



The Global Context of Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: An Heuristic Discourse

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Abstract. The paper assesses the globalization of democracy in the twenty-first century. It identifies factors and processes that have enhanced the global spread of democracy in the twenty-first century. Such factors include globalization of democratic principles, the growth of democratic development institutions, the growth of international civil society organizations, the roles of the international press among others. It identifies challenges facing the process as consisting of the spread of global inequality, the illiberal domination of power by hegemonic forces in the international organization. It concludes that through adoption of open and transparent government by states in the contemporary period, frustration of forceful take-over of power by the military authorities, welfare promotion and enforcement of international human right laws democratic development will be enhanced in global system in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: Global. Globalization. Democracy. Democratic Development, Twenty-First Century.

1. Introduction

The most important milestone of the new century is the emergence of globalization as its variables (liberal democracy, migration across national boundaries, revolution in technology and communication, trade and interaction among others) are involved today, more than before (Mimiko, 2012). In the new century, the spread of democracy arising from pressure for transition from sundry and authoritarian political regime to one form or the other of democracy has reached full bloom and this function is equally helped with the implosion of communism in the Soviet bloc and, in other authoritarian part of the world (Mimiko, 2012). Hence, democracy has become a global agenda that has featured in intra and inter-state relations, and in the internal management processes of international institutions across different continents of the world in the contemporary global system.

Fundamentally, heuristic discourse cherishes the discovery of facts and bodies of information that are

imperative for further investigation. Hence, the paper assesses actors, factors, processes and challenges that are involved in entrenching democratic principles in different states and among non-state actors in the twenty-first century in the global system.

2. Conceptual Clarification

This is a body of inter-related ideas, arguments, principles or rules that forms the intellectual background on which the research is based. We begin with the concept of globalization:

2.1 Globalization

According to Held and McGrew (2007) globalization denotes the expanding scale, growing magnitude, speeding up and deepening impact of interregional flows and patterns of social interactions. To them, it means the transformation in the scale of human social organization that connect distant communities and expand the reach of power relating across the major regions of the world. They explain that global order results from the shared identity and values such as accountability, justice, rule of law and welfare and national communities are locked up into webs of regional and global governance which provide common structure of rights, duties and welfare for citizens.

According to Johari (2013) globalization is an omnibus phrase that includes an array of processes such as time and space compression cultural and commercial homogenization, technological sophistication and aggressive intensification in the consciousness of the world as a whole. Noting that, it is a set of interrelated processes which connect individuals, groups, communities, international government and non-governmental organizations in a complex web of social relations in the world in the contemporary period.

Very critical in the contemporary global order is the globalization of democratic project promoted and supported by an array of international institutions and governments of various states located in different regions of the world.

Lamy, et al (2011) contend that globalization is the process of increasing interconnectedness between societies such that events in one part of world, more and more have effects on peoples and societies far way and a globalized world is one in which political, economic, cultural and social events involve more and more interconnected and such have much impact on peoples' daily life experiences. Hence, entrenchment of democratic ethos is a global project in dominant in the twenty-century global system.

2.2 The Concept of Global or Transnational Democracy

According to McGraw (2007) transnational or global democracy deals with the idea of democracy beyond borders that is exhibited after the cold war. This features as advocates of modern liberal democracy demand the widening and deepening of the democratic order to cover the private spheres of household, work place and inter-state dealings. He adds that political communities are being created by the growing constitutionalization of world order, that is, through the accumulation of multilateral, regional and transnational arrangements that have appeared in the last fifty years and that has created the opportunity to have global constitutions that regulate the affairs of the global society. Accompany this feat is the entrenchment of notable democratic principles of self-determinations, popular sovereignty, democratic legitimacy and legal equality of states within the society of states.

In addition, transnational democracy is espoused by the activities of transnational civil societies who daily advocate the language of stake holding within the process of international institutions such as World Trade Organization and other ones and in the authorities of government institutions in the USA and in other countries. The democratization of international society has equally accelerated recently due to the effect of globalization and the activities of transnational civil societies who are seeking to promotion human condition across different states to the universe.

According to Dryzek (1999) democracy is today the main legitimating principle of government and around the world, political leaders and activists everywhere proclaim their belief in democracy and even dictators routinely excuse themselves on the grounds that they

are simply stabilizing matters to lay the ground for democracy to return. Noting, that this is the age of globalization and democracy where important issues increasingly elude the control of nation-states and democracy must follow immigration of issues, problems, strategies and solutions of the transnational society.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section provides the necessary supports to the proposed study by systematically identifying known variables and establishes relationship between and among them. It equally set the limits or boundary for the proposed study. The researchers adopted eclectic mode theoretical framework by situation the paper in two theories. We begin with the first one;

3.1 System Theory of International Relations

The groundwork and analysis of system theory was done and popularized by Professor David Easton. According to him, the political system receives impact from the environment in the form of demands and supports and produces output in the form of policies and decisions. The environment plays importance roles by influencing or conditioning what takes place in the process of administration. The framework has been useful in analysis of the international political system (Gaubu, 2007).

