

THE IMPERATIVES OF DEMOCRACY TO NATIONAL INTEGRATION: A HERMENEUTICAL APPROACH

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Abstract:

Democracy is a social phenomenon that principally recognises the identity and interests of the members of the state. Being democratic entails due recognition of the opinions and interests of the people. In politics, democracy helps to determine how people assume leadership positions through fair representation of majority interests via votes. This practice is associated with the idea of “majority rule”. This study identifies a problem of misinterpretation of democracy as it tends to downplay the interests of “the minority”. This is problematic because, “majority rule” is largely misinterpreted as majority – minority discrimination; in the interests of the former and at the expense of the latter. This orientation manifests in Nigeria’s political system. The study observes that the Nigerian practice of democracy breeds crises among citizens and groups, and consequently inhibits national development. To alleviate the situation, the study employs hermeneutics for its theoretical framework. It adopts qualitative research methodology, to critically and contextually interpret democracy, its principles and entailments. It recommends inclusion of the “minority” groups; through fair representation and social justice. The objective is to create an egalitarian and a well-ordered society. The paper asserts that democracy is a veritable mechanism of national integration and flourishing; predicated on the principles of equity and social justice.

Keywords: Democracy, Hermeneutics, Majority Rule, National Integration

Introduction

The need for social order makes governance imperative. Governance necessarily involves the people – to govern and be governed. To determine the appropriate order, principles and actors of governance, the interest of the people is indispensable. To guarantee that the interest of the people is secured, their involvement - stating their opinions and interests - is strategic. These dimensions form the foundational thesis of democracy - “rule of the people”. Democracy is appropriate to governance because it entails equality of the members and groups of the community, particularly, in terms of freedom, identity and opinion. This has several implications. Principally, it enhances social participation and integration in view of collective wellbeing.

This paper examines democracy, its pillars, theories and goals. It recognises some inadequacies of democracy, especially in Nigeria, particularly, its inability to secure collective wellbeing. The thesis of *majority rule* leans itself to misinterpretations. Majority rule tends to compromise the ultimate aim of democracy - collective wellbeing - by its association with “identity politics”. There is empirical evidence of manipulation and misrepresentation of the people which manifest in the forms of majority dominance and minority subjugation; non-

accountability and frugality. These factors are constitutive of the crisis democracy experiences and the consequent dissatisfaction upon which individuals and groups cast aspersion.

Generally, it seems to be that democracy is unable to remedy the situation that necessitated its emergence. It should be made clear that while democracy is fallible, the common deficiencies are consequent to particular modes of application. As a result, this research argues that democracy enhances social ordering and posits that democracy is imperative for national integration. To establish this, the paper examines the concept, the basic pillars and theories of democracy and provides hermeneutical perspectives.

Democracy

Democracy has diverse entailments. Primarily, the term originates from the Greek word (demokratia) “rule of the people” which was coined from (demos) “people” and (kratos) “power” or “rule” in the 5th century B.C. (Nwogu, 2015, p. 131). Similarly, the author accounts that "democracy is a government in which supreme power is invested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through representation". Also, Lincoln describes democracy as “*government of the people, by the people, for the people*” (Chatham House). Furthermore, according to Nwogu (2015, p. 131), Diamond describes democracy as a system of government with four key elements:

- i. A system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections;
- ii. Active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life;
- iii. Protection of the human rights of all citizens; and
- iv. A rule of law in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

Furthermore, Nwogu examines democracy to be of many variants. He observed that the most dominant variable is what he terms the direct democracy in which all citizens of a country are given direct and active participation in the decision-making process of their countries. For Nwogu (2015, p. 131), another variant is the representative democracy in which the whole body of all eligible citizens remain the sovereign power but political power is exercised indirectly through elected representatives.

Democracy derives its legitimacy from the people, since demo and krates entail “rule of the people”. It goes to state that democracy gives credence to the people without which state, government and the institutions have no substance. It should be made clear that these positions do not imply that democracy is the best system of government. Rather, it has been questioned and problematised, especially in multi-ethno-religious nations. The practice of democracy in Nigeria implicitly reflects its principle of “majority rule”, at the expense of the minority. As such, the democratic discrimination between the majority and the minority is in itself very problematic and detrimental to national integration, development and collective wellbeing. On these bases, it seems to be that democracy is the bane of integration and inclusivity in some nations.

