

The Myth Called Western Democracy: A Diplomatic Approach

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ABSTRACT: The idea of democracy has occupied our understanding of how leaders who want to govern a state should be elected but covert, the west promotes its national interest through it. Democracy is an Athenian idea but has become a standard form of government to humanity. Ethnologically, democracy is the rule of the people. The main thrust of this paper is to explain the western purported view of democracy been what she preaches and how the West had supported autocratic regimes like the Saudi Arabia Absolute Monarchical System and Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, as against leaders that are aimed to foster development in their nations. Consequently, the paper unveils the national interest objective of the West in her dealings with non-European nations on the disguise of “democracy” in pooling down great leaders. Thomas Sankara, Saddam Hussein and Allede Savaldore of Chile are clear examples in this regard. Secondary sources of data were utilized to get the needed information for this work and it will be descriptive and analytical.

KEYWORD: Democracy, Capitalism, Diplomacy, National Interest.

Introduction

Over the last century, a new wave or trend has gradually spread the use of democracy. As at 1900, not a single country has what would be considered as democracy: a system of government where adult citizen's vote their leaders via election, Cynthia (1988). At the end of 2017, 96 countries out of 167 countries with a population of at least 500,000 (57%) were democratic, Desilver, D. (2017). What was once a dot of practice by an island nation is now practiced all over the globe and have become the standard form of government for mankind.

Ethnologically, democracy is the rule of the people, a common notion but Western democracy goes beyond the attributed notion. The Western view of democracy is when there will be a catalogue of social, political, economic and religious liberality. Put differently, democracy is now synonymous with capitalism which has eroded hierarchies, empowered individuals, transformed societies, and opened up closed systems. Thus, the main thrust of this paper is to explain the Western myth of propagating democracy while she supports, aid and propagate non-democratic institutions in the non-European world. The West is only interested in her national interest and when that interest is not protected by non-European nations, that leader or country is labeled un-democratic, dictator and tyrant. To do appreciable justice to this work, it will be expedient to give

a brief explanation of few concepts. These concepts are democracy, capitalism, diplomacy, and national interest. It is hoped that an understanding of these concepts will help us to understand the main issues better.

The concept, Democracy is multi-dimensional in its kinds and forms. However, Democracy as a term originated from Greek and it is made up with two words, demos-people and kratie-to govern, to rule, Becker P. & Raveloson J. (2008). Also, Merkel Wolfgang in his work, “Is Capitalism Compatible with Democracy”, pointed out that the definition of democracy is highly contested: liberal, social, pluralistic, elitist, communitarian, cosmopolitan, republican, deliberative, participatory and Leninist. Democracy in simple terms is a government where the supreme power is vested in the people. This power is exercised directly by them or their representatives whom they elected through free and fair electoral process. Thus, any form of government that the people hold ultimate power under free and fair electoral processes is regarded as a democracy.

Capitalism on the other hand is an economic etymology used to refer to a situation or system where the means of production is in the hands of private individuals; with minimal state interference. There are different forms of capitalism due to the relationship between the state and the market. One of such forms is Market-Liberal Capitalism. This type of capitalism is common in Europe and North America. In this type of capitalism, States are prohibited from interfering with the market (labour market and factors of production) as opined by Berend and Schubert (2007). On the other hand, Neo-liberal Capitalism places premium on the principle of capitalist self-regulation and places limits on state ownership of property.

Holti (1995) argues that diplomacy is used primarily to reach agreements, compromises and settlements, where governmental objectives conflict. Also, Gore-Booth & Pakenham (1979) define diplomacy as the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the government of independent states, extending sometimes also to their businesses with vassal states. For Kaplan, diplomacy is the formulation of a strategy whose aim is to achieve national interest in the international field (Kaplan, 1952). Diplomacy is the art of conducting relationships for gain without conflict. It is the chief instrument of foreign policy using secret negotiations, international agreements and laws. In summation, diplomacy is the ability to use genuine and superior arguments to win the hearts and consciences of the opponent in any negotiation. It requires capacity to demonstrate professionalism to sell objectives of the home government to receiving states without any form of intimidation.

National Interest occupies a central position in a nation’s foreign policy. It is believed that nations engage in international relations to protect and achieve their national interest. Mahan A. T. (1934) sees national interest as self-interest while Padelford et al (1976) posited that “national interest is centered on the core values of a state or nation, which includes the welfare of the nation, the security of its political beliefs, national way of life, territorial integrity and self-preservation”. The realist also views national interest as the core values of any society, their traditions and culture, which they project and protect in dealings with other states outside their environment while idealists sees national interest as purely what the decision makers and leaders of a country want. National interest can further be seen as those core values that are important to a nation that if trampled upon, would provoke that nation to retaliate. It should be noted that, national interest is an integral part of very nation’s foreign policy.

