

Electioneering Process and Global Democratic Governance: A Comparative Discourse of Nigeria and the United State of America

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Abstract

Every state of the world has burning desire for democratic governance for its public administration. This democratic governance has different reflections in various continents and countries of the world. My focus in this paper is to compare the democratic governance in Nigeria and United State of America. This choice is made because United State of American democracy has been perceived by political analysts and socio-scientists as the model for global democracy. The comparison will be done by considering the point of convergence and divergence between the America and Nigeria democratic governance. The paper raises some questions for critical attention and discourse: (i) Does Nigeria colonial experience have significant impact on the country's democratic governance? (ii) Do bilateral and multilateral relationships of Nigeria have impact upon her democratic governance? (iii) Can there be an afro-centric model of democracy? The paper concludes on the note that leaders and followers need positive value re-orientation for sustainable democratic governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Democracy, American democracy; election; electoral malpractise; military coup.

1. Introduction

The pristine state of nature was characterized by lawlessness, chaos, anarchy and disorderliness. This was as a result of egoistic nature of men in the society. In this state of nature, governance and public administration were not well structured and planned. The evolution and development of state (microcosm or society) have been observed and described by philosophers and sociologist such as Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679); John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). These scholars views state as organized whole that comprises people, territory and mechanism of control (constitutions, law and government). Putting their submission and views together, "the origin of the state can be viewed from different perspectives, namely philosophical, historical and descriptive" (Oyekanmi, 2005:158).

The evolution and development of modern society from the state of nature is as the result of the voluntary decisions of humans to integrate the self will with the will of the society under a sovereign ruler. This condition has been described by Thomas Hobbe as the law of social contract. In his opinion individuals in the society voluntarily cede some of their enjoyment and natural rights for harmonious co-existence in the society. This social arrangement gave birth to different modern governments and system of governance ranging from monarchy, through oligarchy to democracy.

Ever since the emergence of social contract theory, there has been divisions in the political structure and behavior of society under the dichotomy of the government and the governed. In this direction, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher offers what can be regarded as the first systematic study of the modern day government and political structure. Aristotle used two classificatory paradigm in his description of the nature of modern day government and these are:

- i. The number of person(s) exercising power; and
- ii. The end to which this power is exercised.

Philosophers and political thinkers of different extractions have commented and reacted to the position of Aristotle on the modern day government. For instance, Oyekanmi (2005:167) critically comments:

Applying this criteria, Aristotle logically concluded that if one man rules and rules in the interest of all, that is monarch. But, if the rule is selfish, then it is tyranny. If a few rule and they do so in the interest of all, you have aristocracy. However, if the rule of that number is selfish, that is Oligarch. In his final analysis, if all or many rule and they rule in the interest of all, you have polity. But if their rule is selfish, the end result of such government is democracy. As a result of this, monarchy is the best of all types of good government and democracy is preferable to all the perverted types of government.

The critical comment of Oyekanmi above shows different forms of modern government identified by Aristotle, in the opinion of this paper, monarchy is not the best of all types of good government because it has tendency to tyrannical government with abuse of fundamental, civil and natural rights of humans in the society.

My discussion in this paper shall focus on the model provided by Lijphart (1977) in his book *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*. Lijphart is of the opinion that the structure of a society can be homogenous or heterogenous and that this arrangement influences the democratic practices available in such a

society e.g. China, America, Nigeria, Swiss etc.

2. Democracy: Meaning, Evolution and Forms

The origin and evolution of modern democracy has been traced to the ancient Greek city States, particularly Athens in the 6th century B.C. As a system of public administration and political system, democracy has people its at centre. It is therefore no wonder that Abraham Lincoln, the one time American president defines democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. This definition implies that people play important role to take decision about who will govern them and how the government will operate through constitutionalism and rule of law.

When democratic practice began in Athens (Greece), it began as a form of direct participant of adults in the state of affairs. With explosion in population and expansion of land mass, direct participation in the decision making process of the policy and politics of a nationality gave way to representative democracy in which people voluntarily elect who will be their leader in a general election.

Since the evolution and development of modern democracy and democratic practices, different political thinkers and philosophers have given definitions and descriptions of democracy. It is therefore germane to say that there is no single definition of the term democracy. In the opinion of Vanhannen (1997:31) legality to hold institutional power characterizes democracy. He writes:

Democracy is a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institution also compete for power in which institutional powers holders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people.

From the above definition, democracy is seen as a political system that is facilitated and made possible through general elections at periodic intervals. In any democratic setting, people (electorates) have the rights to elect representative who will direct their economic, diplomatic, political and social affairs and at the same time, these representatives must be accountable for their action and be responsible to the electorates.

