DEMOCRATIC THEORIES AND THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN NIGERIA: STRENGTHENING CONSENSUS AND THE RULE OF LAW

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Abstract: This paper addresses the problem of the strategies and theories of democratic participation in Nigeria that breed institutional marginality and bad governance due to shortfalls in pursuing the values of justice and empowerment as core democratic characteristics. The same democratic principles such as voting, parliament, constitution, judiciary, that are suggestive of gains such as responsible use, and peaceful transfer of power may not have translated fully into sociopolitical empowerment for responsibility and representation in evolving democratic practice in Nigeria due to problems of agency and political ideology. Democratic theorizing and participation in Nigeria has defied orthodox presuppositions seen in the disrespect for basic rights and the disregard for the rule of law in democracy that allow for fair play within and among the elites and political grassroots. Thus this study investigates the Nigerian predicament as a model or case study, raising questions about the reasons for the systematic disempowerment of groups.

Keywords: democracy; theory; participation; consensus; rule of law; Nigeria.

Problem

This paper addresses the problem of the strategies and theories of democratic participation in Nigeria that breed institutional marginality and bad governance due to shortfalls in pursuing the values of justice and empowerment as core democratic characteristics. The same democratic principles, such as voting, parliament, constitution, judiciary, that are suggestive of gains such as responsible use, and peaceful transfer of power may not have translated fully into sociopolitical empowerment for responsibility and representation in evolving democratic practice in Nigeria due to problems of agency and political ideology. The problem of democratic theorizing and participation in Nigeria has defied orthodox presuppositions and this is seen in the disrespect for basic rights and the disregard for the rule of law in democracy that normally ought to allow for fair play within and among the elites and grassroots of political parties. As such this study investigates the Nigerian predicament as a model or case study, raising questions about the reasons for the systematic disempowerment of groups and the prevailing logic of democratization that have created a dismal picture of decay and degeneration in sociopolitical life.

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We must, therefore, ask some questions: what strategies were in place to sustain equitable and inclusive democratic participation for social order since the transition to civil government in 1999 and up till 2013? What are the options for democratic stability and security in the light of the millennium development goals (MDGs)? Have the characteristics of democracy such as the rule of law, justice and accountability been upheld by successive Nigerian governments in the face of complaints over corruption, conflicts and insecurity? This work adopts the method of analysis to provide a sharper definition of the problem of democratic participation, exploring some key conceptual frameworks and theories of democratic participation as well as highlighting the specific problems that confront Nigeria's democracy in the light of the premise of learning from other comparative contexts especially with regard to the linkage between the theory and practice of the characteristics of democracy and current gaps evident in the issues of human dignity as well as social justice.

Problematizing two types of theories of democratic participation

There are conceptual and empirical problems with the theory and practice of democratic participation. In problematizing the moral and political dimensions of one of the most widely held premises that participation is the key to characterizing democracy, Coleman and Ferejohn (1986, pp. 9-10) have emphasized Riker's claim that the crucial attribute of democracy is popular participation in government. Democracy requires participation. Participation requires voting. Voting is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of democracy. The concept and nature of participation has, however, been queried or challenged as a contested concept. Care (1978, pp. 318-319) has noted the view held by some which challenges the fact that participation can serve as "an essential means for the individual to discover his real needs through the intervening discovery of himself as a social human being" (Care, 1978, pp. 318-319). For these critics, participation is a mere expression of hope. Participation in government is neither necessary nor sufficient for full moral development nor is participation necessary for developing one's self esteem or identifying one's interest. Participation can be perverted. Such claims as in the above provide the kind of turbulent waters that have characterized the discursive space.

A procedural theory of democracy

There are two main approaches to the definition of democracy which are of interest here. The first approach conceives democracy as set of institutions and arrangements employed basically in the selection of a government. The second approach conceives democracy as a form of life in which members of a society participate. Viewed as a way of life, democracy does not limit its scope only to the sphere of political practice. Rather, it permits the practice of democracy in many other realms of human existence. Thus, it emphasises the greater participation of the citizens in the sustenance of the well-being of society.

One of the major exponents of the first approach, which conceives democracy as a political method or practice, is Joseph Schumpeter. For him the conception of democracy as a political method or political practice does not escape from the problematic of participation that arises thereof. Schumpeter pushes for a narrow formalistic view of participation. He

argues that "the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a government. The democratic method in a capitalist system is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the peoples' vote" (Schumpeter, 1950; Schumpeter, 1977, p.173). In other words, Schumpeter holds that what democracy means is that the citizen's political action or vote should be directed at producing a government. In his view, democracy is nothing other than a political method or an institutional arrangement for arriving at legislative administrative decisions. Clearly, Schumpeter's theory of democracy offers the citizens the restricted role of merely exercising their votes to choose or replace a government (Held, 1987, pp. 165-166; Weale, 1996, p. 227).

