Rotational Participatism : A Leadership Model for Africa Today and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Direct or indirect ethnic conflicts among Africans have contributed to the marginalization of other Africans within a similar geographical region. The results of these are under development, tribalism, nepotism, poor leadership models and an ever increasing conflicts among peoples of the same nation. The purpose of this paper is to encourage a constructive participation of Africans in community development irrespective of their ethnic groups or population size or their geographical location. Two ideological framework inform the writing of this paper. The first is on the role of ethnicity in the squabble for leadership in Africa. The second is an introduction to the concepts of rotational participatism/participation (Ropart) explained as a leadership model that address the problem of ethnicity and leadership in Africa. The suggestion made in this paper is one among other solutions to the problem of leadership in Africa. The suggestion is open for improvements on the condition that the improvements would address the problem of leadership in relation to ethnicity and the so-called minority groups in Africa.

Keywords: *community, leadership, marginalization, participaticism, power, ropart.*

INTRODUCTION

There is a misconception according to which the desire not to step-down or not to handover a leadership position is African. However, I debunk this notion and indicate that the quest for power or not to handover a leadership position is a human phenomenon which depend on specific individuals. It is a fact that Africa had and have leaders who never wanted to allow others to lead except themselves, their families and their cronies. This human phenomenon which allow people to stay longer in power beyond a stipulated period of time have also been expressed by various leaders all over the world.[1] The argument is that the quest to occupy leadership positions together with good and bad leadership models are human phenomenon that have nothing to do with race or geographical demarcation.

Monarchy indeed used to be the primary system of governance in Africa before African states gained their independence from colonial rule. There are series of evidence to proof that monarchs prioritized the well-being of their ethnic groups. Before democracy was practiced as a formal system of governance in Africa, the people were led by tribal leaders. Tribal leaders or chiefs had council of elders who approve or disapprove popular decisions of the king or chief. In other words, the king consulted in order to take vital decisions toward his/her subordinates. The elders were appointed or elected from various sub-tribal groups and geographical locations that belonged to a particular ethnic group. The evolution of tribal and family chiefs might have been a precursor for extreme ethnicism and tribalism in Africa, yet it indicate that monarchs prioritize the well-being of their people.

Slave trade was abolished in 1807 and immediately colonialism emerged until the

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[1]Vladimir Putin has been at Russia's hem of affairs from May 2012 up to date. Sepp Blatter was FIFA president since 1998 to 2015. He intended to remain in power until he was removed cunningly. Aleksandr Grigoryevich Lukashenko head Belarus since 1994 up-to-date. All over the globe, there are people who handed over power and there are those that refused to hand-over power.

1950s and 60s when most African states obtained political independence from their various colonizers. While formal democracy started in most African states from these periods, coups and counter coup de tat's short-lived many Africans the benefits of assimilating and understanding the modus operandi of democracy. A people conversant with ethnic leadership were tamed to find foreign based prescribed democracy most attractive. It is pertinent to note that since the 20th to the 21st centuries, ethnicity and tribalism is yet to be separated from African democracies. It is for this reason that I suggest that, let all ethnic groups be formally recognized, preserved, appreciated and allowed to contribute to the well-being of their respective societies through the system of rotational participation/paricipatism.

I stated that there is need to reform African leadership in accordance to their ethnic groups and according to their geographical location. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), East African Community (EAC), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CENSAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union in its entirety operate on the basis of rotating power/leadership among its members of states. If rotational participatism (Ropart) is applicable amongst these eight African Union Regional Economic Communities (RECs), it thus suggest that it can also be applicable in every African state, in every province and in every local community.

Ethnicity in Africa

Africa remained the most important or one of the world's most important continent for many reasons:

1. Its rich and vast human and mineral resources.
2. Its unique history of slavery and colonialism.
3. Its vast ethnic groups and population growth.
4. Its unique politics and leaders including democrats and dictators.
5. Its unique conflicts, refugee crisis and so on and so forth.

