AFRICAN DEMOCRATIC EXPERIENCE AND FUKUYAMA'S LIBERAL INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

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Abstract

Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy is a means for world peace and contends that either liberal democracy is the end of human's ideological history or it is the beginning of an entirely new repetition of history. Fukuyama's declaration of an end of history with the emergence of liberal capitalism undermines other cultural history and supplants them with Western culture and ideological history. This position forecloses the concept of human dynamism and does not pay adequate attention to Africa's cultural, historical, traditional and economic peculiarities. This paper describes history as epochal, civilisational, ideological and particular in nature. The claim is that each civilisation has its own ideology that responds to some earlier political, economic and social contradictions that arose in the course of historical development. Thus, African cultural peculiarities demand African modeled liberal ideology, since ideological history is a continuum. This paper adopts research methods of critical analysis, conceptual elucidation and reconstruction of ideas to achieve its goals.

Keywords: Ideological history, Civilisation, Francis Fukuyama, Liberal democracy

Introduction

At the outset, one could aver that history is ambivalent. It may mean either the study of certain events that happened in the past or it can be used to refer to those events themselves (Nash, 1980: 13). We may argue that the historians usually record the history, which warriors, kings, heroes, and statesmen produce (Shotwell, 1922: 2-3). History, in this sense, is clearly not narrative but the thing that awaits narration. Both object and subject of the study are regarded as history. A philosophical history can be viewed as the thoughtful consideration of history itself. This type of history is in need of explanation, justification and exposition (Hegel, 1953: 6). Philosophical history is central to humanity. It is this that distinguishes man from the animals. The question of universality and directionality of history is as old as history itself. However, the most serious attempt at writing a universal history was made in the early 19th century by Immanuel Kant in his work, *An Idea of a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View*. Kant raises the question of the intelligibility of human history despite the inconsistency in the occurrence of historical events. He notes that human events are purposeful hence, constitutes the end point of ideological evolution in human history. Though left unfinished, his work triggered definite reactions from scholars like George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx. Both Hegel and Marx agreed that there is a universal history that has a terminal end, but Hegel believes that history ends with emergence of modern constitutional state while Marx identified communism as the apex of human ideological evolutionary history.

With the decline of socialism as political ideology in the late 19th century, Fukuyama declares the Western liberalism triumphalism, and consequently the end of human ideological evolutionary history of man. Liberalism, according to Fukuyama, has a potential solution to every contradiction that may arise in the course of human economic, political and historical development. There is no known contradiction that could not be resolved by the liberal twins' concepts of liberty and equality. This concept is a perfect unbeatable standard that cannot be

improved by any other ideology. This position undermines other socio-cultural and ideological viability. This essay, therefore, considers an alternative political system for Africa's development.

Universal History Before Fukuyama

The debate about historical endism started long before Fukuyama's avowal of an end of ideological history with the emergence of liberal democracy. Hegel, a notable universal historian, sees universal history as purposeful and directional with a given end. Universal history to Hegel therefore, is the developmental process of the Absolute Spirit through time, just as nature is the development of idea in space. The whole philosophical system of Hegel on history is based on a triadic movement of idea-nature-spirit (Eagleton, 1999: 1). The idea-in-itself is that which develops the dynamic reality of the world. The antithesis of the idea-in-itself is idea-outside-of-itself; namely, space-nature. History then is interrelated with ideas. This self-consciousness of the idea is spirit, the synthesis of idea and nature, and the development of this consciousness is history. The idea is the nature of God's will and this idea becomes truly itself only in and through history. Furthermore, Hegel takes the position that history ends upon the realisation of freedom, because freedom brings about equality. The universal history is the same as the progressive consciousness of human freedom. Hegel argues that the development of consciousness of freedom is in stages. The family is the first stage of development of the consciousness of freedom. Through the strong mutual love that the individual possesses, each one has the consciousness of himself in the consciousness of the other.