Majority rule and minority right are the two theses of democracy that build on the foundation of collective interest. This paper acknowledges that *prima facie*, democracy recognises and provides for equality of individuals and groups in terms of identity, opinions and interests. This is foundational to the concept of equality before the law. It is against this background that this paper examines the imperativeness of democracy to national integration. To establish this, it adopts hermeneutics to examine the pillars and theories of democracy and their implications to national integration, social development and collective wellbeing.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy concerned principally with methodological questions about how to acquire correct understanding and interpretation of text (Hoy, 1980, p. 649).

Hermeneutics as technique of interpretation enhances the effective understanding of concepts. In this study, hermeneutics serves dual purpose; theoretical framework and methodology. It is the theory with which democracy is interpreted in relation to national integrations. Also, it is a component of critical analysis, of qualitative research methodology. This methodology analyzes literature and some corresponding instances – in Nigeria.

In the context of this research, the concept of democracy means a principle of social ordering. The pillars of democracy are characteristic of “social contract” in which members of the society deliberately volunteer part of their “will” in order to govern their activities. The “will” is the legitimate source of the authority with which the government enforces order.

Pillars of Democracy

Democracy is fundamentally characterised by “liberty, equality, rule of law, the sovereignty of the popular” (Mitchel, 2017, p. 280). These are alternatively referred to as pillars of democracy which form the foundation for the principles and theories of democracy, differently domesticated in various democracies.

Liberty: liberty describes a state of autonomy and independence. It entails being free from slavery, colonisation and imprisonment. It is the civic right of citizens to think and act independent of external social constraints. It is the exercise of the autonomy of citizens or a state to engage in self-determination, in conformity with the legitimate system of government. Individuals and groups possess and exercise liberty when they make decisions about their own affairs. This involves making laws and instituting systems that regulate the activities of the citizens.

Furthermore, democracy entitles citizens - individuals and groups - with the right to liberty. This implies that, democratically, citizens can legitimately make laws and policies and create institutions that regulate social conduct through adequate implementation of the laws and policies. Particularly, a democracy institutes its government and agencies, develops the legal systems, produces its administrative policies and develops its social conditions that enable the development of the state.

Liberty is a pillar of democracy because without liberty, people cannot engage in self-rule. In other words, liberty enables people to exhibit self-rule. The place of liberty in democracy is reiterated by the point that,

Since its classic Athenian origins, what characterizes democracy as a distinct form of government is the pursuit of equal liberty, defined as the (direct or indirect) participation of all citizens in the process of making the laws they obey through their equal contribution to the establishment of the majority view (Saffon and Urbinati, 2013, p. 442)

Liberty is associated to equality. In fact, Saffon and Urbinati, (2013, p. 444) attempt to fuse the concepts on the note that “equal liberty implies not only the right to participate in politics via voting and freely expressing one’s mind but doing so under equal conditions of opportunity which entails protecting civil, political and basic social rights with the aim of ensuring a

meaningful equal participation”. An implication of these positions is that the liberty of citizens is anchored on equality.

Equality: equality in democracy creates a single standard for citizens to operate; to manage existential differences that exist among citizens. Citizens are evidently different in notable measures such as identity, gender, age and socio-economic status. Amidst these factors, democracy identifies and emphasises equality of citizens in terms of opinion and voting power. This does not mean that democracy either conflates the differences or neglects them; rather, it creates equality to control discrimination. This implies that, difference in identity does not entail either superiority or inferiority. This means, rather, that a citizen is neither superior nor inferior to another on the bases of sex, age and status. The legitimacy of this sense of equality is in the sense of social reconstruction and reordering from imperialist systems and orientations of dominance into an egalitarian system of government. It is in the context of equality that certain rights and duties are appropriately applicable to citizens.

Rule of law: law is the organising principle of the state. Laws are codes of conduct derived from the will, interests and goals of the state. The rule of law is imperative because it sustains the “social contract” by specifying the duties and rights of citizens. In democracy, laws are made by the representatives of the citizens in service of common interests. In fact, rule of law protects the liberty and equality of citizens. More succinctly,

Rule of law means that no individual, president or private citizen, stands above law. Democratic governments exercise authority by way of law and are themselves subject to law's constraints. Laws should express the will of the people, not the whims of kings, dictators, military officials, religious leaders, or self-appointed political parties. Citizens in democracies are willing to obey the laws of their society, then, because they are submitting to their own rules and regulations. Justice is best achieved when the laws are established by the very people who must obey them. Under the rule of law, a system of strong, independent courts should have the power and authority, resources, and the prestige to hold government officials, even top leaders, accountable to the nation's laws and regulations (Principles of Democracy: The Rule of Law, paras. 2-5).