Schmitter and Karl (1991:76), in their earlier study, project the view of Vanhannen (1997) that:

Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.

The above view point show that sustainable democratic governance is a collaboration between the government and the governed. Any breach of the democratic arrangements and social codes that made representatives governance possible may result in chaos, anarchy and the total break of law and order. It can be deduced from the above definition that democracy is all about competition among political parties to occupy the position of authority over the nation's resources (human, natural, material and immaterial) and cooperation between the government and the governed irrespective of social status, political affiliations, economic status, ethnic and religious affiliations, gender and cultural background.

In another study, Weak (1999:14) is of the view that public opinion and ability to exercise political rights are common to any democratic system. He writes:

In a democracy important public decisions on questions of law and policy depend, directly or indirectly, upon public opinion formally expressed by citizen of the community, the vast bulk of whom have equal rights.

In a democratic state, whatever decisions made by the elected representatives are believed to be from the generality of the masses through public opinions. It is therefore expected that public sitting, hearing and deliberation of important matters that affect the survival and continuity of a nation should be encouraged. Citizens can take part in the decision making progress through referenda and submission of memoranda for public deliberations.

In his own study, Dahl (1998:38) sees democracy from the view point of opportunities and expectations. In his study, he gives opportunities that are expected from democratic governance and he also gives what are expected of the democratic rulers. He writes:

Democracy provides opportunities for (i) effective participation, (ii) equality in voting, (iii) gaining enlightened understanding (iv) exercising final control (by the people on the agenda), and (v) inclusion of adults. The political institutions that are necessary to pursue these goals are (1) elected officials (2) free, fair and frequent elections (3) freedom of expression (4) alternative sources of information (5) associational autonomy and, (6) inclusive citizenship.

It can be said that the above description of democracy makes use of integrative approach blending the process and the machinery together. A true democracy does not limit the source of information and information flow between the government and the governed. From the above submission by Dahl (1998), the final decision over public policies that affects the generality of masses belongs to the electorates who wield political sovereignty through "free, fair and frequent elections".

Lijphart (1977:106) identifies four forms of democracy which are consociational democracy; depoliticized

democracy, centripetal democracy, and centrifugal democracy.

In the opinion of Lijphart, consociational democracy favours the arrangements that brings together elite groups from different types of society while depoliticized democracy is premised on the arrangements tht favour mutual agreement on certain basic things and ideals. From my view, this form of democracy is not good for sustainability and continuity because it is transactional and based on prejudicial judgments. In a centripetal democracy, the central authority coordinates the affairs of various regions, units and states in the country, while in the centrifuged democracy, the regions and states assert control over the center. In my opinion, centripetal democracy is a resemblance of federalism while centrifugal democracy is a resemblance of confederation.

In the world over, people have shown positive dispositions to democracy and democratic governance and for this reason, concerted efforts are being made in the new world order to ensure that every country is under democratic governance that is participatory, functional and sustainable law not oblivious of the fact that sociological and political variables influence the difference in the democratic governance across the globe. That is why the developed world gave conditions that to have aids, loans and all forms of support there must be democracy which gradually makes unpopular military coups.

3. Electioneering Process and Democratic governance in Nigeria and U.S of America

Despite the difference in continents, Nigeria and U.S of America share the same sociological and political experiences. The two countries experience colonialism and civil war. With no doubt and with absolute conviction, the U.S of America and Nigeria are former British colonies. It has also been established by historians and political philosophers that America experienced civil war, particularly between the North America and South America. It is quite unfortunate that Nigeria, as a nation with vast economic and national resources has not been able to integrates the past sociological, political and economic experiences with the present realities for sustainable development of the polity and the varied resources.

Electioneering means the process of actively engaging in an election. Electioneering will be able to take two candidates or incumbents and compare them to each other. Electioneering campaigns, the Nigerian style sees politicians applying campaign strategies that are very unhealthy and capable of breaking down law and order e.g. sometimes early this year between Accord party and CAN at Olomi area of Ibadan, Oyo state of Nigeria. Sometime this makes one think whether the affected candidates are truly contesting to serve the electorate or are they struggling for power by all means for a kill or do they have good intention for the masses, if they assume office. Politicians in Nigeria don't package good programmes to get their audience convinced with their manifestoes and why they are better than their opponents and be voted into office. In America, campaign is issue based and politicians are seen as serious and ready to serve the people.