It is important to note that "in Schumpeter's rather meager account of democracy, participation is strictly limited, and the influence that voters have over government policy is minimal. His was a purely procedural account of democracy; it is no more than a method for producing a government and is compatible with almost any kind of society" (Barry, 1981, p. 215). Moreover, one can criticise Schumpeter's view by arguing that given the trend and development of democracy in many modern states, the mere holding of elections for instance, does not make a democracy (Ghali, 1995, p. 6).

Furthermore, we can argue against Schumpeter's view by pointing out that there may be some institutions which supposedly embody a democratic culture, but which in actual fact do not operate effectively or functionally. In fact, institutions and organisations everywhere are prone to hijack, perversion and abuse by hostile elements. Democratic institutions are no exception. Democratic institutions, where they exist and if they function, are merely instruments in the service of democratic ideals, values and principles, and thus they are not ends in themselves. Thus, Schumpeter's approach to the study of democracy seems inadequate and merely plays lip service to the problem of the establishment and sustenance of viable social order. No institution can effectively realise its set goals unless it is complemented by some associated values. In fact, governments and other institutional arrangements and other institutional arrangements in the state have been known to quickly lose their humane faces and to enthrone inflexibility, alienation and tyranny. This situation ensures that men easily become slaves to social institutions.

For Nigerian society or any society like it, the consequences of upholding such a limited idea of participation with a foreign ideological base could be inimical to the wider social struggle to maintain separation of powers, checks and balances on government, freedoms of the judiciary, worship, opposition, civil protest and the press among others. The crucial question is: can we accept the view of Huntington and Schumpeter who seem to offer a restrictive definition of democracy? According to Cammack (1997, p. 224) Huntington who turned to the question of what prospects there were for emergent democratic regimes adopted a narrow definition of democracy that was not too different from the type that Schumpeter would propose. This led to the "rejecting of the "automatic association of democracy with other values such as social justice, equality, liberty and progress" (Cammack, 1997, p. 224). This repudiation of key values in democracy and the construing of democracy as a political form was one of the main issues that Dewey sought to tackle in his reconstruction of the democratic vision.

Given some of the short comings of the above idea of democracy as a political method or regime, we need to go further to examine the idea of democracy as a system of values. One

of the foremost critics of the idea of democracy as a form of government is John Dewey. He maintains that the identification of democracy with political democracy is responsible for most of the failures of democratic theory and practice. Thus he presents a different approach which views democracy as a social ideal or system of values.

A substantial theory of democracy

John Dewey has been widely recognised as the foremost American philosopher of democracy of the twentieth century who attempted to further the realisation of democracy in every sphere of life. He sought an all embracing conception of democracy which he placed in opposition to the views on democracy held by all preceding philosophers. For Dewey, political philosophy had tried to restrict its attention to narrow political issues like the state and other institutions of government. The development of a democratic philosophy was to encompass the whole traditional concern of politics, and then go on to provide a democratic understanding of ethics, education, logic, aesthetics and other areas of knowledge for instance. Dewey's philosophy is unique in its desire to address the true end of philosophy, social progress and the contemporary state of affairs (Horwitz, 1987, p. 851).

Dewey insists that democracy as a way of life is much broader than a special political form, a method of conducting government, or political system. It is broader and deeper than a political regime. For him, "democracy is the best means so far found for realising ends that lie in the wide domain of human relationships and the development of human personality" (Dewey, 1992b, p. 324). Therefore, Dewey concludes that democracy is a way of life; social and individual. The keynote of democracy as a way of life may be expressed as he says, in "the necessity for the participation of every mature and responsible human being in the formation and preservation of the values that regulate the living of men together." For him, these values are necessary if human beings are to achieve the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals (Dewey, 1992b, p. 324).

According to Dewey, society as the composition of individuals affords us an acceptable way of viewing it. It may be that society and individuals are correlative or organic to one another, in which case, society requires the service and subordination of individuals, while at the same time, it exists to serve them. Society is a word that embraces or covers all the ways in which, by associating together, men share their experiences and build up common interests and aims (Dewey, 1963, pp. 463-473). Consequently, society is many associations, not a single organisation. It embraces the many associations coming together in joint intercourse and action for the better realisation of shared experiences. Therefore, he holds that society by association ensures that experiences, ideas, emotions, and values are transmitted and made common. For him, the individual and institution are truly subordinate to this active process (Dewey, 1963, p. 474).

