

DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND NATION BUILDING: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

This research reinforced the multi-disciplinary approach to the study of democracy, good governance and nation building through the application of systems and integration theories and structural functional approach. Indeed, this is a variant of sociological and political knowledge that would revolutionize democracy, good governance and nation building in Nigeria and Africa. The inter-relatedness of human and material resources as well as their interactions is reflected in systems and integration theories as well as the structural functional approach to the practice of democracy, good governance and nation building. The crisis of development and democracy is resolved by the application of systems, integration and structural functional theory to good governance and nation building by Anatol Rapoport, Talcott Parson, David Easton, Gabriel Almond, Ernest Haas and Amitai Etziona.

Keywords: *Democracy, good governance, nation building, multi-dimensional approach*

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a descriptive term that is synonymous with majority rule (Iain and Alistair, 2003). Naturally, man is rarely unanimous, more so, in Nigeria and indeed Africa where ethnicity thrives and is being used as political weapon. The political leadership is therefore confronted with the challenges of establishing a consensus form of government, thus seeking refuge in democracy. Ake (1996) posits that African elites are not so much in support of democracy as using it to acquire political power. But merely preferred to be called democrats than suffer the inconveniences of practising it. While international development agencies and western governments support it as both an asset to structural adjustment as well as a means to further promote their ways of life with scant regards to Africa's problems to which Nigeria is a sub-set.

Ake maintains that what is being foisted on Africa is a version of liberal democracy, reduced to the crude simplicity of "multi-party elections" which is not really conducive to political stability, rule of law and democracy. Politics is but a lawful competition to select not only those to manage our common concern but also, it is typically and importantly about the masses. But democratisation in Nigeria and Africa at large has tended to focus on the power elite, the natural enemies of democracy; because they seek accommodation with democracy when it pleases them and work to impede same whenever it becomes exigent to do so.

Nigerians, indeed, Africans, should demand for "unpopular empowerment" and "electoral democracy" from indigenous leaders even though their exploitative bent and meddlesome incompetence have become life threatening. The reason for towing Ake's line of argument is not far fetched, "unpopular empowerment" addresses the socio-economic and political problems and offer concrete rights.

Unpopular empowerment is being driven by the interests

of the ordinary people because it empowers them, makes government more accountable and less corruptible as well as brings public policy more in alignment with social needs. Summarily, popular empowerment would ensure that government at whatever levels are responsive to the legitimate expectations of the citizenry through continuous and purposeful investment in their health, education and productivity so as to make them more competitive in every sphere.

If there is rule of law, equality of opportunity and equitable sharing of burdens and reward of democracy; ethnic groups will not be desperate about avoiding domination, and the premium on power will not be so high. Indeed, the most decisive issue today in Nigerian and African politics is the prospect of democracy. Its desirability and necessity stemmed from the fact that most challenges being faced in most African nations could be surmounted if practised within the context that its principles will be applied to solve the peculiar socio-economic and political problems confronting each nation state in Africa. The success of any democratic experience is built on socio-economic and political ideas that are developmental in nature; a catalyst upon which the good will of political leaders must act in order to create a secure and safe environment.

The bitter experience of unending transition programme was the climax of political instability, orchestrated by the military in Nigeria from 1983-1999. This event shaped our collective destiny in Nigeria, but no lesson was learnt. Much of the recent past political experience is worst than what plunged us into the Nigerian civil war. Our democratic ideals, norms and values have been subsumed by the cupid avarice of politicians. The bills passed into laws and the policies made do not necessarily have bearing on the genuine yearnings and aspirations of the Nigerian masses. This is why protest, ethnic militias, boycotts, industrial actions, political

assassinations and mudslinging are unprecedented in our present political experience across the political kaleidoscope.

It is the position of this paper that good governance remains the conduit pipe through which democracy convene the principles of justice, freedom, fair play, equal representation and empowerment of the masses. The task of achieving this feat simultaneously with the responsibility of integrating the basic constituents of the nation states is referred to as nation building.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance is the making and implementation of policies that would impact positively on the citizens of the country. This is what Ake (1993) meant by "bringing public policy in alignment with social needs". The term good governance was first used by donor agencies in the 1980s by the international monetary fund (IMF) and the World Bank. It is a "stick and carrot instrument" being used by the IMF for keeping in line errant developing countries that must match their request for aid with good behaviour. This implies that countries with satisfactory record of good governance could count on the international monetary fund and the World Bank for aid. On the contrary, those countries that have performed poorly in good governance, must improve to qualify for adequate support (Bamgbose, 2005).

