African Research Review

Domesticating Representative Democracy: Re-Inventing the People   *(Pp. 392-407)*

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Abstract

World politics has taken a dimension toward global democratization. An undemocratic state is viewed as not having an objective existence among comity of nations. Thus, there is a global attestation and fraternity with the idea of democracy whether in theory or in reality. This deference for democracy has led to the pretentious display by many nations to be democratic. Obviously, given the nature of the modern societies, Representative democracy becomes the most appropriate form of democracy that nations could embrace in their quest for democratization. However, the peculiar weakness of this form of democracy empowers men of weak moral rectitude to exploit it to the detriment of the people whose consent is germane to the enthronement and practice of democracy. Therefore, this paper proposes Naturalized Democracy which the author considers as the most appropriate form of democracy, beyond Representative democracy. The weakness of Representative democracy is that it venerates and pays attention more to the Representatives while Naturalized democracy focuses on the people and holds the Representatives as stewards of the people.

Keywords: *Domesticating, Representative Democracy, the People, Re-invention and Naturalized Democracy*

Introduction

In this paper, the writer begins with the assumption that democracy is a famous concept in the world today given its wide spread acceptability based on its ability to foster development. Therefore, we shall not be too much bothered with the process of defining democracy and also historicizing it.

It is also important for us to note that the democracy in question, as it reflects in the topic of this paper, is Representative Democracy as presently practiced in some African countries. It is important to note this because democracy has been developed to have various variants.

Methodology

This research adopts a critical conversational method which involves literature review, histo-empirical analysis, critical conceptual clarification and analysis. As a way of exhausting the content of this paper, the literature review will afford us of the opportunity of laying bare the thesis of democracy. We shall not suddenly arrive at our choice of African communalism as a basis for an ideal form of democracy but rather show the logical rejection of Representative democracy and allude to Naturalized democracy as a form of democracy that accommodate the idea of the community and the promotion of common good within the African setting.

Thus, our literature findings are exhumed out of secondary data.

Discussion

Aggregative Democracy

> Democracy is a competitive process in which political parties and candidates offer their platforms and attempt to satisfy the largest number of people's preferences (Young, 2000:19).

Democracy is thus conceived in terms of competition for state power of governance. With this conception of democracy, the whole society is automatically thrown into the theatre of competition which may result into a complete warfare between people, policies and ideologies if there is a short supply of moral virtues necessary for a harmonious existence in the society.

> Citizens with similar preferences often organize interest groups in order to try to influence the actions of parties and policy-makers once they are elected. Individuals, interest groups, and public officials each may behave strategically, adjusting the orientation of

> their pressure tactics or coalition-building according
> to their perceptions of the activities of competing
> preferences (Young, 2000:19).

This competitive spirit in this modern presentation of democracy is conceived as the end of the political process in Africa. In the developed democracy, embodied in most of the countries in the Western world, the competition is the means to the end which is the citizens' welfare. But in most developing nations, democracy is nothing but a life of continual and unending competition which is evident in destruction of lives of competing parties. The opposition parties and political activists whose major goal is to act as watch dog over governmental policies and activities and proffer alternative policies, must be in constant watch against gruesome blood-thirsty political practitioners who have no regard for human dignity.

> Assuming the process of competition, strategizing,
> coalition-building, and responding to pressure is open
> and fair, the outcome of both elections and legislative
> decisions reflects the aggregation of the strongest or
> most widely held preferences in the population
> (Young, 2000:19).

The basic problem in Africa has always been that these competitions in the political processes are always illegal, immoral and not free and fair. Therefore, the people have always been victims of political leaders who were favored by their access to money which they use for electoral manipulation.

In his discourse of two models of democracy, Young calls this Aggregative Model of democracy. He writes:

> The first model (aggregative) interprets democracy as
> a process of aggregating the preferences of citizens in
> choosing public officials and policies. The goal of
> democratic decision-making is to decide what
> leaders, rules, and policies will best correspond to the
> most widely and strongly held preferences (Young,
> 2000:19).

The underpinning principles in this kind of democracy are competition, self-interests, etc.

Jane Mansbridge described this model of democracy as Adversary Democracy and goes on to outline its inherent principles.

> Voters pursue their individual interest by making demands on the political system in proportion to the intensity of their feelings. Politicians, also pursuing their own interest, adopt policies that buy them votes, thus ensuring accountability. In order to stay in office, politicians act like entrepreneurs and brokers, looking for formulas that satisfy as many, and alienate as few, interests as possible. From the interchange between self-interested voters and self-interested brokers emerge decisions that come as close as possible to a balanced aggregation of individual interests (Mansbridge, 1980:17)

To my mind, this is the basis of idealistic politicking in Africa. A process whereby the people are conceived as mere mental (ideas in the mind) realities whose existence is only necessary for the realization of political power during the electoral process. As soon as that is done, the people return to their idealistic position of non-relevance to further decision making processes in the society.

