

P.R.I.D.E, Family Institution and Development of Democratic Values in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria's struggle for sustainable democracy and development has, like in most other African states, been characterised by ups and downs. While no single factor can give a holistic explanation of this development, the total neglect of the roles of traditional institutions particularly the family, offers a window through which the problem can be partly understood. To be sure, there is a pervasive failure to appreciate Africa's indigenous way of life particularly the value it places on human dignity, accountability and control, which is to a reasonable extent more democratic than the imposed alien western-liberal democracy. The attempt to reclaim the past may have informed the emphasis placed on PRIDE (P-Patriotism, RResourcefulness, I-Integrity, D-Distinction, E-Enterprise) by the fledgling democracy in Nigeria. The central argument of the paper is that PRIDE can strengthen family institutions in contributing to the development of social capital, which is reportedly imbued with the capabilities to develop inbuilt mechanisms for engineering the process of sustainable development especially at the grassroots level. Despite inherent limits of both the social capital theory and family institutions in Nigeria occasioned largely by the fallouts of the structural adjustment programme, there is still some sense in trying to revive African social structures particularly family institutions to reposition democratic development. Reformative efforts should therefore be targeted at the base of the problematic by trying to

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rejuvenate family institutions in the effective discharge of their responsibilities towards the society at large. This calls for a sustainable process of socio-political reengineering and mobilisation by all democratic stakeholders– the state, political parties, civil society, mass media, etc.

Key words: Democracy, family, development, social contract, PRIDE

Introduction

Since the end of the cold war, the world has witnessed significant political and economic developments with far-reaching consequences for global order. For instance, the democratisation processes and outcomes in some countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa have benefited from the triumph of globalisation. Also, the new neoliberal global order under the influence of the United States has created a favourable environment for the spread of Western liberal democracy to other parts of the world. So, the transition to the present democratic government in Nigeria in 1999 was not unconnected to the train of events that globalisation and development had forced on all countries and continents of the world. Huntington (1991) says Africans, especially Nigerians, would prefer the various inadequacies of the combination of the tripod of democracy, globalisation and development to any form of benevolent dictatorship.

While no one doubts the essence and necessity of instituting a democratic system, the moral decadence that it has instituted in hitherto compact and disciplined societies had been unparalleled in the annals of African history. As a result of democracy, corruption has been endemic, moral values has been thrown to the wind, mutual accommodation and relationship has turned sour for competition and accumulation of material wealth because avarice has taken over cooperation and collaboration. Despite good governance, rule of law, party system etc. that democracy engineered as features, issues of values and moral ethos had been neglected in its form and practice. Competition for power and its exercise had been intense and cruel, people had been murdered for having contrary opinion or as opponent, the issue of P.R.I.D.E (P-Patriotism, R-Resourceful, I-Integrity, D-Distinction, E-Enterprise) had not meant much to stakeholders.

As a response to the aforementioned, the current democratic governance at various point in time under different leadership has articulated a number of reforms that supposedly cut across all spheres of the country's sociopolitical and economic lives. While reform is expedient, the strategies variously adopted must reflect the peculiar realities and nature of the country and her people. This is because considerations were not given to the history, nature and peculiarity of the diverse (ethno-religious) people involved, especially in terms of attitudes and behaviours which family institution initiated for both leaders and the led. It is interesting to note that Nigeria, like most emergent countries of Africa have neglected the roles of the traditional family institutions where values, beliefs and norms associated with the societies and nations are learnt, and absorbed in their efforts at successful socio-economic transformation. To the extent that socialisation of great ideas and orientations had been deficient and shallow. It is disturbing that all efforts that had been geared towards democratic sustenance and consolidation had been fruitless because the nations have not appreciated their own indigenous way of life that is more democratic than the imposed alien Western-liberal democracy. Hitherto, the family, not the state or the school, or any other agent of socialisation was primarily responsible for teaching lessons of independence and proper conducts, which are essential building blocks to a free, democratic society.