As illustrated by the influential 1969 report "Partners Development", under the Chairman of Lester Pearson, a moral argument has been advanced to answer the question "Why Aid?"

The simplest answer to the question is the moral one; that is only right for those who have to share with those who do not. Moral obligation however, is normally felt with particular force inside national groups to which people belong and with which they identify. Concern with the needs of others and poorer nations is the expression of a new fundamental aspect of modern age, the awareness that we live in a village world (globalisation).It is this,

which makes the desire to help, into more than a moral impulse felt by an individual: makes it into a political and social imperative for governments, which now accepts at least a degree of accountability in their relations with each other.

It is a recognition that concern with improvement of the human condition, is no longer divisible. If the rich countries try to make it so, if they concentrate on the elimination of poverty and backwardness at home and ignore them abroad, what would happen to the principles by which they seem to live? Could the moral and social foundations of their own societies remain firm and steady if they washed their hands off the plight of others? (Abolade, 2001).

The crux of the above argument is that foreign aid is given in forms of grants, loans or technical assistance by industrial nations with the intention of eliminating poverty and backwardness from developing nations, however, the only candid and genuine ways to assess the impact of the aid on the citizens of recipient countries is good governance. At the first Annual African Governance Forum in Addis Ababa, on July 1997, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, identified peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development as the four pillars of good governance.

In the same vein, Salim Ahmed Salim, the former Secretary General of the former Organisation of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU), had emphasised quality leadership, sound management of the economy, a strong judicial system, an independent and responsible media as good governance. Some foreign aid donor agencies have emphasised education, participation in the political process, rule of law and transparency as good governance. However, there is a consensus and a dialogue of elements embracing all the ones mentioned above as well as additional ones such as constitutional guarantees, political position (leadership), and fight against corruption, gender issues and

empowerment as well as the civil society. Good governance brings about nation building.

NATION BUILDING

According to Ndolo, (2005) citing Eleazu (1977), "Nation building is the process of politically socialising the people into becoming good citizens of the political order and making the citizens feel they have a stake in the community worth fighting for". Erondu and Obasi (2000) have posited that nation building is a process of mobilising available resources, human, and materials and financial, for socio-economic and political developments of a given nation state. It was the desire to establish and build the Nigerian nation that led to the nationalist struggle. Nation building involves the transformation of existing structures through the collective efforts of the citizens of state (country). Indeed, good governance and nation building.

Nation building entails proposals designed to bring about long term political stability, rapid economic development and visible social justice. It is in realisation of the importance of good governance and nation building in a democratic setting in Africa, that the leadership of the African Union had to fashion a blue print of African economic development: New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Essentially, NEPAD is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty, to place African countries individually and collectively on the part of sustainable growth and development, ensure peace and security through conflict management and prevention, to promote democracy and sound political governance; agriculture with emphasis on productivity and food security; resources mobilisation through capital flows and improved market access; strengthening of political leadership and creating conditions for democracy, peace and security as well

as consolidating good governance (Masire,2003). In order to achieve this feat from the harmonious whole of the political leadership and masses in a functional democracy; the concept of systems theory and integration theory must be applied.

SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems theory is a multi-disciplinary approach to the analysis of political events. It presumes the existence of other components which make it a whole, and which are also in constant interaction and inter-dependence. The relationship between and among these parts must be inter-related and dependent. A good example of a system is the human body whose components are in constant touch and inter-dependent. The relationship between and among these parts is organic and another example is the automobile whose various but inter-related parts work in unison to make it move. Unlike the human system that is organic in relationship, that of the automobile is inorganic in relationship (mechanical/electrical).The emphasis is the harmonious functionality that characterises the system.

A system's theory is a conceptual framework and methodology for understanding the operation of a system where there are two or several actors that are essentially components of the whole. It subsumes an integrated set of concepts, hypotheses and propositions which theoretically, are widely applicable across the spectrum of human knowledge. Systems theory is therefore defined as a series of statements about the relationship among independent variables in which changes in one variable is accompanied or followed by changes in other variables or combination of variables.