Democracy and Liberty

The western perspective of democracy is a political arrangement were free and fair election, rule of law and other principles of government such as separation of power; checks and balances and protection of human rights are enshrined. But this bundle of freedoms is tagged constitutional rights and not democracy and both has nothing to do together. There is always a call for democracy when leaders of a nation limit the rights for its citizenry which is now visible in several nations of the world such as Peru, Palestine, Iran, Saudi Arabia,

Afghanistan, etc. However, this form of democracy had been captured as illiberal democracy. Over the century, both concepts have emerged together but currently, one is succeeding while the other is not.

In some places such as Chile, Upper Volta and Iraq, the citizens were governed properly when they were ruled by strong men such as Thomas Sankara, Allende Salvadore, and Saddam Hussein than the democratically elected leaders breed out of western democracy. While we acknowledge the fact that election and by implication, democracy is not a bad thing, the question that run on the lips of many is that, why are all developing countries that have embraced democracy still finding of difficult develop and have stability in all fronts. The reason for this is not far-fetched. From the time of Herodotus and the Athenian society, Democracy has been the rule of the people. This literally mean that when free and fair election is conducted to bring a leader into an elected position, this election could bring a tyrant or a dictator as a leader but this do not connote that the nation is undemocratic. However, a nation in times of election need to protect it nationals or voters but when it goes beyond this to liberal social, economic, political and religious rights, then democracy is useless and a tool for western capitalism. After all, Sweden has an economic system that curtail individual liberty rights, France until recently had a state monopoly of its media, and Britain has a state religion but they are identified as core democratic states Zakaria F. (2007).

Western Democracy: A Study of Iraq under Saddam Hussein

Democracy was used as an excuse for the bombardment of Baghdad. “Tomorrow is the day that we will determine whether or not democracy can work”, President Bush was quoted as saying the above before the bombardment of Iraq by US forces. This was a state that saw its limelight, put differently, glimpse of development under the leadership of Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein was a child that grew up from the slums in Iraq, who sells snacks and fruits at the road-side that rose to occupy the highest authority in the country, Malhortra D. (2018). Saddam Hussein joined the Barth Party in 1956 and rose in rank. He became the 5th President of the country on the 16th of July, 1979 and governed the country till 19 April, 2003 when he was arrested by US forces. He was a leading member of the party, his journey to been a President created lots of enemies for him. However, Saddam Hussein led the modernization of Iraq.

Prior to this time, Iraq had been divided into economic, social, ethnic and religious lines. Sunni versus Shiite, Arabs versus Kurds, tribal chiefs versus urban merchants, nomads versus peasants, etc. Saddam propelled the attainment of stability in the nation by unifying these factions. Also, Saddam undertook some social developmental works in the country. He undertook a campaign for the provision of national infrastructure that led to the building of several roads, promoting mining, energy and industries in the country. His administration also distributed free electrical appliances such as fridges and television sets to the citizenry nationwide. Furthermore, he embarked on a national campaign for compulsory free education in the country by introducing universal free schooling up to the tertiary education levels; free hospitalization scheme that earned him an award from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, The Guardian, (2003). According to Slosberg, Saddam in order to fight isolation by western powers entered a diplomatic pact in 1972 with the Soviet Union by signing a 15year entente of friendship and cooperation.

However, this innovation did not go down well with the West that preaches democracy. Saddam was labeled as a terrorist and by November 5th, 2006 he was sentenced to death for the killing of 148 Shias from the town of Dujani in 1980, Rachel (2016). The question remains, why was democracy used as an excuse to bombard Baghdad when the populace was happy and in recognition of his contributions to the development of Iraq, an award was given to him by an organ of the UN if not for the interest of the West, herein represented by the United States of America. Some scholars opined that, the interest of USA and her allies had been in jeopardy since the emergence of Saddam Hussein in the politics of Iraq. To ensure they remove Saddam from office at all cost, he was accused of been a dictator and possessing weapons of mass destruction, but in course of the war, the US did not discover any such weapons. It is worth noting at this juncture that, Iraq is one of the

countries with high oil reserves and unfortunately for the US and her allies, Saddam denied them access to the oil in Iraq. Hence, their quest to remove him at all cost. Consequently, after the war, the US led forces have secured all Iraq's oil reserves and planted a puppet with the oversight by the US Oil Administrative Official. The national economic interest of the US was the spur for her intervention and invasion of Iraq by the US and not the entrenchment of democracy.

Western Democracy and the Killing of Thomas Sankara of Upper Volta (Burkina Faso)

On August, 1983, a thrilling development occurred in one of West Africa's nations called Upper Volta at that time. This development was the handiwork of one of the most profound revolutionists in the history of Africa. Upper Volta which was colonized by France was among the poorest nations in Africa. Thomas Sankara became the President of a new government at the age of Thirty-Three and later change the name from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso-The Land of Incorruptible people.

He was born in Yako in 1949. While he was in training in Madagascar, he was exposed to Marxist ideals and neo-colonial impact. In 1972, there was mass demonstration and strike that toppled the then government and acted as a catalyst to Sankara's rise in rank. He was appointed Prime Minister in January, 1983 by Jean-Baptiste Ouedraogo. Long before this time, he was linked with aggrieved junior staffs that by May, 1983, he was jailed briefly when he resigned to protest the repressive policies of the government of the day. A group of revolutionary officers staged a coup on his behalf while he was still under house arrest and Sankara became the President of the Republic of Upper Volta at the age of 33.

