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AUTOCRATIC OR DEMOCRATIC STATE-CENTRED MODEL AND THE CHALLENGES OF AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Africa, originally called *Alkabulan*, described as mother of mankind is a continent known for its rich cultural diversity and natural resources. Africa, with a population of over a billion people is the poorest continent in the world. The decades between 1950s and 1960s remarkable as most hitherto colonised African states gained political independence but after more than half a century of independence, most African states have mimicked the European governance model of Liberal Democracy with little and questionable results. This has placed African states in the valley of decision, contemplating choosing between autocratic or democratic models of development. It is against this that the paper examines Autocratic state centred or Democratic state centred development models in addressing the development challenge of African states. The main objective of the paper is to interrogate the challenges of African development within the context of state centred or democratic development models. The paper relied on secondary sources drawn from journals, relevant textbooks, internet materials and both published and unpublished materials. The paper concludes that liberal democratic model with its neoliberal policies produced results that are more hurtful than helpful to African countries. The paper therefore advocates for democratic governance conceived as an alternative to the much-touted concept of good governance, in addition to a strong political leadership with the will power to transform African states and strengthening governance structure and institutions by promoting transparency and accountability within the state.

Keywords: Alkabulan; Autocracy; Democracy; Liberal Democracy; State-Centred Development.

Introduction

One of the remarkable events of the 20th Century is that it witnessed the emergence of newly independent nations eager to assert their sovereignty and take charge of their economies in the face of inherited unfavourable colonial legacies and the contending global power dynamics. Ake (1995) painted a gloomy picture of the African continent saying that most of Africa is not developing. This apt description of the decline in nearly all African states underscores the depth of underdevelopment ravaging the people in the midst of abundant natural resources. The African soil has the capacity to feed the whole of Europe, America, Asia; yet is grossly under nourished and food in-secure because of the absence of leadership in a system that is incompatible with development objectives of Africa. While most of the African countries gained political independence in the 1960s, the struggle to ensure economic development and political stability has not only proven negative but elusive. This justifies the assertion by John Harry Clark, the great African -American, who once said about the independence of African states that Africa regained independence by mimicking the European governance system (Liberal Democracy in contemporary states).

Consequently, most contemporary African states remain largely primary exporters, aid dependent, deeply indebted, highly underdeveloped despites decades of conceptualizing, formulating and implementing several types of economic policies and programmes. The African region with its enormous natural resources is still considered with astronomical share and rise in world's absolute poverty. For instance, Sub Sahara Africa, which is home to over 1 billion people, half of whom will

be under 25 years old by 2050, is a complex as well as diverse continent offering human and natural resources that have the potentials to yield inclusive growth and eradicate poverty in the continent.

With the world largest free trade area and a 1.2-billion-person market, the continent is creating an entirely new development path, harnessing the potential of its resources to people. In addition, the region is characterised by low, lower middle, upper middle- and high-income countries, 22 of which are fragile and conflict-ridden. It is also characterised by 13 small states with small population, limited human capital and a confined land area (Agbola, 2007). However, decades of efforts have yielded stagnation, regression or gotten worse. The tragic consequences of this are increasingly clear in a rising tide of poverty, decaying public utilities and infrastructures, social tensions and political turmoil, and now, premonition of inevitable drive into conflict and violence (Ake, 1995).

The state is undeniably and unarguably considered as the most important socio-economic and political institution to perform its functions and fulfil multiple roles. According to Fukuyama (2007), the ability of some states to harness their human, materials and other resource endowment and to create wealth more effectively than others, has been presented as a partial explanation to the differences in economic advancement. Central to the role of the state is its capacity to drive economic change by providing a logical vision of the future at a foremost stage of transformation. Therefore, the role of the state in fostering social and economic advancement otherwise generally described as development particularly in the developing countries has remained a subject of heated debate among scholars and experts of international development. For over half a century especially since the end of the Second World War, this debate was remarkable as it witnessed newly independent states in Africa and Asiaembracing state led development strategy in order to bring about industrialization and entrepreneurship through deliberate state efforts. The period between the 1950s and 60s marked a significant degree of state intervention in economies all over the world. However, in the 1970s, the state led development strategy adopted by most countries of Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe failed, thus giving rise to the market led development strategy championed mostly by the advanced countries of the West and the Washington consensus.