Gunther said that Africa is as vast as the USA, Western Europe, India and China all put together and that it is an area that covers one-fifth of the surface of the earth (not less than 11, 262, 2000 square miles).[2] Some notable racial groups in Africa are the Hamites, Negroes, Bantus and the Bushmen. While many have accepted that the entire human race originated from Africa and that human civilization started in Africa, others contested these views. These contentions are caused basically because of inadequate archaeological research to proof the civilization of ancient Africans except those of the ancient Egyptians. It is debated that the civilization of the ancient Egyptians is not of African origin but of Greeks and Romans. However, modern researchers have demonstrated that the ancient Egyptians themselves were Africans.[3] This subject is important because it address one vital question: if civilization started in Africa, what made Africa to be left behind America, Europe and Asia with regard to developments in science and technology? The scope of this research is beyond addressing this question in detail. Some Europeans are of the impression that they civilized the Americans, the Africans and the Asians. Because of the European particularization and the politicization of the concepts of civilization, scholars have now lost interest in the definition of the term.[4] The concept has been misconstrued to the point that nations that colonized Africa thought that it was a moral obligation for them to "civilize" Africa through colonialism and imperialism.[5]

The achievements or the evidence of civilization of Africans has been destroyed by the impacts of slavery and colonialism. It is important to note that writing especially in English language does not mean the beginning of civilization as speculated by many. But even if writing is to be regarded as a sine quo non to civilization, Africans wrote before the Europeans traded or invaded Africa. For example, the meroitic scripts provide that the ancient Egyptians, the Ethiopians and western Sudanese communicated

[2] J. Gunther, Inside Africa, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1955), 5.

[3] JM Agai, 2013 "Who were the ancient Egyptians?" Theologia Viatorum, 37(2), 88-101.

[4] Connah, G., 1987, African civilizations, precolonial cities and states in tropical: An archaeological perspective, (Cambridge University Press. London), 8.

[5] Folorunso, C. A., 2003, "Views of Ancient Egypt from a West African Perspective," in D. O'Connor & A. Reid (eds.). Ancient Egypt in Africa, (UCL. London), 85.

their civilization one to another by writing. The Vai scripts were also used among the Kru people of Liberia. Yet these scripts cannot be fully deciphered today. The Nsibidi system of communication was used around Cross-River and Akwa-Ibom states in Nigeria. Arabic was used as a means of writing in Africa before Europeans came to the continent. The Tarkh al Fet' tach, the Tarikh al Sudan and the Kano Chronicles are African histories recorded in Arabic used in western Sudan, Ghana, Mali and Nigeria.[6]

Almost all developed nations have some level of reliance on Africa's resources for their economic growth and development. While very few nations prefer to trade with Africa on a balance or a 50 to 50 basis, most nations access Africa's resources through dubious means. The provision of loans with surplus profit to African states, the formation and the sales of weapons to militia groups, the dethroning and defaming of African leaders who are outspoken against colonialism or neo-colonialism using the media and local agents are few among the ways some foreign countries and companies exploit Africans and their resources. Beside the mentioned factors, ethnicity has been misused to cause leadership crisis in Africa.

Unlike other countries in other continents that have fewer ethnic groups, the countries in Africa seemingly have the highest number of ethnic/tribal groups in the world. Some among the major ethnic groups in Africa are the Igbos (Nigeria), Fula (Guinea, Senegal, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, etc.), Amhara (Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti), Kongo (DRC, Angola), Shona (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zulu (South Africa, Zimbabwe) and many more. Within a particular major and sometimes minor ethnic group are sub-tribal ethnic groups who share the same dialects, accents and culture. However, in some instances, very minor and seemingly diminishing differences may exist sometimes in dialect or accent or physiognomy or tattoo or beliefs system among sub-tribal groups belonging to one major ethic group. In most cases, a major ethnic groups share similar culture including dialect and accents among its sub-tribal groups. Among the Sepedi (South Africa), there exist sub-tribal groups like the

Malobedu and the Mapulani. Among the Yoruba (Nigeria), there exist the Egba Yoruba, the Ijebu, the Ekiti Yoruba and many more. Also among the Berom (Nigeria), there exist the Gashish, the Foron Berom and others. Among the Shona (Zimbabwe) there exist the Zezuru Shona, the Manica Shona and others and the list goes on and on.