Sovereignty of the Popular: the popular consist of the opinions of either all or majority of the citizens. Principally, democracy aims to make provision for the interests of all citizens. However, in recognition of the differences and disputes that happen among citizens, it gives credence to positions provided and supported by the majority. In other words, democracy seeks the interests of all citizens but equally acknowledges plurality and diversity of the opinions and interests of citizens. In recognition of the plurality of opinions and interests, it employs “majority rule” as a strategy to determine the interest of the majority.

It should be noted that, equality and liberty are basic foundations of plurality. To determine the abiding principle(s) from the diverse opinions, the currency and popularity of opinions are instrumental. This paper opines that the level of popularity of opinions largely depends on the resonance of the ideas with the citizens. This implies that, certain ideas become popular on the basis of acceptability which is in turn dependent on the persuasion and resonance with the people. This point is critical to the democratic concept of “majority rule”.

The democratic concept of “majority rule” is a more strategic and realistic approach to manage diversity and plurality that happen in the search for collective interests. The rationality is, the majority is more representative of the entire population, in comparison to the minority. By way

of illustration, of a population of ten (10) people, it is rational that the interest of seven (7) persons is prioritised over that of (3). But, in commitment to the primary concern of the interest of all citizens, democracy equally executes “minority interest”. Put clearly, to balance some inconsistencies and inadequacies that may arise from “majority rule”, democracy establishes “minority interest”. The implication is, the interests of the majority only outweigh but do not nullify the interests of the minority, such that, while the former is considered at first, the latter is considered subsequently. This is in tandem with the theses of procedural and deliberative theories of democracy which will be detailed in this discourse.

The accounts of the pillars of democracy correspond with the democratic thesis of “collective decision”. Nwogu, (2015, p. 133) accounts that “a decision is collective when it emerges from arrangements of binding collective choices that establish conditions of free public reasoning among equals who are governed by the decisions”. Similarly, the author accounts that provided that the procedures of the deliberations (political discourse) secure impartiality, equality, openness and lack of coercion, they will guide the deliberation towards generalisable interest, which can be agreed upon by all participants – thereby producing legitimate outcomes.

While “collective decision” is an imperative of democracy, it is worthy of note that “democracy does not promise decisions that are more correct than those achieved by a group of experts, but decisions that express the choice of many – while respecting everyone’s right” (Saffon, and Urbinati, 2013, p. 446). This position aptly represents the dual democratic principles of “majority rule” and “minority right”.

Since democracy entails the “decisions that express the choice of many – while respecting everyone’s right”, it is imperative to determine how everyone’s right is preserved in decisions that express the choice of many or how minority interests is preserved in majority rule. This is determined through “rational consensus”. According to Lagerspetz, (2012, pp. 754-761) “in a rational consensus, no one is forced to submit his or her judgement to that of another. The rational discussion would filter out ideological distortions as well as claims based on personal or group egoism”. Similarly,

The Habermasian counterfactual supposition is that ideally rational individuals, discussing in an ideal communication situation, would reach a rational agreement on any given issue related to their generalizable interests. Moreover, this is not merely utopian, because as sincere participants in everyday discussions we all have implicitly accepted the norms of communicative rationality and the commitment to the search for a rational consensus. This implicit commitment explains why the appeal to shared values like the general interest is the norm even in real-life politics (Lagerspetz, 2012, pp. 754-761).

The point is made that rational consensus derives from the pillars of democracy – liberty, equality, rule of law and sovereignty of the popular. More importantly, it is instrumental and strategic to national integration.