During party primaries in Nigeria many candidates are hand picked b y feudal cabals, no level playing field and ultimately the general citizenry are presented with limited choices, hand picked by money-bags and ethnic chauvinist who pay lip service to one Nigeria's but in reality have sentiments against the unity of the nation but in American, candidate goes through long process of screening that takes a year to bring out presidential material.

In Nigeria geography/ethnic/religious sentiments are pre-requisite attribute to lead the nation. Vision and moral standing of candidates are relegated to the background while, equally the past of these seeking elective office is not as well important but all these are very much important in American politics. Political campaigns is an organized effort which seeks to influence the decision making process within a specific group. In democracies, it refers to electoral campaigns where representative of the people are chosen. The following entails political campaign.

- ❖ Campaign message: This is the idea that candidate intends to share with the voters and it becomes his/her political agenda. It consists of several talking points which are repeated frequently to create a lasting impression with the voters. Most campaigns prefer to keep it broad to attract most potential voters, a message that is too narrow may limit the candidates chances e.g. in 2008 American presidential election John Maccain used a message that focused on patriotisms and political experience but later change it but Obama was consistent with a simple message of change. In Nigeria our message is North/South, Christian/Muslim, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba etc.
- ❖ Campaigns in America: Involves fund raising techniques which involves candidates meeting with large donors, sending direct mail pleas to small donors and concerned interest group that can contribute millions on the race if they are interested in your program but in Nigeria it involves milking dry the state, by appropriating state resources either by proxy or stealing directly from the source e.g. Ibori, Saminu Turaki, Tinubu even Obasanjo all of them.
- ❖ Organization: In American, the campaign organization have coherent structure of personnel headed by campaign manager who coordinates the campaign operations, apart from the candidates they are often seen as the campaign most visible leader, such people are often master strategy that employ all means to ensure victory but in Nigeria thugs and political jobbers often populate campaign trains that is why violence is usually associated with campaign in Nigeria.

The mental and socio-political orientations of an average Nigerian influences his/her political thought and behavior. The political thinking of an average Nigerian supports electioneering violence and absolute anarchy as opposed to what is obtainable in American. Geocentrism characterized politics in Nigeria by extension Africa and consequently anarchism, violence, thuggery, arson and murder are the dominant political mechanism used in Nigeria. The first attempt of Nigeria at democratic governance in first republic was characterized by unbridled destruction of lives and properties. This situation botched up the launch of the laudable democratic governance in Nigeria.

Democracy and democratic governance in Nigeria have been characterized by anarchy as a result of some variables such as ethnic loyalty, fear of marginalization and corruption. Anarchy has thus become the albatross hanging on the neck of Nigeria as a country. This position has been maintained by Sesan (2009:171).

The seeming indomitable albatross that hangs on Nigeria's neck, rippling her of her existential essence is anarchy. This anarchy manifests itself in various forms-political riots, religious crises, strikes, police brutality, kidnapping, broad-daylight robbery, intra and inter-party rivalries. Indeed, all facets of society manifest diverse kinds of lawlessness.

The socio-political anarchy being experienced in Nigeria is as a result of the deformed political socialization, behavior and participation. In Nigeria and by extension in some African State, politics is seen as a "call to wealth" instead of the conventional call to serve. Opportunity to contest in an election is seen as a means of getting access to national wealth with impunity. Consequently, democracy and democratic governance in Nigeria and most part of Africa have been perceived as dynasty reign where politicians are recycled. On this position, Sasan (2011:95) complains:

In Africa, democratic governance has been seen as a dynasty reign patterned after filial relationship, political-affiliations, ethnic background and tribal interests. All these anti-democratic factors prompt different forms of electoral malpractice (registration of under-age voters, printing of fake ballot papers, snatching of ballot boxes, intimidation of electorates, thuggery and violence during elections, annulment/cancellation of election results for selfish political reasons and refusal to vacate office at the declaration of election results) that are observable on the continent.

The above observations show the peculiar features of Nigerian and most of African democracy and electioneering process.

It is in the opinion of this paper that colonial experience has significant impact on the democratic governance in Nigeria. The country is still attached to the apron string on their erstwhile colonial masters. This is as a result of economic assistance the country is receiving from the former colonial master. Another factor is the membership of the country of the Commonwealth of Nations i.e. association of former colonies of Britain. Till date, there is still servant master relationship between Nigeria and Britain. Owing to the factor of colonial experience and general Afro-European relationship, democracy in Nigeria and other parts of African are externally influenced by Europe and America. To this end, Nigeria does not enjoy absolute sovereignty on some matters affecting her citizens. Apart from this, the foreign diplomacy of the country is affected. To adjudged that a democratic governance is effective and efficient, there should be judicious harmonization of internal relationship and international relationship for the betterment of the citizens, without any fear of favour.