It is important to note that Africans take pride in their culture including their languages, places of origins and in their land. For most Africans, burial in a person's place of origin connect the deceased easily to his or her ancestors and sent the deceased to a blessed destiny of the dead. This suggests that the possession of land is an integral part of the African culture. One of the means of obtaining land in Africa is the occupation of leadership positions within a community. The main issue I hope to raise at this juncture is that Africans, admire their culture and pride themselves in associating with their tribal groups and the land they inherited from their parents. For most Africans, the absence of land is equal to the absence of dignity. Many ethnic organizations have been constituted to foster the growth and development of their culture and of their people. More so, it is important to note that there is nothing wrong or evil in associating with one's ethnic and tribal organizational-structures. There is however something wrong when one ethnic group refuse to recognize the independence and the existence of another ethnic group.

Most of the conflicts in Africa are caused due to the none-recognition or the marginalization of one ethnic group over another. In other words, the marginalization of an ethnic group by another ethnic group in the provision of leadership and land-occupation often resulted to conflicts. The occupation of land and of key offices in politics, economy, education, etc. in a particular area by a particular ethnic or tribal group contributed to the rise of conflicts in Africa.

The Problem of Leadership & Ethnicity in Africa

With the rise of sophisticated means of communication in Africa, there are clear indications that more people participate in politics and community development directly or indirectly. Through the social media, both the young and the old have opportunities and platforms to express their views concerning local and global affairs. Through similar

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[6] Adeoti, E.O., 2014, "African History and the Tradition of Historical Writing," Journal of Social Science (COES & J-JSS) 3(2), 319-320.

channels, many can now access and evaluate, criticize and suggest ways towards curbing the various social and political ills affecting various communities. Through the social media and other forms of communication technology, there is currently more awareness created on the affairs of communities among Africans and this has contributed to people's desire to contribute to societal development directly or indirectly.

One factor that characterizes the failure of leadership among Africans is ethnicity. Opposition perpetrated against a leader because the leader is wrong or found wanting by a court of law has often been tribalized to the point that the affected leader's tribal group defend him/her even when the leader is found guilty. There are many reasons that may lead to the domination of one ethnic group over the other in African societies:

1. Most ethnic groups who are large in number often dominate minority groups.

2. Ethnic groups that participated in the liberation of their people and in the liberation of minority groups from colonialism, apartheid or from inter-tribal conflicts often find it an obligation to dominate the minority groups in their regions who allegedly had lesser participation in the liberation movements.

3. Where a particular ethnic group obtained formal education than others, or are economically buoyant than others, they often find it necessary to dominate the other groups who are less educated or are economically incapacitated.

4. It is sometimes alleged that colonial powers or nations support the domination of one ethnic group over the other in Africa. This allegation applies to the Hausas of Nigeria and the Tigrays of Ethiopia among others.

5. The histories or the traditions regarding the origins of some African ethnic groups have been misused to dominate other Africans. Some Africans do accused other Africans of not originating from their country of occupation and regard them as originally "foreigners."

6. One ethnic group may also orchestrate the elimination of another ethnic group in other for one ethnic group to continue to dominate the other. The Nigerian Civil War of 1967 and the Rwandan genocide of 1994 are few examples among many.

Today, the major problem in Africa pertains to leadership. If Africa would have efficient and effective leaders, the following problems may be potentially solved or subsided or well-approached:

1. Refugee's migration to Europe and to other parts of the world.

2. Hunger and starvation in some African countries.

3. Diseases

4. Ethnic and religious intolerance.

5. The formation of more separatist groups as is the case with Congo, Angola and Nigeria.

6. There will be quality and equal education, health care system, security, and advanced economic and technological growth.

In this paper, I discuss that addressing ethnic lapses is fundamental in creating and in solving Africa's verse problems. I demonstrate that sharing political offices, resources and all benefits derived from a country among all ethnic groups in a particular region is relevant in Africa's search for peace. My thesis is not aimed at negating good and moral leadership but to encourage the participation of all towards community development. Here are few among many tensions generated in Africa due to the none-recognition and the marginalization of one ethnic group over the other:

1. Some Igbos of Nigeria are seeking for a secession out of Nigeria because they felt they are not given equal opportunity to contribute to governance and to nation's building. The Nigerian Civil War of 1967 and Africa's bloodiest coup orchestrated by Major Gideon Gwaza Orkar (October 4, 1953 – July 27, 1990) on April 22, 1990 are allegedly caused due to the domination of the Hausas over other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

2. South Sudan in the northeast is the newest nation in Africa and the nation seceded from North Sudan in 2011 because they felt marginalized by the Arab speaking Sudanese. Unfortunately, South Sudan is today one of the most unstable countries in Africa and the country with the highest number of refugees in Africa. The instability in South Sudan is mainly due ethnic conflicts.