The second stage of historical development of freedom is patriarchy; this is also based on family foundation. It is through the family that morality was implanted and the family later gives way for patriarch. The patriarchs lay the foundation of race that eventually develops to a nation state. The state is the third stage; it possesses universal altruism. This is because it is through the state that the hidden spirit openly manifests itself, leading to human freedom. Before reaching the stage of statehood, universal history has passed through many stages. It was in the Greek civilisation that the consciousness of freedom was first manifested, and therefore the Greek civilisation was

the first to attain the consciousness of freedom. But the Greeks and the Romans know only that some men who have educated their minds are free. The Germanic nation, influenced by Christians' principles, came to consciousness of freedom before any other nation of the world. The Germans know that man qua man is in a state of natural freedom, that it is this freedom that truly constitutes the essence of humanity. Hegel concludes that universal historical development terminates at the realisation of freedom. He locates the end of history in modern constitutional state, thereby fulfilling the aspiration of Kant that history has an end in the realisation of freedom on earth.

Karl Marx, an immediate interpreter of Hegel's historiography, brought Hegel's system to the terrestrial realm. Marx accepts Hegel's account of historical development from primitive social structure to more complex modern society. However, Marx disagrees with Hegel's account on the type of society that will emerge at the end of history. To Marx, liberal capitalism has failed to resolve one fundamental contradiction, which is the class distinction. Marx, therefore, argues that communism would resolve the last contradiction that is created in liberal orthodoxy, and this communism is a socio-political ideal of the future.

It is on the foundation of the writings of both Marx and Hegel that Fukuyama places his writings on the philosophy of history. However, unlike Marx who posited communism as the end of history, Fukuyama interprets Hegel's philosophy of history in favour of liberal democracy. With the practical fall of socialism, it becomes more tempting for Fukuyama to argue in favour of the rival ideology – liberal capitalism. Thus, like Hegel, Fukuyama also sees the end of history in the present liberal ideology.

Fukuyama's Liberal Interpretation of History

Fukuyama's avowal of the end of history is drawn on Alexandre Kojeve's submission on his interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. Fukuyama presents Kojeve's argument in the following words:

> …as for all good Hegelians, understanding the underlying processes of history requires understanding development in the realm of consciousness or ideas, since consciousness

> will ultimately remake the material world in its own image. To say that history ended in 1806 means that mankind's ideological evolution ended in the ideals of the French or American Revolutions. While particular regime in the real world might not implement these ideals fully, their theoretical truth is Absolute and could not be improved upon…If ideological development had in fact ended, the homogenous state would eventually become victorious throughout the material world (Fukuyama, 1992).

Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy is a means for world peace and contends that either liberal democracy is the end of human's ideological history or it is the beginning of an entirely new repetition of history. However, he concludes that the latter option is extremely dangerous because it would lead to repetition of entire historical process. In short, the central thesis of Fukuyama is that liberal ideology is the apex of human ideological development. It is therefore expedient to ask, what is Liberalism? This is because it is apposite to understand what liberal philosophy is, so as to answer the two major queries: (1) Could Fukuyama rightly be taken as a liberal in the first instance? (2) What brand of a liberal is Fukuyama, if at all he were to be one?

Liberalism as a political ideology takes its major concern from the freedom and equality of individuals in the society. A liberal believes in human natural freedom of action and choices. Liberalism as a political ideology is divided into different varieties and competing visions, but the core commitment of the liberal is in the principles of autonomy and equality in relation to individuality in the society. The liberal believes that an individual has a right to order his live in whatever way he chooses.

The metaphysics of liberalism is dominated by the debate between two main political schools of thought generally identified as the 'Individualists', and the 'Communitarians.' However, liberalism is usually connected with analysis of atomic individuals that makeup a society. The society in its entirety comprises of atomic individuals who possess certain inalienable rights by the virtue of being humans. John Rawls maintains that liberalism is necessarily individualistic; the individuals by nature are pure choosers. The commitments, concerns

and values of these individuals are to possess their own selves (Rawls, 2001). The communitarians on the other hand, believe that a society is not just a heap of individuals, but it functions as an organism with a complex internal life. Communitariansm is a theory which sees individuals as subordinate to other more complexly organised social structures: Family, Nation, State, Race, Social class among others. Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his book *The Social Contract* observes that an individual can only realise his true potential as a human being and his freedom only through submission to the "general will" of the larger community.

