

Tribal Democracy in Africa: The Incumbents are the Winner of the Election

¹Louis M Nyarsuk, ²Dr. S. Thanigaivelan

¹Author: Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy Annamalai University Annamalai Nagar, 600201 Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India, 2019.

²Assistant professor, Department of Philosophy Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar 6000201, Chidambaram Tamilnadu-India

Abstract: In this article, the author wants to critically analysis the system of governments in Africa, which is fully dominated by tribal ethnic affiliation and patronage. Most of the leaders doctored or rigged election to prolong thie tunner in offices because they garner support from their tribal loyalties. Most of the incumbents have ruled for 30 to 44 years or rule for life. \furthermore, most of the head states and governments in Africa do not have respect for the rule of law, human right, and freedom of speeches and expression. They also used patronage and the politics of ethnic identity to keep them in power. The term tribal democracy was coined for the first time by the conceding presidential candidate of Namibia during the presidential election of 1994, when the majority tribes voted against the minority tribe candidate. In Nigeria the Igbo against Hausa, Kenya Kuyukiyu against Luo, in Sudan Jaalyin and against other tribes, and South Sudan Dinka against Nuers and other minority tribes and in Rwanda between Hutus and Tutsi. Election in Africa is a tribal pride, and defeat of the presidential candidate is like a defeat of the whole tribe, that is why Professor Patrick Lulumba stated that, election in Africa is a census to determine which tribe has more population than another tribe. This system of electoral democracy is prevalent in most of the African countries. Many African countries use tribal democracy to elect their tribe men.

Keywords: Tribal Democracy, human right, freedom, electoral democracy.

Democracy etymologically is derived from the Greek word (Demo) mean popular or common people whereas (Kratos) is the rule or government and in Greek it is Demokritos (13c.), In French it is (Democratie, 14c.) and in Latin it is Democratia.

Democracy implies that, the man must take the responsibility for choosing his rulers and representatives, and for maintenance of his rights against the possible encroachment of the government which he has sanctioned to act for him in public matters. It is a system of government in which power is vested in the people, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives. It is also defined as the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people (*Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*).

Whereas, Batton; Dewiel (1997) defines democracy as the form of political regime where citizens choose in a competitive election the occupant of the top political office of the state. Whereas Dewiel (1997) define democracy as the government where contest equality, liberty, justice, and fairness are the ideal values. According to him, people disagreed about politics because interest collide; therefore, he referred to democracy as an ir-resolvable contest of priorities among common values. Dewiel (1956) further contented that, even if we remove all the stupidities and nastiness, democracy cleave in a familiar ways due to competing values such as liberty, justice, equality; therefore, people differs and interests collide which cause conflict. (pp.1.3) He further concluded by saying that, democracy is an unwinnable war of good against good. But Plato in his republic defines democracy as the rule of animals. According to him, ninety nines animals can shake their heads to vote against the one animal who is gifted with knowledge. Plato further stated that, the ruler must be

a philosopher King. He was against democracy, because the juries who voted to put his master Socrates to death due alleged act of treason voted without any knowledge of democracy. That was why he advocated for philosopher kings to be trained to the highest stage of education before assuming office. Plato theory is more or less an aristocracy, or monarchy, because the Spartan and Athenian system of government was limited to the city state and had all the components of both democracy, monarchy, aristocracy and oligarchy, but some critic referred to him as authoritarian, or communist, because Plato in his Republic advocate for the communism of wives, children and properties. Plato' ideal state proposed for a statesman or ruler to be a philosophers king, who are gifted with wisdom and knowledge of the State. Socrates was against democracy, because he thought the Athenians people voted without knowledges. In his Apology, Socrates had criticized the Athenians for sentencing him to death because the jury who voted to sentence Socrates with the act of treason voted without knowledge of democracy. "*Socrates used an analogy of a ship and a captain*". He said the person who is gifted with knowledge of sailing the ship is the captain and not everybody else could sail the ship. Same with statesman who are gifted with the knowledge of the states. The Plato concept of philosopher king depicted some of the current problems of leadership and governance especially in Africa. Because some of the African leaders, especially the president of South Sudan, have no basic education. Socrates, was right, because majority of the African leaders do not have basic knowledge. For example, the former president of Sudan Omer El Basher only completed a military college; the current president of South Sudan have basic primary education, that is why they lack knowledge of governance and leadership. Secondly, Plato wanted a society where every citizen should have a share of the resources of the state, that, was why he advocated for the communism of properties and wives, such that, leaders who are greedy, should not embezzle the resources of the nation for their personal families' gain. This model is emulated by the Catholic nuns and priests who live the life of sanctity and celibacy without a family of their own. Pope Disband restricted Pope, Bishops, priest, nuns and brothers from marrying and having families of their own due to corruption in the churches where Bishops and priests encroached to peoples' lands and properties.