In a functional democracy, the application of the system theory cannot be over emphasised. This is because it addresses the issues of interdependence, dependence and interaction of variables typified by political position(leadership);sound management of the

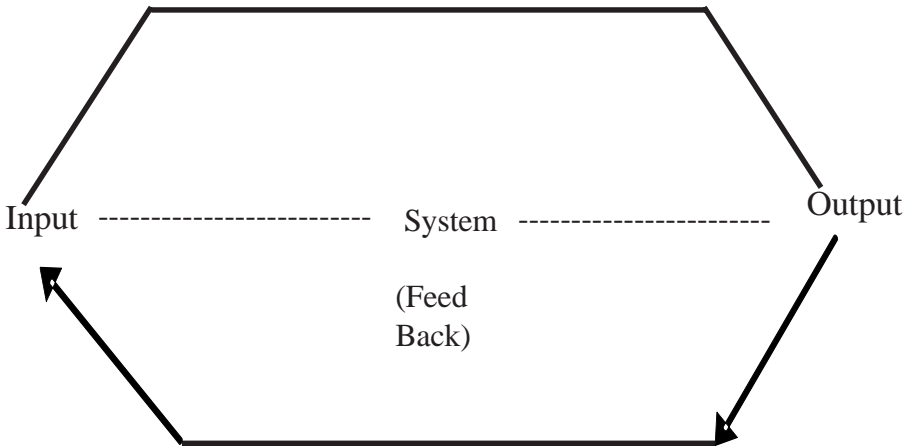
economy, strong judicial system, education, participation in the political process, rule of law, sustainable growth and development, peace and security, promotion of democracy, food productivity and security, resources mobilisation among other variables. If the leadership of a nation state in Africa ensures a perfect interaction of these variables, the task of good governance and nation building would have been made easy and the course of integrating the component parts of the polity would have been achieved.

It is the view of this research that contending issues in good governance and nation building in a functional democracy are components of the whole (the nation state) which the system theory seek to address in order to integrate every citizen of the nation state. The fact is that the interdependence and interaction of variables such as leadership, sound management of the economy, sustainable growth and development, rule of law, participation in the political process, not necessarily in that order; is likely to evolve democracy, good governance and nation building. This is so because a change in one variable is likely to be accompanied by changes in other variables.

Notable Scholars on systems theory include Anatol Rapoport who defines a system as a whole which functions as a whole by virtue of interdependence of its part. The whole, being the nation state; and the parts are ethnic nationalities, leadership and other variables. Talcott Parson, a foremost Scholar of systems theory in sociology postulates the existence of an actor (leadership) oriented towards attaining anticipated goals (good governance and nation building) by means of a normatively regulated expenditure of energy.

Many Political Scientists have adapted, developed and employed systems theory. One of them is David Easton who postulates that the systems theory is based on the idea of a political life as a boundary maintaining set of interactions embedded and

surrounded by the social system which constantly influence it. Easton contends that political action can be differentiated from other kinds of interactions by orientation toward the authoritative allocation of values for a society. These values being constitutional guarantees, leadership, gender issues, popular empowerment, resource control, strong judicial system, as well as a consensus and dialogue of other elements that defines good governance.



In this scheme, the principal INPUTS are the demands and supports: the major OUTPUT is the decisions allocating the system benefits being a dialogue of elements that explains good governance. The feedback system sends the reaction to the policies into the input for further processing, the cycle continues again, this is referred to as the Eastonian approach. Another important approach to the study of democracy, good governance and nation building is Gabriel Almond's explanation and application of the systems theory into the nation building paradigm. He formulated the structural-functional system analysis where he explained how the political system engages in political socialisation, interest articulation, aggregation and political communication. Almond is also concerned with the output side and this involves rule making,

rule application and adjudication. This corresponds to the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Another important approach to the study of democracy and good governance is Gabriel Almond's explanation and application of the structural-functional theory that fits into the nation building paradigm. According to Anifowose and Enemuoh (1999), taking Easton's analysis as a starting point, Almond looks for the functions which he included among the input and output functions of all political systems. On the input side are the functions of interest articulation and interest aggregation, which cumulatively impact on nation building if such views and ideas adequately reflect the interest of the masses. Still on input, Almond further stated the functions of rule making, rule application and rule adjudication. Relating to the above is the function of political communication which is undertaken to inform all within and outside the political system of diverse activities.