The current development problematique of Africa cannot be adequately understood from one but several perspectives with both exogenous and endogenous factors. For instance, one of the exogenous explanations has been alluded to colonialism and the scramble for Africa which resulted in colonialism from1880 and formalised like in the case of Nigeria in 1900. The continent's resources were therefore exploited by the colonial masters thereby making Africa to remain underdeveloped while the colonial masters experienced development in their countries. All this took place within the historical context of world capitalist expansion which has continued after colonialism into neo-colonialism and even in this age of globalization.

This paper evaluates the contemporary relevance of autocratic state-centred developing strategy as an alternative to addressing the many challenges confronting African states. The need for autocratic-centred development strategy is predicated on the premise that strong, interventionist states can catalyse development and mitigate the challenges associated with globalization and market-driven capitalism (Chang, (2008); Cardoso and Faletto, 1979).

Tragically in Africa, African states, according to Ayittey (2006) has evolved into a predatory monster or a gangster state that uses a convoluted system of regulations and controls to pillage and rob the productive class-the peasantry. It is common knowledge therefore, that heads of states, ministers, and highly placed African government officials raid the African treasury, misuse their positions in government to extort commissions on foreign loan contracts, scheme foreign aids, inflate contracts to cronies for kickbacks and deposit the loot in overseas banks. The very people who are supposed to defend and protect the peasants' interests are themselves engaged in institutionalized looting. In an attempt to come out of this development crisis, African states are confronted with which development strategy would be most appropriate considering the remarkable results of the Asian Tigers who were largely at par or below the African status of development in the 1950s and 1960s vis-a vis the failure of liberal democracy to produce expected dividends of democracy in Africa. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines Autocratic state-centred or Democratic state-centred development and the development challenge of African states.

Literature Review

To achieve the objective of this paper, it was anchored on a sound methodological literature that abound on autocratic and democratic state-centred model and similar literatures was reviewed, the paper therefore, relied on element of past research verifiable evidence on the issues and observation to promote and enhance theoretical unity. Relevant documentary sources for proper analysis included conference paper, relevant topics in text book, academic journal, scholarly articles, newspapers, memos, archival records and papers on contemporary argument on the subject matter.

Conceptual /Contextual Discourse

Development according to Seers (1995), refers to a creation of conditions for the realization of human personalities which implies a redefinition in poverty, unemployment and inequality. The question therefore is who creates this condition? Anderson and Woodrow (1989) see development as a process through which people's physical material, social, organizational, motivational and attitudinal vulnerabilities are reduced and their capacities for progress are increased. Ake (2001), defined development as the attainment of an easier and higher standard of life set by the developer in accordance with his aspiration, values and need. According to Kohli (2004), state led development strategy has yielded mixed results; the states have helped in ameliorating certain societal problems, while compounding others and recreating new ones.State centred development refers to states transforming their society from developing nations and rural based economy to social and economic prosperity through industrialization and technology updating. It is characterised by leaders who are strongly committed to achieve development goals rather than personal enrichment.

Autocratic state in this context is conceived as one in which government plays a dominant role to govern in the economy. It is a multi-faceted approach that places the government at the centre of economic, social and political development efforts.

Historically, state-centred strategies have deep roots in the developmental history of many countries (Todaro & Smith, 2019). Developmental state is associated with scholars like Chalmers Johnson and Alice Amshen, who emphasized the proactive role of the state in guiding and coordinating economic development. There abounds evidence of some states, particularly in East Asia that effectively utilized state intervention to promote industrialization, technological advancement and economic growth. The historical context demonstrates that state-centred development strategies have been implemented with varying and mixed degrees of successes thereby making it imperative to assess their relevance in contemporary development discourse.

The post-World War II period witnessed the emergence of state led development models in Asian countries particularly in South Korea and Taiwan with the desire to advance rapid economic transformation and stimulate industrialization and export oriented growth. Another prominent example of state-centred development is India's post-independence economic policy under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's vision of a mixed economy with a strong public policy and planned development encapsulated in the first five years plan was aimed at reducing poverty, fostering industrialization and achieving self-reliance through state intervention (Brecher & Costello, 1994).

