

Democracy and the Quest for Responsible Governance in Southern Africa

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KEYWORDS Democracy. Governance. Development. Leadership. Southern Africa

ABSTRACT The clamour for democracy worldwide is premised on the fact that it allows citizens' active involvement in the way they are being governed. Being a representative system of government, democracy is expected to make political leadership responsive and responsible to the entire citizenries of the state. However, experiences in the Southern African region have shown the institutionalisation of democracy without responsible governance. By responsible governance, we mean the conscious effective and efficient management of the state human, natural and financial resources in order to bring about sustainable national development. The absence of this has brought about below capacity development of the region. Even though, "Southern Africa needs a developmental and capable state for socio-economic progress and sustainable democracy", this cannot be achieved without responsible political leadership, which would be responsive to the yearnings of the people. So, in this paper, we are presenting a position that it is only responsible governance, which can make democracy meaningful, as democracy without responsible governance is meaningless.

INTRODUCTION

Southern Africa region has the most vibrant economy in the sub-Sahara Africa. Democratic ideals still rank high in the region compared to other regions in Africa. This has made the region, among others in the continent, the preferred choice of many migrants from different parts of the world. Revelling in this situation, there is wrong assumption that the region has reached its eldorado where everything functions well. The aim of this paper is to correct this wrong impression and to bring to fore the daunting challenges being faced by the region. The region is also witnessing high rate of unemployment, decadence in educational and other infrastructural facilities as well as problem of corruption. These are the problems militating against sustainable human development of the region. While many theorists of African developmental states have hinged the development of Africa including the SADC region on multi-party democracy, this paper presents a position different from the above. It is the view of this paper that much as multi-party democracy is desirable in the region, it is when it is complemented with responsible governance that the region can advance towards genuine developmental states. Here this paper explains the historical evolution of multi-party democracy in southern Africa. The paper also discusses the interface between democracy and

development, and how it relates to the region. Finally the paper explains in detail, the various issues involved, in the quest for responsible governance in the region.

DEMOCRACY AND THE EVOLUTION OF GENUINE DEMOCRATIC IDEALS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Meaning of Democracy

Democracy has been viewed with various lenses by different scholars based on their experiences and research. This accounts for the different definitions of democracy. Plato defined democracy thus: "And a democracy, I suppose, comes into being when the poor, winning the victory put to death some of the other party, drive out others, and grant the rest of the citizens an equal share in both the citizenship and offices-and for the most part these offices are assigned by lot"(Plato 1961). The above represents the genuine description of the origin of democracy as found in Athens and what the modern democracy tries to be. However, democracy goes beyond this definition. It is not only about winning elections and neither does the coming of poor into power means that genuine democratic ideals are on stage. In fact, Plato is not a known support-

ter of democracy as he prefers institutional dictatorship to democracy. So his definition of democracy could not be relied upon. In the contemporary era, democracy is being associated with simple majority. That is why it is defined as “the rule by the majority rather than by a minority” (Ranney and Kendall 1951). In line with the belief that democracy is a system of government where majority rules, H.B. Mayo came up with four distinguishing principles of democracy namely (a) popular control of policy-makers; (b) political equality; (c) effective popular control made possible by political freedoms, and (d) decision by the majority when the representatives are divided (Mayo 1961). However, democracy is not only about simple majority. The idea of simple majority has failed to adequately address what democracy stands for. Democracy is best understood and appreciated in terms of people’s rule hence the popularity of the definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln as the government of the people by the people and for the people. In expatiating on the definition of Lincoln, D.D. Rapheal comprehensively writes thus:

The essential idea of democratic government is government by the people. Strictly speaking, government by all the people should mean unanimous decisions. But this, of course, is impossible in political matters. Democracy in practice has to mean following the view of the majority. Perhaps Lincoln’s addition of “for the people” means,..... that the decisive view, which for practical purposes must be that of the majority, should seek to serve the interests of all even though it does not have the agreement of all; otherwise there is the danger,....that majority rule may become tyranny (Rapheal 1976)

The above explanation by Rapheal clearly shows the inherent deficiencies in democracy but notwithstanding this democracy still stands out as the system of government that allows for checks and balances, periodic elections and fair involvement of citizens in the decision making process.

We have tried to explain what democracy is all about before considering its tortuous journey in Southern Africa and how it evolutionary processes that span more than four decades in the region.