National Integration

National integration is the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. In relation to national integration, it is observed that “though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one” (Ezeobi, Mbachu, and Chukwuji, 2019, p. 222). Similarly, they accounted that national integration is referred to as the process of creating awareness of a single identity by which people from different socio-economic, political, religious and cultural group are being

identified for the purpose of achieving a national goal. It is a progressive attempt to reduce cultural, political, tribal and religious tensions in the process of creating a homogenous political community. More succinctly,

national integration refers to a sense of territorial nationality which overshadows or eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties. For national integration to occur in a nation, a significant number of citizens must develop identification with the nation that supersede identification with ethnic, cultural or religious groups, acquire political awareness, share common norms and values and develop attitudes favorable to the display of integrative behavior among people of different groups (Ezeobi, Mbachu, and Chukwuji, 2019, p. 222).

There are three approaches to national integration, namely: structural, cultural and Marxian (Bello-Imam, 1987, p. 266). The demand of this paper requires emphasis on the structural integration. Cultural Integration is defined as when people from a culture adopt the essence of another culture, while maintaining their own culture (Kessler, 2023). Cultural Integration helps foster a sense of unity within a community. Also, integration is important because unlike assimilation, people maintain their own culture and the parts of their cultural identity that are important to them (Ibid.). The Marxian approach to integration emphasises class consciousness. Class consciousness is the self-awareness by members of a social class who come to understand their material reality. The implication is that, by class consciousness, members of the proletariat understand that they share the same position as other exploited members of the proletariat, they will collectively fight to end a capitalist economic system (Ceniceros, 2022). In what follows is the structural approach to integrations.

A structural approach views integration in terms of the extent to which parts interact and complement each other in order to constitute a viable whole. It is within this frame that national integration is considered as involving a process of holding tightly together the various nationalities or ethnic groups and institutions in a dovetailed manner through the bonds of contrived structures, norms and values. Further it is construed as the process by which hitherto distinctive and autonomous peoples and cultures incorporated into a multi-national state can achieve higher levels of mutual trust, cooperation and independence, shared values, common identity and national consciousness (Ceniceros, 2022).

It is at the very moment of establishing mutual trust, cooperation and independence, shared values, common identity and national consciousness that democracy becomes more strategic and imperative.

Theories of Democracy

This paper identifies two theories of democracy to be basic, namely, deliberative democracy and procedural democracy.

Deliberative theory of democracy

The deliberative theory of democracy focuses on an “ideal speech situation” where autonomy can be said to exist and consensus likely to happen, and take that situation to be a regulative ideal that real political processes should “mirror” (Saffon and Urbinati, 2013, p. 444). On the significance of deliberation, it is conceived that,

In the real world as we know it, discussion is often limited by ideological distortions, particular interests, social inequality, and even by a naked repression of opinions. In an ideal world governed by the rules of communicative

rationality, the participants in a discussion would have only a single aim, to solve practical and theoretical problems rationally. Hence, they would use only the force of argument, and accept statements and policy prescriptions only for rational reasons (Lagerspetz, 2012, pp. 754-761).

For Lagerspetz, equality is a central norm in deliberative communication. However, if a rational consensus is not attainable in a finite time, the decision-makers are forced to violate some norms of communicative rationality. It is not clear why only the norm of equality should be taken as inviolable. According to Lagerspetz, (2012, pp. 754-761), the theorists of deliberative democracy take democratic equality as an independent value that is not derivable from the value of deliberation.

Procedural Theory of Democracy

According to Saffon and Urbinati, (2013, p. 442), the proceduralist vision insists that equal political liberty is the most important good for which democracy should strive. And it posits that the modern democratic procedure – based on every individual’s equal participation in fair and competitive elections for selecting political representatives and thereby contributing to the production of decisions via majority rule – is the best way of respecting equal liberty in a context of pluralism and dissent.

Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 444), also opine that procedural democrats believe that equal freedom can be strived for in non-ideal scenarios even if deliberation does not take place and if consensus is not approached because bargaining and voting are also legitimate mechanisms for expressing the majority view, especially in contexts of deep disagreement. Furthermore, Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 442) claim that, in contrast with populism, procedural democracy claims that, in a context of pluralism and dissent, following (instead of transgressing) the democratic procedure is the best way of achieving or approaching equality without violating freedom.

Having underscored the concept of democracy, the pillars and basic theories, it is incumbent, as germane to this paper, to employ hermeneutics to examine democracy in relation to integration. On this note, the demand is to establish, with the aid of hermeneutics, the imperativeness of democracy to national integration.