Here, governments enlarge their governing capacity and power through strengthening top-down or hierarchical governance and making partnership with non-state actors in order to accomplish collective goals. For example, Singapore, a third world country that gained independence in 1960 with limited resources embarked on a government led development model under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yeu, implemented a state led development industrialization and export-oriented development model. They invested massively in education, infrastructure and technology creating a business-friendly environment. Today, they are considered among the first world. Yeu's government attracted foreign investment and established state owned enterprises such as Singapore Airlines and Temasek Holdings. The state's strategic planning contributed significantly to Singapore's economic prosperity

In Africa, Botswana, a landlocked third world country in southern Africa, effectively managed its diamond resources through state intervention. The government established partnership with foreign companies to exploit and market diamond. Revenue from this sector were invested in education, health care, and infrastructure, leading to a significant improvement in living standards. In Ethiopia,

the Ethiopian government invested in infrastructural development which pursued a state centred strategy to develop critical infrastructure such as roads, railways and energy facilities.

State centred development strategy sees the state as the main driving force of structural change and economic progress; state capacity where the basic economic structures of the state are underdeveloped with undeveloped markets and lack of adequate entrepreneur; State as the dominant actor for development and the society as a building block available to the state. Acemoglu and Robinson (2002) observed that state centred development strategy expands the role of the state to include nationalizing corporations, providing subsidies and incentives, licensing schemes to reduce competition and guarantee profit, investment in infrastructure as well as central planning, exchange rate stability. In his own view, Martinussen (1997) sees state centred development strategy as the use of the state's administrative resources as an engine of growth and development and as a central planning and redistribution tools.

The key components of state-centred strategy include governance and institutional strengthening. The need is to establish and strengthen governmental institutions including bureaucracy, legal system, regulating bodies, etc. An efficient and transparent government is essential for creating an environment conducive to development; infrastructure development which involves investment in infrastructure such as roads, energy, telecom which are fundamental aspects of state development; human capital development where government must prioritize education, health care and social welfare programme to ensure their citizen are healthy, skilled and empowered; industrialization and diversification; social inclusion and equity. Charles (2017) identified key areas of relevance of state centred strategy. These are:

i. Income redistribution with the ultimate intention to reduce income inequality.

ii. Access to basic services. This is done by prioritizing access to essential or basic services such as health, education, housing, etc.

iii. Resource nationalization. This will provide government with significant revenue which can be invested in infrastructure.

iv. Political stability. The emphasis here is social inclusion and political stability leading to reduction in social unrest and conflict.

v. Industrialization and self-reliance. This is obtained by promoting domestic industrialization and self-reliance, aimed at reducing dependency

vi. Land reform.

Trajectories of Africa's Development Paradigm

Several development initiatives ranging from the Lagos Plan of Action1980; the 1986-1990Priority Programme of Economic Redressing of Africa(PPREA) adopted by the OAU in 1985 and complementary UN Programme for the Economic Redressing and Development of Africa; ECA Alternative, SAP, etc, NEPAD have yielded little or no positive result in terms of promoting development.

In the 1940s and 50s, development Economists, partly influenced by the exploits and successes of the post Second World War reconstruction in Europe and the Soviet's witty central planning model stressed the need for state playing active role in improving the welfare of the people and structural transformation of the economies. Ideas of scholars, Arthur Lewis was very predominant and the call for the state to lead the process of transformation from subsistence agriculture to industrialization. However, attempt at replicating same in the most newly independent African states failed.

In the 1960s, there was a change in the development paradigm by adopting the Import Substitution Industry (ISI) model which encouraged the state to use high tariff and quotas on import to stimulate domestic production, diversification and export trade. The result took the opposite direction by inhibiting self-sustaining industrialization even though it succeeded in some countries like India and Brazil. The Import Substitution Industry (ISI) was prevalent in the 1950s up to 1960s with a focus on

domestic production of goods that were hitherto imported, thereby reducing dependency on foreign market. The resultant outcome of this approach was contentious as some experienced periods of rapid industrialization and economic growth while most states especially in Africa are confronted with stagnation, debt crises and political instability. The divergence in outcomes, according to Kohli (2004) underscores the importance of examining the contextual factors, governance structures and extends influence that mediate the effectiveness of state centred approaches.