In a broader context, the study of complex relations existing among states and other actors can best be approached from the perspective of system theory, in that, it is asked direct questions about the international system and the nature of interactions that occurs within that system overtime. (Ojo,1986). International system matrix composed of actors of entities such as states, some private individuals and institutions and multinational corporations and the conversion of demands are done by foreign affairs, diplomats, international organizations, international courts of justice and tribunal. While the outputs come inform of statutes, treaties, awards, among others. In contemporary time, some issues formally taken to be local or domestic have gradually become international issues. Coupled with the fact that it is gradually problematic to distinguish between international issues and purely domestic ones (Adesola, 2004). One of such issues is matter of democratic issues has assumed international or global dimensions such that, an abridgement to democratic process in a state is frowned at and collective sanctions is applied by actors outside the borders of the given states. In the twenty first globalized world, collective efforts are globally taken to ensure observance of democratic

development and democratic defeat anywhere is responded to by forces operating in the domestic and international environment.

3.2 Neo-Liberal Democratic Theory of Politics

Adam Smith (1774), John Stuart Mill (1892), and Jeremy Bentham (1789) were early founders of liberal democratic theory and the theory enjoy wide acceptance in democracies like the USA, Britain, France, Canada among others. Liberal democratic theory espouses political systems that encourage private property, social justice, majority rule and equal opportunity for citizens' participation in political affairs of their state.

According to Rourke (2008) neo-liberalists contend the international political system is not only anarchical but rooted in global complex interdependency, which is, countries are tied together through trade and other social interactions that both increase cooperation and limit conflict. In their view, complex interdependence also promotes the increase use of international law and the creation of international organizations to deal with mutual problems. In addition, in the early 1980s, with the thinking of neoliberal ideology, the thought on democracy developed and widened and the common understanding was that democracy is not just a formal political arrangement but a way of life embracing plurality, diversity and difference (Myon, 2014). Central to the neoliberal thinking is fact that individuals are rational creatures who have their interests and can determine their needs and desires and desire less state intervention. Also, the state should deal with new challenges posed by the menace of nuclear proliferation, cross border terrorism, environmental pollution, serious epidemic and racial and ethnic conflicts (Johari 2007). Hence, the thinking of the neoliberal aligns with central thought of their research paper that democracy is a global issue that transcends state boundary and the need to use different platforms to protect democratic values and ethics in the global system, in the contemporary of globalization, with its attendance changes taking place in different regions of the world.

4. Methodology

The paper adopted qualitative research design and expressive data were collected from secondary sources such as books, journals, periodicals, official publications among others. Data analysis involves the application of interpretive and descriptive approach that is dominant in the qualitative research mode to probe into the ways through which democratic ethos were entrenched globally in the twenty-first century

5. Findings and Discussion

The paper assesses the global spread of democratic ethos in the twenty-first century by taking insightful analysis of factors, processes and challenges of the global spread of democracy in the contemporary times. From thick literature reviews, theoretical expositions and textual and expository analysis of relevant materials, the researchers draw together relevant secondary data for further discussion on the issue under research in this section of the paper.

5.1 Analyzing the Global Context of Democracy in the Twenty First Century

Firstly, democracy is a globally accepted principle of government in the contemporary world. According to Baradat (2013) the most basic idea in democracy is that people are essentially equal and that each person has a right to have a say in who governs and how they are doing so. He explains that legitimate power comes from the people and government therefore is legal, only when it governed according the consent of the people and the act of popular consent of government is captured by theories of popular sovereignty and the social contract.

Contributing to this, Pennock (1979) contends that democracy as an ideal where government by the people, where liberty, equality and fraternity are secured to the greatest possible degree and in which human capacities are developed to the utmost, by means including freedom of the people and of common problem and interest. Most fundamental principles of democracy include (i) popular sovereignty (ii) freedom in society (iii) human equality in society (iv) consent and contract (v) the state as a delegated power (vi) citizen participation and consent in governance (Christenson, 1972). The aforementioned democratic principles have attracted attention and approval in countries of the world. Every democratic country seeks to apply democratic principles such as equality, periodic election, rule of law, majoritarianism in their governance process across different continents of the world.