From the above, we could see that the individualist analysis of liberalism puts more emphasis on the idea of Michael Sandel's 'unencumbered self' (Sandel, 1999), which means that the person ontologically precedes any substantive attachments in the society. This atomistic understanding of the person is contrary to the communitarian understanding of the human person. In view of this, according to the analysis, the autonomy of the self and the equality of the self with the others are the core commitments of liberal philosophy. Now to answer the queries posed earlier on Fukuyama, one could state that Fukuyama is a liberal to the extent that he is in full support of liberal democracy as the ideology of the end of history. However, what remains unclear is the type of liberal that Fukuyama is, since he does not fully come out on this.

For both Kojeve and Fukuyama, the history of ideologies has ended with the emergence of liberal democracy. And by liberal democracy, we mean the Western political ideology that emphasises on the right of the individual to liberty:

> …the individual has certain inalienable rights, which he possesses merely in virtue of his humanity. These rights include right to vote and be voted for, right to personal liberty, right to own property and pursuit of happiness (Fukuyama, 1992).

Fukuyama contends that liberal democracy has defeated all the competing ideologies in the world and therefore a homogenous state of affairs would be the status of the victorious ideology. According to him,

all political and economic contradictions could be resolved by modern liberal principles. He lists other competing ideologies and gives reasons for their failures.

According to Fukuyama, Fascism as an alternative political ideology, saw the political weakness and materialism in European and American nations as major contradictions that cannot be resolved through liberalism, therefore the need to recommend strong government. But World War II destroyed ideology of fascism. The attack of Japanese two cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima through atomic bombs as well as the destruction of the German chancellery ruined the ideology both on the levels of consciousness and materiality.

Another strong contending ideology is Communism. Marx contends that liberal society was un-egalitarian in structure because of the last contradiction that could not be resolved within liberal context, and this contradiction is that labour and capital. The contradiction according to Marx can only be resolved in Communism, which to him is the end of history. On the contrary, Fukuyama contends that the class issue which was a fundamental contradiction within liberal ideology has provided a perfect solution to all known human contradictions through the liberal principles of freedom and equality. He argues that the egalitarian modern life the European and American countries are enjoying has adequately represented the Marxist's vision of classless society. Marxism failed as an ideology because of its inability to compete favourably with the West in the management of information technology.

Fukuyama and Endism: A Critique

Samuel Huntington argued against Fukuyama's paradigm of perfection of history. Huntington assumes that ideology is not the main stuff of history: the stuff of history is civilisation. According to him, civilisation produces ideology and not vice-versa (Huntington, 1997). Liberal democracy, Huntington says, is a Western ideal. Western culture is unique and should not be universalised. The attempt to universalise Western culture has produced three different reactions: Rejectionism, Kemalism and Reformism. These reactions come up because the expansion of the West through Western ideology necessarily promotes both the Westernisation and modernisation of the non-West.

Rejectionism opposes both modernisation and Westernisation. Japan embraced rejectionism in 1847; while China did it in 1722. Huntington asserts that Kemalism embraces both Westernisation and modernisation. In other words, a society must westernise in order to successfully modernise. Both Japan and China later adopted Kemalism but eventually rejected the Westernisation aspect of it after they had modernised. Reformism, according to Huntington, is the last reaction: this accepts modernisation and rejects Westernisation. Thus, one could state that both Japan and China eventually embraced Reformism.

From the above, it is clear that many nations want modernisation and not Westernisation. It is therefore not unexpected when some Asian countries like Japan and Korea embarked on de-Westernisation in order to assert their individual identities after they have successfully modernised. However, Huntington sees universalisation of the Western culture as inimical to both the West and the other nations because non-Western civilisations that hold contrary ideologies to the Western liberalism may jointly fight the West.