The era also witnessed the concept of the developmental state. Scholars such as Johnson (1982; Peter; 1995) popularised the idea of a strong, interventionist state playing a pivotal role in driving economic development. Governments were seen as instrumental in guiding economic activity, investing in critical infrastructure and strategically protecting the industries. This vision is predicated on the assumption that state is envisioned as a proactive agent in steering economic growth and achieving social welfare. In Nigeria for instance, according to Ake (1993) the government, like many other African states embarked on a path of state led development, driven by the belief that strong government intervention was necessary to accelerate economic growth, addressing pressing economic development challenges. It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian government adopted a range of policies and programme such as establishment of state-owned enterprises in both the oil and agricultural sectors aimed at promoting industrialization, infrastructure development and the provision of social services. Despite these interventions and generation of substantial revenues, these enterprises became conduits where public resources were siphoned.

One critical issue against state-centred strategy in Africa has been governance and accountability. Another is the undue pressure from the IFIs and global economic dynamics which brought about the introduction of SAP in the 1980s and 1990s which promoted market- oriented reforms thereby reducing the roles of the state. These reforms, according to Ogwuma (2006) posed a significant challenge to the continuation of the state centred strategies.

The 1970s and 1980s was remarkable for the introduction and imposition of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) as a rescue package for the crisis ridden African economies. One of the critical issues raised was the excessive intervention of the state in the economy and therefore recommended that state intervention in the economic matters of African states needed to be reduced to the barest minimum. Hence, between 1980s and 90s, most African states adopted one form of SAP or the other. However, the results are more hurtful than helpful to African countries.

By late 1990s, the view that lack of good governance and poor quality of state institutions were seen to be at the root of development crisis in Africa became prevalent and as such, the IMF and WB began to impose governance related conditionality. In the 1997 World Development report, the role of the state was succinctly captured that “an effective state is vital for the provision of the goods and services and the rules and institutions should allow markets to flourish and the people to have healthier and happier life without it, sustainable development in terms of economic and social factors would be impossible to achieve (ECA,2010).

Autocratic State Centred Development Model

The experience of states like Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and their deep structural economic transformation and sustained economic growth and development over three decades attest to the Autocratic state planning model. It is therefore imperative for African states, if we effectively want to transform our economies to plan the process, formulate relevant economic and social development strategies and policies and implement the plans and policies suitable to our own peculiarities. The experience of the successes recorded in countries of Asia, Latin America and elsewhere in terms of effective transformation processes calls for rethink for the African countries. On the one hand, these countries have witnessed fundamental patterns of structural changes and economic development characterised by industrialization and diversification. On the other hand, is the role of the state in driving, guiding and promoting successful economic transformation. If developing infrastructures, attracting foreign resources, increasing productivity are important elements of economic transformation anticipated as well as strong functional institutions, the role of state in driving this process is sacrosanct. But what type of state? Is it an autocratic state or democratic state?

The discourse on the state-centred development strategy in Africa has thrown open two major contradictions: i. The feasibility and viability of autocratic state-centred development in Africa against the background of the continent's peculiar realities vis-à-vis the fundamentally altered global environment that seems more constraining particularly with the collapse of the former USSR which also marked the end of socialism or the triumph of capitalism over communism. The second contradiction is what form should the state centred development approach take? Should it be the Asian type of autocratic/authoritarian model or the democratic model arising from the tidal wave of democratization in 1990s? Does the state-centred development model require democracy or must it be applicable in a specific political system?

According to Domingez and Shifter (2003) and corroborated by Afrobarometer (2006), authoritarian regimes do not meet substantial difficulty in state building. For example, contemporary China and Vietnam adhere to authoritarian communist regimes, South Korea and Taiwan, began with capitalist dictatorship, while Europe led by monarchy in the 19thc but most third world countries particularly in Africa, since the 1980s have been struggling with low speed in decision making process, with dispersal of power but still stuck in development process.

