

Democracy and Social Justice in Developing Nations Democracy and Social Justice in Developing Nations

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Abstract

Specifically, this study sought to undertake an examination of the ideals of democracy and social justice in the context of a globalized civil society and to determine the extent to which human dignity, human rights, social justice, civic responsibilities and liberties, peaceful co-existence, culture and linguistic diversity and integrity had any significant relationship with the study. Based on experience and research, democracy is a system of governance which intends to serve and strive towards social well-being of all people, political, ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups exercised through the civic responsibility of all citizens. The paper recommended that democracy in developing countries must strive to respect the sanctity of human life, respect for elders, uphold equal opportunity, human rights, rule of law, hard work and the acquisition of private property anywhere in our globalized civil society.

Introduction

One major problem for us today in Developing Nations to which Nigeria belongs is how to use democracy as a system of governance to organize a fair and free election exercised through civic responsibility of all citizens free from rancor and violence. An important key to this problem lies in our ability to respect the principle of one man one vote which is an essential pre-requisite for the enthronement of credible political leaders, for it is only after this has been settled that the efforts invested in the building of democratic institutions can yield appreciable dividends.

Throughout Africa, and specifically Nigeria, a great deal of time, money, and energy is put into setting up of democratic institutions of governance in which respective governments intend to serve and strive toward social well-being of all people, political, ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups and so provide the political context for freedom exercised through the civic responsibility of all citizens.

This paper will, therefore, be discussed under the following headings:

- I. Human values
- II. Human rights
- III. Social justice
- IV. Civic Responsibility
- V. Democratic society
- VI. Cultural and linguistic diversity.

HUMAN VALUES

Human values are those qualities in the human person which make individuals desirable, happy, useful, helpful, loveable, good and worthy of emulation by other human beings. Human values are the standard or idea which most people have about the worth of good qualities. Human values are core values which people hold dear to their hearts. They are the principles we live by every day. These core values may include; love, money, love of neighbors, material wealth, friendship, good family upbringing, patience, good name, honor, service and more. One way of judging a society, for example, is to consider its values, that is, the worth which its people place on justice, kindness, freedom, integrity, peaceful coexistence to mention a few. In choosing a career, for instance, one always sets a high value on interest in the work and a much lower value on the pay offered (Lauwers, 1979; Ibeneme, 2000).

At the national or international levels, core values may include; fundamental human rights, civil liberties, justice, rule of law, honesty, great nation, good people, democratic principle, respect for elders, loyalty, self determination, fair play, patriotism, discipline and more. It is unfortunate that in many cases, individuals and nations find it difficult to hold tenaciously to the above core values in many countries because of poor mass education, irresponsibility among the leaders and followers, uncertainty of compliance rewards, dishonesty, incompetent leadership, unemployment, corruption, and poverty.

Since human values are the principles we live by every day, they are the light that guides us and give stability, order and structure to individuals in a globalized civil society. When that society is in order and peaceful, we can navigate our way through everything. Without order, or peace, all we have in chaos, confusion, conflict suffering, and pain (Mkpa, 2000)

One spiritual example will do. At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus Christ was taken to the high mountain by Satan. While there, Satan showed him all the beautiful things of this world: high building, gold, silver, best limousines, indeed, the material things any man that loves the high side of life would want. Thereafter, he requested for one thing from Christ: 'if only you would bow down for me and worship me, I will give you all these riches. But Christ refused Satan's request. And that is why Christians have salvation today. If you were in Christ shoe, what would you do? What scale does good name, service to others, self- worth, peaceful coexistence, love of neighbor, honor, integrity, love of fellow man, or kindness occupy in your heart?

It is unfortunate that the globalized civil society is over- monetized, today: honor is monetized, good neighborliness is monetized, justice is monetized, human beings and human parts are monetized. Any wonder we live in a valueless globalized civil society? Let the globalized civil society today go for things of the spirit, things of the living heart. Is a globalized civil society that makes money the bottom line of its values not lost? How do we save this society today?

HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are those basic rights which democratic governments in both developed and developing nations accord their citizens. These basic rights are also enshrined in the constitution of the United Nations organization (UNO). These basic human rights include: right to life, right to personal liberty, right to dignity of the human person, right to fair hearing, right to personal liberty, right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, right to peaceful assembly or association, right to freedom of expression, right to freedom of the press and right to freedom from discrimination.

