

THE IMPACT OF DEMOCRACY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

The need to find a way to rule the world in the most peaceful and rightful manner concerned many people during the centuries, and even now there are some contradictions regarding the way that is the best for ruling a country, without the risk to alight chaos. Humans' nature is very prideful and so, they want to have their own word in the decision making. We can see that in history the main reason why the wars started was that the people didn't liked how others implemented the rules and so they wanted to set their own rules. The first steps for implementing the democracy were made by Antic Athens. Even in those times the rulers of Athens wanted that the people to take place in the decision making. Of course there were some restrictions and not everybody that lived in Athens could have the right to vote, but this was the initial stage of democracy.

Key words: democracy, rule of law, decision making, people's power.

Introduction

Democracy is preferred over authoritarianism. Even if the democracy isn't something that can distribute the level of wealth among the people and the social status, it is still seen more acceptable than the other regimes. The people at least have more alternatives at choosing their future and can actually decide who will be their leader, and so, they become somehow their own decision makers.

The African countries are having strong bonds with the European countries due to the fact that they were counted and developed as a result of colonization. In the nineteenth century, the British and the French people started to colonize the African continent, and so, in these days we are able to import different products and even cheap labour force .

Even in the Ancient times the great European Empires started their mission to colonize the African continent. The Romans, Greeks and Phoenicians struggled to gain more power over the African lands. In the end, the Roman-Byzantine influenced lands fell in the Arabian hands in the seventh century.

The colonization brought a sense of independence in Africa as the professor Vincent Khapoya notes in his book “The African Experience: An introduction” and some Africans built their own churches and in the same time they realized that they weren't equally receiving gratitude for their intervention in supporting the Imperialist countries during the world wars.

The methods that the British colonies applied to get their independence were based on receiving a gradual transfer of power and so, that didn't brought problems for the Africans. On the other hand, the French colonies weren't so lucky, and so, their achievement of independence came with great struggles, that led to many armed conflicts conducted in the prospects of obtaining their independence.

According to the surveys[1] made in 2015 the only country fully democratic in the African continent is Mauritius. The other countries that are declared democratic are not fulfilling all the criteria for being, in the true meaning of the word, a democratic country. Some are even ruled by some authoritarian regime, such as Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Central African Republic and others. They try to embrace a democratic regime, but their understanding of democracy is different than the true meaning, and so, they make mistakes in the way of ruling a country. This implies in the same time a trespass of human rights, for example in Egypt, the free expression of opinion is prohibited, and the mass-media is only publishing about what the ruler wants the people to hear about.

Democracy in developing countries and its influence on economic growth

“The events in the world history demonstrated that democracy was an extremely complex phenomenon, whose analysis challenged most of thinkers and also common people who as early as ancient times imagined a model of political system arrangement where the community members should be equal politically speaking, should govern together and should have at their disposal their qualities, resources and necessary institutions to exercise selfgoverning.”[2]

In the developing countries the experience with encountering democracy was referred to as mixed due to the fact that in the 1950s when they tried to implement democracy, neither the state-society within these countries or the global context regarding them was conducive enough to consolidate the democratic regimes.

The biggest problem with implementing democracy was met by the really poor countries that had an influential traditional elite with roots in landed wealth, small urban middle classes, a considerable elite-mass gap and in some of them the political institutions were weak or in-existent.

Because of the problems that the developing countries encountered, some of them started to re-considerate their traditional policies; this was specific to the countries in the Middle East, and in others, such as China and Cuba, their decision was to take on revolutionary overthrow of the old regime. The Cold War also made the implementing of democracy in these countries, a goal difficult to achieve.

The experiments made for implementing democracy in the developing countries faced different challenges that were hard to overcome. For example, East Asia had indigenous traditions that were deeply authoritarian and the colonial impact in most cases just reinforced these tendencies and we can also say that another reason was that in the Cold War this area was a battlefield. In Africa the democratic experiments evolved in sectional conflicts over the state of power that led to military coups. Latin America was also unable to implement democracy as a method of government because of the business and land interests, the deep inequalities and also the politics implemented by the United States in the period of the Cold War in these regions.