However, the scepticism surrounding the emergence of a viable state centred development model on the continent arising partly from the generally poor record of state led development efforts in the past especially in the early decades of post independent African states where the state was, and is still used as avenue for primitive capital accumulation is still fresh where the state exists according to Ake (1996,p.6), as an instrument that facilitates the accumulation of wealth by the governing elites.

In addition to this, the prevalence and persistence of institutional and structural weaknesses that resulted in the dismal performance of the state are still very much with us. The adequate political superstructure and leadership necessary for the pursuit of developmental policies are still absent in most African states. However, it can serve as a pivot for the promotion of human centred development. Kieh(2011)put it that, state centred development in Africa could lead to a renaissance in terms of socioeconomic development and human security.

Does the state centred development model require democracy or must it be applicable in a specific political system? According to Domingez and Shifter (2003) and corroborated by Afrobarometer (2006), authoritarian regimes do not meet substantial difficulty in state building. For example, contemporary China and Vietnam adhere to authoritarian communist regimes as well as South Korea and Taiwan, began with capitalist dictatorship, while Europe led by monarchy in the 19thc but most third world countries particularly in Africa since the 1980s have been struggling with low speed in decision making process, with dispersal of power but still stuck in development process.

Challenges of State-Centred Development Model

Autocratic state-centred development model could lead to political patronage and rent seeking behaviour. The state can become a vehicle for political elites to distribute resources and favours to their cronies and supporters, rather than allocating resources based on merit or need (Hyden, 2006). This has the tendency to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of few, thereby exacerbating inequality and undermining the goal of an all-inclusive development. There is therefore need to strengthen other innovative mechanism explored to address corruption and transparency such as open data platforms, citizens' engagements and strong and effective anti-corruption agencies aimed at enhancing accountability in the use of public resources (Chene and Leonard, 2018).

At the continental level, African states have recognized the need to work together to address issues such as infrastructure development, trade facilitation and regional security which is reflected in the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and other institutions like the African Continental Free Trade Areas (AfCFTA) which seeks to promote economic integration and boot intra Africa trade(AU, 2021).

Socio-economic dynamics and state centred strategies have enormous potentials of shaping the formulation, acceptance and implementation of development initiatives and the overall outcomes of such strategies. For instance, local perception and cultural norms that are deeply ingrained in the life of the people may influence the reception and success and the overall outcomes of such strategies.

State centred approaches may encounter resistance or scepticism if they clash with deeply ingrained cultural practices or beliefs (Banerjee and Duflo, 2009). For example, development initiatives that disregard traditional land tenure systems or gentle roles may face significant challenges in gaining community acceptance. In a multi-ethnic, cultural and religious societies, understanding and respecting local traditions are essential for the effectiveness of state led initiatives (Adigun,et al, 2016). Ignoring cultural nuances can lead to exclusivity which may result in social unrest and failure of development project no matter how plausible the initiatives may be.

State-centred development strategy that does not involve local communities' decision making and project implementation and overall ownership may encounter resistance and fail to address the specific needs of the people. One is the lack of Participation and consensus-building which Mayer et al (1996); and Kaufman, et al (1996) called the lack of sense of national community. According to Mansuri and Rao (2013), community-driven development approaches, where local residents actively participate in project design and management, have shown promise in fostering successful outcomes. Meaningful development and political stability require the collective identity of the citizenry. Leaders of most African states have become parochial with the overriding consideration for personal survival rather than national development

Environmental considerations are increasingly relevant for state centred development strategies particularly in the face of global environmental challenges (UNEP,2021). As Dasgupta (2021) has noted, neglecting environmental sustainability can lead to ecological degradation, resource depletion and long-term development setbacks.

Liberal Democracy and the Challenges of Africa's Development

The basic principles of liberal democratic model include economic liberalism, good governance, protection and promotion of human rights of which according to western view remains the tonic of development within the globe, etc. African states are not left out especially those in the West African sub-region. This explains why there is great agitation from many nations to have their states democratized to reflect the interest of the masses.

Democratic state is based on liberal democracy centred development model. This system on the other hand, have some remarkable feet in some few countries in Africa such as Botswana and Mauritius but largely a failure on a general case. There is need for right leadership and institutional structures. Secondly, is the African state capable of liberating itself from the stranglehold of dominant, particularistic and predatory capitalist interests of both state and non-states actors so as to emerge as an autonomous entity, capable of prioritizing developmental objectives.