However, the proponent of this model saw the inherent danger this form of democracy could bring to any society. He therefore writes:

> The democratic process consists in various groups putting out their interests and competing for those votes. Such a mass plebiscite process treats citizens as atomized, privately responding to itemized opinion poll questions (Young, 2000:22).

Also was the problem of the formation of the content of the individual self-interests that were compartmentalized into preferences.

> …some preferences may be motivated by self-interest, others by altruistic care for others and still others by a sense of fair play, the Aggregative model offers no means of distinguishing the quality of preferences by either content, origin, or motive (Young, 2000:20).

Deliberative Democracy

The alternative model to the Aggregative is the Deliberative Model which holds that:

> Participants arrive at a decision not by determining what preferences have greatest numerical support, but by determining which proposals the collective agrees are supported by the best reasons (Young, 2000:23).

This democratic model, contrary to the Aggregative Model, lays emphasis on conscious participation of the people not in the form of competition on whose preferences or ideologies win the battle, but rather in the form of reasonability and practicability of such proposals.

This model of democracy emphasizes inclusion, political equality, reasonableness and publicity. The people must be included or integrated into the process of political deliberation. There is an equal political right by the citizens such that none should try to undermine the political right of another. Reasonability enjoins openness of mind in political discourse. Finally, *the condition of inclusion, equality, and reasonableness…entail that the interaction among participants in a democratic decision-making process forms a public in which people hold one another accountable* (Young, 2000:25).

Though we do not intend to launch a destructive argument against this model, but obviously democracy is not just outright deliberation in the real sense of Representative democracy. It is true that the people have to be included in the process of governance, but what happens in a situation where the consent of the people cannot be harnessed in the deliberative manner. This process of conscious deliberation is hardly anything we can totally come by.

Another point against this model is its assumption that the goal of deliberation is to transform the preferences, interests, beliefs and judgments of participants as against the aggregative goal of mere description. It is a possibility for a charismatic but unethical leader to galvanize the preferences of others through money politicking (as it is in Africa) to the detriment of the majority of the people. This is further based on the assumption that Representative democracy (a democratic system where others act on behalf of the masses) does not embrace the possibility of collective deliberation in matters of public policies given the cosmopolitan nature of the contemporary society.

I do also feel that the concept of massive deliberation in public matters may not be healthy and may also be slow (especially in developing nations) given the level of political and educational illiteracy. More so, in a society with divergent dialects (languages and tribes), with most of the citizens not able to communicate in the country's official language (either English or French in most African countries), how to intelligently deliberate on public matters becomes a difficult task.

I believe these are serious issues against this model of democracy.

Naturalized Democracy: A New Model of Respresentative Democracy for Africa

Representative democracy is the form of democracy that emerged as a result of increase in population beyond the polity states of the ancient direct democracy.

This is a system of government whereby the citizens elect representatives, through elections, to act on their behalf. The representatives are supposed to be responsible and accountable to the people.

But the theoretical underpinning of this kind of government calls for the need to rehabilitate, reconstruct and domesticate it in Africa so as to produce a socio-political system where the people are venerated by their Representatives. This is because the idea of Representative democracy has been the bane of the African societies in which the Representatives take decisions without recourse to the people.

> The original idea of a representative was of a person elected to express or reflect (to re-represent) the views of his constituents. But this is not practicable either, for it would require the representative to gather together a meeting of his contitutents and ascertain the majority view among them before he voted on any issue in the legislative assembly (Raphael, 1990:88).

This was the beginning of idealistic conception of the electorates by their Representatives.

> The idea therefore arose that the representative was chosen, not as a mirror of electoral opinion in his constituency, but as a man of good judgment who

> could be trusted to make up his own mind
> conscientiously; he was not to be a postman for the
> majority of ordinary citizens in his constituency, but
> a reasonable example of how the ordinary citizen
> would (or should) decide on a disputed question
> (Raphael, 1990:89).

The Representative is empowered by the vote of the electorates to take decisions on their behalf without further need to consult with his people on the line of action to take in deliberating issues that affect his people. He is conceived as an embodiment of his peoples' needs.

This foundation of Representative democracy has resulted into a visible alienation between the people and their Representatives. The Representatives get disconnected from their people as soon as they ascend their desired political thrones.