Dewey argues further that the best guarantee of collective efficiency and power is liberation and the use of the diversity of individual capacities in initiative, planning, foresight, vigour and endurance. He says that personality must also be educated. Full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person in proportion to his capacity to contribute to shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which he belongs. According to Dewey, the above point endorses the significance of democracy which cannot

properly be conceived as a sectarian or racial category. For him, democracy cannot properly be conceived as a consecration of some form of government which has already attained constitutional sanction (Dewey, 1963, p. 475).

Dewey holds that "democracy is but a name for the fact that human nature is developed only when its elements take part in directing things which are common, things for the sake of which men and women form groups—families, industrial companies, governments, churches, scientific associations" (Dewey, 1963, p. 475) and others. It is clear that the common factors he implies here are mutual intercourse, security, peace, co-operation and partnership among others. Once we admit this fact, then it is necessarily follows that the interrogation of social order, morality and democracy make sense because, man must seek humane, beneficial and lawful ways of arranging such social interactions.

Dewey maintains that democracy signifies, on one side, that every individual is to share in the duties of social affairs. On the other side, it signifies that social arrangements are to eliminate the constraints of status, birth, wealth, sex, and so forth, that restrict the opportunity of each man to attain full development. Democracy then operates within two realms; the individual and the social. For Dewey, democracy at the individual level takes as its criterion of social organisation, the release of the potentials of individuals. At the social level, democracy demands co-operation, instead of coercion, and voluntary sharing in a process of mutual give and take, rather than authority imposed from above (Dewey, 1963, p. 497).

According to Dewey, the method of democracy requires positive toleration or the sympathetic regard for the intelligence and personality of others, even in those cases where they hold positions or opinions different from our own. For him, the democratic method also demands the scientific interrogation of facts and the general testing of ideas. As such, Dewey maintains that democratic political structures are not enough to capture the essence of democracy. Rather, there must exist the democratic method in all social relationships because, democratic habits of thought and action are part of the fibre of a people. If this method is absent, then a democratic political system is not secure (Dewey, 1992a, p. 488; 1992b, p. 324).

Dewey goes further to say that though the factors or institutions of democratic government such as universal suffrage, regular elections are means that have been found expedient for realising democracy as the truly human way of living, yet, these are not a final end and a final value. He maintains that democracy is rooted in the idea that no man or a limited set of men is wise, educated or good enough to rule others without their consent.

According to Dewey, the positive implication of the above view is that all those who are affected by social institutions must have a share in producing and managing them. Therefore, he stresses that the foundation of democracy is a conviction and faith in the capacities of human nature, faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and co-operative experience. Dewey points out that the faith or belief expressed in these things is not to say that they are complete qualities, but that if they are allowed, they will grow and be able to generate progressively, the knowledge and wisdom needed to guide collective action (Dewey, 1992b, pp. 320-332).

Also, Dewey holds that the belief in equality is an element of the democratic credo. He points out that this is not a belief in the equality of natural endowments. He insists that it is the belief that all individuals are entitled to equality of treatment by law and its administration. For Dewey, each man should have an equal right to express his judgement,

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and should also be entitled to equal opportunity to develop his capacities (Dewey, 1992b, pp. 321-322). Therefore Dewey states that the democratic faith in equality is the faith that each individual shall have the chance and opportunity to contribute whatever he is capable of contributing. It is through this means, he says, that democracy is often naturally associated in our minds with freedom of action. Dewey points out that the democratic idea of freedom is not the right of each individual to do as he pleases. He insists that the freedom in question is far more substantive and elaborate. It refers to the freedom of belief and conscience; or expression; of opinion; of assembly for discussion and conference; of the press as an organ of communication. According to Dewey, democracy guarantees these freedoms so that individuals can be free to develop and so that society can benefit from their contributions (Dewey, 1992b, p. 322).

According to Dewey (1963, p. 498), democracy as a moral ideal or an ideal of social life, is much wider than any form of government, although it includes government in its scope. Democracy as a moral ideal is that very attempt to write and combine two ideas which were often related antagonistically in history. These are the idea of the liberation of individuals and the idea of the promotion of a common good. The democratic ideal poses rather than solves the great problem of how to harmonise the development of each individual with the maintenance of a social state in which the activities of each will contribute to the good of all the others. For Dewey, democracy expresses a demand that must be achieved. Thus he says that democracy like every true ideal, signifies something that is yet to be done, and not that which has already been done (Dewey, 1963, p. 498; Dewey, 1994, p. 156).