This means that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity irrespective of color, creed or religion. Similarly, they are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood and equality. How can we ensure social justice in such a society? To this question, we shall return.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Nemesis, in Greek mythology, is the name of Greek goddess of retribution. It is a deity responsible for ensuring that human beings and nations do not get away with their misdeeds. The fundamental concept that underpins the intervention of Nemesis is social justice. Justice is basically the idea that there is a balance of forces in the universe. Without social justice and the rule of law, this world would be a dark, wicked and frightening place or jungle with neither signposts nor beacons where the strong will eat the weak. Social justice implies that there is the need for equity and equal opportunity in human, national and international affairs: equal opportunity in human affairs, equality of educational opportunity, and equality of races.

In the first place, it is essential that justice should be interpreted to mean giving each person his or her share or due, vindicating and convicting the guilty being upright in ones dealing with people and not favoring anyone unduly. Such acts inspire confidence and trust in the leadership. Those who work in such a system will be happy and pleased to work for the development of the state or nation (Mkpa, 2000).

Justice maintains that there is a correlation between human actions and the accompanying consequences or rewards for our deeds or misdeeds. It is akin to the law of whatever you sow, you will reap. Some religious fraternities believe that the law of sowing and reaping is a fundamental, inexorable, cosmological and icescape law of nature. Again, Jesus of Nazareth talked about justice and fair play when he asserted that 'what a man soweth, that he shall reap.' Political leaders who oppress their masses will expect revolution, political unrest or civil war (Igwe, 2005).

The idea that we get what we deserve is a warning against abuse of political, economic, social and intellectual powers. Social justice is associated with morality. Even the churches are failing: nobody rebukes from the pulpit anymore for fear of losing members of the congregation, and so the society grows more and more rotten.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Civil responsibility can be defined as the civic duty that a citizen is expected to perform in private or public life for the common good of all. It is obvious that under a responsible democratic government, the president and state governor's exercise political, economic, and administration powers to manage a nation's affairs to all levels. Similarly, they must give account of their actions to the electorate.

At the family level, the man, as the head of the family, has to perform the civic and family responsibility of providing food, shelter, security and comfort and other educational foundations such as basic education values, beliefs, skills and standards of performance and respect for elders to all members of the family. Later, it is the responsibility of parents to send their children to schools to learn further these skills, attitudes, and appreciations. This is because education appears as a social instrument through which man can guide his destiny and shape his future, provided the apparatus at hand is used intelligently, forcefully and skillfully (D. Hoogh, 1983, Eyibe, 2000).

At the national level, all the adult citizens have a civic responsibility for cultivating the land and producing food to feed the nation and the international community, building homes, roads, and other infrastructure, caring for the sick, controlling the environment, making cloths, transporting people and their wares servicing machines, teaching the young and inexperienced in the society. Indeed, the caring attitude and paying taxes are the civic responsibilities of all adults.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

Democracy is a system of government in which all adult citizens share power through their elected representatives. It is a government which encourages and allows rights of citizen such as freedom of speech, religion, opinion, and association, the assertion of the rule of law, majority rule, as well as the respect for the rights of minorities. Democracy is a market place where issues are traded. Democracy is a not the absence of conflict or disagreement but a place where issues and conflict are examined and resolved in the interest of peaceful co-existence. In a democratic society, all citizens are treated as equals. In a democracy, the representatives of the people are elected by the electorate on the principle of one man one vote. However, elections do not make democracy; rather they are just a part of what constitutes democracy. Mass participation in governance is an essential part of democracy.

In discussing democracy, the following questions are posed: what power have you got? Where did you get it from? In whose interests do you use it? To whom are you accountable? And how can we get rid of you? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a good number of its population is discriminated against because of the colour of their skin? How can the democracy thrive in a developing country where a good number of its citizen are discriminated against and fought over or killed on the basis of their religion or way of life? How can democracy thrive in an under- developed country where a section of its population believes that they are born to rule over other citizens? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a section of its population is regarded as "foreigners" in their own country simply because they have higher educational attainment? The phenomenon of the colour of the skin is a climatic factor which has nothing to do with intelligence or development. Intelligence is a gift of