This Representative democracy now thrives on the capitalist economic system given room to selfish (egoistic) pursuit of personal wealth to the detriment of the community (society) and its people.

The obvious situation of Nigeria (one of the leading Africa countries) was captured by Hillary Clinton this way:

> The most immediate source of disconnection between
> Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is a failure of
> governance at the federal, state and local government
> levels. The lack of transparency and accountability
> has eroded the legitimacy of the government and
> contributed to the rise of groups that embrace
> violence and reject the authority of the state (*Punch*,
> 2009).

We can no more pretend to be enjoying this individualistic democratic enterprise in Africa. There must be a readjustment of representative democracy if we must overcome these present accumulative tendencies in our leaders.

Liberty, equality and fraternity as ideal concepts in democracy only exist as political lexicons in African representative democracy without any objectification in our socio-political milieu.

Way Forward

Naturalized Democracy, a new model of Representative democracy, as a mental and practical revolution against our present Capitalistic Representative Democracy has actual possibilities when we jettison the present order of egoistic politicking and replace it with communal rooted values in which the individual interest is not lost. This is because brotherhood (fraternity) is a strong normative ideal of Naturalized Democracy as against Friendship in Unitary Democracy. The leaders and the led are brothers enclosed within the same community. Naturalized democracy is a clear attempt at domesticating democracy based on the African communal nature before the advent of colonialism.

I consider Aristotle as a forerunner of Naturalized Democracy. Though, he did not subscribe to the idea of democracy as an ideal system of government, but his idea of person and community is central to this model of democracy for Africa. With his teleological conception of nature, Aristotle argues that man is intended by nature to live in the company of others in a political society as a viable way of achieving his desire for happiness.

> He who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must either be beast or a god (Aristotle, 1962)

For Aristotle, the political society (government) exists to serve the needs of man, and provide him with the platform that will enhance his development and realization of his goal which is happiness.

> The process of the narrowing down of the purpose of the State reaches its culmination in Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). According to him, the State is nothing but a natural institution for preventing one man from infringing the rights of another; it is a joint-stock protection company for mutual assurance (Appadorai, 1975:40).

Therefore, Naturalized Democracy takes us back to the necessity of pursuing the natural goal of man in the society and not just that of the political leaders. The people are the central figure of this model.

Theoretical Framework
In driving home this understanding of the social-ethical realities of Naturalized Democracy in Africa, we need to appeal to Communitarianism and African Communism

Communitarianism
We shall employ communitarianism as the theoretical basis on which Naturalized Democracy is based. The idea of Naturalized Democracy is to produce a socio-eco-political system that is void of negativity; and one of the ways this can be achieved is by our societies transforming from what John Dewey calls The Great Society to The Great Community. The reason this theory is more appealing is because it stands against the idea of individualism found in Western Capitalist Democracy imported to African politics, and embraces collective responsibility. Thus, to realize the goal of Naturalized Democracy, there must be a restoration of the collective consciousness (within which the interest of the individual is not misplaced) entrenched in communitarianism.

The communitarians, for instance, believe that a social conception of human life gives rise to a distinctive set of concepts and values, and leads to a different vision of a good and harmonious society based on fraternity (brotherhood). This is the uniqueness of our new model of Representative democracy for Africa. It embodies the ideal of brotherhood in the same community as against Jane Mansbridge's Unitary Democracy based on the ideal of friendship outlined in her book *Beyond Adversary Democracy*.

Naturalized Democracy, thus, has a sentimental idealization towards the production of a good society and harmonious relationship among its people-first among the leaders; second, the leaders and the led and third, among the led themselves.

It is based on the assumption of fostering national rebirth and social transformation that is currently being sought in contemporary African politics.

However, this is only possible after we have restored the necessary communal values that are missing in our democracy in Africa.

This is my opinion of Naturalized Democracy: when the egoistic politicians turn their attentions to the community in general, they see the collection of people whose existence provided the platform for the realization of their (the

politicians) political ambitions. Hence, the people (who are the aggregate of the community) are the central focus in all political activities.

The perceived alienation in our society calls for the need to have democracy naturalized within our polity. In other words, there is a need for the operators of democracy in Africa to look beyond their political solipsism and avoid political nihilism in their political discourse and embrace the nature of man as a political animal whose existence is justifiably believed to have been only possible within political community.

Furthermore, Communitarians argue that Liberalism cannot be the guiding philosophy for a complete social order, because its language and ideals fail to cultivate community values (Markate, 1994:xix). If this is accepted, it would imply that we jettison the arrogated position of Liberal Democracy if we are really interested in developing nation-states that is not inhumane to the people.