Dewey argues that there can be no genuine democracy outside of a clear consciousness of a communal life in all its implications. Fraternity, liberty and equality isolated from communal life are hopeless abstractions (Dewey, 1994, p. 156). Dewey argues that fraternity viewed in the context of communal life is capable of yielding some important social goods if it is based on mutual contribution and the recognition of liberties. For him, liberty implies the secure application and realisation of those potentials afforded by fraternal relationship. While equality refers to the recognition of the distinct and unique qualities of human beings irrespective of their different psychological and physical make up (Dewey, 1994, p.157). Dewey holds that these values are crucially important for the establishment of viable social order in which the end results of human actions are directed by feelings of community. Dewey argues further that community cannot be achieved by mere associated activity or aggregated collective action. The fact that individuals participate in activities and share in results does not portray the existence of community. For Dewey, communication is a prerequisite for community. Communication implies a common or mutually understood meaning. It creates new relationships and transforms conjoint activity into a community of interest and endeavour (Dewey, 1994, p.157), which can guarantee the existence of social consciousness. Dewey (1972, p. 288) criticizes democracy as both a political system and a set of institutions as means that have been found expedient for realizing democracy as the truly human way of living yet, these are not a final end and a final value. In one viewpoint, it is very possible for us to have a set of institutions that are purportedly democratic, in the sense of putatively embodying its core principles and ideas, but these institutions will not be effective or functional unless we have a holistic view of the meaning of democracy that looks beyond its values to the historical and cultural contexts of establishing such values.

Although Dewey's theorization of the idea of participation in democracy is significant in terms of conceiving the concept of a stakeholder who shares in the life of the community according to her ability, Dewey has not fully succeeded in responding to the fundamental question of the ethical basis of the commonwealth: Whose values are to be pursued in the search for democracy? What are the conditions under which a social order established? What endogenous or exogenous logic or architecture sustains it? Do the practical ramifications of the abuse and perversion of the idea of participation as shown by our case study, not suggest a vitiation of existing theories on participation and thus an imperative for alternate theorizing.

Dewey's theory of democracy has some profound implications for contemporary theory and practice of democracy. Let us examine some of these implications. Firstly, he perceived a barrenness and decline in the earlier existing theories and practice of democracy. In response to the short comings of these earlier democratic theories Dewey postulated a new idea of democracy. This is one in which the idea of community is the primary goal of a genuinely democratic way of life. Dewey did not only criticise and condemn the traditional theories of democracy and political philosophy of his epoch, he went further to postulate the importance of morality for the sustenance of democracy, and conceived democracy as a personal way of life. He displayed a conviction and optimism in the ability of human beings to live together in a social arena that could guarantee their dignity, freedom and well being. He was optimistic that man could live by certain rules guiding personal and social existence.

Therefore, Dewey exhibited a great trust in, and commitment towards the use of human intelligence, talents, dignity and responsibility in the establishment of social order. He emphasised the important roles played by freedom, creativity and the experimental attitude, in the sustenance of social order. Hence, Dewey claimed that "the task of democracy is forever that of the creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (Dewey, 1951, p. 394; Roth & Sontag, 1988, p. 321). Dewey conceived democracy to be the most suitable form of social order by which human beings can contribute to, and share in the burdens and benefits of life in the society. By this fact, he brought to the fore the role of democracy, in protecting the dignity, worth and freedom of the human person as a moral being imbued with a sense of responsibility and purpose.

One of Dewey's most important contributions to contemporary democratic theory and practice was to highlight the fact that the most severe threat to democracy emanated from within it. According to him, the danger in question arises out of the very question of the meaning of democracy. Dewey sought to deal with this danger by construing democracy as a way of life or a moral ideal. In this regard, he was deeply concerned about the nature of man's political and moral life. Although he raised questions about the moral character of community life itself, he remained committed to a defence of a strong sense of community (Bernstein, 1985, pp. 49-55).

A most remarkable personal strength which Dewey carried over into his political and ethical theory is "his sanity and his courage, his refusal to submit to despair" (Bernstein, 1985, p. 58). He was undaunted by the numerous failures and defects encountered within man's practice of democracy. Dewey retained a firm belief in the capacity of man to live according to the rules of freedom and justice. Indeed, he was convinced that every man was capable of contributing to the well being and prosperity of the society. Therefore, one can

rightly say that "much of the genius of Dewey as a moral philosopher lies in his recognition of the plurality of human moral positions that can be taken by rational persons" (Gouinlock, 1989, pp. 49-319). Thus, according to Robert Horwitz (1987, pp. 859-867), Dewey's democratic political theory upholds the view that human growth occurs within associations and in fact that human existence depends on social or associated activity. Horwitz says that the measure of Dewey's depreciation of the political lies in his refusal to treat democracy as primarily a form of government but rather as a way of life.