Democracy in Nigeria and Africa is still nascent and developing because of some identifiable factors of military intervention in politics in the recent past. Nearly all African countries have witnessed military incursion in politics, the situation that is not common in U.S America. At the wake of the 20th century Nigeria and other African countries began to embrace democracy and democratic governance, the model is patterned after French, British or American style. Oguejiofor (2003:3).

The general picture is that democracy in Africa is still very far from being stable. Both in the early days of independence and in the recent waves of democratization, there is hardly any effort to fashion a procedure that will lead to emergence of a lasting democratic leadership. The usual practice has been to copy the French, British or American models of democracy.

It is very hard to fashion a procedure that will lead to and that will ensure a lasting democracy governance in Nigeria and Africa at large owing to the factors of deformed political orientations, misplacement of political ethical values and questionable foreign diplomatic relationship.

Bilateral and multilateral relationship of Nigeria with other countries of the world such as China, America etc also has significant impact on the country's democratic governance. Nigeria relies heavily on the grants and aids from developed nations of the world. At present, China is having an in-road into the country and that is the reason for dumping of all sorts. Over-reliance on the grants, aids and military assistance from America, Europe, and at present, China has negative consequence on the nascent democratic governance of Nigeria. The country has to adjust its foreign policy to reflect the needs and yearnings of the benefactors.

The considerable number of Nigeria politicians have misplaced the ethical values of others (nation) first and

self-last. The current trend among the Nigerian politicians is to place themselves at the centre of attention at the detriment of the populace that contribute largely to the human capital development in the country. Following the opinion of Sesan (2009:173), Nigerian can extricate herself from the self-imposed problems through civil education. He critically comments:

The decolonization process of Nigerian nationalist that began in the 1920s did nothing but replaced white colonialism with black colonialism at maturation on 1st October, 1960. Since the period of political independence in the country, Nigeria has been moving from one political and economic nightmare to another. Consequently, this impedes the country's human capital development. For Nigeria to extricate herself from self-imposed social economic and political encagement, she needs a total re-orientation. This can be effectively done through purposeful and goal-directed civic education. It is though this that individuals will realize that collective interest of a nation, overrides personal interest, and the leadership in any form simply means service to the nation and humanity.

The change of orientation through civic education as suggested by Sesan will make democracy in Nigeria a worthwhile project.

Nigerian democracy is also characterized by some congenital and ontological problems such as minority questions on power and resources sharing and distribution. There is always perceived sense of marginalization by the minority groups in Nigerian democracy and consequently, this phenomenon had degenerated into various agitations, Northern Nigerian. One of the paramount demands of these minority groups is that there should be devolution of power irrespective of the size and population of components regions in a country. In the North East activities of Boko Haram is making life unbearable, in the middle-belt regions of Nigeria, there is an in ending agitation to have a worthwhile stake in the central administration of Nigeria. Omololu, Bello and Mbada (2012:2), on the issue of minority questions are of the views that:

The minority questions or agitations by the various groups revolved around the continuous dissatisfaction by the ethnic minorities with the distribution of power and resources in the nation. Although, there appear to be similarities in the demands of these ethnic groups, in the North or South, these agitations seem to agree on a common point that the minorities want a sense of fairness in the way the vast resources are distributed and that state power should not be the monopoly of any group, no matter its size.

The above observations made by Omololu, Bello and Mbada show that there is no fairness, equity and justice in the democratic governance in Nigeria.

In Nigerian democracy, the democratic leaders always frown at civil disobedience to some ill-formed public policies. These leaders have forgotten or pretend to have forgotten that modern day democracy and other forms of governance is a social contract between the government and the governed. Protest and peaceful demonstrations against any unpopular policy of the government is usually met with state terror. The mass and national demonstrations that followed the removal of oil subsidy on January 1st 2012 was met by state terror in the form of intimidation, official conspiracy against labour leaders, threat of retirement and illegal and subjective media declaration supporting government's actions. The inability of the masses to engage in civil disobedience against the unpopular policies of the democratic government in Nigeria is one of the problems against the success of democracy in the country.

Nigeria, indeed African countries, should learn from the experiences of the United States and other advanced democracies of the world. In fact, America's greatness today rests largely on her protection of the freedom of mass opposition. In fact one can boldly say that the United States of America is one of the few countries in the world today where the freedom to dissent and oppositions to government actions has been more broadly respected, and the results of exercise of this right have indeed been auspicious, as seen in the negroes' protest against government segregated schools as well as the general protest against the United State's involvement in the Vietnamese war. The role of the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East was presently protested against by a handful of Americans, both at home and abroad, and these protests have had modifying effects on America's actions and policies in these areas.