This is therefore the yearning gap that this piece will endeavour to fill, with a view to establishing the relevance of family institution to democratic governance. To achieve this, while relying on relevant literature, the paper will be divided into five sections. In addition to this introduction, the paper proceeds to explore the concepts of democratic values in Nigeria, as well as Family Institutions and Democratic Values for Development. It later discusses P.R.I.D.E. and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria before the Conclusion.

Democratic Values in Nigeria: Reviewing the Literature

It was Kunle Amuwo that declared in his essay on "State Repair and Democratic Development in Africa" like other good thinkers of African Politics that the historicity of the post-colonial African state has to be the starting point of any meaningful examination and hopefully understanding of its many manifestations and behaviour" (2004:315). As I put it elsewhere,

while assessing the prospect of liberal democracy at consolidation (Azeez, 2006), the deviation from African traditional institutions including the family has been seen as the point through which all social vices associated with Nigeria's challenges to development and democratic consolidation can be traced. According to John Whitehead (1999), "the family structure had been revered, and long before foreign invaders toppled any of those great societies, they collapsed from within, due largely to the deterioration of their family structures." Badeh and Jaja (2013) says "the cultivation and promotion of family ethics and values such as love, care, loyalty, generosity, obedience, sincerity and so on in individual families would gradually transcend and transform the whole nation."

Before the emergence of the democratic third wave, democratisation seemed a fragile and uncertain process, characterised by numerous authoritarian setbacks in Nigeria and in the African countries generally. This changed in the early 1990s when a wave of democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Africa and Asia stimulated greater optimism. It was therefore not to be debated whether or not the country will join the train. Of course, Nigeria joined and by 1999 she installed a democratically elected government headed by Rtd. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and the first in the stream of elected presidents of the fourth republic.

However, since the West had served as the laboratory for the development of democracy, it posed a critical problem for Nigeria where different forms of social relations and types of governance existed. Because of its specificity, there were calls for the indigenisation and liberalisation of the liberal democracy. It should be noted that once a regime transit to democracy from an authoritarian regime, a consolidation phase emerges (Osaghae 1995). The success of the phase depends on how skillful the politicians are to give life to the new institutions. It also depends on how compromised they are to gradually end with the authoritarian past, therefore indigenising the process and procedure. That is why the consolidation is a difficult task that takes time.

In the literature, a democracy may be regarded as consolidated, if its presence and ascension to power is accepted by the population (indigenisation and sustainable legitimacy) and if political actors assume

institutions created in the first stage to last indefinitely (Bogdamor 1991; Tansey 1995). Unfortunately, the 16 years of PDP democratic regime in Nigeria presented a political institution that was shallow and immature, unable to structure meaningful policy courses and provide the responsiveness, accountability and transparency expected by the Nigerian public for sustainable legitimacy. To Gilley (2006:48), “a state is more legitimate the more it is treated by its citizens as rightfully holding and exercising political power.” This definition takes all citizens in a state as being the relevant subjects of legitimacy. It takes the state (defined as processes and institutions, as well as norms and ideologies) and how it holds and exercises political power as the relevant object.

Admittedly, democracy is never a finished project, a fact that has contributed to the polemics that surround its practice, if not its definition. There is little doubt that vibrant and robust democratic communities where values are attached to and given credence will have to take a closer look at ways in which the society can be strengthened. Hence, some sort of institutional reorganisation is needed either (or both) on the input side to allow for better articulations of political demands within the country; or on the output side to provide better delivery of political decisions by the government (Pereira and Teles, 2010). According to Amuwo (2004:136), “the dominant thinking that emerged was that (formal) institutions matter for successful development and in the light of Africa’s persistent underdevelopment, the problem arising was the abuse of appropriate (formal) institutions or their systematic pervasion by the forces of neopatrimonialism.” This brought out the notion also that both political elite and the people must somehow become more committed to democracy as a superior form of government because a country’s chance of democratising successfully, according to Wolf Linder and Andre Bachtiger (2005), depends primarily on the political intentions and the actions of its political elites (cf Carothers 2002). But Amuwo was quick to react when he realised that the state in Africa, talk less of its political elites, has been neither developmental nor transformative. He says, “there is more of government and less of governance, and the shrinking of the formal sector and state structures is more vivid and perceptible in the realm of social and economic provisioning and less in the sphere of both putative and actual coercive apparatuses of the state” (Amuwo, 2004:315).