While the Liberals emphasize personal values, Communitarians emphasize collective values of the community. Developing nations (Africa inclusive) polities have been taken over by political individualism to the neglect of the common good (I do not agree with Joseph Schumpeter argument against this ideal of common good).

I agree with some Social-Political theorists who hold that communitarian philosophy is framed in terms of the common good, social practices and traditions, character, solidarity, and social responsibility (Markate, 1994:xvii).

As it is evident in our polity today, there is a loss of evocative intensity of fraternity and the solidarity of social bonds in our Liberal democratic system. There is an absence of commitment to the State and its institutions. This explains why we intend to ground our idea of Naturalized Democracy first and foremost on the ideals of Communitarianism which is the theory that places the collective interests above the present politics of private interests based on the principle of radical egoism.

Just as Karl Marx, a great social theorist, bemoaned the alienation of the proletariat from their production, so are the citizens of many developing nations who should be the source of legitimizing governmental policies alienated from their States.

Ade Ajayi (1999:16) puts it succinctly:

> The elite, like the colonial State, which they inherited has grown apart from the society. Increasingly, the State and the elite who control the State have become predators of the society.

This, I believe, represents the experience of the citizens of the developing nations as captured by this Africa Scholar above.

Karl Marx (1962: 245,228) captures this more poignantly.

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same times its ruling intellectual force…The man who possesses no other property than his labor power must, in all conditions of society and culture, be the slave of other men, who have made themselves the owners of the material conditions of labor.

Thus, our society is bedeviled with lack of commitment by the citizens given this alienation between the rulers and the ruled. Both the rulers and the ruled are not committed to building society based on common goals and vision.

Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987:9), in analysizing The Crisis in Zaire has this to say.

> It is the national ruling class interest that constitutes the principal obstacle to economic growth and development through the privatization of the State, depriving it of those essential means and capabilities with which to generate economic growth, improve the living conditions of the masses.

The larger parts of our economic institutions are owned by majority of our political leaders who rule in favor of their own pockets. The resultant effect of this is that the citizens withdraw from the State to their different ethnic groups, tribes and small communities. That explains the reason behind the different ethnic clashes, and loss of commitment for national integration, unity and identity. This is because a man that emerges out of any of these smaller communities rule in favor of his own community or ethnic group. For instance, in Nigeria, we have produced, over time, ethnic leadership rather than national leadership. We have witnessed the emergence of 'anophelic' and 'parasitic' political leaders from the six geopolitical zones which are

better described as the six communities within the 'Great Community' called Nigeria. One of the challenges we are also confronted with is evolving a democratic system that will collapse the six communities into one Great Community in the John Dewey's sense.

Communitarianism and its attendant values such as brotherhood, civic virtues, common good, social and national solidarity, and public interest are the entrenched values of Naturalized Democracy. This should replace the present Liberal egoistic democracy.

John Dewey, one of the proponents of Communitarianism proposed the union of democracy and community. For him, the cure for the ailment of democracy is more democracy. More democracy implies democracy imbibing communal values such as respect for the common good and public interest.

> …whatever changes may take place in existing democratic machinery, they will be of sort to make the interest of the public a more supreme guide and criterion of governmental activity, and to enable the public form and manifest its purpose still more authoritatively….government exists to serve its community...it is more difficult to sever the idea of brotherhood from that of a community (Boydston, 1984:329).

The relevance of the theory of Communitarianism to the realization of Naturalized Democracy is well spelt out in the Dewey's theory of democracy and community.

First, there is an emphasis on the supremacy of public interest in order to attain good governance. This is lacking in many developing nations of the world. The corruption index of Transparent International has at the top rate developing nations as the most corrupt in the world. This, at a careful look, came about as a result of unethical and exploitative leadership style coupled with citizens' rootless hatred for the sanctity of the human life which is demonstrated in illegal, immoral and destructive political and economic practices.

Second, there is the idea of service to the citizens or masses. Government is meant to serve the people and not to exploit and legislate to the disadvantage of the citizens.

The ideal of Representative democracy is that the citizens are adequately represented by their elected leaders. In any polity where the people's voice is irrelevant in determining who becomes their leader is a perverse form of Representative democracy. For instance, in most African countries, the so-called political Representatives are impassive to the need of the people. Governmental policies are in officious and lack human face. This has bred disloyalties among the citizens to both the State and one another.