The above is a reflection of democratic practices in Nigeria and America. From the above point, it can be said that there are differences in the political socialization behavior and participation in Nigeria and America. In America, for instance, the candidates in an election takes election results with utmost goods faith. National interest often override that of personal in this direction e.g. Clinton VS Opponent in 2000 Democratic governance in America is integrative and all inclusive irrespective of party affiliations, ethnic backgrounds. Indeed, it can be said that democracy in America is not the winner takes all as we have in Nigerian democratic arrangements.

The quality of democracy in Nigeria and United State of America is seen in the electoral process of the two countries. In Nigeria, gross impropriety characterized the whole electoral process. It is not uncommon to see in Nigeria manipulation of electoral officers during the registration of electorates for undue favour. Apart from this, electioneering campaigns, party conventions, political rallies and public awareness are characterized by thuggery, hooliganism, public disorder and murder with the resultants effects of chaos and anarchy. In some situations, voters are intimidated from casting their votes. All these conditions are peculiar to democratic process in Nigeria. In America, punitive measures are put in place to check political thuggery, hooliganism and vandalism. It can thus be said that the political and electioneering process in America is more civilized than Nigeria electioneering process. This differences is as a result of difference in value system and political socialization. Even in America, the selection of presidential candidates follow a due process within the party unlike in Nigeria where the party members have a pre-determined candidate in mind. It takes a whole year to present a presidential candidates. Explaining the political socialization of Nigeria and America further, this paper supports the view of Olajide (2008:258) that politics should be left in the hands of person with reflective consciousness. He critically comments:

Politics as politics is certainly not for brutes. It is essentially for persons, that is human beings with reflective consciousness that can fully name their needs and articulate their preferences. These are human beings who are able to think and reason and are sufficiently aware of their immediate environment and the tremendous power they have to influence it, in order to make their dream of citizenship in a sovereign state possible. Politics, so understood, as yet another form of relations through which human beings define their existence specifically as being with others.

It can thus be said that American democracy unlike it's Nigerian counterpart is managed and controlled by individuals with reflective consciousness. The well-being of individual masses occupies the central position in the agenda of the government.

The differences in America and Nigerian democracy is schematically presented below:

American democracy	Nigerian democracy
More of altruism	More of egocentrism
More of equity and justice	Less of equity and justice
Less of corruption and corrupt practices	More of corruption and corrupt practices
Less of political violence	More of political violence
Masses oriented/centered	Self oriented/centered
Rule of law and constitutionalism	Breach of law and constitutionalism
People play important role in decision making	Cabal play important role in decision making
Democratic arrangement smoothly run	Breach in democratic arrangement
Collaboration between government and the governed	Collaboration between cabals

It is in the position of this paper that the problem of Nigerian democracy is not in the structure/system but in the mechanism controlled by human factors of the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government. It is in the opinion of this paper that if Nigerian president is put in charge of American polity, America may have propensity to bad governance and questionable democratic practice. There is an urgent need to change our social and political values in Nigeria for worthwhile political socialization and praiseworthy democratic governance. Going by the aforementioned nature and practice of democratic governance in Nigeria, it is in the opinion of this paper that there cannot be Afro-centric democratic governance in Africa. The reason is that any model of democracy, proposed and initiated, lacks sustainability and continuity. An instance can be drawn from Julius Nyerere's *Njaama*. This was a policy instituted by Nyerere when he was the president of Tanzania. In this end, people's need take the central position in administration. It can thus be said that *Njaama* is a sort of democratic communalism. This policy has a shorter life span because of lack of continuity and sustainability in African democratic governance.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined the meaning, evolution and forms of democracy. Attempts are also made to do a comparative study of America and Nigerian democracy and democratic governance from the view points of leadership qualities and electioneering process. It is in the observation of this paper that American democracy is more of altruism, equity and justice while Nigerian democracy is more of egocentrism and loss of equity and justice. For sustainable democratic governance in Nigeria, there is a need for value re-orientation in terms of democratic leadership and followership. The complexity of Nigerian historical and social experiences influences the nature and practice of democratic governance in the country. This paper concluded on the note that there can be no Afrocentric model of democracy because of colonial factors are foreign diplomatic relationship characterized by debt relief, aids, grants and military assistance.

Our electioneering campaigns need to apply civility where morals and sincerity are used to address the electorate and that candidates who are unsuccessful in an election should learn to be patient and wait for their time of victory, elections should not be a do or die as it's been portrayed by both new PDP and old one.

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