Family Institutions and Democratic Values for Development

There is no doubt about the fact that family institutions vis-à-vis democratic values have an immense effect on development. The family institution remains one of the veritable tools that engender some of the basic features of democratic values, prominent among which are good governance, accountability, and responsiveness which invariably also lead a given polity to the required development. According to Laura Janara (2001) “in many developing societies, family and kinship systems continue to play a very important role.” He contends that: “family and kinship systems form the basis of networks and corporate groups by regulating social interaction, reproduction and flow of wealth. The more extensive a family or kinship system, the more a society can be considered “familistic” (i.e., all basic needs are provided and regulated by the family).” In fact, Badey & Jaja (2013) was of the opinion that “the family is the fundamental unit of society. It is the foundation upon which the state is built. It is also the fundamental institution in African cultural heritage and philosophy.”

Brown (2006) presented several reasons for affirming the pertinence of family to democracy:

- i. It is a social institution that ensures the propagation of the species and the continuation of democracy;
- ii. It teaches children about the proper limits of human conducts; and
- iii. It is the most effective teacher of virtues, precisely because it is not a democratic institution.

He concludes by stating that we cannot “underestimate the critical support which the family provides to our democracy. Each time the law severs another tie in the private realm of the family, it cuts a tie that holds public institutions together and undermines democracy. In similar vein, Whitehead (1999) sees the family as the basic unit of the society, the centre of the personal affections that ennoble and enrich human life. It channels biological drives that might otherwise become socially destructive; it ensures the care and education of children in a stable environment; it establishes continuity initiative that distinguishes a free people.

While focusing on the link between familism and democratisation, Sennett (1970) also coined the terms “traditional sociability” – that is, the concentration

of solidarity, loyalty and identity in family or kinship groups– and “free sociability”– the capacity to build trans-familistic and civic networks. Sennett’s argument portends the fact that from family affiliation and solidarity, a democratic civic culture is invariably built for the development of the political system. Following this, Laura Janara (2001) was quick to infer that democratic stability is dependent on a specific form of social organisation and citizen values, which the family institution offers. Her argument is that denser networks and norms of reciprocity in a society make it “more likely that its citizens will be able to cooperate for mutual benefit.”

It is observed therefore that the personal love of individuals for families is transferred to the society, because the family is considered as the institution that confer certain behaviour over its members and such behaviours are used to shape democratic tenets of the political system. This is further justified when we consider the family as an agent of political socialisation. The way a child is brought up will determine his attitudes in relation to the polity. A child that has a constructive political socialisation will be characterised with positive democratic values that tend to have a relative or direct effect on the overall development. Also a child that is brought up in a destructive family will constitute a threat to positive democratic values and a setback for societal harmony and development. Therefore, in familism is the appropriate answer to the problems created by the modern world with undue emphasis on socio-economic self-interest. Because of its altruistic outlook, familism has continued to thrive in Africa. It is unimaginable to consider familism irrelevant to the 21st century world of greed complexity, acquisitiveness, cutthroat competition and struggles for survival. To do so is to live in illusion, oblivious of the needs of our present world (Badeh and Jaja, 2013).

Democratic values are therefore primarily cultivated in the family institution. It is recognised that the impact of socio-economic changes in our societies has much affected and altered the family in its function and as an institution. Despite the often delicate and difficult situation in modern society and the rapidity of change, families continue to provide the basic and practical life experience of responsibility and of values such as loving, caring, sharing and families are ongoing factor of social cohesion. It is also imperative to point out categorically that stable families are main agents of sustainable social development because of their fundamental role as

intermediate body between individuals and society. According to Gilley (2006) “social progress implies the constant and dynamic interaction between family structure and functions and the larger social, economic, cultural and physical environment”. The family remained the first environment to teach the values of democracy, human right, social responsibility, tolerance and peace, enabling their individual members to contribute to the fight against poverty as advocates for social justice.