Lastly, since every system ensures its maintenance and sustainability, it becomes imperative that there should be system maintenance and adaptive functions through political socialisation and recruitment of people to ensure the workability of democracy and good governance. This is in terms of capability and performance of the political system as a unit in its environment (nation state). How it is shaping that state and how that state is being shaped by the political system. In other words, a functional democracy would necessarily ensure good governance and nation building. Critics of Almond have contended that the system cannot distinguish between the deliberate aims of participants and what takes place, and that there is complete objectivity because interpretation of analysts based on observed developments and that the approach is culture bound (modelled on western political systems). Despite these criticisms, Almond's structural functional

approach has been recognised as a major existing tool for genuine comparative analysis of political systems.

INTEGRATION THEORY

Another theory that is of strategic importance to the functionality of democracy, good governance and nation building is integration theory. Generally, integration is concerned with making a whole out of the components (different ethnic nationalities) that make up a nation state. The various ethnic nationalities have different system properties (various natural resources), whether petroleum resources or solid minerals. According to Ernest Haas, integration is a process whereby Political Actors in several distinct nationalities are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities towards a new centre. Over the Institution of such centre possesses jurisdiction over the pre-existing national state. In other words, integration is a process that links a given nation state (ethnic nationality) to others. Integration helps to catalyse the process of interaction between and among states in nation state.

In the same vein, Amitai Etzioni has argued that integration as a condition means the possession by a political community, the effective control over the use of violence. Such a community has a centre of decision making (central government) that allocate resources and rewards. This forms the dominant force of political identification for the larger majority of the citizenry. Leon Lindberg has asserted that through integration, larger groupings emerge or are created among nations without the use of violence. It involves joint participation in regularized, on-going decision making. Donald Puchela defined political integration as a set of processes that produce and sustain a concordance system. In this case, a system where the various ethnic nationalities could possibly and constantly harmonise their interests, compromise their differences and reap natural rewards from their interactions.

This would produce dependable expectations of peaceful changes among the citizenry. Indeed, political integration theory has been linked to functionalism. It holds the view that the society as system (Nigeria as a nation state) is made up of inter-related parts (ethnic nationalities. All do interact on the basis of a common value system or consensus about basic values and common goals. Practically, every social custom and institution is seen as having a function in ensuring that society works efficiently. The main task of political integration are maintenance of peace, attaining greater multi-purpose capabilities, accomplishing specific task and gaining a new self- image and role identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the forgoing it is obvious that the application of systems theory, structural functional approach as well as integration theory to the study and practice of democracy, good governance and nation building in Nigeria and indeed Africa is a remedy to the socio-economic and political crises that has bedevilled our nation and the entire African continent. The fact is that the interdependence and interaction of variables such as leadership, sound management of the economy, sustainable growth and development, rule of law, participation in the political process, is likely to evolve democracy, good governance and nation building. This is so because a change in one variable is likely to be accompanied by changes in other variables.

As advocated by the structural functional approach, on the input side are the functions of interest articulation and interest aggregation, this, cumulatively impact on nation building if such views and ideas adequately reflect the interest of the masses. Still on input, the functions of rule making, rule application and rule adjudication have been further highlighted for the political leadership. Relating to the above is the function of political

communication which is undertaken to inform all within and outside the political system of diverse activities. Lastly, since every system ensures its maintenance and sustainability, it becomes imperative that there should be system maintenance and adaptive functions through political socialisation and recruitment of people to ensure the workability of democracy and good governance.

Integration helps to bring resources together, thereby reinforcing the interdependence of different components that make up the whole. Integration enables the components to enjoy resources which they lack separately. Thus within the context of integration theory, democracy ensures rule of law, equality of opportunity and equitable sharing of burdens through which natural and mineral resources could be exploited and used for the common good of the entire nation state.

Democracy as a form of government any where in the world except Nigeria, is synonymous with participation in the political process, rule of law, transparency, equality of opportunity, equitable sharing of burdens, constitutional guarantees, political position (leadership), fight against corruption, gender issues and "unpopular empowerment". The most decisive issue today in Nigeria and Africa is the prospect of democracy because its practise negates the universal concept. The challenges being faced in Nigeria and most African nation states could be surmounted if democracy is practised within the universal context of "unpopular empowerment". The application of systems and integration theory as well as structural functional approach to the practise of democracy and good governance would enhance nation building in Nigeria and Africa. Policy makers and political office holders should imbibe the "unpopular empowerment" approach. The latter would make government at whatever levels responsive to the legitimate expectations of the citizenry through continuous and purposeful investment in their health, education and productivity.

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