According to Nohlen (1999) Research in 1990 found that, only four countries could be considered as electoral democracies in sub-Sahara Africa and they are as follows: South Africa, Botswana, Gambia, Senegal, Ghana, Tanzania, and Mauritania. But in Botswana democracy has been controlled by the incumbent since independence in 1966. Although Africa have adopted democracy, however, 11 out of 44 countries that went for a free and fair election completed their terms in offices; 6 countries were plunged into a civil war, before the next election; 18 had an election which was not considered free and fair. And 13 incumbents took to the second and third terms. Furthermore, 25 out of 46 countries surveyed found out that, the incumbents enjoyed a majority in parliament 37 out of 46 sub-Saharan African countries held a presidential election, which most researchers believe favor the incumbents, because presidential election do not provide for a political space for oppositions to compete. Mannang (2005), Battan, et-al contended that, pluralistic society has a cross cutting membership to different groups, which reduce cleavage, and polarization is minimized. Paglia (2004) further contended that, these communities were homogeneous and were ruled by the tribal kings and chiefs and never thought of heterogeneous administration that is why there is ethnic chauvinism and polarization that resulted into conflict.

The international election observers such the Carter foundation, have referred to most African system of government as autocratic and (*ethocratic*) or tribal democracy, because it blends democratic features with ethnicity and absolute tyranny and totalitarianism. According to Mannang (2005), there is no multi-party democracy in Africa that is why there is ethnic polarization. Beside, national agenda alleviates existing cleavage lines, and regulate leadership succession, by assimilating diverse groups, to the party which forge unity. For example, in USA, most minorities are welcome into the democratic party than into the republican party. Even in Canada, the liberal are more accommodating to minorities than the conservatives. The national agenda, such as the affordable health care in USA, (Obama Care) or the universal health care in Canada, social security or social welfare, pension and old ages, are some of the platform voters are interested to hear. The Core values special in the USA is not aiming at alleviating poverty and provision of social welfare to the poor, because over 40 million American people do not have health care coverage. But the America spent billion in the Middle East, and Africa on defense and humanitarians assistant; by providing aid to poor countries including some Arabs and African countries who are affected by war.

According to Diamond (1997), research scholars used the western models of democracy as a guide to democratization in Africa. He further contended that, the minorities should be integrated into the party, through strong social policies for group mobilization from the grassroots. In addition, Brattan (1997) contrast and compare democracy between advance countries and the sub-Saharan Africa countries and concluded that, the way how democracy is built in Africa is different

from that of the western pattern of societies; because democracy in African is a one party system with a majority which does not overlap, and ethically oriented. Besides, it does not allow competition. Furthermore, there is no independent election commission, because the election commissions are controlled by the incumbent presidents who appointed them from the ruling party. In addition to that, most of the African systems of governments are egalitarian or totalitarians in nature, and most of them are rule by the fdespotic and autocratic leaders who blend dictatorship with decentralization or regional limited decentralization to connote federalism democratic system. The civil liberties and fundamental human rights are suppressed, and there is no rule of law and accountability in most of the African Countries. Although there are multi parties in some of the African countries, yet, the ruling party changes the legislation to favor the incumbents ruling party. The high court judges and the election commissions are appointed by the president of the ruling party. Elections are always rigged by the same election commission in favor of the incumbent president. This has happened in South Sudan, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Benin, and Namibia. Further, there is Censorship of the press and lack of fundamental human rights are the major problem facing African Governments. There is no spirit of nationalism and patriotism. Tribalism is a substitute for nationalism, and leaders and citizens are identified more by their tribe rather than by the nation which in turn affect the nation building. This is evident from the fact that South Sudan is plunged into a civil war soon after independence; because of tribalism, and patronage due to lack of the spirit of nationalism. Further, the institutions of government were not properly developed. The constitution was poorly written to favor the ruling party rather than the nationals. The president was given absolute powers, what Thomas Hobbs referred to as the powers of King in his Leviathan. The presidents has the absolute power to dismiss an elected governors and appointed new ones, which is a mockery of democracy “as the rule of the people, by the people and for the people”. The civil liberties and freedom of speech and expression are suppressed in South Sudan and ost of the African countries. There is no independent judiciary inSouth Sudan, and the accused are presumed guilty in the court of law before proven innocent. The accused are held for months or year without trial. There is no respect for human right, instead, might is right in South Sudan.

