EKITI, ITS DISCONTENTS AND ASPIRATIONS

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Introduction

The defeat of the incumbent Governor, John Kayode Fayemi, in a take-all election across 16 local governments in Ekiti State has raised shock to many believers in the electoral power of ‘‘dividends of democracy’’ assumed to have been delivered by Governor Kayode Fayemi and popularly received by voters. Believers in the power of symbolic gestures of as well as material benefits of sharing ‘‘amala’’ or ‘‘rice-and-stew’’ roadside meals with common folk, had predicted easy victory by challenger Ayo Fayose. Those surprised by Fayose’s victory had put much weight on the electorate punishing him for being accused by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission of looting 461 million Naira during his truncated first tenure as Governor of the State; his alleged lack of educational qualifications in a State which values educational attainment so much that each household owns a ‘‘professor’’ (Bello:85).

The electoral drama has significance for political parties; keen watchers of the performance of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC); theorists of state development in Africa, and analysts of electoral politics in Nigeria. This note will discuss issues relevant to the discipline of African Studies; as well as propose useful lessons to be teased out for guiding political action by researchers and civil society activists.

Theoretical Questions

African politicians of the anti-colonial generation lacked the benefit of indigenous theorizing about the national road to development which Japan evolved for itself and became a model for other Asian leaders to emulate. Japan intensively studied the Euro-American record in achieving industrialisation and took the decision to indigenize as much as possible what was learnt. As an example, their idea of shares in enterprises was rooted in ‘‘groupism’’ which
made share holding include staff of subsidiaries of a firm participating in
decision-making in other subsidiaries and firms working in the same line of
business. Finance-sourcing agencies like the Bank of Japan and the Ministry of
International Trade also sent staff to management meetings of enterprises who
had received funds. Unlike practices by Euro-American corporations, share-
holding was not purely individual injecting funds into a company by buying
shares.

A strand of ‘’groupism’’ was urging the public to deposits savings in the post
office and the government handing over the pooled funds to selected enterprises
to use under managerial ‘’groupism’’. (De Mente: 68). Their ideology of
transformation was based on turning to Japanese culture to reap values which
could be used for guiding rapid industrialization.

In Africa, the colonial claim that administration was guided by the primary goal
of achieving ‘’law and order’’ hid the task of social engineering to achieve
economic productivity for export of raw materials; and excluded African elites
from industrial accumulation. Local politicians would, subsequently, place
holding state power above borrowing from ethnic ideological rules of
accountability for animating social engineering for industrialisation and
ensuring public welfare.

The question that deserves to be raised is whether Fayemi’s administration was
guided by a theory of ‘’societal transformation’’ which focused on productivity
as opposed to primarily servicing patronage networks by undertaking
‘development’ through export of capital through awarding contracts for
importing technology for capital-intensive building of infrastructures. The
contrast to that would have been to focus on increasing productivity through
labour-intensive processes in order to promote income distribution and thereby
earn legitimacy for an administration.

‘Godfatherism’

Hoffmann has profiled a factor which undermines the principle of electoral
representation as a process in which political party bosses:

‘’ Enter personal transactional relationships with candidates
in order to manipulate politics behind the scene and benefit
financially by using their positions to cause contracts to be
awarded to favoured companies’’. (Hoffmann::291)
In his study of electoral drama in Anambra State between Chris Uba and Chris Ngige, the latter had signed an agreement in which he would as Governor pay 3 billion Naira as the cost of being installed into office; and 860 million Naira as payment for a building not completed by Uba.

Manning and Malbrough also note this influence of “external actors” by noting how the United States set out to destroy Sadam Hussein’s state structure by disbanding the army and the Sunni-dominated civil service; as well as arming Shiite militias, whose operations in the absence of the official security forces released terror on Sunnis and triggered formations of self-defence militias by Sunnis and other ethnic groups. A spiral was started which has rolled into the emergence of a faction of Sunnis declaring the formation of a “Caliphate”. The drama is being manned by top generals and intelligence officers thrown out by the American invaders. The authors reiterate what political economy critics of the World Bank have accused it of, namely:

“regularly to impose aid conditionality aimed at inducing recipient country governments to put in place a series of macroeconomic policies that donors believed were essential for promoting economic growth” (Manning & Malbrough: 145).

These conditionalities were what Adebayo Adedeji labelled as “socio-economic warfare” against African countries due to their destructive and impoverishing effects.