Disempowerment, marginality and vitiation of the rule of law in Nigeria's democratic participation

Hall, Held and McGrew (1992, pp. 40-41) see democratic participation as the political control of power in a political system or the establishment of countervailing centers of power "as a way of containing the powers of the state and of mediating among competing individual and collective projects. The idea of democracy is important because it does not just represent one value among many, such as liberty, equality and justice, but is the value which can link and mediate between competing prescriptive concerns" (Hall, Held & McGrew, 1992, pp. 40-41). Brozen (1952, p. 256) insists that "one set of values for which men strive is that of freedom, human dignity and democracy" (Brozen, 1952, p. 256). Also Mamdani (2001, p. 21) has made it clear that democracy "is not just about who governs, it is about how they govern, the institutions through which they govern" (Mamdani, 2001, p. 21). The moderation of political power, while significant, is not enough given the real contexts and consequences of the exclusion of the bulk of the citizens from the commonwealth. This affects the real practices and gains of democracy *via* the negative use of other factors such as ethnicity, elite politics, economy, education and social amenities. The focus needs to be on the way to mobilize the masses and interest groups to become socially and economically self-reliant. Will the present elite political economy accommodate liberation and transformation?

This situation calls for a review of Nigeria's state-centric tendencies and the closure of avenues of independent dialogue and information that goes beyond media censure to conscious economic disempowerment of the people mainly the high numbers of unemployed young people. The point then is that participation as solely the control of political power may not be enough as a conceptual or major platform for the apprehension of democracy. As Quinn (1992, p. 201) has rightly noted, "institutions, even with well intentioned laws and leaders, move slowly and are given to compromise" (Quinn, 1992, p. 201). Recent developments in the theory and practice of democracy in Nigeria seem to suggest that "while democracy may be commended for giving people a (nominal) say in the way that they are governed, it has been noticed that if not carefully introduced, democratization can exacerbate conflicts" (Solomon & Mathews, 2002, p.10). Indeed, if democracy is not carefully conceptualized, it will lead to chaos, retrogression and instability as we now find in some African societies.

Dahl puts it directly: "in practice, democratic systems have always fallen considerably short of the criteria and values that justify democracy" (Dahl, 1995, pp. 46, 47). The consequences of the above are that "no democratic country has created a set of social economic and political arrangements that achieve a satisfactory standard of liberty, justice,

security and decency" (Dahl, 1995, pp. 46, 47). Therefore, he notes that the visible gap between what is, and what ought to be, tempered by what could be, will continue to drive the search for alternative solutions" (Dahl, 1995, pp. 46, 47). There is a gap between the conceptualization and application of the features of democracy which pushes us to devise conditions for deepening our home grown democracy in Nigeria. This means that we must separate the normative from the contextual. The task of identifying the general features of any democratic society as a logical issue may be quite different from that of identifying the democratic features of a particular society as an empirical concern.

Ake (1996, p. 7) a Nigerian social scientist who is renowned for his analysis of the largely adverse effects of the liberal capitalist tradition on the quest for democracy in Africa has rightly pointed out that since Africa's state structures are susceptible to abuse, thence they are detrimental to democracy due to foreign ideological predispositions. Owing to the consolidation of immense state power in an inherited presidential system, the capitalist and neocolonial political and economic control of the African state nurtures and accredits a form of politics imbued with highhandedness, insensitivity and lawlessness. According to Ake (1996)

> Nigeria, democratizes with no separation of powers, all powers having been vested in an imperial presidency. There is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, and no transparency. The coercive institutions of the state are above the law, the civil society is below it, ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond its protection (Ake, 1996, p. 6).

It is correct to say that there are still "many parts of the African continent where prevailing realities are still a far cry from some of the precepts of human centered development, including transparency of governance, socio-political legitimacy, the rule of law and widespread popular empowerment" (Ninalowo, 2003, p. 9). In our view, this type of politics can only be put in the service of personal aggrandizement, nepotism and the breeding of the cult of personality. These attitudes are clearly guiding principles that are contrary to the rule of law as a democratic way of life. We agree with Gyekye (1997, p. 197) that the lack of an efficient or adequate legal and institutional framework explains the widespread incidence of dislocation and disorientation as seen in corrupt behaviour, inadequate institutional checks and ineffective law enforcement capabilities that have typified democratic practice in a developing society like Nigeria.

