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Globalisation, Good Governance And Democracy: The Interface

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Introduction

Globalisation has been an important factor in accelerating democracy's growth in recent decades. In this globalised world, rapid development and global proliferation of new technologies and telecommunications, and integration of the world economy through trade and investment, have increased the role and power of regional and global institutions (Cheema and Maguire, 2004). This promoted and strengthened the spread of democracy while also providing the leverage for good governance. Globalisation impacts on the mode of governance that a country operates either as a symbol of universality or for uniformity. This unstoppable trend has homogenised governance on a global scale while depicting authoritarianism as unproductive political modernity.

Consequently, countries of the world have come to the realisation of the need to embrace democracy as a universal form of government albeit in different variants. Democracy has become the basis for friendly relations among nations and also a defining factor in global identity. This is why the rate and wave of democratisation (genuine or rhetorical among nations) have become massive. Any country that does not embrace democracy is not likely to receive continental respect and global attention or supports. The linkage between globalisation and democracy is further strengthened by the interdependence and interconnectedness that define the relationship of nations in a global scene. Globalisation is capable of engendering good governance as ideas, technologies and trade are exchanged freely in a global continuum.

Even so, democracy, which for us is a process that can not be attained or put in place overnight. All democracies are at a particular level of transition or change can be tagged democratisation. Democratisation is defined as the process of transition to a stable and consolidated democracy. Although democratisation has both economic and political dimensions, it is not an end in itself. This is reflexive of democratisation in most countries in Africa which, indeed, has not brought about the desired good governance. This explains the need to use democracy as a vehicle for good governance. In doing this, however, it requires unalloyed commitment to democratic ethos which, in itself, is ingredients of good governance

The concomitants of globalisation -one of which is democratisation- have not been really of positive implication in most developing countries. The present parlous state of democratisation, particularly in Africa gives cause for concern, as it appears to be promotive of poverty, disempowerment, ethno-religious conflicts and sit-tightism. The global acceptance of democracy is a function of its inextricable linkage to development. Democracy is the best system of government man has invented. This is because democracy offers better opportunities for self-appraisal, self-actualisation and developments. And because, globalisation impacts on democracy, and democracy on good governance, there lies the linkage and connection among them.

Globalisation, Good Governance and Democracy: A Conceptual Analysis

The triple concepts- globalisation, good governance and democracy- have dominated international discourse for sometime now. The conceptual ambivalence and ambiguity that hover around them, however, are owing to their multidimensional and multifarious perspectives. Yet, it is necessary to operationalise these concepts so as to properly situate them in the context of the discourse in this paper.

Globalisation

Globalisation is defined as the integration on a global scale of flows of goods and finances, cultural contacts and information. According to Held and McGrew (2004,1) can be conceived “as a process (or set of processes) which embodies transformation in the spatial organisation of social relations and transactions, expressed in transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and power”. Held and McGrew also went further in explaining four characteristic types of change of globalisation which include:

1. Stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers, regions and continents;
2. It is marked by the intensification or the growing magnitude of interconnectedness and flows of trade, investment, finance, migration, culture, etc.;
3. It can be linked to a speeding up of global interactions and processes, as the development of world-wide systems of transport and communication increases the velocity of the diffusion of ideas, goods, information, capital and people;
4. The growing extensity, intensity and velocity of global interaction can be associated with their deepening impact such that the effects of distant events can be highly significant elsewhere and specific local developments can come to have considerable global consequences.

Inferring from their submission, the boundaries between domestic/national matters and global/planetary affairs become increasingly blurred and fluid. In this sense, globalisation can be thought of as the widening, intensifying, speeding up, and growing impact of world-wide interconnectedness and interrelationship.

In the same vein, David Held, et al (2004:2) sees globalisation as the “emergence of interregional networks and systems of interaction and exchange”. Ajayi (2000, 154) observed that globalisation “involves increase in the density of social and economic contracts between locations world-wide”. On the whole, globalisation is a global networking of activities. It also involves homogenisation of the hitherto heterogeneous world in all spheres of life. According to Keohane and Nye (1989,1), globalisation “is a state of the world involving interdependence at multi-continental distances”. These networks, according to them, “can be linked through flows and influences of capital and goods, information and ideas, people and force, as well as environmentally and biologically relevant substances”. The running theme of these conceptualisations points to the three elements of globalisation: liberal democracy, economic liberalisation and explosion in information technology.