Secondly, global development of human right institutions, particularly, and the coming of Human Rights Commission to handle human rights issues across states of the world. Right from the making and signing of Magna Carta or Great Charter between the nobles and King John of England in 1215 (Segah), the issue that the individual had natural rights against the king and those rights should be permanent, has been dominant in the global system. This was followed with

the promulgation of English Habeas Corpus Act of 1679, the legal process for securing liberty of the suspect by affording immediate release from unlawful or unjustifiable detention in prison or private custody. (Seggah 2006). An important development in the twenty first century is the universal declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations in 1948. This was followed by international convention on civil and political right, right to democratic rule as a Human Right. At the constitutional level, the African Charter on Human Right entered into force on 21st October, 1986 after its ratification by the majority of OAU members and it guarantee a number of political rights and civil rights without qualifications – the right to equality before the law, human dignity and inviolability and the right to asylum. It prohibits all forms of degrading treatment and exploitation especially slavery, torture and degrading punishment. It also contains political and civil rights such as right to life, freedom of conscience, expression, association, assembly and movement and the right to receive and impact information.

With the coming of African Union from the transformation of the organization of African Union, the right of intervention in human rights situations as prescribed by the African Union is known as humanitarian intervention was entrenched. This was built in the norm of shock, the conscience test, and was embarked upon when a state violated some maximum humanitarian interventional law standard (Agwu, 2003). Human right issues from history have attracted global attention and responses and this has been enhanced at continental level in different regions of the world. The activities of the Human Right Commission of the United Nations and the Rome Statute of 1998 establishing international criminal court which is empowered to exercise foundation over persons for the most serious crimes of international concern such as Human right illustrate the global attention on Human right issues.

Thirdly, there is increasing roles of international institutions in promoting democratic development, in the global system in contemporary period.

Oyediran (2000) posits that the strengthening of the fabric of international relations has not proceeds only at the global level, it has also continued to take place at regional levels, and sub-regional institutions have been created as mechanisms for addressing problems common to states in those regions of the globe and have demonstrated in varying degrees, the capacity to achieve the purposes of their member-states. Noting, that prominent among those issues demanding attention are human rights and fundamental freedom and democratization.

International organizations, at global, regional and sub-regional levels have been actively involved in democratic promotion across different continent of the world right from the twentieth century. International institutions also help in expanding democratic choice, in that, they have been involved in protecting human rights within and cooperating with other countries in the adoption of some polices, and cooperating with the countries of the world through bilateral or multilateral treaties in a bid to solve mutual problems (Moravic 2016). This has resulted in the making of global policies such as Sustainable Development Agenda and conflict management issues. All international organizations, whether global, regional or sub-regional ones, work against forceful takeover of governments and termination of democratic government in states of the world (Isinkaye 2011). All international organizations, at all levels have taken resolution and adopted protocols on sustaining and promoting democratic government in states of the world. An example are Chapter 1, Article 1 of the United Nation Article 3 of the African Union and ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good sustenance of 2001. All the afore-mentioned articles and protocols are made to promote democratic development in states of the world. Equally, The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was founded in July, 1979 to provide collective security and to reduce economic dependence in South Africa and has since undergone a radical realignment, with South Africa leading the organization. The SADC's 1992 treaty states clearly that the consolidation, defence and maintenance of democracy, peace, security and peace are the principal objectives (Adetula, 2006). In 1996, it also established organ of Politics, Defence and Security to settle disputes by negotiation, mediation and arbitration and its effects have been felt in mediating conflict in Comoros and Democratic Republic of Congo among others. This has further fanned the ember of democratic development by international organizations.

Fourthly, this has been increasing roles of international/transnational civil societies in democratic promotion in the twenty first century global system.

According to Rouke (2008) trans-nationals advocacy networks (TAN) are created comprising of groups of Non-Governmental Organizations and International Governmental Organizations that share interest in a specific of a global society such as democratic project and international conferences are held as the centre of the political stage and as a vehicle that promotes their

roles visibly in the global system. Global interconnectedness opens up new possibilities for citizens groups and for protecting and strengthening independent political groupings in authoritarian and close societies (Kelvin, 2007).

As Mbah (2013) notes, non-governmental organizations in the 21st century are greatly involved in every aspect of human rights and human right activists are risking their lives and livelihood for the sake of free speech, democracy and religion and social tolerance. Others are speaking out against arbitrary imprisonment, and modes form of slavery and women and girls trafficking.

Greenhill (2017) underscores the roles of transnational actors in human right promotion across different states, particularly, the intergovernmental organizations. He explains that states' right compliance tends to converge with their peers IGO member states and reinforce each other in context of that IGO membership and promotion of human right culture, norm internationalization and human compliance. He concluded that effective is carried out by the vast networks of transnational and local human right through the building of intensive cooperation in regard to transnational and domestic advocacy.