3. The Oromo's of Ethiopia allegedly complain of being marginalized by the minority Tigray's ethnic group who are at the hem of affairs in Ethiopia.

4. Between 1983 and 1987, the Zimbabwean government led by mostly the Shona targeted and killed about 30, 000 Ndebele in what is referred to as Gukurahundi.[7] More so, after the death of Joshua Mqabuko Nyongolo Nkomo on 1st July, 1999, the Ndebele people of Zimbabwean alleged that the Shona ethnic group have marginalized them up-to-date.

5. The Burundi Civil War which started from 1993 to 2006 was centered on ethnic conflicts between the Hutu and the Tutsi of Burundi. Over 300, 000 people were killed during the war.

6. The Rwandan Genocide which started from April 7 to mid-July 1994 is sometimes referred to as a slaughtering against the Tutsi by the Hutu majority led government. About 500, 000 to 1, 000, 000 Rwandans were killed during the genocide.

7. The Egyptian minority groups like the Berber (Siwa Oasis) and the Nubians also claim of being marginalized by mostly the descendants of the Hamito-Semitic Egyptians.

8. Where certain leaders or presidents over-stayed in power, other ethnic groups not belonging to the leader's ethnic group often feel marginalized because they are not given equal and formal opportunity to participate in the development of their specific states. In most of the African nations, there are silent and sometimes wild and turbulent conflicts that is ongoing between ethnic groups and the impacts are devastating. In order to avoid more ethnic conflicts among Africans, it is relevant to allow all ethnic groups to participate in the socio-economic development of their societies. This instigate the need for a leadership model called rotational participatism to be made a law and enforced within African states.
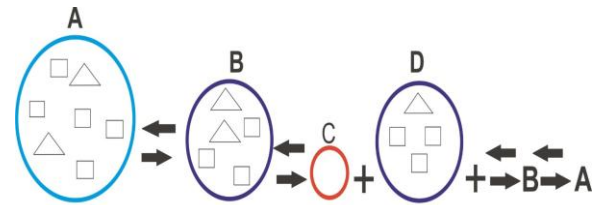
ROTATIONAL PARTICIPATISM (ROPART)

Meaning of Rotational Participation/ Participatism

Ropart is a system of government according to which political appointments, electoral positions, state resources, and both governments and private job opportunities are shared primarily among all ethnic groups within all the geographical domain of a particular community at a particularly period of time. The highest and the lowest offices or appointments are rotated or shifted from one ethnic group and from one geographical area to the other after a stipulated period of time. Ropart promote the notion according to which qualified candidates should be accepted, equip and trained among all ethnic groups so that they could assist in transforming their states for the good of all.

Agai's Cycles of Rotational Participatism[8]

Abbreviation:

A – Local Councils / Municipality

B - State / Provincial Councils

C – National Council / Government

D – Other States / Provinces

□ - Ethnic / Tribal Groups

Δ - Wards

Features of Rotational Participatism

1. Where a particular ethnic group occupy more than one local area or ward due to their population or geographical demarcation, they might be allow to occupy positions accordingly. But ethnic minorities may be given priority which may be negotiable. In other words, the minority groups within the ward or local council must be given key positions in order to balance the influence of the majority with those of the minority groups after which the position must be rotated. This is necessary because the majority group would occupy more positions than the minority group.

2. Ropart concur that where a particular ethnic group in a particular location does not have qualified candidates to occupy specific office(s), it is a mandatory responsibility of the local and national government to equip and train the disadvantage ethnic group for the subsequent occupation of such position(s). This is one of the responsibilities of the *National Selection Council* (NSC). A government council involving traditional

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[7] A Shona word which means "the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains."