> In any society the concrete loyalties and devotions of any individual tend to become directed toward the associations and pattern of leadership that in the long run have the greatest perceptible significance in the maintenance of life (Nisbet, 1990:49).

The third fact in the Dewey's analysis is the idea of brotherhood. For him, the idea of brotherhood is greatly embedded in the idea of community. In most African countries, what we are left with is nothing but ethnic brotherhood as against national brotherhood and social fraternity. There is the absence of the moral values found in the communal society. The present democratic scene has failed to create a new context of association and moral cohesion that will ensure that the smaller allegiances assume both functional and psychological significance (Boydston, 1984:329).

He argues that without the restoration of community and its undeniable inherent values. "….no amount of mere material welfare will serve to arrest the developing sense of alienation in our society" (Boydston, 1984:329). In an alienated society, the human condition becomes what Thomas Hobbes, a great social theorist called 'homo lupus homini'- Man is wolf to man. This is because the lack of moral guide and personal integrity will result in the devaluation of human dignity.

It is simply due to the alienation that part of the masses that have been victims of the alienation, but eventually found themselves in the position of governance, see the collective national treasury as an escape route out of poverty and thereby breeding more corruption in the developing nations.

The cry for Naturalized Democracy is thus the cry for collective vision, restoration of the common good, emergence of national leadership as against ethnic leadership, social solidarity and fraternity (brotherhood) and common national identity.

African Communalism

Closely related to communitarianism is its African version, communalism. Communalism is described as African mode of existence until the intrusion of Western individualistic democracy.

It could be understood as a doctrine about social relations and moral attitudes that determine what sorts of relationships should hold between individuals in a society. It stresses and takes into account the interests of the wider society not only in designing sociopolitical institutions but also in evolving behavioral patterns for individuals in their response to the needs and welfare of other members of the society (Gyekye, 1997:149).

African communalism is the existential mode of life of the traditional African, based on the belief that all human beings are members of one family of humanity. It is the traditional concern for the people and their welfare. It presupposes that the family is the unit of an African community and thus thrives on the idea of brotherhood.

African scholars, like Kwasi Wiredu, have expressed that the ethical dimension of communalism distinguishes it from socialism which is purely a system of economic distribution of material wealth (Gyekye, 2001:173).

The community takes pre-eminence and an overwhelming importance above the individual. The common good is paramount and hence guides actions and lifestyles. There exists in African communalism a form of universal hospitality in which human concern forms a sort of centrifugal force. There is also the attitude of solidarity and oneness.

Between Western and African Communitarians, the central argument remains that the communal good takes pre-eminence over the individual goals and aspirations and embody the idea of brotherhood. Thus, the individual while pursing personal goals must not undermine or destroy the order, peace and harmony of community and the communal existence. Naturalized democracy helps us to preserve our public life against the present politics of violence and self-centeredness. We lie vulnerable to the mass politics of totalitarian solution if our public lives wither, and our sense of common involvement diminished (Sandel, 1984:17).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The primary focus of Naturalized democracy is the collective destiny of the whole community. It is treated as different from other forms of democracy

given that it is founded on the nature of man as a community-structured being based on Aristotelian postulation.

> Like the sailor, the citizen is a member of a community. Now sailors have different functions for on of them is rower, another a pilot, and a third a look-out man, fourth is described by some similar term; and while the precise definition of each individual virtue applies exclusively to them all. For they have all of them a common object, which is safety in navigation. Similarly, one citizen differs from another but the salvation of the community is from the common business of themall (Aristotle quoted in Echekwube, 2003:476).

We shall be critically committed to the pursuit of this democracy given that it is one of the ways (to avoid the fallacy of hasty generalization) Africa can gravitate towards her ideal form of development. When the polity is about the people, the people also get involved in contributing to the development of the polity. Naturalized democracy, the democracy that is people centered and hence invests in the people, will promote holistic development that is neither regional nor sectional. The political leaders see the community as one not given heed to the temptation of ethnic cleavages.

Obviously, it is this form of democracy that promotes nationalism and patriotism in multicultural and multiethnic states given its adherence to the ideal of national community as against ethnic community. It goes beyond ethnic community because it conceives all human beings as one family or community of relatives. This is the phase the African democratic states have to embrace so as to get rid of this present individualistic and ethnic politics in Africa. Naturalized democracy comes as a remedy to the present ethnic and egoistic inflicted Representative democracy. Naturalized democracy imbues into Representative Democracy the essentially nature of the community-structured life of the African society. Let us domesticate Representative democracy by imbuing into it African values, as outlined above, so that it can serve us well in Africa. This is one of the ways of saving our democracy.

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