A Hermeneutical Analysis of the Imperativeness of Democracy to National Integration

The natural conception of democracy - “people rule” indicates self-determination by a people. The pillars of democracy: liberty, equality, rule of law and sovereignty of the popular and the two theories of democracy examined: deliberative and procedural suggest plurality and diversity. Technically, democracy empowers citizens – individuals and groups – to engage in purposeful self-determination through means of self-affirmation. This is encouraged through active participation in democratic activities such as civic education, campaign, election, referendum. A fundamental goal of these democratic activities is social integration. Some positions specifically identify how democracy is imperative for social integration.

Firstly, “democracy does not promise decisions that are more correct than those achieved by a group of experts, but decisions that express the choice of many – while respecting everyone’s right” (Saffon and Urbinati, 2013, p. 446). This raises questions, particularly, why choose democracy? Some reasons for the choice of democracy include, “variety is promoted” and “individuals are educated in self-consciousness” (Frankel, 1986 p. 481). Variety in democracy provides for eclectic, enriching and all-encompassing options that enhance the achievement of deliberated goals. Also, “political democracy and a socially mobile society thus invite the individual to a greater degree of consciousness about the relativity of his own ways and a

greater degree of self-consciousness in the choice of the standards by which he lives” (Frankel, 1986 p. 481).

Secondly, according to Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 448) “the object of democracy is opinion, not truth”. To buttress this position, Frankel (1986 p. 481) observed that “no one can say with assurance that democracy makes people wiser or more virtuous. But political democracy invites men to think that there may be alternatives to the way they are governed”. Opinions and alternatives confirm plurality and diversity on the one hand and expose the people to competition on the other hand. Notably, the form of competition that takes place in democracy is purposeful and positive; to determine the opinion that resonates with the greater number of people. This implies that democracy is utilitarian in outlook. For Frankel, (1986 p. 484) “the competition that takes place in a democracy is an instance of cooperative competition. It is a struggle in which both sides work to maintain conditions necessary for a decent struggle. Accordingly, it rests on the assumption that there are no irreconcilable conflicts, that differences can be negotiated or compromised, if men have good will”.

But since “good will” can neither be presumed nor guaranteed, Frankel (1986, p. 484) considers some normative approaches. He thinks that “such a system requires men to deal with one another honestly, to make a serious effort to reach agreements, and to keep them after they have been made. It requires them to recognise, therefore, that the other side has its interests and to be prepared to make concessions to these interests when such concessions are not inconsistent with fundamental principles” (Frankel, 1986, p. 484).

Thirdly, based on the pillars and theories of democracy examined, we can glean harmony. A critical analysis of democracy shows that it involves deliberate and genuine reconciliation of differences. Put simply, democracy predisposes citizens to new frontiers and empowers them to determine the most appropriate approach to achieve deliberated goals.

Ultimately, this hermeneutical analysis of the imperativeness of democracy to national integration gives support to democratic policy and democratic ethics. The point of the democratic policy is that it makes for democratic feelings. This implies that “those who do not wish to see human society divided into exploiters and exploited, those who wish to see each man come into his own free estate, believe that in the ultimate condition men will treat each other with the respect and fellow-feelings that equals show to equals. It is in the name of such moral attitudes that they seek democracy” (Frankel, 1986, p. 485). This idea conduces to democratic ethics. Frankel (1986, p. 484) makes the point that “a democratic ethic does not ask men to be fools” rather, to be wise.

A society of exploiters and exploited typifies the Hobbesian ‘hypothetical’ “state of nature”. In what follows, it is the case that,

for much of human history, rulers and law were synonymous -- law was simply the will of the ruler. A first step away from such tyranny was the notion of rule by law, including the notion that even a ruler is under the law and should rule by virtue of legal means. Democracies went further by establishing the rule of law. Although no society or government system is problem-free, rule of law protects fundamental political, social, and economic rights and reminds us that tyranny and lawlessness are not the only alternatives (Principles of Democracy: The Rule of Law).

Importantly, both democratic policy and democratic ethics are instrumental to the emergence of social contract which in modern democratic terms is described as “rational consensus”.

Rational consensus enables citizens – individuals and groups – to intelligibly determine the order of needs and to employ prudence in the preference of the needs. Significantly, by rational consensus, the interests of both the majority and the minority are mutually considered. Thus, rational consensus enables an egalitarian system that engenders collective wellbeing.

The imperativeness of democracy to national integration is hinged on its principles and theories. More fundamentally, the crux of integration is located on majority rule and minority right. In this context, the following points are appropriate.