In his campaign rhetoric, Fayose told his audiences that under Fayemi contracts were awarded to persons and groups who are “external actors”; with Bola Ahmed Tinubu, as leader of APC, being targeted for blame. Flibbert warns that “external actors may compromise a state’s legitimacy by reducing the state’s capacity to provide collective goods or meet the needs of major social groups.” (Flibbert: 77). Research should focus on these issues, and not focus only on accusations of federal government “rigging” of Ekiti State’s election.

Shepler offers the interesting proposition that a study of music by artists may be a useful guide in investigating popular dissatisfaction with governance. She asserts that “the campaign for change preceding the 2007 elections (in Sierra Leone) was inaugurated and conducted by an informal opposition: the musical artists”. (Shepler: 628). The vast numbers of youths who are unemployed and feeling powerless to impact on corrupt political leaders - seen as responsible for wealth not reaching their lives - infused the consciousness of musicians in post-
civil war Sierra Leone. Emerson, for example, sang ‘’Borbor Beleh/ Belly Boy’’ with the following lyrics: (Shepler: 637)

‘’You think you can eat
As much as you want?
Those days are over!
The youth are ready
To stand up strong
To stop you!’’

A study of music by artists in Ekiti State in the run up to the 2014 elections should receive research funding.

**Symbolism**

In this season of **BRAZIL 2014**, it is easy to see manifestation of symbolic satisfaction as crowds both at home and football stadia cheer or weep over results of football matches. It is that emotional consumption that is associated with a citizen’s identification with the state or nation. In American electoral culture, candidates seek to win hearts with what is called ‘’pressing flesh’’, namely: by shaking scores of hands among crowds; holding and kissing babies from hands of mothers; starting baseball games by throwing the first ball to a hitter; or blowing a saxophone in a nightclub – as candidate Bill Clinton did. President Obama claimed to a euphoric crowd that the national team would win the World Cup and sought to make political capital out of the American team reaching the ‘’Group of 16’’ even after losing a match to the German football team.

There is a widely held view by commentators that Ayo Fayose’s former term as Governor was characterised by gestures rich in symbolism. Doyin Adebussuyi notes that he ‘’attended naming ceremonies; house warming and donates in cash and kind to such heart-warming occasions’’. (**Sunday Trust**, 29 June, 2014, p.14). In contrast, a respondent stated in an interview that ‘’most of his (Fayemi’s) aides are too far from the people’’. This factor is, however, likely to be dismissed as the ‘’opium of the masses’’. A documentary by Aljazeera Television on Sarajevo during its tragic three years of war and siege, makes the point that organising football training for ten and twelve-year old boys in an indoor basketball court affirmed its merit when a small boy said his ambition was to ‘’be like George Weah’’ – the Liberia star. A comparative study of
records of Fayemi and Fayose over the use of symbolism is waiting for researchers to undertake.

Niyi Bello puts emphasis on the exploitation of symbolic gestures by Ayo Fayose:

’’The new governor is more at home with the elderly woman selling roasted corn or plantain by the roadside and he could be found among the commercial Motorcyclists and drivers who form the bulk of his support’’.(*The Guardian*, June 23, 2014).]

This factor deserves close study. Jacobson writes that ‘’Obama won because, despite the weak economy, he received overwhelming approval and electoral support from ordinary Democrats’’ many of whom blamed the collapse of the economy on President Bush. Obama’s symbolic value as the first black president remains of immense value to African-Americans. Women voters voted for John F. Kennedy because ‘’he was handsome’’; a factor which must have counted in Obama favour in his contest with an old Romney.(Jacobson:4)

**Building awareness**

Amilcar Cabral did emphasize the critical importance of intensive face-to-face dialogue with individual peasants, mechanics, school teachers, market women, nurses, truck drivers in order to expose the link between existing conditions of their existence; factors responsible for it, and how her/his joining revolutionary armed struggle will bring material benefits for themselves and their families. Cabral insists that telling potential recruits about the importance of fighting against abstract entities like ‘’imperialism’’, ‘’neo-colonialism’’, ‘’comprador-bourgeoisie’’ is not as touching to their hearts and their will to take up arms as showing them real evidence of better services being built inside ‘’liberated zones’’.

In Ekiti, this point was illustrated by an engineer interviewed by Adebusuyi, as follows:

’’But it’s unfortunate that his (Fayemi’s) understanding of good Governance is quite different from the way the people understand it.’’
He added that teachers voted against Fayemi because he had announced ‘’a plan to organise assessment test for teachers’’. Fear of losing their jobs became palpable.