P.R.I.D.E. and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

It is a truism if we assert that democratic practice in Nigeria until recently, and the effort exhibited towards stability and consolidation negated all known theories in the field of political science (Linz & Stepan, 1996; and Schedler, 1998 etc.), to the extent that, reversal to authoritarian rule and repression was becoming thought in the mind of political observers and public analysts. It is therefore normal to set the stage for the new party in power (All Peoples Congress, APC) for an inclusive condition for consolidation and institution of democratic governance especially from inherently family institution. That is why this section reviews P.R.I.D.E. as attributes of family lives that engendered good democratic governance and its attendant democratic consolidation.

Patriotism

The patriotic zeal that an individual home enjoys from its members could have been extended to the state and its political system if the inherited state, after the demise of military rule, had dismantled every element of autocracy, and reconstruct the polity to provide a new dispensation that was based on African values, traditions, interests and aspirations. The new post-military laws and institutions, which were to be designed through participative, inclusive and bottom-up process (that is, with the full and effective participation of the relevant stakeholder groups), would significantly enhance the ability of Nigerians to (i) institute an indigenous political system that is legitimate and responsive (ii) create the wealth that they needed to deal with endemic poverty and deprivation, and with strong emphasis against corruption and mismanagement. The fact that the fourth republic witnessed unprecedented rate of corruption and mismanagement despite public outcry against them- and the establishment of institutions like Economic and

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), among others, expose the inability of the government to get people to be patriotic to the progress and development of the political system. Because they were not part of the restructuring, they do not believe in it, and they became sceptical of its success. So, everybody strive to get his own share of the supposed booty.

Resourceful

Sequel to the problem of patriotism exemplified by Nigerians is the problem of resourcefulness. It would amount to an overstatement of fact that people are not painstaking and productive in the effective management of their political life. While reinstating similar condition in Ghana, as it happened in almost all African countries, Whitehead (1999) argued that politics has become a war in which each group struggles to capture the state and use it to its advantage, and hence, there usually is no room for compromise or cooperation for the sake of, say, maximising national objectives. Rather than agree on exact rules of the game as well as observe them, Whitehead contends that the language of politics has always been decidedly bellicose and the reality of politics one in which the victors have rarely been kind to the vanquished. According to him, "...each side tends to claim a monopoly of political virtue. Not far below the surface of constitutional argument and counter-argument lies an intensity of enmity far greater than is customary between parties in stable multiparty democratic system" (Whitehead, 1999).

It is therefore the politics of *winner-takes-all* that exclude participation of the larger majority in the opposition camp or that are not partisan from the development of the polity of the management of the country's resources. It should be noted that democratic governance involves fulfilling the basic needs of the citizens by providing the things, conditions and activities which the individual inherently needs, those which insure his physiological equilibrium; those through which he may discover his role in life and learn to play it in such an effective manner as to develop a sense of worthy selfhood; those which are essential to the establishment of meaningful relationships with other person, not when the resources of the state is manipulated for the benefit of the privileged few.

Integrity

Leaders in post-military Nigeria made no effort to engage the people, as we have shown, in genuine state reconstruction through democratic constitution making to provide them with the types of institutional arrangements that would have effectively constrained the abuse of government agencies and enhanced sustainable development. Instead they undertook opportunistic institutional reforms that increased and strengthened their ability to monopolise political spaces and the allocation of resources. The citizens and even the leaders alike ended up with no self-respect or self-pride mainly because they lacked in the course of governance an African spiritual foundation, coupled with increasing inferiority complex with respect to the past culture and family heritage. With Western way of life that had been grafted into people's sick body, it has weakened the traditional and cultural system of checks and balances which "naming and shaming" of the family and the eventual expulsion or ostracising from the family portend in periods of arbitrary behaviour and misdeeds by anyone.