[8] The National Council have no geographical demarcation but roles/positions/offices that need to be occupied by people from the local and provincial councils. The strength of the National Government is primarily on the local councils and secondarily on states and the provincial councils.

leaders, the judiciary and representatives from religious, academia, security, youth, children, human rights and other social groups must coordinate the committee responsible for the training of prospective-potential leaders. This council which may be called by any name like NCS is also responsible for preserving the heritage and for identifying all ethnic groups in a particular location and sharing all appointments and other opportunities among all ethnic groups. The powers of the leaders of the various selection committees are bound to rotation within a specific period of time. The committee should be divided into local, state or provincial and national level. None of the committee level is superior to the other. Their activity is just to coordinate the training and the selection of the nation's ethnic groups in national building. They must also work hand-hand with the state electoral commission.

3. Should a leader died or be impeached or resigned or be removed for whatever reason, a replacement would have to be made from his/her ethnic group and possibly but not necessarily from his/her immediate family members.

4. Where a position is contested by more than one candidate from the same ethnic group, people would be allowed to make their choices of a leader among those candidates contesting. (*Will there be multiple political parties or will political parties still exist*?) Political parties can still exist but they must recognize and adhere to the view according to which all their representatives and their office occupiers must be distributed and rotated among all ethnic groups. It thus mean that, for a particular position like premiership or governorship or presidential, all political parties must filled-in the position with people of the same ethnic groups as prescribed by the National Selection Council. (*What if one ethnic group occupy more than one region*?) In this case, majority ethnic group may occupy multiple-positions but priority must be given to the minority groups to occupy key positions until an agreed period where power is rotated or shifted to another ethnic group. In other words, power has to rotate among the various ethnic groups and minority groups must be allowed to occupy other positions despite being led by a majority group. If an ethnic group is allowed

to lead and where a consensus is not reached on one candidate, two or more candidates may be presented for an election from the same ethnic group. (*Will there be elections or democracy in a Ropart society*?)Elections or democracy would still take place as usual, but those chosen to contest key and all positions must be selected and rotated within all ethnic groups in a particular area. (*What would be the role of electoral councils or state electoral commissions*?) State electoral commissions or councils would be allowed to conduct elections pending on the lists of candidates submitted to them by the local and national selection councils that are charged with the responsibility of candidates' selection base on ethnic group and geographical placements.

5. It is important to note that while the national electoral council's concentrates on elections in a country, the selection commission concentrates on planning and equipping people for future opportunities.

Purpose of Rotational Participatism

The main purpose of Ropart is not to enhance ethnicity or to promote the view according to which one ethnic group is better or superior to the other but to promote the participation of all ethnic groups in community development. A committed adherence to the formulae of Ropart discourage cronyism and nepotism. In addition, a second purpose of Ropart is to encourage the spirit of community development and community involvement in the donation of skills, knowledge, resources and the participation of all sundry in the process of policy initiation, policy implementation, policy assessment and policy amendment in a state. This means that members of a community can contribute to community development irrespective of whether or not they were officially elected or appointed as leaders. Some advantages of Ropart are:

1. It encourages the political, social, the educational and the gradual empowerment of all citizens irrespective of their ethnic stratification.

2. It gives minority tribal or ethnic groups a voice.

3. It gives all regional or geographical groups a voice.

4. It gives African traditional councils or institutions a role to play in community and national development.

5. It promotes equal distribution of wealth and resources to all citizens.

6. It is cost effective.

7. It encourage the preparation and the training of all citizens for societal development.

8. It encourages human and infrastructural development from the grassroots or local or rural areas.

Some disadvantages of Ropart are:

9. There may be unfair agitation for more geographical wards to favor a group of people.

10. Majority groups who occupy more geographical regions may have an advantage of getting more positions over those who occupy less wards/geographical domains.

In conclusion, I wish to state that Ropart remained the best option and solution to ethnic conflicts in Africa simply because it encourage community development through an all-inclusive community participation. It is important to note that the dominant concepts of Ropart is not ethnicity or leadership but participation and development. The concepts of Ropart may not be welcomed by leaders or people who do not want power or leadership roles to be shared among all people of a particular or different region. I suggest that the best way to adapt this leadership model is to begin to teach the idea to the younger generation of people especially the youths. The idea is to teach them that all peoples of different ethnics groups are equal in every rights.

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