On a general note, democratic participation can be threatened by a dualism of internal and external forces operational in any country including those seeking to export a particular brand of democracy: The threats come from ideology, elite politics, economic down turn, militancy and militarization, religious fundamentalism, and so forth. For instance, Mansfield holds that the belief of the founding fathers of liberal republican democracy in the United States of America was that "once democracy is established, the greatest danger may arise not from outside but from within democracy" (Mansfield, 1995, p. 30). The view of Kymlicka (1999, p. 22) is instructive here. He notes that the "history of ignoring national minorities in the New World is inextricably tied up with European beliefs about the inferiority of the indigenous peoples who occupied the land before European settlement. Until recently, the minorities were seen as wards or subjects races lacking the political development to qualify as nation, incapable of self government and needing the paternalistic protection of their

white superiors" (Kymlicka, 1999, p. 22). Even today the problem of national minorities has not been fully resolved in the context of an American society that is in need of institutional social justice.

This problem seems pervasive among countries that profess to be democratic. The problem therefore seems to be a pervasive one in democracies and non-democracies alike. Democratic participation can be threatened by forces external to a nation state. Kolakowski (1990, p. 78) identifies in some detail, certain factors and forces that continue to threaten democratic institutions. He highlights the following: the enfeebled but still living force of Sovietism or the deep crisis of totalitarian institutions, the growth of malignant nationalism all over the world, the reality of religious intolerance and theocratic aspirations, the menace of transnational terrorism and criminal violence, the long term changes that effect all parts of our planet, and so forth, (Kolakowski, 1990, p. 78). Today it seems that the dangers to democracy unleash their repercussions with equal force both from within and outside the state.

From the above, it seems that in characterizing democracy and the rule of law, the problem of participation is occasioned partly by the issues of values and representation, which viewed in a formal or minimalist sense, excludes the bulk of the citizens. At one level this situation raises distinct issues about the meaning of responsibility of political authority to the common good. The democratic society aims at its own notion of responsiveness through the creation of access to greater opportunities for citizens' republican attitudes that justify interest in matters that concern everyone, the desire to engage in public service without discrimination, access to mechanisms of redress, equitable provision of social amenities for the citizens so as to guarantee human dignity and well being.

The structures of democratic participation seek to ensure the dignity of the human person as occasioned by responsible and responsive conduct among electors and elected, based on the humane, just and fair treatment of all. The reality then is that while participation is not easily attained due the perversion of the participatory process, representation is itself not attainable, due to the lack of compassion, responsibility and responsiveness on the part of the elected. These questions are important in the face of recent evidence of the substantial weakening or failure of the core values of providing security and infrastructures among key Nigerian institutions such as the government and the social and national security agencies. We need to examine the short-term and long-term consequences of this deficit for the sustenance of a democratic society.

The reality of de-participation and disempowerment is seen through the trope of the rule of law, and set against the backdrop of the immanent shortfall in the articulation of the system of political morality, application of social justice and achievement of institutional efficiency. Gaps in the character of democracy are noticed in the entrenched patterns of the bad governance of the rulers arising from a complicit liberal capitalist value system that pursues exploitation and disempowerment as core values. This deficit such as we find in the contradictions of the oil exploration process in the Niger delta area vis- -vis establishing a humane democratic society explains the descent into violence and militarism as aided and abetted by the ignorance and complacency of the ruled in Nigeria. Obasanjo—a former president of Nigeria claims that in democracy "it is evidently necessary to uphold at all times the basic principles of accountability and social justice" (Obasanjo, 1993, p.1).

This statement belies the reality that we actually see on the ground in Nigeria. The political culture of state-centralism, top-down social engineering and other major social engineering instruments that are the heritage of colonial capitalist alienation and marginalization have ensured that effectual and broad-based democratic participation is at best a mirage, especially in a country low in the human and technological development index and far behind in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) such as Nigeria. Within the dominant political parties such as the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), the realities of god-fatherism, money bag politics, a lack of internal democracy and the unethical breach by the incumbent government of written and unwritten agreements on a rotational formula for sharing political office among competitors have contributed to the current instability in democratic consolidation. The political and religious crisis leading to terrorism and low intensity war in northern Nigeria is partially explained by the incumbent Nigerian president's disregard of the rotation formula for the presidential office within the ruling PDP party otherwise called zoning where the northerners were supposed to complete their own eight years after Obasanjo—from south western Nigeria had ruled for eight years from 1999 to 2007.

Also the problems of disregard for the rule of law are seen mainly in the partisanship and compromise of the past leadership of the electoral umpire Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which have exacerbated electoral fraud, politics of resource deprivation, ethno-religious manipulation and lack of equity and integrity in the electoral process and have led to the massive disenfranchisement of voters and contestants in the democratic process. Again the high incidence of political-elite-instigated nationwide mob violence and the militarization of political activities during election years, such as we find in the General Buhari (retired) led All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) have triggered hooliganism, banditry and political assassinations across the length and breadth of the society threatening democratic order. These are sources of concern for Nigeria's democracy.

