

THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA, 1999 – 2004

Eze, M. C.

Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

ABSTRACT

This article overviews the relationship that exists between the contemporary orthodoxy- the millennium development agenda and democracy, using Nigeria as a case evaluation. According to the orthodoxy, development in the 'South' depends on the reappraisal of the respective roles of the state and market, institutional and economic reforms, and good governance, which finds expression in democracy. This article argues that the principles of these reforms tend towards dictatorship, orchestrate increased poverty and deepen- underdevelopment. Thus, the orthodoxy is an instrument of 'Northern' exploitation and subordination of the South, and does not re-inforce democracy. A mass oriented model of development that re-inforces democracy is therefore recommended.

INTRODUCTION

The battle for hegemonic order in International Economic Relations and the emancipation of national economies from the pangs of dependency and underdevelopment, have pitched both the academics and political administrators of the 'North' and 'South' against each other for decades (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979, Robertson, 1984 and Leys, 1995). The North has pursued the justification of the status quo and innovative ideas, rules and practices meant to perpetuate their exploitation and subordination of the 'South', while the 'South' remains enmeshed in blames, struggles and crises. The cynosure is development- a concept that applies differently to both sides. However, whether as economic growth (Northern view) or as improvement in human welfare / skills (Southern view), the synthetic overture of the 'South' has led to changes in the Northern- originated models of development over the years.

As noted by World Bank Report (1997:29), the first model of development, which laid the foundation of International Economic Relations (IER), saw access to natural resources as the key to development. Thus, explorations, search for cheap raw materials and market, and colonialism

(Lenin, 1974) was the nature of IER then. Its consequent favourable result led to a change in the model of development, wherein acquisition of physical capital such as machines and equipments was then held as a prerequisite for development. This was to enhance their production power due to enlarged raw materials and markets. Then industrial revolution and abolition of slave trade followed. The abolition was neither morally nor did humanitarily motivate. Rather the industrialization and mechanization of production rendered the slaves unprofitable since they became liabilities, hence their settlement in some parts of Africa like Sierra Leone and Liberia. The industrial revolution pitched the manufactured goods ('Northern products') against raw materials ('Southern' products), with the associated inequitable terms of exchange and trade. Therefore, acquisition of capital for foreign exchange and 'sound policies' were identified as the key to the development of the 'south'. Thus, the World Bank and IMF advocated SAP with its liberalization, privatization and external credit schemes, as the only policy option for development in the 1980's. This development option institutionalized the neo-colonial structures of exploitation and subordination in the 'South', as their economies were integrated into the global capitalist economy in a subservient manner. The geometrical increase in the level of unemployment, hunger, inflation, debts, etc associated with SAP, led to the emergence of various civil liberty agitations in the 1980's. Such agitations paralyzed state activities. The inability of the state to contain this and the concomitant policies it elicited, led the state into what the Bretton-woods institution called the 'doom day' (World Bank, 1997:19). Rescuing the State (the instrument of Northern exploitation in the South) from this incapacitation lies behind the foundation and emergence of the Millennium Development Agenda-an agenda that is people centered and internationally focused. In it, the World Bank (1991) redirected development focus to the state and its capability to implement reforms and laws. Specifically, the nature, powers, and dynamics of civil liberties responsible for non-implementation of liberalization /privatization policies, the force of powerful individuals who continue to direct the focus of government to their favour, the bureaucracy and stemming the activities of NGOs that challenge state policies, were its major concern. Increasing state capacity through institutional reforms, democracy and good governance was identified as the key to development in the 'South'. These reforms internationalized the statist economy while democracy restored people's sovereignty. Can both re-enforce each other to produce good governance? Is the Millennium Development Agenda meant to promote Democracy in the 'South'? We shall explore these using Nigerian experience.

party democracy is the best political arrangement for an enhanced development.