David Held in his work, ''Liberalism, Marxism and Democracy'', responds to Fukuyama's position on historical endism, by arguing that liberal democracy could not be presented as one united tradition, since liberalism has many traditions as propounded by different liberal theorists such as John Stuart Mill, John Locke, Adam Smith and John Rawls among others. These traditions disagree on some issues, such as different conceptions of what individual agent should be, conception of citizenship, of what the right and duties of individuals should be and so on (Held, 1993). He contends that Fukuyama does not give explanation on various forms of liberalism and does not provide information on how to choose among 'the competing variants'. These presented a problem since liberalism as an ideology is a contested terrain.

Furthermore, Fukuyama does not come out on the perceived tensions that seem to exist between the two components of liberal democracy, that is, democratic component and liberalism, Held presents his argument thus, to depict the contradiction:

> ...between the liberal preoccupation with individuals rights or "Frontier of Freedom" that "nobody should be permitted

to cross" and the democratic concern with the regulation of individual and collective action, with public accountability (Held, 1993).

Kishore Mahbubani reacts to the attempt to universalise Western culture in his article entitled, "The Dangers of Decadence: What the Rest can Teach the West". He observes a lot of contradictions between the Western culture and other cultures. He believes that the West cannot successfully impose her culture on other countries of the world because each civilisation has her own distinct culture that differentiates her from other civilisations (Mahbubani, 1996). Mahbubani further observes that the view that human rights are based on natural rights is not acceptable to all. The African and the Asian cultures emphasise collective rights over individual rights. Thomas Hobbes believes that rights have to be submitted to government in the modern society for the purpose of protection such that the life of man does not revert to the inglorious pre-historical period. In other words, in view of the brutality of the state of nature, individuals trade away some of their rights to gain protection from the state.

Some other commentators on the subject of rights support the argument that rights are not inherent; they stand for the point that rights are culturally based. The proponents of this view would assert that differing standards prove cultural origin rather than condemn other standards to illegitimacy. Mahbubani who belongs to this school of thought argues thus: Western (especially American) culture, for example, believes so much expression individual rights, while many other cultures put a much higher value on communitarian values. This means that when the rights of the individuals and good of the society clash, the presumption is that societal good is a more important standard (Mahbubani, 1996).

Mahbubani further states that students protesting in Tiananmen Square in China were gunned down by Chinese government troops in 1989, the West immediately condemned the action of China of violating the right to democracy, freedom of expression, and some other freedoms. The Chinese government responded that the students' rights did not extend to trying to undermine the socialist movement that had done much to benefit Chinese community. He points out that many

people in China see America's system of democracy as unnecessarily divisive and dangerous and these emanate from their corruption of society and its relation to individuals.

James Kurth, in his article, "The Real Clash," holds a contrary position to Huntington's. He posits that the real clash is not between the West and the other civilisations but within the 'already fragmented' Western civilisation itself,· Many in the West advocate universalisation of Western values, while others seriously preach multiculturalism and self-determination. Kurth believes that history proceeds from traditional political thoughts to modern philosophy to post-modern philosophy, and (post-modernism, having already taken root in the West) to some other systems of thoughts to emerge in the future (Kurth, 1996).

African Economic and Political Liberalism

The foundation of African economic liberalism was laid by the colonial masters. The power of the colonial state was absolutely arbitrary. The colonial government determines both the political and the economic structures of their colonies. For example, Ake argues that when Ghana was colonised, it was not a cocoa producing nation but because the British colonial government perceived that cocoa production would serve their economic interest, they introduced cocoa farming. By 1865, Ghana had started exporting cocoa, it became the leading producer of the product by 1901 "and it quickly became a mono-cultural cocoa economy; by 1939 cocoa accounted for 80 percent of the value of its export" (Ake, 1996). This same arbitrary power was exercised by colonial government throughout Africa in both the political and the economic realm.