Background to Democratic Rule in Southern Africa

The journey to the present multi-party demo-

cratic state in SADC region has been a tortuous and difficult one. Not to be divorced from the happenings in other part of Africa, the Southern Africa region has had its own share of long duration of authoritarian rule. By authoritarian rule, we mean the era in which there was imposition of “one political group or interest over everyone else. They restrict pluralism and limit public participation, calling for obedience and not dissent” (Jackson and Jackson 1997). During this period, there was no room for opposing views or dissent voices. Everybody must toe the line of thought of government of the day. Southern Africa region has been exposed to and has experienced various kinds of authoritarian systems. These include (a) one-person dictatorship. This was the prevailing system in Malawi under Kamudzu Banda until 1994; (b) military incursion into politics like the one that overshadowed Lesotho’s political scene between 1986 and 1993; (c) one-party states. This was the order of the day in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia until the early 1990s; and monarchical dynastic rule as we have in Swaziland even up till the present day (Matlosa 2005b). While one could see little or no traces of authoritarian rule in Southern Africa during the pre-colonial, the fact cannot be disputed with rational argument that the foundation for authoritarian rule in Southern Africa was laid during the colonial rule. This was extended to the post-colonial era by the so-called political activists who inherited who inherited state power from the colonial masters not for the development of the state but mainly to promote their own interests (Mamdani 1996). So during the period of 1960s-1980s, except for Botswana and Mauritius who enjoyed liberal democracy, majority of Southern African countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, Malawi, Lesotho and even South Africa were under the jackboots of authoritarian rule.

However, new vista of political experiences emerged in Africa in the 1990s and this rubbed greatly on the Southern African region. Beginning from this period, there was a reinvigorated clamour for genuine democratization and multi-party systems across the continent. The heat was on the authoritarian regimes that “reluctantly, African presidents released political prisoners, unfettered the independent press, and recognized opposition political parties in preparation for competitive elections. Together, these liberation reforms put an end to the political monopoly enjoyed by African one-party states and made it difficult for

military officers to again stake a legitimate claim to rule" (Bratton et al. 2005). Thus the genuine process of decolonization, transition from military rule and from apartheid to multi-party liberal democracy started in the 1990s in the SADC region. This led to the political independence of Namibia in 1990 and the demise of apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994. Since then, "almost all the SADC states have embraced the political practice of regular multi-party elections with the exception of Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Swaziland (Matlosa 2005). Even Angola and the DRC have since transited to multi-party democracy.

It is important to point out at this juncture that even though almost all the SADC countries have embraced multi-party democracies, the level of its development varies from one country to the other. While countries like Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Mauritius are practising liberal democracies with stable and consolidating democratic frameworks, majority of SADC countries such as Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia are practising electoral democracies whose democratic credentials are stronger in relation to the holding of regular elections but suffer great democratic deficits between and beyond elections. Zimbabwe is a typical example of another facet of democracy in SADC region. It is a country that has embraced the political culture of regular multi-party elections but election in the country is a mere façade behind authoritarian indulgences. Swaziland represents the last group which is indifferent to multi-party democracy (Matlosa 2005; Schedler 2002; Diamond 2002).

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The interconnectedness between democracy and development in Southern Africa has been a contentious issue. The bone of contention has been whether democracy could aid or hinder the evolution of developmental states. Majority of the African leaders who took over the rein of government from the colonial masters during the period of 1960s-1980s were opposed to the institutionalisation of multi-party democracy. Their belief was that multi-party democracy would come with its divisive tendencies which would affect the national unity, the development and the process of nation-building in their

countries. Their opinion was that accelerated development would be achieved if democracy was not given chance to flourish as it ought to be. In fact, this accounted for the preponderance of one party state in most of the Southern African states after independence and the justification for military rule for example in Lesotho (1986-93) in some countries.

However, this idea of detaching genuine democracy from the process of evolving a developmental state might not have been the best way to achieve national unity. According to Mandaza and Sachikonye (1991) "the flaws in this ideology partly explain the failure to attain both political stability and economic development in much of the continent". It is quite saddening and ironical that the political leaders who were in the forefront for political independence never had real plans for the development of their states after independence. Rather they were more entangled in power struggles, the fallout of which is the mortgage of the development of the state on the altar of their selfish pecuniary gains. In essence, the much talked about development by the political elite in place of genuine democracy was also lost to the unending power struggle among them. The situation was appropriately captured by Claude Ake when he states thus: "It is easy to see that the political environment at independence was profoundly hostile to development. The struggle for power was so absorbing that everything else, including development, was marginalized" (Ake 1996). So, rather than focusing on how to develop their states, the political elites "locked horns in an unending zero-sum struggle over state power and rampant accumulation by both fair and foul means" (Matlosa 2005). At the end both democracy and development suffered.