Mwalimu Nyerere adopted a practice of translating into Kiswahili language Left Wing writings about the evils of capitalism and classes which loot the state. He would use folk tales to illuminating their meaning and relevance for his non-literate listeners. In 1976, Beverly Manley, wife of Prime Minister Michael Manley of Jamaica, used weekly radio broadcasts to tell traditional Anansi stories inherited from African slaves. She used local ‘’patwa’’/’’pidgin’’ to tell those stories the way grandmothers do in rural Jamaica. The stories were meant to complement calls for liberation by Rastafarian singers, notably Bob Marley. Michael Manley, himself a mulato with a white English mother, sought to raise the political consciousness of blacks who constituted over85 per cent of Jamaica’s population but lived under desperate poverty and political marginalisation. It is noteworthy that he had invited Samora Machel, Mozambique’s revolutionary fighter to undertake a state visit to Jamaica. Generations of black Jamaicans had been brainwashed into resenting any association with Africa and were uninformed about Africa’s armed struggle against liberation wars against white domination across southern Africa. Consciousness-raising had assumed high priority in Jamaican politics.

In northern Nigeria, Mallam Aminu Kano used daily ‘’Tafsir’’ sessions for political education of the talakawa.

Monarchism

To often vitriolic criticism, Ali Mazrui once warned against a creeping culture of royalty growing around the personalities of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Jomo Kenyatta in Kenya, Kamuzu Banda in Malawi and other nationalist politicians after their coming to office as prime ministers. Nkrumah was given the title of ‘’Osagyefo’’ ( Redeemer); Kenyatta got the halo of ‘’Mzee’’ (Elder), Kamuzu Banda became ‘’Ngwazi’’ (Lion), and Obafemi Awolowo as a regional prime minister was adorned with ‘’Chief’’. The danger to democratic political culture were courtiers who shielded anti-colonial heroes who had rallied crowds of politically aroused peoples. Opportunities for common and often poor people (‘’talakawa’’) to take views and needs to leaders were denied. Patriotic critics became demonised. Colonial tools for suppressing nationalism, notably: ‘’preventive detention’’ and ‘’anti-sedition’’ laws were dusted up for use.

Mwalimu Nyerere is reported to have often circumvented his ‘’human fences’’ by disguising himself as a mechanic and joining small palaver groups to hear people’s concerns and ideas. Jomo Kenyatta invited elders and dancers from
various ethnic groups to entertain him at his official Gatundu home; during which demands and complaints were presented directly to him. It also enabled him to warn local communities against re-electing politicians who were critical of his government in their parliamentary speeches. Both Kenyatta and Banda were accused of feeding offending politicians to crocodiles or hyenas.

In a dialogue with a community in Osun State about their relations with elected leaders, there were complaints of being met with notices like “BEWARE OF DOGS” at gates to homes of Action Congress (AC) party officials and local, state and federal legislators. Dialogue with communities became substituted with awarding contracts to “Consultants” to conduct studies and draw up policy proposals for government to implement and impose on a silenced and ignored people.

C.L.R. James (in The Black Jacobins) had drawn attention to the distance between ordinary peoples and the ‘aristocracy-by-education’ and professional jobs in Accra and major towns in colonial Gold Coast. Kwame Nkrumah, who had witnessed mass mobilisation in urban America by Marcus Garvey, would apply the strategy in Ghana and lit a storm of popular appeal among ordinary people. Market women, lorry drivers, local musicians carried his message of the new Messiah across the country. Ayi Kweyi Ahmah would capture the betrayal of this fire in hearts of people in the novel: The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born. It is necessary to conduct research on this factor in Fayemi’s tenure. CLR James, like George Padmore, were aware that at the root of Nkrumah’s ‘‘charisma’’ were aspiration among the people for an end to decades of colonial exploitation and deepening impoverishment.

A similar study of the storm of Fayose’s popularity must take into account the economic history of Ekiti State. At the national level, growth rate of the food sector had declined from 1.6 per cent (1960 – 1965 to 0.2 per cent (1982 – 1983). It is against such economic decline at the rural level in Ekiti State that questions must be asked about what strategies were invented by the Fayemi administration for reversing it; to what extent was it rooted in the participation of the people in designing the measures; and monitoring the implementation of strategies for wealth creation among rural communities.

**Reflections and conclusion**

Ginsberg has noted that in the history of electoral democracies there have been incidences of incumbents using military force ‘‘to suppress their opponents’’. The Northern People’s Congress did use violence against supporters of Northern Elements Progressive Union. In 1983, the Shagari administration used violence in Borno, Ondo and Oyo States to suppress protests against rigged election results. In Algeria (1992) and Nigeria (1993) election results which
would have brought unfavoured elites to power were withheld and the elections nullified. In the context of Ekiti it is not clear that if Governor Fayemi controlled a ‘State Police’ he would have used it to disrupt the universal defeat he suffered.