Consequently, he embarked on programmes that will bring about change and development to the country and also changed the name of the country to Burkina Faso. With the support of the people, payments of tribute and compulsory labour services to village chiefs were abolished Michel P. (2007). He also increased the amount government gave peasants for basic food crops. On behalf of the government, he embarked on desertification of the desert by planting several thousands of trees in the Sahel. He also extended the country's railway lines through "the battle of the rails" project. As at that time, the project was captioned "unprofitable" by the World Bank. This extension was made possible by the utilization of mass public labour provided by the lower, middle class and every day citizens of the country as recorded by Murrey A. (2019). Other notable traits of his international vision and thinking were his call for the eradication of Africa's dependency on Europe, debt rejection and his critique of Africa's ruling class.

However, the capitalist West did not approve of this revolution and modernization in Burkina Faso and on the 15th of October, 1987, Thomas Sankara was assassinated alongside twelve of his comrades in a coup d'état. This coup is vehemently believed to be executed by Captain Blaise Campaore, Sankara's Second-in-Command with the support of the West. The next day, Sankara's policies were rolled back, neo-liberal agenda and structural adjustments where now the main policy in Burkina Faso (Jeckson 2018). In a nutshell, following the assassination of Sankara, the world powers did nothing and did not label Blaise Compaore's leadership as undemocratic as done in Iraq but maintained the status-quo due to the neo-liberal stand in their national interest.

The Champion of Democracy and The Absolute Monarchy of Saudi Arabia

In 1928, Saudi Arabia gain international recognition from Britain and in 1931 by the United States of America. Both countries since then has enjoyed close diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. King Abdulaziz Al Saud, Ibn Sand granted close concession to US oil firm, Standard Oil of California, allowing them to export oil in the Eastern Province (Smith, 2013). In 1951, Saudi Arabia and the US signed a mutual defense assistance pact in spite of the fact that there are visible differences between the two countries, one been an Islamic absolute monarchy and the other, a constitutional democracy. The main thrust of this agreement was that the United States of America protects Saudi Arabia militarily for a reliable supply of oil

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from Saudi Arabia. The US was willing to over-look most of the excesses of Saudi Arabia in as much as there is continuous oil supply to the United States of America.

The September 11, 2001, attack on the New York City and Washington D. C. was regarded as the worst terrorists' attack at the time, killing about 2,977 people and destroyed properties which was estimated to cost \$150 billion. However, it was noticed that 15 of the 19 hijackers that were involved in the 9/11 attacks were Saudi citizens; some close to the monarch. The FBI carried out a report but did not disclose this because she felt it will be a problem to the relationship of the two nations.

In 2017, after the emergence of Donald Trump, the first nation he visited was a non-democratic nation -Saudi Arabia, where he signed the highest arm deal worth \$350 billion to assist Saudi-Arabia (Wion, 2022). In October 2018, the Jamal Khashoggi who was a Saudi journalist and a General Manager and Editor -in -Chief of Al-Arab Neo Channel was assassinated at the Saudi-Consulate in Istanbul on 2 October, 2018. He ran from Saudi Arabia in September 2017 and went into self-imposed exile. He was last seen entering the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul on the 2nd of October, 2018 but was never seen leaving or coming out (Wion New,2022). Despite the killing of an American resident, the American President stated that, "The United States intends to retain a solid ally in Saudi Arabia to ensure the interest of our country, Israel and other partners (Wion, 2022). However, on April 8, 2019, U.S Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo announced that 16 Saudi nationals involved in Khashoggi's murder have been barred from entering the U.S. (Gehrke, 2018).

Conclusion

There is a great fallacy that the West (Britain, France and United States of America) support and promote democracy. As explained, this is a great myth purported and covertly used as an excuse for the assassination of Thomas Sankara, Saddam Hussein and U.S- Saudi relationship. The West had supported autocratic regimes as far as their strategic and economic motive is intact – the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, a United States resident, did not affect the relationship of the two nations as far as their agreement for mutual security is intact. Also, the expository justify that it is not only in democracy that peace, welfare and liberty can reign because free elections has brought tyrants like Adolf Hitler to power

The western view of democracy is the protection of her economic interest and not political democracy in the non- European world like the Burkina Faso and Saddam's cases have shown. Thus, the West being the most undemocratic continent cannot give what they don't have. Each State in America sends two Senators to Washington, D.C. as their representatives, regardless of its population, that is to say, California with our 30 million and Arizona with 3.7 million has same number. This does not represent one man, one vote. However, when things do not go well with regards to their national interest, they label the leader a dictator, promoter of terrorism and human right violator and through the Bretton Woods Institutions such States suffer which often times, lead to the collapse of their economies and by implication, their underdevelopment.

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