Good Governance

Before defining good governance, it is pertinent to define governance in order to use it as a point of departure to fully understand good governance. Governance, according to Keohane and Nye (1989) refers to “the emergence and recognition of principles, norms, rules, and procedures that both provide standards of acceptable public behaviour, and that are followed sufficiently to produce behavioural regularities”. Governance can also be seen as both processes and arrangements that ensure orderliness, acceptable standard of allocation of resources (both human and material) and a legal framework within which national behaviours are shaped and controlled. Good governance on its own refers to “broad reform strategy and a particular set of initiatives to strengthen the institutions of civil society with the objective of making government more accountable, more open and transparent and more democratic” (Minogue, 1997,4).

Good governance has been closely linked to “the extent which a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate, committed to improving the public welfare and responsive to the needs of its citizens, competent to assure law and order and deliver public services, able to create an enabling policy environment for productive activities; and equitable in its conduct” (Sharma, 2007). The holistic perception of good governance by the World Bank largely illuminates the hidden virtues of the concept. It views governance as “the means by which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development” and good governance as synonymous with broad sphere of public sector management; accountability; legal framework for development; information and technology; the legitimacy of government; the competence of governments to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions; implement them effectively and deliver services” (Cheema and Maguire, 2004).

Democracy

Generically, democracy involves the opportunity to participate in decision making in the political process (Oke, 2010). It repudiates arbitrariness and authoritarianism. It extols the consent of the governed and it protects human personality and values (Ake 1991). Democracy whether liberal, African or modern includes fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty, equal opportunity for all, majority rule, representativeness, minority rights, right of choice between alternative programmes, popular consultation, consensus on fundamental issues and more essentially periodic elections (Oke, 2005:45). The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision making by all adult citizens. The citizenry enjoys wide spread participation in the political process. Though all these are not exhaustive of the elements of democracy, particularly when talking of the variant manifestations in history.

For the purpose of this work, therefore, democracy shall be operationalised according to Harvey and Harvey (1974:269) who opine that democracy “involves settling affairs according to known rules of government, tolerance towards minority views, regular elections and freedom of speech; and above all, observance of rule of law”. In the same vein, Larry Diamond sees democracy as:

a system of government that meets three essential conditions: meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties, for all effective positions of government power, at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair election, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and a level of civil and political liberties, freedom to form and join organizations sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (1989:xvi)

In a similar perspective, Onyeoziri (1989:6) conceptualises four indicative domains of democracy which include: “the domain of individual and group rights and freedoms; the domain of popular and equal participation in collective decision; the domain of accountability of government to mass publics and constituent minorities; and the domain of the application of the principles of equal citizenship in all spheres of life- social, economic and political. The running theme of these definitions is that any claim to democratic regime or state must essentially embrace a high degree of popular participation, competitive choice, and openness, the enjoyment of civil and political liberties by the citizenry in concrete terms and accountability of the leadership. The opportunity to participate in democratization process accords the citizenry the choice and selection of credible representatives through periodic elections.

Globalisation and Good Governance

Arising from the ‘de-territorialisation’ of political and economic power of the nation-state, the challenges of governance become massive and cannot be handled alone by individual states (Arowolo, 2008:141-142). There has been institutionalisation of fragile system of multilayered global and regional governance, reinforced by Intergovernmental Organisations (IGOs). This multilateral system institutionalises a process of political coordination amongst governments, intergovernmental and transnational agencies (public and private) designed to realise common purpose or collective goods through making or implementing global or transnational rules, and managing trans-border problems (Held and McGrew, 2004).

Governance, especially good governance, is now synonymous with development and has worn a global outlook. Governance has been internationalised, and transcends local domain. The issue of social service delivery is not the exclusive duty of national government as IGOs have been fully involved in the actualisation of the demand for improved service delivery capacity. National governments are becoming more responsive and responsible to the citizens as the latter are well equipped and empowered to challenge the inefficiency of any national government, this again promotes good governance in no small measure as there are various coordination and measurement mechanisms through which performances of national governments are examined and rated. Subscribing to this assertion, Held and McGrew (2004,6) observed that “this explosion of ‘citizen diplomacy’ creates the basis of communities of interest or association which span national borders, with the purpose of advancing mutual goals or bringing governments and the formal institutions of global governance to account for their activities’.

Also worth mentioning is the change in the scope and content of international law. From the law governing war to that concerning crimes against humanity; terrorism; environmental issues; human rights and financial crimes. We now have what is called International Police (Interpol). This is a collaboration of international securities in a way to prevent crimes or tracking offenders. There is transnational cooperation in the areas of crimes detection, crimes prevention and crimes investigation.

As governments and their citizens have found themselves in more expansive networks and layers of regional and global governance, they have become subject to new loci of authority above, below and alongside the state. National governments are no longer the determinants of their citizens’ fate. This does not, however, suggest that national governments or national sovereignty have been eclipsed by the forces of political globalisation.