How tribalism stunts African democracy?

According Calestous Juma (2012) International development professor at Harvard University: “Africa's democratic transition is back in the spotlight. The concern is no longer the stranglehold of autocrats, but the hijacking of the democratic process by the tribal politics. Tribalism according to him has stunt Africa democracy, because thousands of people were killed in Kenya in the name of democracy. In south Sudan 20,000 Nuers were killed because of democracy. Dr. Patrick Lumumba stated that, the election will determine how much blood will be spilt, therefore he suggested that, Africa should adopt a system like China, which do not have a human right right of rule of law, but yet it provided for his people. The term Tribal democracy was first coined by the conceding president candidate in Botswana in 1994 election who was defeated by the incumbent who come from majority tribe. Botswana has been ruled by the same incumbent party since independent 1966 that is because the voters are not voting for the party platform, or ideology, but rather on a tribal affiliation due to the politics of an ethnic identity. Loyalty to the presidential candidate is based on ethnicity or tribe. That is why there is a lot of civil wars and genocides in Rwanda, South Sudan and many others countries in Africa such as: Seirra leon, Ongola, South Sudan, Liberaia,. Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and many other countries fought wars because of misrule by the incumbents.

Ethnicity has been used as a mean of gaining power either through military or the ethic convass and suffrage. Each ethnic group mobilizes their groups against one another. That’s what Professor Patrick Lumumba of Kenya referred to election in Africa is a tribal census to determine which tribe ¹has more population than others. Because nationals are not voting based on a party platform or ideology, but rather on the basis of tribes and ethnicity. According to Horowitz, (1985), plural society like African, Asia, and the Caribbean’s parties, tend to organize along the ethnic line. Henceforth, religion polarization is more susceptible to violence and conflict than linguistic difference. Although India and Pakistan share common culture and language, yet, religious tension has created deep divisions among the two nations.

Even modern political parties are polarized, between the ruling party and the opposition parties. Polarization and cleavage in government affect the decision making even in policy making. For example, the republicans in USA are more radical against the democrats who are more concern about the social welfare of its citizens, whereas republic are concerned about foreign policing the world order in the international politics. While Democrats are concerned with the provision of social

¹ Dr. Carol Berger on Ethnocide as a tool of state building in South Sudanand the never ending wars

Prof. Peter Adwok Nyaba. The Skiwewd political thought, and the falure of the state formation

benefit, especially the affordable health care. Further, Democrats are more concerned with domestic policies that, aims at providing social service to low income.

Election irregularities and rigging in Africa

Most incumbents have contested for four or even seven terms in office, because there is no term limit in Africa, and the electoral system is flawed, because the election commission is not independent but rather appointed by the president to serve the incumbent term in office. The election commission doctored the result by rigging the election in favor of the most presidents in Africa. Some election commission officers were caught stuffing the electoral ballot boxes in Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe, to mention a few. Two Doctors who served as election commission officers were killed during 2019 election in Nigeria, and an IT officer who entered data into the system was found dead in Kenya 2018 election.