There is enough evidence to substantiate the fact that norms of traditional African societies, epitomised greatly in the family frowned at corrupt practices. Cheating was severely punished. Undue influence could not succeed in helping any member of the society get anything for which he had no personal merit. Critical morality was the foundation upon which traditional political system and families were founded. People avoided corruption or any misdemeanour, not so much because of the criminal penalties as the societal condemnation, which it evoked. In the traditional family system, it is everybody's job to ensure that nobody is allowed to conduct his/her business in such a way as to lead the weak into temptation or permit the cunning to get rich at the expense of the citizenry or the nation.

Distinction

Most Nigerians may disagree especially those who do not sit down to reflect on why the country is at its precarious political circumstances today. It is time to know that the Asians are not only far ahead of Africans, but they are seriously challenging the superpower status of the United States of America, not to talk of Russia and other Europeans. In fact, the Western countries are now on a commercial crusade in China and India just like it

happened to Japan over 50 years ago. What has made them so successful? The answer lies in the fact that they stuck to their cultures especially their philosophical and spiritual values and norms, foundation of which is the family. The Chinese had and still have well-educated and carefully selected mandarins founded on Confucian ideals of meritocratic government. They adapted Marxism and call it Maoism. The Indians also adapted Socialism by Nehru and Gandhi with its foundation on Hindu spirituality.

For the purpose of this paper however, we agree to the fact that countries can be “differently democratic.” Italy, as a uniquely styled democracy is eloquently described by Joseph La Palombara as “democracy Italian style” (Azeez, 2006). In Botswana, we find a dominant party state democracy, yet with a good human right record, little corruption and high economic growth. In Japan, traditional styles have been intermarried with democracy, and the country has a fairly good human rights record and a vibrant and growing economy (Pereira and Teles, 2010). While China and India managed to keep their traditions of public responsibility by retaining their philosophical and cultural foundations, it is interesting to note that they were also quick not only in grafting Western knowledge along with their ancient wisdom, but they were also fast in commercialising this combined knowledge in order to gain comparative advantage. Therefore, it is time distinction was made between the practices of graft-induced Westernliberal democracy and a home-grown political order.

Enterprise

The constitution (laws and institutions) adopted during the nascent democracy in Nigeria failed like its predecessors to adequately constrain the state, allowing the leaders to abuse their public positions and engage in many forms of opportunism (rent-seeking and corruption) to enrich themselves at the expense of the rest of the people. In fact, as argued, many of the large-scale enterprises that were supposed to form the foundation for rapid economic and industrial growth were easily converted into instruments for the private capital accumulation activities of the ruling elites (Mbaku, 2004: 194). From independence through several years of military interregnum and the nascent democratic experiment, little or no efforts had been made to effect the necessary people-oriented change on the constitution. Even,

despite series of cosmetic attempts at constitutional reviews by consecutive democratic regimes since 1999.

Whereas, enterprising in the typical African setting is “a process of ‘communitisation’ or municipalisation’ of the economy, public properties, goods and services that necessarily have to pass through a reassertion of the people as the subject of development and, therefore, their reinsertion into the development matrix as citizens, not as subject” (Amuwo, 2004: 316).

It is expected that the democratic state should initiate democratic means of restructuring the state (through participatory, inclusive, bottom-up, and people-driven) constitutional making to provide the society with more effective governance and economic structures (See also Mbaku, 1999).

Conclusion

Though inexhaustible, but limited to the scope of the paper, it had been realised that democratic governance and attempts at consolidation it has been a tall dream in Nigeria. With an elongated democratic government since 1999, and still counting, the attempt of the current agents of change will be worthwhile if closer look is given to the relevance and contributions of the family institution to the enthronement of an indigenous workable democratic system. Charity, they say begins at home, hence, every manifested behaviour, positive or otherwise in public service could be traced to big neglect of the institution that moulds adult behaviour from the cradle.

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