The amalgamation of the Northern Protectorate of Nigeria with that of Southern Protectorate by the British colonial government was inform by an economic reason, to serve economic interest of the colonial master and it has economic implications for both colonial and post colonial era. The nation, Nigeria, was divided into three regions with each region specialising in the production of cash crops fitting their land. The Western region of Nigeria produced cocoa and kola nut, while the Northern region produced cotton and groundnut and the Eastern region produced oil-palm. All these cash crops were to serve the interest of the colonial government. Africans were not allowed to

have a say about the choice of the crop to plant. This marked the beginning of masses' alienation from the national mode of production.

Upon independence, Nigeria in particular continued the mode of production left by the colonial masters. Some of the newly independent African countries experienced balanced and prosperous economy for a short while. For example, Ghana's economy was buoyant for sometimes before it started to experience economic recession. The three regions in Nigeria after independence were competing in agricultural production of the crops that each region had a relative comparative advantage. Nigeria became a mono-product economy when petroleum was discovered in commercial quantity. Each region abandoned agriculture, and the country depended mainly on exportation of petroleum products. The strong federal structure left by the colonial government was abandoned for unitary system, such that, the Northern Nigeria could benefit from the petroleum products of the South. This marked the beginning of economic problems in Nigeria. The states became lazy, since each state depended on federal monthly allocation to meet their domestic and infrastructural requirement.

The pre-colonial economic system in Nigeria was radically different from both colonial and post-colonial economy. In fact, the African traditional economic system as a whole was communalistic. And in practice, this gives no room for any form of unemployment. The young children were introduced to the trade of their fathers early enough, they learned on the work. This type of native African economic structure was dislodged by the colonial government and was supplanted by liberal capitalism.

Obi argues that, the emergence of the third wave of democratic tradition was principally to correct economic problems in Africa. The expectations of the people were that democracy would reverse decades of poverty, corruption, and underdevelopment but the new democrats failed in their bid to bring the needed economic change. Obi further argues that:

> Africa in the spirit of the global moment embraced democracy or, more precisely liberal or multi-party democracy. This has found acceptance within Africa's

> political elite, and perhaps more significantly, within the donor community and Western democracies that seek to connect the process to market based economic reforms and development on the continent. They also seek to globalise their own political and market ideology as part of the process of universal homogenisation (Obi, 2008).

African economic system is dictated by the Western economic interest. The elites see the democratisation process as an opportunity for them to hijack the democratic institutions to enrich themselves. There is a way in which the people cast their ballot for a political party, and by the same logic have no say about economic policies the political party adopts after assuming power. Obi describes African economic system in the following way:

> Although the people vote for political parties the experience in Africa is that they do not have a say in the economy policies of elected government, increasingly, the economic policies adopted by Africa states tend to place accountability and power in the hands of external constituencies and a few legal technocrats sometimes known as the "dream teams" that are obsessed with getting the "prices right", no matter the adverse social impact involved. We are then increasingly confronted by the situation in which the economic logic overpowers the people's will, making nonsense of choices between different candidates that all end up implementing the same economic reforms and disempowering the poor people who are the majority (Obi, 2008).

There is a gap between the ruling elite and the common people. The elite just need the people as a stepping stone to power. Nkwi is of the opinion that since 1990 "Western democracy has become a buzzword and become synonymous with development" (Nkwi, 2013). However, the supposed necessary connection between democracy and development is only in theory in Africa, in practice, Western styled democracy has no fundamental positive influence on Africa. The last

two decades of democratic practice in Africa have shown that democratic transition needs to be re-structured and reformulated towards an autochthonous paradigm. He further stressed the importance of democracy to development.

> Democracy should lead to meaningful development that will affect all and sundry or else it will not be relevant … democracy is not simply about forms or means but also about ends which have to do with its capacity to enhance development. Most, if not all societies will have to undergo "developmental democracy" which is more oriented to solving problems of economic underdevelopment, social stagnation and political drift (Nkwi, 2013).