Sudan: President Hassan Al Basher who seized power by coup has been in office since 1989 and had rigged the election to prolong his tenure in office. He ruled the country under dictator rule until he was deposed on April 11, 2019, by Ahmed Awad Ibn Auf who claim to have taken over. But in two days he stepped down due to continuous popular uprising in Sudan until now. Despite the current successor Awad Abdelhaman Burhan, who also claimed to have taken power on April 12, 2019 still cling to power. Sudan has been ruled by military dictators since 1958, when general Ibrahim Aboud took over power by coup. And in 1969, Jaafar Mohamed Nimeiry seized power by coup, who was also deposed by Mohamed Ahmed Suwar El Dahab in 1985. On the other hand, Uganda President Yoweri Museveni rigged election several times, arrested the contesting candidates from the opposition. He has been in power for 35 years. Further, former President of Zimbabwe: Robert Mugabe rigged election in 2002, and 2006 and ruled the country for 33 years until he was deposed by the army chief when he was 92 years and considered unfit to rule due to aging. Tunisia President Beji Caid Essebsi is 92 years old and still expected to contest for the presidency when his term expired. Paul Biya of Cameroon is 84 years old and had ruled for 33 years. He was unable to stand nor address the public yet he wanted to contest. On the other hand, Kenya had had an election rigged for several times by the incumbents; the opposition sued the incumbent, and the court nullified the result of the election in favor of the opposition; but the court never provided a provision for oversight to regulate the re-run for election. The incumbent presidents in Africa are always the winner of the election.

Adejumobi S. (2000, Sorensen 1993), further urge that, to bring democracy and good governance back to Africa, the people must have a political participation and the involvement in the choice of their leaders and a decision making which constitute democracy; a view substantiated by Joseph (1990) as a process of democratic renewal in Africa. Further, the World Bank in 1994, has incorporated a condition for good governance in their aid development corporation for Africa; by heralding the concept of good governance and the institution building, public accountability, transparency, rule of law, civil society participation, and alleviation of poverty in Africa (*Olukoshi 1992, Nunnkamp 1995*).

Furthermore, the Commonwealth countries have also promoted the program for democracy, respect for human rights, and good governance at Harare Zimbabwe conference in 1991. And in 1996 in New Zealand they imposed punitive measures where the erring country like Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth 1997; and Sierra Leone was also suspended for seizing the power by coup. African Union is threatening Sudan to hand power to civilian within two months or else, it will be suspended from the African Union. ECOWAC have intervened militarily to depose Gambai president J. Yahya who refused to concede the defeat and handover.

Further, good governance, although equate to liberal democracy yet it does not mean democracy; it could be authoritarian, socialist, or dictatorship, but it literally mean the organizational effectiveness, popular welfare which promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. In addition, the post colonial rulers like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, were referred to as "*the dictatorship of development, rather than democracy of development*", because they did place welfare of the people first and constructed a minimal or fair good governance. Whereas, Mobutu of Zaire, Samuel Doe of Liberia, and Siad Barre of Somalia had destroyed the wealth and social fabric of their countries with misrule and bad governance (*Nzongola, 1982, Sandbrook 1985, human rights watch 1997*).

Other scholars link bad governance in Africa to the colonial era, military dictatorship, corruption, and the rigging of the election, therefore, there must be a need for demilitarization, and demobilization in Africa. In addition, the challenges of African democracy are due to the: election rigging by incumbents; the repression and elimination of the opposition

candidates; and the key election commission officers who are not from the incumbents camps have posed a challenge to African's democracy. Further, the BBC, and CNN, have reported that the election commission officers in Nigeria were killed in Feb election 2019: Prof Comfort Dooshima and Dr. Ferry Gbereghe were shot because they refused to allow the election result be doctored or tempered with at the provincial result in Nigeria. The independent National commission Information Technology Chris Msando of Kenya, was tortured and found death after three days during the 2017 election in Kenya. Therefore, these election in Africa are a guise to create an illusion's believe locally and internationally that, Africa is democratizing. Further, its also to deceive the nationals that the incumbents have been mandated to continue ruling, therefore, the conduct of elections is to keep the status quo and to increase the tenure of the incumbents without a hope for change of conceding defeat.

Criticism of Liberal democracy by African scholars is tantamount Africanization. Most critic are bewildered whether it is democratizing or Africanizing democracy in Africa. Larok (2011) found that, liberal democracy cannot fit well with the social, economic condition of Africa, henceforth, we need to invent a new system that suit its context. The author criticized the features of liberal democracy such as "regular free and fair election, whereby voters surrender their rights over decision making to the representatives, who wine and dine and enrich themselves while the majority economics condition remain the same". Besides, the election has not been actually fair, but rather rigged by the incumbents. Furthermore, the critic of liberal democracy thought that, "the liberal democracy doctrine of individual choice by secret ballot is a tyranny of individuals over the majority". He thought that, the individual has to decide for the whole society without the consensus and the need of the society. But In Africa traditions, collective values, regulate individual's behavior. In addition to that, the author contended that, political parties act as proxy representative democracy rather than direct vote. Henceforth, "the elite rule is tyranny over the majority".