Majority rule is a means for organizing government and deciding public issues; it is not another road to oppression. Just as no self-appointed group has the right to oppress others, so no majority, even in a democracy, should take away the basic rights and freedoms of a minority group or individual.

Minorities -- whether as a result of ethnic background, religious belief, geographic location, income level, or simply as the losers in elections or political debate -- enjoy guaranteed basic human rights that no government, and no majority, elected or not, should remove.

Minorities need to trust that the government will protect their rights and self-identity. Once this is accomplished, such groups can participate in, and contribute to their country's democratic institutions (**Principles of Democracy: Majority Rule, Minority Rights**).

Implications for Nigeria

The practice of democracy in Nigeria seems to be discriminatory. Hitherto, political and democratic activities have been in the interest of the majority and against the minority; people who do not possess the dominant social identities – religion: Christianity and Islam; ethnicity: Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba (and Igbo); status: the affluent; gender: the male. This practice excludes people who could be of significant contributions to national development.

To demonstrate majority – minority discrimination in Nigeria, empirical evidence shows that the position of the President has in turn repeatedly rotated among the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo and exceptionally Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Ogbia (or Ogbinya) ethnic group (Nigerian Tribune online, 2020). Similarly, on religious basis, key political positions are categorised according to the dominant religions - Christianity and Islam. It is observed that “there is usually a Muslim/Christian or Christian/Muslim ticket. ... During civilian regime, the Obasanjo/Atiku regime was Christian/Muslim. Yar’dua/Jonathan was Muslim/Christian, Jonathan/Sambo was Christian/Muslim and the current regime of Buhari/Osibanjo is Muslim/Christian” (Umeanolue, 2020, p. 147). Exceptionally, the controversial 2023 general election brought in Tinubu/Shetima being Muslim/Muslim.

The point at breast is that political democracy in Nigeria is largely representative of individuals and groups of the majority category. Apparently, most of the core political positions are occupied by male, at the expense of their female counterparts. The court annulment of the female elected governor of Kano State is indicative of the gender bias of Nigerian political democracy.

Evaluation

The interest here is to underscore diverse possibilities of democracy. It is crucial to examine the pillars and theories of democracy based on empirical evidence. In this paper, we attempt to

determine the extent to which democracy has applied its principles and equally the extent to which the goals have been achieved. To restate the point using other terms, democracy is highly appealing but equally questionable basically because it is unable to substantially demonstrate its potential efficiency that differentiates it from other political systems.

Primarily, its equal recognition of both individual interest and common good solicits a question: how do the individual interests produce common good? Alternatively, how are individual interests compatible with common good? Does democracy simply fuse the opinions and interests of citizens – individuals and groups – to form common good? On these demands, exponents of democracy and the various theories have greater obligations to provide more resonating descriptions, interpretations and applications of democracy.

In an advance consideration, a point is made that most important philosophical problems in democracy are related to its justification. First, how can majority rule be made compatible with demands of individual autonomy? Second, why should a government chosen by ordinary citizens be better than a government chosen by experts? (Lagerspetz, 2012, pp. 754-761). In response to the first question, a quiet rational answer is social contract or “rational consensus”. This is to the extent that rational consensus does not violate the liberty of citizens. As a matter of fact, rational consensus make provision for individual autonomy in the context of majority rule. On the second question, the rationale and legitimacy of the democratic choice of the popular opinions of “ordinary citizens” against experts is inclusivity or integration. The point is, the opinions of experts are truly selective and exclusively subjective.

Another perplexing component of democracy is its object. According to Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 448) “the object of democracy is opinion, not truth”. This has dual implications. On the one hand, it implies that democracy solicits for opinion not truth, democracy does not guarantee truth, therefore, it does not necessarily enhance “common good”. On the other hand, it implies that democracy, all things considered, harnesses vast pool of opinions from which truth can be more possibly harnessed. Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 449) account for Aristotle’s perspective that “citizen’s participation protects liberty in two ways: first, their great number is an important obstacle against corruption (not even the richest citizen can buy a majority in the court or assembly). Second, they are able to act together, which shows that while each is individually weak, the inclusion of all makes them able to rule themselves”. Furthermore, a critical sense and advantage of the multitude is that it provides enriching and robust possibilities of deliberative proficiency. The point is that democracy tends to provide for the interests of the members of a community through an inclusive approach. It follows that it is characterised by equity and social justice, therefore, democracy is imperative for social integration.