The use federal security tools in Edo State is said to have prevented veteran election ‘‘fixers’’ from blocking Adams Oshiomole’s victory as a newly elected governor. The replay of that scenario – including closing borders of Ekiti State to APC leaders arriving on the eve of the election - may well have facilitated a violence-free election; while allowing INEC’s measures for inhibiting manipulations of vote-counting and vote-tabulation to have their full prohibitive effects.(Ginsberg: 261).

Election studies have claimed that certain indicators of economic development, notably: industrially-based urbanisation; the spread of private wealth in the hands of capitalists and a high income-earning middle class; high rates of literacy, and increased capacity for organisation of campaign and voter mobilization ‘‘facilitated political action and increased citizen capacities for sustained political action’’ (Ginsberg: 262). In Ekiti State it is paradoxical that a people with supposed history of putting high premium on access to higher education, would vote in support of teachers frightened by Fayemi’s proposed tests to ascertain their literacy and competence as gatekeepers to higher education. In 2002 trade union leaders in Osun State asserted in interviews I conducted that they would defeat Governor Akande in 2003 elections because a vast network of family and clan relations depended on handouts from their salaries. His retrenchment of civil servants and teachers of Arabic - in preference for teachers of science subjects - had threatened the welfare of members of these networks.

The implication of voter-power which supports entrenched mal-development, and blocks progressive policies and programmes has aroused anger in theorists as far back as Plato who had contempt for democracy as rule by the ‘‘wretched of the earth’’ (Franz Fanon). Amilcar Cabral had urged liberation movements to undertake detailed demographic studies of their population to map out profiles of economic, political, religious, ethnic interests in order to know how to avoid alienating potential supporters. Campaigns against colonial exploitation must recognise that there were chiefs who were benefiting from the system. Nyerere’s warning that being a peasant does not necessarily make a person support socialist measures, echoed this warning. Good quality research is a vital tool for supporting the growth of progressive democratic politics.

The electoral exercise is a major tool for linking massive numbers of citizens into a collective moment of reviewing performances by past officials and
sending signals to future leaders about their needs and aspirations. Locations of voting centres; procedures for registration and casting of votes, become moments for civic education. Prohibited and legitimate forms of speech and use of political symbols within specified arena invoke the importance and force of wishes of the public in the ritual of voting. Introducing guns and brazen snatching of ballot boxes are meant to deflate this sense of power and assert the impunity of authoritarian rule. In this regard Ekiti’s violence-free voting ritual was a significant promotion of democratic political culture. Research should interrogate voter responses and perceptions of the process.

References


11. Mahmud Jega, “Sai kayi, don’t bank on Ekiti”. Daily Trust, Monday June 30, 2014, p. 72, enumerates resources which an incumbent governor may deploy to either defend re-election or influence who succeeds him. He provides a useful list of resources, notably: “name recognition” which is “worth more than a million colour posters and billboards”; “ready media access”; “a record to point at”; “political wiggling room” to assuage those who had not yet benefited from his tenure; patronage for agents who are animated by “what they got, are getting or will get”; making “lucrative appointments, award contracts, allocate parcels of land and wands of money”, and access to money since “money is the starting and also the end point of Nigerian political aspirations”.

12. Boye Lafayette De Mente, Japan Unmasked: The Character and Culture of the Japanese, Singapore. De Mente notes that unlike Western business corporations which are run as dictatorships by the boss at the top, Japanese companies are “run much more like democracies, in which the power of the presidents and other high executives is limited and a substantial percentage of the employees play a direct role in management decisions”.
Civilization and Its Discontents is a book by Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. It was written in 1929 and first published in German in 1930 as Das Unbehagen in der Kultur ("The Uneasiness in Civilization"). Exploring what Freud sees as the important clash between the desire for individuality and the expectations of society, the book is considered one of Freud's most important and widely read works, and one of the most influential and studied books in the field of modern psychology. Civilization and Its Discontents is one of the last of more than 20 books Freud wrote on the topic. Together, his works on psychoanalysis have influenced generations of therapists, popularizing such concepts as "libido," "neurosis," "super-ego," "narcissism," "Oedipus complex," "reaction-formation," and "the id." Civilization and Its Discontents first discusses the problem of human suffering and how individuals strive to avoid pain and enhance pleasure. Three main sources of pain plague humanity: old age, the harshness of nature, and social conflicts. And people tend to respond to suffering in