A meaningful democracy is the one that aids development. Fukuyama argues in his article "The End of History, Five Years Later" that economic modernisation necessarily follows democratisation, this trend has been observed in Europe, America and Asia and that democracy has a way of opening up the economy and allowed scientific modernisation of the market system (Fukuyama, 1995). That democracy and economic modernisation are necessarily connected has been argued out by Fukuyama.

> As an empirical matter, the most interesting case is now in Asia: Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian countries … there has been a distinct correlation between level of economic development and stable democracy. This suggests that while there may be cultural elements to the correlation, the correlation itself is not ultimately culturally determined but applies universally (Fukuyama, 1995).

Fukuyama's conclusion here is hasty because democratisaton in Africa has not brought about economic modernisation in most African states. Ake argues that the structure of African politics has dictated the failure of African economic development. The common characteristic of colonial policies in Africa is that of absolutism and arbitrariness which was inherited by the post independence political elite. The failure of

the elite to improve the economy made them to seek modernisation theory. The modernisation paradigm ignores two important factors, according to Todd Bradley and Ake, which are the historical uniqueness and cultural specificity of African countries (Ake, 1996; Bradley, 2011). The implication of this is that, Western liberal model has failed from the beginning as a tool of social transformation and economic development in Africa.

The Prescription

Ake makes useful suggestions towards arresting economic problem and underdevelopment in Africa. According to him, developmental scheme in Africa should be people-based and "based on empowerment, confidence building, self-realisation and self-reliance (Ake, 1996). A democracy that empowers the people to participate in decision making is necessary if Africa would have a chance to develop the continent. Ake emphasises a democracy that is definitive, a democracy that recognises social, political and economic rights that, also recognise collective rights of inclusiveness and the development of institutions. Adopting totality of Western model of economic paradigm to solve African problem that is rooted in ethnicity and regionalism has been counter-productive. One may argue that America and Canada are multi-ethnic society but the level of social integration in both countries is higher than African nations. The ethnic diversity in Africa is very sharp and every attempt to integrate this ethnicity has failed because the boundaries of most African countries were drawn arbitrarily.

Francis Offor, in his work, "The Sociality of Democracy" asserts that liberal democracy could be adaptable to African setting if we could explore the idea of democracy beyond its political conception. Both the political and economic realms of democracy could be enhanced and the democratic culture established by inculcating democratic values into the institutional structures of the society. According to him, the survival of liberal democracy depends on socialisation of the political processes to actually involve the participation of the entire eligible public population. The more the active population that understands the nitty-gritty of a democratic government, the more enhanced the system becomes (Offor, 2014). To

achieve this aim, he argues that there must be a socialisation programme for the devolvement of the ideals of democracy to the family space, the religious organisations, the financial sector, the educational sector and so on, as these institutions form the framework for building the culture of democracy.

Conclusion

In this work we have attempted to discuss African democratic experience from the perspective of Francis Fukuyama's liberal triumphalism. We have argued that Fukuyama's liberal triumphalism does not adequately address the peculiarities of the liberal trial in Africa. The argument has been that for liberal philosophy to be existentially successful in Africa, there must be an injection of Africa ideas and values in the thinking and practice of democracy. In other words, it is only Africanised liberal democracy that could be existentially successful in Africa. It could be validly argued that that there is no perfect system of democracy without any known limitation throughout the entire world, African democracy should be a blend of what is relevant and suitable in African culture and that of Western liberal democracy. We have seen from the arguments above that democracy is culture-bound or culture-specific. Even, African culture today is a blend of Western culture, assimilated during colonialism, and that of traditional African culture. African democracy cannot be a prototype of Western democracy. Athenian democracy is different from modern liberal democracy because both afore-mentioned democracies are products of different cultures and different epochs. Democracy is a way of life and there are no two communities that have exactly the same experience. Liberal democracies in the Western tradition have a lot of variations. The cause of the failure of liberal democracy is not in the liberal principles itself, but in the inability of African democrats to integrate democratic process into our culture.

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