In addition, there is the real problem of the socioeconomic disempowerment and marginalization of a broad group of citizens. These include vulnerable peoples, such as rural dwellers, low-income earners, politicians and business people disfavoured by the current government, medium- and low-level government workers, pensioners or retired workers, rural peoples, uneducated people, unemployed and underemployed young people, physically challenged persons, destitute children, area boys or 'almajiris.' This marginality is instructive in its implications for the failure of existing strategies of social welfare. Thus there is an imperative to re-theorize a model of participatory and inclusive democracy for social empowerment in Nigeria. There is also the incapability of government and its key agencies to strongly uphold basic rights and the rule of law, causing violations of freedoms and conflicts. The positive use of the armed forces for internal security and air freighting of electoral materials pales into insignificance in the face of the inefficiency and partisanship of the police and the brutality of the army in pursuing the self succession and aggrandizement agenda of the incumbent political regime and its numerous acolytes and clients.

Other gaps in the character and effectiveness of Nigeria's democracy arise due to a general inefficiency in public service delivery, the under-funding of government agencies, the dominant role of the politicization of ethnicity as a directing principle of social affairs and also general citizens' dissatisfaction with the standard or quality of life and the potentials

for attaining human dignity indices—notably, deficits in health care, transport infrastructures and education. This developmental shortfall is seen vividly in the standard of living of those in the rural areas who lack access to good access roads, free and safe waterways and so on. These deficits have had dire consequences during election years where materials are not delivered on time and election officials have died by drowning or vehicle accidents. These shortfalls conspire to obstruct the establishment of a stable political culture for delivering the values and dividends of democracy.

The truncation or convolution of democratic values in Nigeria will terminate in insecurity. The link between democracy and security is clearly seen in the inability of the government and its agencies to protect the life, property and other just claims of all legitimate human interests within its territorial jurisdiction and protect the citizens from external incursions. There has been the massive incursion by foreign civilians who seek employment or commit banditry, and armed militia groups who are escaping from low intensity conflicts in countries to the north, west and east of Nigeria through the porous borders. These illegal aliens come in larger numbers during national census or election years to register and vote as Nigerians. These people have been implicated in the recent spate of politically motivated violence, international terrorism and domestic insurgency as well as cross border banditry in Nigeria. This governmental incapability breeds mistrust, fear, conflicts, instability and the weakened infrastructure affects virtually everyone.

Therefore, the mere or exclusive notion of participation may not easily cover all of the values and principles that are needed for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Any form of democratic participation that inadvertently denies internal democracy within the party system, shows hostility to the opposition, promotes poverty, oppression and domination can only be a source of concern, and evidence of the failure of the qualities and practice of genuine democracy. This current situation of poor social capital of trust and efficient service delivery in Nigeria ensures that the leaders and the led still have a long way to go in the pursuance of the democratic nation state project. This point is especially significant in the context of a multiethnic, religious and class-driven society where systematic social exclusion and economic disempowerment usually reverberate as injustice, conflicts and insecurity, raising doubts about the faulty logic and poor quality of democratic participation.

The problem of characterizing democracy is further underscored when we recall that it has been assumed that democracy has an essence. Participation has been taken to be that essence or at least at the heart of it. This sounds reasonable. However, a more careful look at the issues show that democracy is represented by a combination or a conglomeration of certain principles, institutions, values, characteristics and conditions. Democracy has as its core principles, the belief in the dignity of man, the recognition of the rights of man and the belief in responsibility. When we examine the character of democracy, we see clearly that participation, peaceful transfer of power, and the recognition and acceptance of opposition are the main features.

Yet these features do not by themselves indicate that we are running a democracy thus we need to identify the core institutions of democracy. Even a dictatorship or collectivistic society can transfer power peacefully and allow for participation. After all authoritarian or communist societies do ensure participation, which is why there is some growth or action. The issue is that democracy differs from other systems of social planning when we focus

on its institutions operating by the rule of law, to include, the existence of ideological and republican political parties, separation of powers among the tiers of government and a functioning judicial system as the last hope of justice for the citizens. These institutions can be subverted or violated thus we must affirm a set of core values that such institutions need to uphold if they are to fulfill their democratic mandate. This means that we can have democratic institutions without having the values truly embodied in the rule of law. The values in question are justice, fairness, dialogue and tolerance.

