law making power is given to a person, King or Queen, Aristocracy is government by the best citizens etc. Democracy postulates a measure of personal freedom and equal consideration for all classes. As John Stuart Mill said:

It is superior to other forms of government because the rights and interests of every person are secure from being disregarded only when the person interested is himself able and habitually disposed to stand up for them. The participation in governmental affairs lifts the individual above the narrow circle of his egoism and broadens his interests. It makes him interested in his country and gives him a sense of responsibility.²⁴

According to Maclver, in democracy the government is less dependent on the psychology of power than in other forms of government. Always those who wield power are tempted to extol it, but the more so if that power is unchecked and irresponsible. Democracy makes authority a trust; the common interest, the common welfare becomes the sole justification of government.²⁵ Nigeria government and international communities have strived hard to curb the incidence of terrorism and insurgency. Such measures employed include identification and blocking of the sources of Boko Haram funding and means of getting weapons. Also, strict enforcement of relevant United Nations and other international sanctions against terrorist groups, joint border patrols and

intelligence sharing, intensification of socio-economic cooperation by regional governments and multilateral institutions.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are made. Nigerian and international governments should cut off the sources of contact of Boko Haram. The popular support of terrorist group in form of man power, material, fund, arms and ammunitions must be cut off. In the same vein, an empowerment programme that aims at reducing unemployment among the youths and universities graduates must be effectively implemented. This will further improve the standard of living and well-being of African youths. Lastly, there should be strict enforcement of law against any act of terrorism and insurgency. Africa has come of age to understand what viable institutions are, and their undiluted significance in building viable societies. No convincing explanation is enough to shelter the catalogue of excuses continuously made by those in charge of various African countries on why we are not developing or slow in growth. Infrastructures don't build institutions; durable institutions build durable infrastructures. As reactionary measures, some African governments hastily or angrily ban certain foreign products that is ludicrous because one cannot ban something when one doesn't have an operational alternative solution, otherwise one will put the people in undue hardship. Building judicious institutions is what takes care of the various arms of government and governance, whether in the public or private sector.

It is the importance which a democratic system attaches to human personality that makes it valuable. The democratic method is to reach decision by discussion, argument and persuasion. It is at best the least objectionable form of government that is practicable. Things may be bad today, but they were worse yesterday in Africa. However, grave the indictment that may be brought against democracy in Africa, its friends can answer, what better alternative do you offer?

In view of the above, the following recommendations are made. Nigerian government and the international community need to cut off the sources of contact of Boko Haram. The popular support of Boko in form of manpower, material fund, intelligence, arms and ammunitions at the domestic and international levels must be cut off. In the same vein, an empowerment programme that aims at reducing unemployment among the young school

leavers and university graduates must be effectively implemented. This will further improve the standard of living and wellbeing of Nigeria youths. There is the need for government to ensure that the dividend of democracy is enjoyed by all and sundry, this can be achieved through popular participation of the people. Government should create an avenue to resolve conflicts among any conflicting parties before it degenerates into crisis. Also, government should ensure effective use of resources like power, military, land reforms, finances external alliances and hierarchical structure of organization to counter-insurgents. Lastly, there must be strict enforcement of law against any act of terrorism and insurgency.

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