But this prospect of the democratically enabled majority is flattened by the very fact that the many are not competent to make decisions and laws. Citing Aristotle, the point is equally buttressed on the note that “virtue, a quality more easily found in the few, was the condition for lawmaking; and the many, according to Aristotle used consent (not virtue) to make political decisions” (Saffon and Urbinati 2013, p. 449).

Procedural theory of democracy also entertained critiques. Notable of them are the positions of Rawls and Habermas. Saffon and Urbinati, (2013, p. 443) cite Rawls, that political groups are inevitable in the electoral arena; however, he considered that a democracy which merely consists in a bargain among groups is unsuited to a just society because it induces citizens to “take a narrow or group-interest standpoint,” instead of aiming at a conception of the common good. For Habermas, although “public controversies among several parties” are a necessary condition for democratic decision making, they do not guarantee results with “reasonable

quality”. Therefore, Habermas proposed to identify the conditions under which autonomous deliberation could be achieved through democratic procedures, such that the latter could offer a path towards a “rationally motivated *consensus*” (Saffon and Urbinati, 2013, pp. 443-444).

Ultimately, the central point of the evaluation of the procedural and deliberative theories of democracy is to harmonise them towards efficiency of democracy. Saffon and Urbinati, (2013, p. 445) made allusion to this on the note that “democracies are being threatened from within in part because they use of electoral procedures without the awareness of their significance for liberty renders them inane”. According to the evaluation of Saffon and Urbinati (2013, p. 445) “proceduralism is still the most adequate normative definition of democracy” possibly because “the pursuit of equal political liberty is what characterizes democracy as a distinct form of government”. It bears emphasising that this distinct characteristic is purposeful – to enhance the achievement of the common good. More importantly, equal liberty is hinged on rational consensus. It suffices to state that democracy which is characterised by equal liberty and rational consensus is imperative for common good which is the goal of national integration.

Exponents of social integration believe that when interactions occur without regard to ethnicity or creed, society reaps benefits, including economic gains (Kuran and Sandholm, 2008, p. 220). Furthermore, Kuran and Sandholm (2008, p. 220) account that civil rights laws and anti-discrimination statutes are motivated not only by considerations of fairness, but also by the belief that social integration promotes economic efficiency.

Clearly, democracy is fallible. **The principles of majority rule and the protection of minority rights seem contradictory. However, these principles are twin pillars holding up the very foundation of what we mean by democratic government (Principles of Democracy: Majority Rule, Minority Rights).** How shall the inadequacies - that manifest through its applications – be corrected? A response is “a cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy” (Chatham House).

Recommendations

Based on the espoused principles, theories and implications of democracy, this paper makes the following recommendations for effective practice of democracy in Nigeria:

- i. **Inclusivity:** the interest of both the majority and the minority must be equally considered in political decisions and activities.
- ii. **Rotational modality:** to ensure inclusion, key central positions such as the “presidency” should be open to all groups, in turns of the “geo-political zones”.
- iii. **Value orientation and Moral Character Formation:** the Nigerian state and its agencies should educate the citizens with values such as liberty, equality, rule of law and sovereignty, in the light of democratic activities. Also, citizens, especially children are to be trained to habituate moral principles, to be virtuous citizens; followers and leaders.

Conclusion

This paper examined democracy, its pillars and theories in relation to national integration. It underscored democracy as people-based political system which is characterised by plurality and diversity in terms of opinion and interest. To address the problem of plurality and diversity, exponents of democracy institute liberty, equality, rule of law and sovereignty of the popular as pillars that sustain democracy. The paper examined two theories of democracy, namely, deliberative and procedural. It employed the conceptions, pillars and theories to establish how democracy enhances national integration towards human wellbeing.

Social contract reflects rational consensus and this is often, due to limited time, consummated through voting. Democracy tends to appeal to many people because its theses of majority rule and minority rights preserve common interest which responds to the social crises that particularly characterise the state of nature. Democracy is more effective among informed citizens and less effective among uninformed citizens; among the former, it enhances fair representation while among the latter, it breeds “identity politics”. Consequently, it recommends that Nigerian government should adopt inclusivity, rotational modality and value orientation viz moral character formation in order to improve its democracy.

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