With the economic growth of South Korea and Brazil, the authoritarian regimes seemed to receive a boost, but once the oil crisis began in 1974, the global economic contradiction started.

Afraid of the slow economic growth, the authoritarian regimes tried to find a way out of the unfavorable global circumstances by the so called method “borrow and grow”. It wasn't helpful for all the states, and in Latin America and Africa led to severe debt crisis.

The impact of democracy on the economic growth in the developing countries is highly inconclusive. The economic growth is influenced by factors such as infrastructure, quality of human capital, rates of investment, quality of organization and management, level of research and production of knowledge, but even so, it is not defined how the democracy is affecting the economic growth.

As the developed countries, the developing ones started the free market but in this case the economic liberalization didn't had a good effect because their political institutions weren't prepared enough, and so the society became worse off than before.

Democracy isn't associated with extremes of growth performance; and so on the issues regarding economic growth, the stable developing democracies are plausible to fall in the middle range. Regarding the equity front, democracies don't incline to undertake radical property redistribution but if democratic politics lead to democratization of power then the situation may change.

“The reasons for failure of democracy in the developing countries across the world can be summarized as lack of domestic political cohesion and an unfavorable global environment. India, a poor developing country, stands as an exception.” [3]

Democracy in Mauritius

Mauritius (French: *Maurice*), is officially known as the **Republic of Mauritius** (French: *République de Maurice*). This country is actually an island nation in the Indian Ocean about 2,000 kilometres off the southeast coast of the African continent. The country includes the island of Mauritius, Rodrigues (560 kilometres) east, and the outer islands (Agaléga, St. Brandon and two disputed territories i.e. Tromelin Island and Diego Garcia Island). The islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues (172 km southwest) form part of the Mascarene Islands, along with nearby Réunion, a French overseas department. The area of the country is 2,040 km square and the capital and largest city in the same time is Port Louis.

In the constitution of Mauritius is not mentioned any official language, and so, we can find people that speak Hindi, Mandarin and other languages, but the administration of this country have chosen English as their working language, due to the fact that in the past it was a British colony and French is taking the role of the prestige language of the country. This country, being in the same time an English-speaking and French-speaking language, is natural that it is both a member of the La Francophonie and The Commonwealth.

The population in Mauritius was estimated in 2014 to be about 1,261,208 of people that are multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual.

As we saw, the Republic of Mauritius includes disputed territories too, such as Chagos Archipelagos that is disputed between Mauritius and the United Kingdom, and also Tromelin Island that is under French custody.

The British government at the Lancaster Conference in 1965 had clear intentions in lessening themselves over the colony of Mauritius. Later in the same year, the Chagos Archipelago

was taken from Mauritius to form the British Indian Ocean Territory. After adopting a new constitution, Mauritius received their independence on 12th March 1968.

“Mauritius is a democratic republic with a parliamentary system and a non-executive president. The president is appointed for a five-year term by the National Assembly.” [4]

Their judicial system is a mix between the English Common Law and the French Napoleonic Code. They aren't using the death penalty since 1989 when it was abolished.

Mauritius was proclaimed as republic in 1992, after twenty four years of independence by the Commonwealth of Nations. The prime-minister has still remained with the power.

In September 19th 2014, the “Electoral Alliance Agreement between the Mauritian Labour Party and Mauritian Militant Movement”, proposed the project of Second Republic. This project is inspired by a semi-presidential regime 'à la française', but it will give rise to selective interpretation. This system focuses on measures than can give more power to the President and in the same time to guarantee the balance of power.

One of the most important changes that the Alliance will bring is the universal suffrage for the election of the president, thing that will get the Mauritian political system closer with the French political system.