Neoliberals triggered messianic euphoria about a world economy that would finally conform to the expectations of theory. It declared that we should unleash `the borderless economy's potential to equalize relations between countries and regions. This belief is at the core of the ideology of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and from the early 1990s, for all practical purposes, these Washington institutions took over the management of the affairs of most poor countries. For many parts of the globe, the result has been a shambles. An abyss now separates Third World reality from the vision. Where the prophets of the new world order predicted harmony, we see famine, war and progressive environmental collapse. Today must drastically begin to take reality into account once again.

The gap between the rich and the poor on this planet is larger than ever before and still growing at least by most methods of measuring. Even after massive economic transfers during three 'Development Decades' that began in 1970, and trillions of dollars of `development assistance', the situation is still dismal and getting worse in many places. Half of the world's population particularly in sub–Saharan Africa lives on less than $2 a day, and in a number of countries real wages peaked as long ago as the 1970s.

The developing world has experienced similar shocking differences between theories of economic harmony (neoliberals) and brutal economic reality before, and there is a lot to learn from these experiences. We must move away from a theory which poses economic harmony as an automatic

outcome of divinely or mathematically premeditated harmony, and move back to one in which economic harmony is a product of conscious policies.

Even though we can see that free trade as advocated by neoliberals under liberal democracy in some contexts makes people poorer, Western governments are still complacently insisting on it and are offering more aid as an incentive for accepting it. It is imperative to note that understanding the problems underlying today's ruling economic theory and resurrecting alternative approaches is a necessary starting point.

It is the incontrovertible fact that rich countries got rich because for decades, often centuries, their states and ruling elites set up, subsidized and protected dynamic industries and services. They all emulated the most prosperous countries at the time, bringing their productive structures into those areas where technological change was being focused. In this way they created rents (a return above `normal' income) that spread to capitalists in the form of higher profits, to labour in the form of higher wages, and to governments in the form of higher taxes. At its core, colonialism and neo-colonialism in its present context is a system that seeks to prevent these types of effects from being produced in the colonies.

The main difference between rich and poor countries is that rich countries have all moved through a stage without free trade, which - when successful - subsequently made free trade desirable(Reinnert,2007). This mandatory passage points in the history of all presently developed countries allowing poor countries to emulate the economic structures of rich countries - is currently outlawed but can only be made effective under autocratic state development model.

There is need for African countries to understand the causes of American and European prosperity, study the policies of those who created it, not the advice of their forgetful successors and formulate policies suitable to their peculiarities and not the palliative measures prescribed by the Washington consensus (Reinnert,2007).

In many poor African countries today, we can observe the opposite of development and progress, that is, retrogression and primitivization. The logic that died with the Berlin Wall was that it is better to have an inefficient manufacturing sector than not to have a manufacturing sector at all, and such an approach has led to falling real wages in many countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. In comparison to the free trade that is forced on poor countries, rich countries restrict imports of agricultural products from the Third World and subsidize their own agriculture. Enlightenment philosopher and economist David Hume, however, suggested that the best way to improve agriculture is through the roundabout way of first improving manufacturing industry - and we now have half a millennium of historical data to back up Hume's insight.

In the light of the foregoing therefore, this paper advocates for democratic governance. Democratic Governance is a new concept developed by African scholars as an alternative to the much touted concept of ‘good governance’ advanced by the World Bank in response to ‘gross mismanagement by African government’(Mafeje, 2002). Unlike good governance which emphasizes such technocratic issues like efficiency, transparency, and accountability in governments, democratic governance seeks to link governance with the people, their participation in the institutions and processes of government based on equality of opportunity and equity (Mafeje, 2002). Cheema, (2005) defines democratic governance as the range of processes through which a society reaches consensus on and implement regulations, human rights, laws, policies and social structure-in pursuit of justice, welfare and environmental protection’ (Cheema, 2005, p.1). Defined in this way, democratic governance is then about democratic institutions and processes by which authoritative allocation of values is undertaken. It is about democratic institutions because it is concerned with such sites of governance like political parties, electoral bodies, legislature, executive branch etc.