God, Jehovah, Jesus Christ, Allah, Buddha, Chineke, the creator, and our Higher Power bestowed on all human beings everywhere as He wishes. It is not a monopoly of any group of people in the world. On the basis of equality or equal opportunity, any human being can play a positive role in world affairs, if he or she is given the opportunity. Religion or denomination is a private affair and it is futile to fight for God in developing nations. How can democracy thrive in a developing country where there is no merit, hard work, transparency, integrity or accountability? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a good number of its population is discriminated against because of the colour of their skin? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a good number of its citizens are discriminated against and fought over or killed on the basis of their religion, denomination or way of life? How can democracy thrive in an underdeveloped country where a section of its population believe that they are born to rule other citizens? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a section of its population is regarded as foreigners in their own country simply because they have higher educational attainment? The phenomenon of the colour of the skin is a climatic factor which has nothing to do with intelligence or development. Intelligence is a gift of nature or the Almighty bestowed on all human beings everywhere as He wishes. It is not a monopoly of any group of people in the world. On the basis of equality or equal opportunity, any human being can play a positive role in world affairs if he or she is given the opportunity. Religion or denomination is a private affair and it is futile to fight for God in developing nations. How can democracy thrive in a developing country where there is no merit, hard work, transparency, integrity or accountability? True democracy and social justice must strive to protect the above values to ensure peace and spiritual freedom in our globalized civil society. How can democracy thrive in a developing country where an immunity clause exists in the nation's constitution which indicates that all the citizens are not equal? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where a particular religious group insists that its adherents must always lead in different ranks of its national life? How can democracy thrive in a developing country where election results are falsified or inflated in favour of mediocre leaders to the detriment of the emergence of far-sighted leadership? The questions bordering on these issues are the causes of conflict, social unrest, cold war, armed struggle, tribal war, or outright civil war in many developing countries. Democracy demands a spirit of give and take in order to ensure stability and peaceful coexistence in a country. How can democracy thrive in a developing country where the employment of young people is seen as a privilege rather than a right? How can democracy thrive in an atmosphere of God-fatherism in the developing countries? It is obvious that the God-fatherism is incompatible with democracy. How can democracy thrive in a poverty and corruption ridden country? How can democracy thrive in a country where governments continue to fund political parties? We must empower the youth who are the leaders of tomorrow. We must empower the women who are the custodians of our social life. African countries must work to set up strong democratic institutions of credible far-sighted leadership of much political wisdom and discourage the coming to power of mediocres, gunmen and money-bags at all levels in their national life. This is because mediocres do not know the way and so cannot show the citizens the way. This is the bane of African political instability since independence. They must work hard to retain their stars at home and so discourage the phenomenon of brain drain of African stars, intellectual and skilled workers to four host countries: United States of America, Germany, Canada, and Australia in that order (Eyibe, 2001).

True democracy and social justice must strive to protect the above core values to ensure peace love understanding and spiritual freedom in our globalized civil society. The answers to these questions will show how democratic such a society is. Democracy has been abuse in many developing countries by the manipulations of electoral rules and the use of state powers or intimidation to silence opposition. Effective machinery should be put in place to replace dictatorship in whatever form (Obike, 2008 and Eyibe, 2009).

We need philosophical and democratic teachers in our schools in the new millennium of globalization, who will lead in the human struggle and in the understanding of why people or national leaders behave as they do, how knowledge can help create a democratic atmosphere among teachers, students and citizens. Such an education in schools will help us identify and analyse the basis of civil society: fundamental human rights, self-help, democratic principles, honesty, respect for elders, freedom, self-determination, fair play, authority, patriotism, discipline, patience, self-reliance, dishonesty or incompetent leadership. But the question remains: how do we relate violent civil disturbances to the emergence of democracy in developing countries of Nigeria, Niger, Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Yemen, Kyrgyzstan and more? The causes of these disturbances or wars are as different as their outbreak, but the most fundamental is the nurtured suspicion and mutual distrust that found outlet in their democratic dispensation (Eyibe; 2000).

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND INTERITY

Human societies do not all enjoy the wealth and natural resources of the United States of America, nor share the energy and optimism of the Americans. Sometimes, there is fear of the future and love of the past; the will to seek modest security rather than dangerous greatness. The essential point for us today is that everywhere ideas on the upbringing of the young stem from and reflect historical experiences, geographical conditions, and patterns of culture (Blaug, 1986, Eyibe, 2000).