The world is becoming more unified than ever before politically. Countries of the world are integrating more and more and cooperating in the areas of trade, military and economy. The unification has blurred barriers to free movements of nationals across the sub-region, and the emergence of a single Eurocurrency has resolved constraints in the business transactions. Protectionism, except in a few countries is no more in vogue.

National problems have now become international both in approach and outlook. Problems such as: flooding, earthquake, erosion, epidemics like: HIV/AIDS scourge, malaria fever, tuberculosis, leprosy, guinea worm, polio, drugs menace, food crisis, debt crisis, refugee and civil conflicts are now being tackled globally rather than nationally. In fact, such problems surpass national capacity and domestic solution. This global approach to governance is capable of catapulting good governance.

As countries open up their economies through the removal of trade restrictions, the level of output would increase. The effects of the ensuing specialisation and competition would be higher productivity and increased living standard of national population. Subscribing to this assertion, Ajayi (2004, 4) posited that:

At the general level, the welfare benefits of globalisation would, indeed, be similar to those resulting from specialisation and

the widening of markets through trade by enabling a greater international division of labour and a more efficient allocation of savings, globalisation would not only raise productivity but also improve living standards and bring about good governance.

Ever more, it has become clear that the quality of a country's governance has a direct impact on the level of human development within that country's borders. Indeed, in today's world, governance can no longer be considered a closed system. The state's task is to find a balance between taking advantage of globalisation, and providing a secure and stable social and economic domestic environment, particularly for the most vulnerable (Norris, 1999). Globalisation is also placing governments under increasing scrutiny, something that may prompt improved state conduct and more responsible economic policies. In developed countries, globalisation has also resulted in fewer state-supplied services in favour of private services. And, as the phenomenon of globalisation spreads worldwide, it brings with it a proliferation in regional and global institutions that are neither elected by nor accountable to citizens. This has translated into the need for 'states to develop their capacity to manoeuvre within a new architecture and to facilitate policies that promote human development locally while protecting national interests globally' (Cheema and Maguire, 2004:8). There is also a growing relationship between the quality of governance in developing countries and the trade and aid provided to those countries. Larry Diamond (1999:19) opined that debt relief and other incentives, if properly channelled, is capable of engendering political liberalisation and responsibility. In a way, therefore, globalisation opens up wide opportunities capable of propelling good governance.

Good Governance and Democracy

Democracy, on its own, does not connote good governance. Deep-rooted and consolidated democracy in form of liberalism or what Cheema and Maguire (2004:6) call 'maximalist democracy' can and indeed has been found to be able to engender good governance. According to them,

maximalist democracy encompasses “various rights and liberties that have to be associated with a competitive and inclusive system of government. Larry Diamond, while illuminating the maximalist approach of democracy, submits that the maximalist definition of democracy is holistic as it incorporates “not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime, with regular, free and fair elections and universal suffrage, but organisational and informational pluralism; extensive civil liberties (freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations); effective power for elected officials; and functional autonomy for legislative, executive and judicial organs of government (1999:19). For a democracy to evolve good governance, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1999:14) suggest five inter-related conditions that must exist which include: 1. the rule of law to guarantee citizens’ freedoms and independent associational life, 2. functioning state bureaucracy which can be used by the democratic government to deliver public good, 3. free and lively civil society, 4. a relatively autonomous and valued political society, and, 5. an institutionalised economic society.

Liberal democracy entails not only free and fair elections in terms of the administration of the voting and vote counting. A liberal or ‘high-quality’ democracy requires a more comprehensive fairness of political competition embodied in the concept of a “level playing field” (Diamond, 2005:2). In a high quality democracy, the electoral arena is open, and the playing field is reasonably level. Also, liberal democracy requires extensive public freedoms of speech, press, information, association, assembly, movement, e.t.c. This is simply fundamental. Only in a free society with a vigorous public space can good governance be achieved. Only if people are free to organize, protest, and petition, only if groups can assert their interests and values, only if the media can report, investigate, and expose government policies and actions without fear or favour, can there be meaningful competition, participation, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability (Diamond, 2005:3). Only in a climate of true political and civil freedom can a country achieve the absolute fundamental condition for development: responsible government—that is government that is committed to the advancement of the public good, rather than the private interests of its own officials and their families and their cronies (Diamond, 2005; Cheema and Maguire, 2004; Sharma, 2007).