Fifthly, there is increasing roles of international press in projecting the basis for democratic values/ethos in the global system in the contemporary time. The globalization of communication in the twentieth century is a process that has been driven primarily by the activities of communication conglomerates (Thompson, 2007), and this is primarily due to the emergence of the internet and global television and radio stations that broadcast across different continents of the world. Telecommunication with its ability to connect communications beyond geographic space is strengthening the identity principle and members of transnational movements such as those linking women from various countries or human rights activists are linked and thereby creating a functionalism that could encourage international integration on a global scale (Goldstein, 2011). Hence, the use of a website, mobile telephones also help to integrate and reduce authoritarianism in the international political system. Non-Governmental Organisations use information to create awareness and cause a change in the behavior of government and to promote democratic ethos in authoritarian states. Also, elections and political processes in states of the world are monitored via international communication systems and human right promotion is facilitated through the operation of global communication outfits.

However, there are challenges in instilling and entrenching democratic ethos in the global system in the twenty-first century. Such identified challenges include the under-listed cases:

Agwu (2003) posits that one of the problems of globalization within the compass of human right is related to the widening of the gap between rich and the poor countries. Also, globalization foisting of neo-liberalism in the under-developed countries has further deepened human mystery indices and greatly militating against them. Capacity to combat their social problems such as drug trafficking armed robbery, financial crimes among others.

Furthermore, the liberal character of the international institution has been challenged as entrenching democratic deficit. According to Lamy, etal (2011) the illiberal nature of regimes and institutions subsist where fifteen members of international society determine issues of international peace and security and five of the fifteen can exercise power of veto, In an instance where nearly two hundred states in the world can believe that military action ought to be taken and such an action can contravene the UN chapter if one of the permanent members cast a vote. In addition, they argue that most policy descriptions of western financial institution always come into conflicts with the norms of democracy and human rights, as they tend to impoverish and dis-empower the people financially.

Regilme (2019) contends that the rise of illiberal population exists between, within and beyond the supposedly core human rights states or 'steward states' as they tend to undermine global human rights order instead of reinforcing it. Explaining further, he maintains that the end of the cold war in the 1990s stimulated a global appetite for liberal democratic values and human rights norms but the prospect of a conveying global human rights order seems to be bleak.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

From the foregoing, it is glaringly clear that democracy is a global issue that has attracted attention in the global system in the contemporary period. It is a global principle of government that is central to internal management of a state, inter-state relations and the process of international institutions.

We therefore recommend the under-listed strategies to further entrench democratic ethos in the current global system:

Firstly, that states of the world should maintain open and transparent government as this forms the fundamental ways of achieving democratic development of states in the global system. An open and accessible government that allows citizen's participation in the governance process is highly desirable in the contemporary world.

Secondly, there is need for collective action by states through the instrumentality of the United Nations and regional organizations to frustrate and alienate authoritarianism and forceful takeover of power in states of the world. This has been gradually promoted since the middle of the twentieth century and needs to be sustained in the twenty-first century global order.

Thirdly, the promotion of citizens' welfare is imperative in states of the world. This is because social empowerment forms part of the democratic dividends in the contemporary global system. This will ensure effective human security and the accompanied social order that government exists to promote democratic development in the states of the world.

Fourthly, an increasing acceptance of Global Best Practices by nations of the world is imperative. This refers to certain methods, techniques, mechanisms and practices that have been tested and found to be generating or producing results globally and as such can serve as examples and templates and set the path for others to follow (igi.global.com). Elements of global best practices include accountability, transparency, responsibility, reporting among others. These tend to promote democratic management involving accountable and responsible government and are promoted by international organization of all levels, global continental and sub-continental. As Osaghae (2004) notes that most Africa states, donors and civil societies have played major roles in building of oversight institutions, usually in profession like civil society organizations and belong to agencies of the state as this has taken the form of finances and technical support for reforms in areas such as legislative competence and effectiveness, budgetary process, human rights, gender, electoral process, anti-corruption and legal-judicial reforms. Noting that the USA is involved in the promoting a participatory transparent and accountable legislatives and budgetary process, while the Africa Development Bank and other donors as supporting the anti-corruption crusade and its printed institution, the anti-corruption commission and the transforming of the police into a community and human right friendly and accountable force.

Finally, there is need to strengthen and enforce international human rights law and institutions that are

concerned with human rights promotion in the global system. Vagrant violations of human rights in the global system should be adequately punished and the culprit should be brought to book. This will ensure right democratic development in the countries of the world.

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