Democratic governance therefore, emphasizes the ‘social’ aspect of governance by making it to be human-centred. The sense in seeing governance from this perspective lies in the fact that ‘good’ governance can exist but devoid of democracy. So, the people, who ought to be the main subjects of concern, are left in limbo, while emphasis is put on some less meaningful technical and procedural issues.In addition, popular participation, rather than mere concern with technocratic issues, is the key

element of democratic governance. This is not to downplay the relevance of such issues like transparency and accountability. They are relevant in so far as the concern of the people and their welfare is paramount.

Summary

In the light of the foregoing, we can state that state centred strategies remain a subject of debate in Africa. While some scholars like Mkandawire (2001) are of the view that African nations should continue to prioritize state intervention to address development challenges, others like Hout & Kaufman (2007) are of the opinion that Africa should adopt a more balanced approach that combines state led initiatives with democratic governance associated with private sector participation and civil society engagement. This position is also supported by the World Bank (2020) who argues that while the state plays a crucial role in providing public goods and services, private sector investment and entrepreneurship can drive economic growth and job creation. The civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations on the other hand have gained prominent place in the development discourse of Africa especially in advocating for social justice, accountability and participatory development. According to Bretton (2007) the roles of CSOs and NGOs in holding government accountable and amplifying voices of the marginalized communities has become increasingly recognized. There is therefore need to strengthen other innovative mechanism explored to address corruption and transparency.

Conclusion

In considering the relevance of state-centred development strategy in contemporary development equation of Africa, we cannot ignore the forces of globalization and external factors. Globalization is characterised by increased interconnectedness and interdependence which has implication for how states pursue their developmental goals. The influence of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) by exerting significant influence on global economy cannot be ignored as they exert pressure on countries to adopt market-oriented policies, liberalize trade and attract foreign investment and reduction in public sector expenditure which negates the basic tenets of state centred development paradigm. The IMF and WB often prescribe policy conditions and SAP to recipient countries in exchange for financial assistance. These conditions, according to Stiglitz (2002) can shape a country's economic policies and limit its capacity to implement state led development strategies.

In addition, globalization allows or facilitates the free flow of information, technology and ideas across borders. While these offers opportunities, it also poses challenges to state control. For instance, the spread of social media and international advocacy, campaigns can pressure governments to address issues like human rights and environmental protection affecting their development priorities (Boli-Benneth and Lecher, 2005).

In conclusion, while available statistics has corroborated the thesis of growth without development, it is important to reiterate that while some countries in Africa may be experiencing economic growth in terms of GDP or GNI, this growth is not necessarily a reflection of development as it has not translated into overall development and qualitative improvement on the lives of the people. Therefore, a one size-fits-all model is unlikely to succeed in Africa. So, states should carefully consider their unique circumstances and the potentials considering excessive state control when formulating development strategies many successful development stories particularly in contemporary states have evolved a hybrid approach combining elements of state intervention with market driven policies. For example, China has blended state control with elements of market centred approach to achieve remarkable growth. However, the success of a state centred development strategy depends largely on good governance, transparency, accountability which democratic governance seems to provide a veritable platform for its realization in addition to strong governance institution and anti-corruption measures.

Recommendations

i. There is need for the emergence of a strong political leadership with the will power to transform African states. At the moment, what we have are not leaders but rulers whose mind is fixed on the current benefits and only concerned with holding unto political

power whereas leaders are motivated by vision, destination and the future which they motivate others to follow and lead them there.

ii. Strengthening governance structure and institutions by promoting transparency, accountability within the state by the political elites and Civil Society Organizations.

iii. Promoting active involvement of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and citizens' inclusiveness in the development process from conception, formulation, implementation and evaluation where the people take ownership of the process by the political elites.

iv. Policy makers should consider local context, cultural dynamics and the evolving challenges of the contemporary world.

v. A Holistic approach is required that combines state centred initiatives with civil society engagement, international cooperation, private sector involvement for addressing complex and interconnected issues facing African countries.

vi. To enhance the effectiveness of democratic governance, this paper recommends the need for stronger political commitment, adequate resource allocation, and institutional capacity building.

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