The principles, values and characteristics of democracy make little or no sense outside the ambits of certain enabling conditions that include a vibrant economy and high level of education among the citizens as key conditions. Bertsch (1991, p. 488) argues that the values that are central to the redemption of the African life are those that raise the level of human dignity. These include the provision of goods and services, mitigation of inequality, greater national cohesion and harmony. Bertsch (1991, p. 547) argues that "human dignity begins in the minds of human beings." It is the shortfalls in the aspects of political and economic justice and accountability that have triggered the desire to discover ways of overcoming these problems. What specific measures or concrete steps need to be taken to analyze and institutionalize democratic participation for empowerment and integration?

Conclusion

What we can learn from these two types of theories of democracy is that firstly, the deficits in the procedural theory or conception are exposed by the weak points of the Nigerian situation of democracy. Hence a procedural view may not be suitable for a humane and holistic conception of democracy that can move Nigeria forward. Secondly, the substantial model or conception moves in the right direction of pushing for a sense of each member of the society as a stakeholder and social contributor who will pursue the common good and allow tolerance to be the guiding rule of a highly democratized society. Such democratization ought to affect other key domains of the social order using the principle of communication within the associative body. Dewey's theory is very useful for conceiving a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of democracy both at a theoretical level and in terms of a local case study. A point that should be made is that some of the material and psychological assumptions that defend Dewey's philosophy of democracy may not always exist in the same way in all societies. For example, social and political life is guided in Nigeria by ethnic, class and religious disparities and conflicts which drive politics, economy and social life. As such there arise some of those shortcomings we noticed in the Nigerian condition earlier.

Iris Marion Young's view on the institutional conditions of difference and justice concerns can help to clarify issues here. In her own different characterization of social justice, Iris Young emphasizes that justice would undermine the problem of domination and oppression, and not solve the problem of distribution. For her, justice should refer not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation (1990, p. 39). She is also of the view that justice could be discussed extensively in a democratic society like 'Nigeria' where participation in public discourses and decision-making are embedded. She believes that democracy is a condition for publicly arriving at decisions whose substantively

just outcomes including distributive justice would affect all and sundry in the society. She opines that justice in a group differentiated society (like Nigerian multi-ethnic democratic society) demands social equality of groups and mutual recognition of group differences (Young, 1990, p. 191). Group differences and the corruption, violence and disregard for the rule of law arising thereof can be said to be a key factor threatening Nigeria's democracy. One of the most effective ways to achieve a resolution of the ethnic or nationality question within the modern Nigerian nation state is by establishing an effective system of social justice. Scholars have emphasized the importance of social justice for the management of social, political and nationality problems. Social justice deals with how social institutions are to be arranged, as well as, how just social institutions can be established. An understanding of the meaning of a just society facilitates the understanding of the interconnection between individual responsibilities and mutual expectations. Iris Young maintains that the central concern of social justice is to eliminate institutionalized domination and oppression (Young, 1990, pp. 15-16) which are, simply put, the hallmark of the current experience of democracy in Nigeria.

The conceptual and empirical basis for the creating and sustaining of democratic order triggered the desire to examine Nigeria's strategies for addressing the critical values of respect for basic rights, distributive justice, a culture of rational dialogue, satisfaction of social needs in the light of the shortfalls earlier identified in the theory and knowledge. Resolving the issue of the rule of law and marginality leads us to identify the security issues arising from the practice of democracy in Nigeria. How do we tackle the recent concerns about disorder, public mistrust and corruption that arise from the shortfalls and contradictions in democratic participation and consolidation? There are options for rectifying the situation whereby the institutions of democracy provide for participation, yet factors such as hijack, perversion, anomie and apathy become hindrances to the attainment of full participation, meaning that purported democratic institutions that do not uphold the core values of democratic governance need to be replaced. Participation which can be induced by money, coercion or manipulation is counterproductive and unacceptable. We need to overcome ignorance complemented by the low quality of moral sense among a people, which may pose a danger to democracy cutting short the capability of promising aspirants and triggering the eclipse of a vibrant political space.

There is a need to rectify an intolerant conception of power and its uses that has occasioned (in Nigeria) a neglect of the rule of law and the views of the populace, censure of the media, and intimidation of the judiciary and legislative bodies. The economic and educational disempowerment of the peoples of the Niger-delta and northern Nigeria has compromised our collective security in our quest for viable and stable democratic participation and national integration. The concern with making democracy more attuned to human dignity and well being so as to surmount the obstacles of inequity, marginality and institutional dysfunction that plagues the nation state is a priority as democracy is run by human beings. The problems arising from the social conduct of agency compel us to focus on social and economic problems and to review the democratic features of shared values for joint actions, rejection of monopoly or domination and thence, cooperation for getting the best out of different individuals and groups, so as to ensure a stable and viable characterization of the democratic social order.

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