Critics of liberal democracy also accused the west of globalizing their own political culture and economic ideology; to recolonize Africa. In fact, most regime are either changed, or even their leders were killed by their former colonies. For example, president of Barkina Faso, Thomas Sankara (*was killed by his adopted brother*) on the orders from France; and Prsident of Zaire, Patrick Lomumba was also killed with instruction from their post colonial master Belguim. Similarly, the west fought a cold war to discourage socialism in Tanzania, during President Nyerere, in Ethiopia during Mangisto, and in Sudan during President Jaafaar Mohamed Nimeri and many other commonistscountries who adopted socialism to uplift the social economic condition of Africa were sanctioned by the west or removed from power. Even the cold war between Soviet Union, Yugoslavai, China, and North Korea against America was and is still due to amaerican hostilities toward the communist contries,

Further, African scholars such as Mafege, Claude Ake, Cyril Obi, Francis Nyamnjour, Shiviji George Ayithey et al argued that, liberal democracy is not suited to Africa realities; because it gives power to a few to rule, and alienated, and disempowered the majority. (Ake, 1985, & 2000). These schools of thought argued that, African democracy is a collective social sense, which form a political participation that is superior to liberal democracy. Further, (Ake 1994, Nyamnjuh 2005) criticize liberal because if focus on the autonomy of the individual which is contrary to the African dominance communal spirit and solidarity. Hence, for democracy to succeed in Africa, it must recognize that, Africans are patriotic and loyal to their villages than to the state and country which a secondary. According to Nyamnjuh (2005) "implementing liberal democracy in Africa is like trying to force into a body of a fat person a dress made to fit slim fleshed Hollywood model of Barbie doll. But when the dress failed to fit the African person, instead of blaming the tiny dress, and the designer, you lay fault blame on the tiny body for choosing the wrong size". Therefore, Liberal democracy, according to the scholars is a miss matched with African realities, due to history of slavery, exploitation, colonization, and dictatorship, most of which were formented by the very agents of liberal democracy. Furthermore, other school of thought wants Africa to revert to traditional forms of chieftdom, kingdom and clan chiefs, which also lack the rule of law, human rights and constitutions. But Prof. Mugaju, concluded that, all the pre colonial social systems were rooted in authoritarianism, conformance and compliance (Conyers and Larok 2008). Even monarchy, dictatorship, and benevolent dictatorship have all been contested. Therefore, liberal democracy is a better option for Africa. But the main recommendations for Africa is to reconstitute an electoral legislation and an independent electoral commission to be independent to conduct a free and fair election.

REFERENCES

- [1] DeWiel, B.; Democracy A history of ideas (1956) UBC Press, University of British Columbia ISBN 0-7748-08081-2
- [2] Strauss, L.; Cropsey, J.; History of Political Philosophy: (1987) The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0-226-77708-
- [3] Curley, E.; Hobbes, Leviathan: (1994) Hackett Publishing company, Inc. Indianapolis Indiana USA.
- [4] Macpherson, C.; John Locke Second Treatise of Government (1980) Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis & Cambridge
- [5] Betts, C.; Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract (1993) Oxford University Press New York, USA.
- [6] Philip, M.; Rosen, F. John Stuart Mill on Liberty, Utilitarianism, and other essays: (2015) Oxford University Press New York USA.
- [7] Waterfield, R. Plato Republic: (1993) The Oxford University Press, New York USA
- [8] Baker, E. Aristotle Politics (1993) Oxford University Press New York USA
- [9] Mansfield, H.; The Prince Nicola Machiavelli (1998) The University of Chicago Press. ISBN 0-226-80532-8
- [10] Cooter, R. (2012) Solomon's Knot: How law can end poverty of nations
- [11] Schabert, T. (2015) The second birth : on the political beginnings of human existence.
- [12] Haugen, G. (2014) The locust effect: why the end of poverty requires the end of violence.
- [13] Juma, C. How tribalism stunts African democracy? International development professor at Harvard University: 27 November 2012