Earlier, Ake (1996) had disagreed with the protagonists of Liberal democracy. He argued that pressures from the petty and international bourgeoisie, political elites and the social sciences eradicate democratic values from the liberal variant. Liberal democracy according to him transforms popular sovereignty to rule of law, focuses on political and individual rights and pursues devolution of power instead of decentralization. Thus, Ake proposed social democracy as the best form of political system that guarantees development. The principles of social democracy according to Ake, include powerful legislature as against the liberal's powerful executive, decentralization of power, second legislative chamber wherein all ethnic nationalities and mass organizations are equally represented, development of institutions for interest articulation and harmonization at all levels, and popular sovereignty. Fundamentally, Ake's proposition is prescriptive, has immeasurable models, fails to clarify the modalities for choosing the various representatives, and does not explain the relationship between the two legislative bodies. Besides, the proposition is empirically unverifiable.

It is evident from the literature reviewed that democracy holds the key to development. However, the reality of underdeveloped democratic states opens the unresolved debate and researchable field on what kind of democracy that enhances national development. Of the three schools explored i.e. the liberal, social and dominant party democracy theories, only the last survived into the millennium and has informed the principles and philosophy of the Millennium Development Agenda. The potency of this theory has not been tested particularly in Africa. It is therefore the primary focus of this work to critically evaluate this theory using Nigeria as case study.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Democracy: This is a class phenomenon that has been variously misinterpreted and misapplied by scholars and practitioners in the field of Social Sciences. Schumpeter (1943) discountenancing universal suffrage, conceived democracy as a political framework wherein the elite compete among themselves for people's vote. Central to this is the limitation of people's participation in the political process to voting alone. For Dahl (1956a), it is the rule by multiple minorities who are controlled by the masses only through electoral votes.

These scholars and others of the same orientation such as Berelson, Satori, and Eckstein, associated democracy with electocracy, plutocracy and elite's competition for people's vote, limited participation of the people in the political process to vote casting alone, and the stability of the political system

- b). Four areas of state-market relationship were identified as: (i) Investment in people such as the provision of adequate education, health care, nutrition and access to family planning. (ii) Enabling climate for favourable business such as competition, adequate infrastructure, and institutions. (iii) Integration of national economies into the global capitalist economy through liberalization and openness. (iv) Establishment of stable macroeconomic foundation.
- (c) A combination of pervasive distortion (i.e. high tariffs, currency over-valuation, industrial licensing, corruption, and wasteful public expenditure) and predatory state led to development disaster.
- (d) Development in the 'South' depends on domestic policies and institutions (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1991: iii).

Consequently, the Bank prescribed the following options / agenda for development:

- a). The state should only complement the market. Therefore, it has to privatize state owned enterprises, allow domestic and international communities free hand to flourish, invest in people, provide stable economic foundation, intervene to protect the environment, introduce appropriate policies of deregulation, provide for clearer property rights and resource ownership etc, and open the economy for international trade and investment (The World Bank, 1991:9-10).
- b) Reform institutions and the Economy. The Judiciary and the legal system should be reformed to safeguard property rights, and the public sector such as civil service and public expenditure should be reformed also. This will lead to the strengthening of these institutions, an increase in the quality of government and the capacity of the state to implement development policies, transparency and accountability.
- c) Enthronement of democracy and good governance. In all, the goal of the development agenda is to facilitate collective action and set the rules that underpins market and permits them to function (World Bank, 1997: 34).

The position of this paper is that the global development agenda emerged as a result of the following four factors:

- a) The collapse of the communist bloc between 1989 and 1991 (Leftwich, 2000:9). It became a central piece of official Western thinking to reduce communist influence, disorganize and eliminate socialist structures, and establish capitalist values and principles in the 'East' and 'South'.
- b) The experiences of SAP, which was introduced in the 1980s, to demolish the dominant state planned and led economies (Cammack, Pool and Tordoff, 1993:11-13). Its policies of liberalization,

military regime in power, there is manifested absence of democratic values in the system as could be found in the East Asian experience.

Wallis (1999:39-53) noted that elected governments (i.e. democracies) tend to favour policies that provide benefit to voters and ignore those that yield benefits accruing beyond their tenure. This has electoral significance. The consequences of indifference to democratic values by the various military administration and the effects of SAP, led to a fourteen years span of civil liberty actions that ushered in a democratic government in 1999. The regime was confronted with a wide spread revolution of rising expectations of the products of democracy, and with the need to adjust to the imperatives of survival in a globalized, Western dominated and exploitative economic order. Under the guise of Vision 2010 and National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), the Obasanjo administration pursued with temerity the principles of SAP that were recoiled if the millennium development Agenda. This was done without the consent of the people.