Electoral participation is sine qua non to good governance. People at every level of public life must become involved in the decisions that affect their lives—most prominently, in the setting of priorities for the expenditure of public funds, and in the monitoring of implementation. Multiple, diverse mechanisms for public input can correct mistakes in policy design and implementation, and promote social inclusion and political ownership of policies, including painful economic reforms. It is also argued that institutionalized participation also provides channels for settling (or at least narrowing) conflicts over interests and values and for making broadly legitimate policy choices. Policies will be more likely to be stable and sustainable when they enjoy popular understanding and support, most especially when women and minorities have input into governmental decisions and also be provided with mechanism through which unfavourable policies are contested and protested against.

Liberal democracy requires responsiveness of elected officials to the needs and concerns of society. Obviously, government cannot respond fully to the interests of every group, because in any society, interests are in conflict. But different groups must be heard. They must have access to legislative debates through public hearing or other means provided for public inputs. There must be regular means by which elected representatives go back and consult with their constituencies and explain the policies of government. When there are multiple avenues for participation in policy-making, and when there is strong freedom and competition, then government will be more responsive. And since people

in poor countries most of all want economic development and the physical improvement of their infrastructure and environments, responsive government will be government that seeks and promotes economic development.

On its own, good governance depicts the degree to which institutions of a particular country (such as Legislature or Judiciary) and processes (such as the role of political parties in election) are transparent, accountable to the people and allow them to freely participate in decisions that affect their lives. Good governance is when the authority of the government and sovereignty reside ultimately with the people and are responsive to them. Cheema and Maguire speak of government and its institutions that “are pro-poor and promote the human development of all citizens” (2004). Robert Dahl (1989) identifies three elements that distinguish democracy from other forms of authoritarianism. According to him, he submits that: 1. the democratic process promotes individual and collective freedom; 2. it promotes human development; 3. the democratic process, though not perfect, is the best way by which people can protect and advance their common interests and goods. Good governance enhances human development and human development is the pivot around which other developmental activities revolve. Human development is the means through which other forms of development are achieved. Good governance must indeed democratise the process of decision making in a way to guarantee the involvement of the group for which decisions are being made. For example, poverty alleviation programme can only be potent and sustained only if the affected group is involved at all levels of decision making process.

Finally, democracy and good governance promote development. Liberal and consolidated democracy, the one that is competitive, open, participatory, and responsive, provides a means for citizens to monitor and evaluate the performance of government and to remove officials and representatives who pursue personal gains rather than public interest. The institutions of good governance must be “funded, staffed, trained, and equipped in a manner that will investigate, expose, and punish corrupt conduct, and thus vigorously discourage it in the future” (Diamond, 2005). Human development performance can be enhanced through enhancing the quality of democracy, including the devolution and decentralisation of power and resources, protection of human rights, removal of corruption and speeding up of justice (Cheema and Maguire, 2004).

Governance is good when it is restrained by the law; when the law is applied equally to the lowly and the highly placed in the society; when there is reasonable access to justice and when there are capable and independent authorities to adjudicate and enforce the law in a neutral and efficient manner. Expectedly therefore, good governance is achievable in the atmosphere of sustenance of the rule of law. Good governance should also focus mostly on results and not processes in order to engender development. It should be measured on government’s delivery inputs. That is, good governance is not about budget provisions; it is about actual accomplishment and its good intentions. Good governance is not only critical to development but should also have the capacity to use resources effectively to promote economic growth and reduce poverty.

Conclusion

The study analysed the synergy between globalisation, good governance and democracy. While insisting that globalisation strengthens and entrenches democracy, it, however, found out that democracy on its own does not generate good governance unless it is liberal and consolidated. Good governance and consolidated democracy are capable of evolving development through the unrestricted

avenues and access it provides for both the poor and the rich, the majority and the minority, thereby reducing the spate of majoritarian tyranny. Good governance can not be in isolation, the paper argued, it must be evolved within the holistically interconnected and interdependent global economic system through access to trade and other forms of aid deliberately directed at development.

Sustaining the gains of the synergy between globalisation, good governance and democracy demands that the counteracting agencies should be independent and neutral. They should be supported by the civil society, including mass media and to operate in the environment of political freedom and transparency. In this connection, a Freedom of Information Act is germane to the realisation of this lofty idea. This becomes necessary so as to enable the media and the civil society monitor the activities of government including how it makes decisions and allocates contracts and how it spends public resources. Also, building a functioning judicial system, freedom of the press, free speech are inevitable in the sustenance of good governance anchored on economic reforms aimed at socio-economic development. Fight against corruption should also be taken very seriously. The rule must be potent enough and impartial to punish corrupt officials and reward good conduct in public offices.

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