When we talk of development in this paper we mean sustainable human development. Here, we believe that sustainable human development is anchored on democracy coupled with responsible governance. According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1990) sustainable human development basically has to do with a process of expanding people's choices in a manner that enables them to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. The UNDP came up with three indices to measure sustainable human development. These are Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI) and Human Poverty Index (HPI). These indices were accompanied with three components used in

measuring the socio-economic progress of any country. These are (a) longevity. This is the variable that measures life expectancy and state of health; (b) knowledge. This variable measures the literacy level and (c) per capita income. This is a variable that measures standard of living and poverty incidence. The UNDP captures this vividly in the table below

A critical look at the table 1 and the prevalent situation in most countries in the SADC region show that the level of sustainable human development in the region is below average. Even though some scholars like Matlosa have attributed this to the ravaging effect of HIV/AIDS which is prevalent in the region, I am inclined to another opinion. The major factor leading to the nose-diving in the level of sustainable human development in the region is crisis in governance. By crisis in governance I mean the crisis if orderly political succession, political stability and economic progress. Crisis of governance is also failure in governance, which means the inability of the government, and its agencies to adequately address the cultural, economic, political and social needs of its citizens. The institution of governance is regarded at all levels as the most sensitive human enterprise. It is regarded as such because it is an institution that has the onus to decide the fate of the generality of the masses under such territorial designation. For example, as a way of achieving the set goal for sustainable human development worldwide, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Millennium Declaration committing member states to achieving eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as follows:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty.

Halving the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day and halving malnutrition;

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education. Ensuring that all children are able to complete primary education;

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary schooling, preferably by 2005 and no later than 2015;

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality. Cutting the under-five death rate by two-thirds;

Goal 5: Improve maternal health. Reducing the maternal mortality by three-quarters;

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases. Halting and beginning to reverse HIV/AIDS and other diseases;

Goal 7: Ensure environmental stability. Cutting by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation; and

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development. Reforming aid and trade with special treatment for the poorest countries (United Nations Development Programme 2005).

When we examine these eight point agenda, the question to be asked is that how far has most states in the region gone in achieving this. Signs of hunger are visible everywhere while many people are living below poverty level. There is no well-tailored programme for universal primary education which would have made all children able to compulsorily complete primary education. Primary health care delivery system has not been given adequate attention while other infrastructural facilities such as road, water et cetera are in sorry state. So, lack of responsible governance has impacted negatively on achieving the Millennium

Table 1: Three dimensions of Sustainable Human Development (SHD)

<i>Index</i>	<i>Longevity</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>	<i>Decent standard of living</i>
_HDI	Life Expectancy at birth	· Adult Literacy· · Combined enrolment ratio	Adjusted per capita income in PPP US\$
_GDI	Female and male life expectancy at birth	· Female and male literacy rates · Female and male enrolment ratios	Female and male per capita incomes (PPP US\$) based on female and male earned income shares.
HPI	Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40	· Adult literacy rate	Deprivation in economic provisioning measured by:· · Percentage of people without access to safe water· · Percentage of people without access to health services· · Percentage of children under five who are underweight.

Source: UNDP 1990

Development Goals for sustainable human development. There is then urgent need to turn to responsible governance which is our next consideration.

THE QUEST FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Governance is the act of managing, guiding, directing, influencing and controlling affairs. Governance has remained one of the dominant issues in the current development discourse in the Southern Africa region. (Landsberg and Mackay 2004). The point must be noted that there is a clear-cut difference between a state management and the concept of governance. While the state management is an act of organizing a society, governance is the act of exercising political power or control. This is in conformity with the submission of Goran Hyden that:

Governance refers to the aspect of politics that aim to formulate and manage the rules of the political arena in which state and civil society actors operate and interact to make authoritative decisions. In more operational terms, governance refers to those measures that involve settling conflicts over such rules. Such rules translate into constitutions, laws, customs, administrative regulations.....; all of which in one way or the other provide the framework for the formulation and implementation of policy decision (Hyden 1999).

Thus governance is the management of a nation's affairs by organs of government and other key non-state actors at both national and local levels of the nation-state (Matlosa 2005). In technical terms, governance has to do with the systemic framework, institutional arrangements as well as the machinery meant for the formulation and execution of the policies of a given country. In this case, it is extended to include putting in place a legally constituted authority to administer the state affairs on behalf of the concerned population at all layers of social formation. It also includes the exercise of political power to run state affairs (Hyden and Bratton 1992; Hyden et al. 2000).