The negative impacts of the new orthodoxy as manifested in its reform policies, deregulation, privatization etc created a legitimacy gap that called for civil actions. Trade-offs, contract awards, plum jobs, and distribution of various favours, influences and political positions to various members of the civil society were employed unsuccessfully to neutralize agitations and criticisms. I admit the powerful influence of ethnicism on this; however, the undaunted position of some civil society crusaders led to government repression and infringements on human rights. Freedom of speech and association were attacked. Police permission was needed before any rally could be organized; though a Federal High Court in Abuja recently annulled this practice. Private mass media that were critical of the government had their operating licenses withdrawn. Like the era of military dictatorship when Dele Giwa, Moshood Abiola etc were assassinated, many politically motivated assassinations, incarcerations and abductions followed. Prominent among these assassinations included Harry Marshall, A. k. Dikibo, etc.

The deregulation of the petroleum industry and privatization of other sectors of the economy such as NITEL, NEPA, etc. pitched the government against the civil society and workers. Under the umbrella of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), the masses staged various demonstrations/strikes. Their effects were loss of lives, loss of huge revenue and damage of unquantifiable assets. Yet government remained intransigent. Odey (2003:37) described Obasanjo's democracy as "a veneer of disguised dictatorship".

Paradoxically, the people's perceived voting power that enables them to change the status quo was equally raped during the 2003 General Election. With the facilitation of the armed Forces and Secret agents, election results were prepared prior to election, while the Nigerian Army, the

Nigerian experience from 1999-2004, when a seemingly democratic regime that pursued the model existed, proved this point. Therefore, a mass oriented and originated development model is recommended for a genuine democracy.

REFERENCES

Ake, C. (1991) "Rethinking African Democracy" *Journal of Democracy* vol. 2 No. 1

Ake, C. (1996) *Democracy and Development in Africa* Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd.

Barro, R. J. (1997). *Determinant of Economic Growth: A Cross-Country Empirical Study*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Baumol, W. J. et al (1982). *Contestable Market and the Theory of Industry Structure* NY: HBJ

Braya, J. (1993) "The New Political Conditional Ties: an Independent View from Africa" *IDS Bulletin*. Vol. 24, No 1.

Cammack P., Pool D. and Tordoff W. (1993). *Third World Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Cardoso F. H. and Falleto, E. (1979). *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Berkeley, C A, University of California Press.

Dahl R. (1956a). *Hierarchy, Democracy and Bargaining in Politics and Economics*.

Dopethofer, M. et al (2000). *Determinant of Long-Term Growth: A Bayesian Avareraging of Classical Estimate Approach*, NBER

Ekpo A. H. (2004). The Nigerian Economy under a new democratic Experience: The Charles Soludo Effect. Lecture delivered at the 44th Founder's Day Celebration of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, October.

Eze, M. C. (2005). The Theory of Developmental State: The Case of Nigeria, 1985-2005 A PhD seminar paper on course, Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Friedman, M. (1980). *Free to Choose*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Lake, D. A. and Baum, M. A. (2001). "Political Democracy and Economic Development: Polled Cross-Sectional and Time-Series Evidence". *British Journal of Political Science*

Leftwich A. (2000) *States of Development*. USA: Blackwell publishers Ltd.

Lenin V. I. (1974). "Imperialism; the Highest Stage of Capitalism" *Collected Works*. Vol. 22.

Leys S. J. (1995). *The Rise and fall of Development Theory*. Oxford: James Curry.

Molutsi, P. and Holm, J. D. (1990). "Developing Democracy when the Civil Society is weak: the case of Botswana" *African Affairs* 89 (356).

Nelson J. N (Ed) (1990) *Economic Crisis and Policy Choices: The Politics of Adjustment in the Third World*. Princeton, NJ University Press.