It is a truism that all societies have an adequate educational system, for if they did not, they would vanish. All cultures teach a language which, however primitive in form or restrictive in vocabulary, is adequate for immediate needs.

All transmit the essential secrets of sex and reproduction, as well as the knowledge needed to survive. The phenomenon of colonization and nationalism has made it mandatory in developing countries for many things to fall apart (Achebe, 1958; Jega and Wakaili, 2002; Eyibe, 2006)

DEMOCRACY AND NATIONALISM

The difficulties of wise policy making are aggravated by two great but often distorted passions of modern world: democracy and nationalism. Without both, nations would have gained neither freedom nor unity. But the price paid is often enormous (Blaug, 1986; Igwe, 2005). The difficulties that come from distorted national feeling are even more puzzling than those created by misdirected democratic ideas. Language problems are a good example. One clear example will do. From the economic point

view, India will benefit from widespread knowledge of English, which is helpful in commerce and which is the repository of rich technical, technological and scientific literature. Yet, the standards of teaching English are falling rapidly and its importance in schools is diminishing. Worse still, many areas of India are asking that their own regional languages take precedence over the Federal language, irrespective of the diversity of the sub-continent (Lauwers, 1979). However, as a multi-ethnic nation, with more than 140 million people and about 250 Linguistic groups, Nigeria must gather strength in her diversity for the national good of its peoples.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Egalitarian democratic feeling often expresses itself by constant demand for limitless freedom to behave as one wishes, for the immediate establishment of universal compulsory education, for full restoration of the rights of minorities and for the abolition of all privileges. In practice, this means easy access for all to the nation's wealth, to secondary and higher education, and to all privileges and facilities. There is no doubt that such provisions are wise and economically rewarding, if the resources can be provided. It might be profitable to irrigate the whole of the Sahara desert, making the whole of it fruitful to feed the entire Africa continent or even the world. But, if there is available only a little water, which is best: to irrigate only a few acres, or to spread it over the entire thirsty area?

It would, however, be mistaken to press too far the argument that there is nothing new in the idea of democracy. There are profound differences between schemes like the above and those practices in developed industrialized nations of the West. One thing is clear: the Africa democracy must strive to respect the sanctity of the human life, respect for elders, equal opportunity, human rights, hard work, rule of law, and the acquisition of private property in any state or country of our globalized civil society. In doing this, such democratic ideal or feeling must make tolerance, equity, social justice, integrity and respect for fellow citizens its guiding principles in all national and global matters.

The following recommendations are made:

1. Human values are the principles we live by every day: love, love of neighbours, or strangers, friendship, good family background, patience, good name, honour, service, justice, kindness, freedom, integrity, peaceful coexistence and more.
2. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity irrespective of colour, creed, religion, or denomination.
3. All human beings must act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood and equality.
4. We must uphold social justice and the rule of law so that the world will be a better place for all of us.
5. We must perform our civic duties as citizens for the common good of all.

6. Security of voters should be a priority.
7. Violence has no place in democratic decisions and politicians should advise their followers accordingly.
8. We should be guided by transparency, integrity, credibility, impartiality and dedication.
9. We must see democratic participation or society as a forum where issues and conflicts are resolved in the interest of peaceful coexistence.
10. We must empower our women who are the custodians of our social and meaningful life.
11. Nations can use their diversity as a source of strength and unity.
12. Without democracy and nationalism, there can be neither freedom nor unity.
13. Nigeria must gather strength in her cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity for the national good of its peoples.
14. African democracy must strive to respect the sanctity of human life, respect for elders, equal opportunity, human rights, hard work, the rule of law and more.

Finally, today, the whole world has a responsibility to support people everywhere in their quest for self determination, social justice, and peaceful co-existence so that they can realize their full potentials and to do things in their own way. This is the only way we can guarantee peace and harmony in the globalized civil society. But, again, without social justice, how can democracy thrive in our globalized civil society? Here again, for democracy to thrive in African nations, we must respect the principle of one man one vote which is a prerequisite for the enthronement of credible political leaders free from politics and corruption of 'money bags' that il faut respecter le principe d'un seu/ homme un seul vote' of the French poet.

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