In this paper, we are concerned with responsible governance. By responsible governance, I mean "the administration of society in ways that will improve the standard of living of citizens as well as promote individual and group interest and aspirations" (Oluwole 2002). It requires a systematic method of harnessing the nation resources

for the overall well-being of its citizens. So, responsible governance has to do with the process of harmonizing as well as managing all the diverse elements (i.e. social, political, economic and cultural) in the society to attain a desired level of socio-economic progress for all its members. Responsible governance always put into consideration the yearnings and aspirations of the governed in policy formulation. The World Bank christened responsible governance as good governance and it defines it as the effective and efficient management and administration of public good with emphasis on accountability and responsiveness to the yearnings of the people. Responsible governance encompasses efficient public service, reliable judiciary, and an administration that can be truly held accountable by the people. The World Bank articulates four important elements as the fulcrum of responsible governance. These are:

- Public sector management emphasizing the need for effective financial and human resource management through improved budgeting, accounting and reporting, and rooting out inefficiency particularly in public enterprises;
- Accountability in public services, including effective accounting, auditing and decentralization, and generally making public officials responsible for their actions and responsible to consumers;
- A predictable legal framework with rules known in advance; a reliable and independent judiciary and law enforcement mechanisms; and
- Availability of information and transparency in order to enhance policy analysis, promote public debate and reduce the risk of corruption (World Bank 1989, 1992).

The above mentioned elements have to be properly harmonised and consolidated to achieve genuine responsible governance.

The major goal towards which responsible governance tend is the overall development and progress of both individuals and the society. The achievement of this objective is thrust upon the leadership. The leadership, which is accessible to all, the one, which leads not just according to its wishes but more according to the wishes of the others. It is the one that creates a conducive atmosphere for man to realize and reveal himself fully and the one that harnesses the positive traits of each for the benefit of all. So its primary interest

should be the good of all i.e. common good. In essence, leadership is a person or group of persons who manage, guide, direct, influence and control affairs. Leadership also involves followership. Essentially, governance entails leadership, a leadership that is accountable to the people.

Responsible governance is hinged on accountability. This is its point of departure from democracy. For it is wrong to assume that multi-party democracy automatically translates into responsible governance. Eminent scholars like Prof. Ali Yahaya had argued that multi-party democracy was the necessary and sufficient condition for responsible governance. He argued that multi-party democracy ensures that the economy is efficiently and effectively managed, that fundamental human rights are safeguarded and that only policies that are good and meet the yearnings of the generality of the people are formulated and implemented. Yahaya employed the 1996 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme to buttress his position. He submitted that "the superiority of multi-party democracy was graphically illustrated in the UNDP Human Development Report of 1996. The report revealed that "countries that were multi-party democracies were more sensitive and responsive to the needs and the demands of the people than other political system" (Yahaya 1999).

This is not the case in most Southern Africa Development Council (SADC) countries. We have many consolidated democratic states in Southern Africa which are deficient in accountability. Accountability is central to responsible governance, and lack of it will make democracy meaningless. Lack of accountability in governance arises when:

- Governments ignore or transgress social ethics and constitutional and legal provisions in conducting public affairs;
- Tasks to be performed are so complex or unspecified that implementation is very difficult if not impossible;
- Activities are hidden;
- Corrupt practices are widespread;
- Political and personal loyalty are rewarded more than merit; and
- Public participation in running public affairs is low (Olowu 1999; Thrkilsden 2001).

Lack of accountability as well as transparency is one of the causes of crisis in governance because governance is the conscious manage-

ment of the public realm based on certain common goals such as the promotions of popular participation, accountability and transparency. From the above we could see that the account-ability requires in responsible governance is comprehensive and all embracing. This involves both the political justification of decisions and actions, and managerial answerability for implementation of agreed tasks according to agreed criteria of performance (Day and Klein 1987). Accountability in the political sense makes duty bound for those in authority to be answerable to the citizens in all their actions. In essence, accountability in the public sector imposed on public officials and those in authority to ensure that:

- Some set of recipients receive information about the outcomes of decisions made by identified individuals who are source decision-makers;
- Those sources can be made to explain their decisions; and
- Some sanctions can be imposed if the explanations are unsatisfactory (Economic Commission for Africa 2003).

Since responsible governance has to do with the process of harmonizing as well as managing all the diverse elements in the society for the attainment of a desired level of socio-economic progress for all its members, then many governments especially in the SADC region have failed. The governments are only good in the manipulation of the instruments of government in favour of certain classes or groups of people. This, in no small way, accounted for the tension, conflict and instability being experienced in these countries. In fact, it was this scenario that had put many countries in a state of ferment because political power has been taken to mean a winner-take-all affair with respect not only to patronage and the prerogatives of office but also to the nation's wealth and resources. The concentration of power in the hands of a particular group can in that sense serve only as a source of discontent in that the resulting economic deprivation alienates the government from the majority of the people.

Consequent upon the above, a government that is alienated from the majority of the people could not be said to be responsible and responsive at all. What arises from this is the government losing its legitimacy. This loss of legitimacy will force those in power to adopt undemocratic tactics and unconstitutional methods, including

corrupt practices, to retain power as the opposition to the government mounts. As soon as the government feels unsafe, it thinks more of security than any other thing. In fact, most of its attention would be directed to security to the detriment of other important sectors of the economy that could have direct impact on the citizens. What would result is the gradual impoverishment of the state because the largest chunk of the state budget would go to defence and security. It is in view of the aforementioned situation that this paper places much premium on responsible governance especially its attainment and sustenance.

Failure in governance arises from the fact that too many of those in the higher rung of governance i.e. the leadership cannot be counted upon to act for the benefit of the polity just for the sake of doing so. It often appears as a free for all where the institutions of society are not strong enough to constitute a serious check. This could happen when there is no strong and just legal system in place. In fact, the quest for responsible governance is an outright admission of the failure of governance in most of the SADC countries with its attendant consequences. So, even though almost all the SADC countries are enjoying multi party democracy yet the dividends of democracy have been eluding because the democracy is devoid of responsible governance as a result of failure of governance. The failure of governance itself points to the fact that those in political control have not properly managed the economy and the other social institutions. Almost everyday of our lives, we hear or witness the situation where the population of a nation is severely distressed. The social malaise corruption remains pervasive. Certified corrupt people walk the streets free while panel reports indicting prominent citizens are gathering dust in the files room. The poor people are disenfranchised economically. It becomes impossible for individual citizens to realize their optimum development in the provision of affordable and qualitative education, healthcare, housing, jobs and other things that would guarantee good life for the citizens. There is nothing like accountability in governance again. Lip service is only being paid to transparency. Public access to information on government activities is regarded as sacred. Electoral laws which ought to set out a clearly defined and acceptable system of political succession are always ambiguous. Want and poverty pervade the land. No conducive environment for good

employment, education, decent housing and medical care. Majority of the SADC states survive on aids, donations and grants from few developed countries and international agencies.

Many reasons have been advanced for irresponsible governance across the countries in the sub-Sahara Africa. For instance, Abubakar Momoh laid the crisis of governance in most of the developing countries at the doorstep of their past colonial masters. He blamed this on the colonialism created state structures that are basically violent, authoritarian and unaccountable. He said these were the structures that were inherited at independence. He accused the former colonial masters of always forcing their own system on their former colonies not minding whether it conforms to their societal norms and cultures or not. So, he traced the cause of bad and irresponsible governance to the past colonial masters. Theophilus Okere shared the belief of Abubakar Momoh that the former colonial masters were the cause of irresponsible governance in Africa. He writes:

There is not one African country whose economy cannot be or has not been once or twice toppled or buoyed up at the will of its past colonial master. These have initiated and crushed secession, initiated and decided the outcome of wars as it suited their interests, compounded simple disputes and in general, have been unduly and cruelly meddlesome. They have exacerbated corruption by their complicities and patronage and have used either religion or ethnicity or both to drive wedges of permanent disunity within virtually every former colony (Okere 2002).

Consequent upon the above, Momoh reasoned that responsible governance could only be achieved if most developing countries retrace their steps to dismantle the state structures created for them by the colonial masters on gaining political independence. So, severance of link from past colonial masters and a return to cultural values are needed to bring about responsible governance according to these scholars. Good as this position might be, it has been preached and practised for some time but there is still crisis of governance. This is so because none of the above proffered solutions could solve the problem of crisis in governance. What we need to bring about responsible governance is not multi-party democracy neither is it the severance of link from the past colonial masters but a just legal system. Governance is based on rule of law.

Law protects citizens from the unwarranted use of power and in this way provide them with security. Where the rule of law is not established citizens do not know what conduct is permissible. Governance takes place more or less in a manner set down in laws. So, only law that promote justice could guarantee responsible governance.

CONCLUSION

My task in this paper is not to really evolve system for responsible governance in Southern Africa. Rather, I set out in this paper to prove the point that multi-party democracy does not necessarily translate to responsible governance. This, I have done, by discussing the evolutionary process of multi-party democracy in SADC region. I also gave vivid illustration to the fact that almost all the countries in the region are enjoying multi-party democracy but responsible governance is far from their body polity. This paper is meant to impute this consciousness into us to serve as the basis for further research on the interface between democracy, development and responsible governance in the region. The recommendation of this paper is that the leadership at every level of governance in the region should exhibit high sense of accountability, transparency and responsible governance so as to bring about enduring democracy.

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