“The election of the Head of State would result in dissociation between the Executive power and the Legislative power. Under the French Constitution, the dissociation is obtained by the fact that, firstly, the two bodies are designated separately (both the Parliament and the President are elected by universal suffrage every five years) and secondly, no member of the Executive (including the Prime Minister) can be at the same time a Member of Parliament.” [5]

In the current Mauritian system, that is the Westminster parliamentary, the two powers aren't dissociated and the President which is elected by the Assembly will in turn, nominate the Prime Minister which is seen as the most able to command the support of the majority of the members of the Assembly and the ministers are elected from the Members of the Parliament too, the only exception being the Attorney General.

The project of the Second Republic proposed by the MLP and MMM is raising confusions because even if the President still appoints the Prime Minister, it didn't specify if the Prime Minister and his ministers will still be in the Parliament.

Even if the Alliance between the MLP-MMM states that they follow a system 'à la française' they aren't 100% in co-relation with it due to the fact that the new President elected with universal suffrage can revoke the Prime Minister and dissolve the Parliament at his own will. It's true that in a French system the President has this power but he can't use it if is not for a plausible reason.

The project proposed by the Alliance doesn't seem to follow the claims for a better check and balance; in fact, it actually blurs the limits and distribution of roles of the institutions. It just take the elements that ensure a predominance of the President and in the same time doesn't specify the mechanisms and the safeguarding of the institutions for ensuring the balance of power between the two leaders of the Executive, and the Executive and the Legislative.

This project of the Second Republic might be beneficial for the Mauritian democracy if the Parliament is given more chances to play its role as an effective counter-power to the Executive and so the balance of power won't be any more in question.

“Mauritius is perhaps atypical of many other African countries since it alternates governments regularly through fair and free elections in a rather peaceful manner. All parties are

free to present candidates in elections as long as they register with the Electoral Commission's ESC. But smaller parties and independent candidates have to compete in a playing field that is highly uneven. There are no official restrictions; however, the difficulty of raising the necessary resources acts as an important barrier and parties therefore find it difficult to present candidates in all constituencies. These subtle 'restrictions' highlight how unfair the competition can be and draw attention to the urgent need to address the problem of political party funding.”[6]

The political parties are free to hold private and public meetings but regarding the public ones, they have to get the authorization of the police. They can also take to Court the commissioner that didn't authorized the public meeting.

Mauritius is well-known for their freedom of press, even if it is largely controlled by two big groups belonging to a particular ethnic group, but even so the print media was always more open. Some press newspapers are close to some political parties, others are linked to religious or sociology-cultural groups.

Mauritius was put in the first place in the ranking of the African economies by the World Bank and in the 20th place worldwide; it also was first in the Ibrahim Index which measures African countries based on human rights, rule of law, economic opportunity and human development.

For a better view, we have the example of “the ranking of Mauritius in the Index of Economic Freedom published by the Washington-based Heritage Foundation and The Wall Street Journal. In 2010, this index put Mauritius in 12th place (out of 179 countries); in 2012, it elevated the country to eighth place (with a score, out of 100 points, of 77, only two slots behind Canada's 79.9). It was the first time an African country had placed in the index's top 10 – and it did so by surpassing the United States (in 10th place with a score of 76.3).”[7]

Despite being a small country, Mauritius is doing really great; proof is being able to have 10 top rankings in governance and economic performance (it expanded by 4 percents in 2011).

Of course, that as every country, Mauritius has some problems too, but even more powerful countries such as France and Italy aren't ranking to good in the Economist's Democracy lists, France being in the 29th place and Italy in the 31st.

“Mauritius is deemed to be a 'full democracy', whereas 23 states, - more than half of the SSA countries - are considered 'authoritarian', while 12 are classified as 'hybrid regimes'.

On a global scale, Mauritius has made a gigantic leap of 19 places to occupy the 18th position worldwide among 167 countries from last year's 37th position.”[8]

How democracy works in Zimbabwe

Officially known as Republic of Zimbabwe, is a landlocked sovereign state located in South Africa, having a population of 15.877.684[9] its form of government is a full presidential republic, where the President is the head of state and government as organized by the Constitution adopted in 2013. The Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament, here we can see a similarity with the institutions of the European Union, where the Council of Ministers shares the power with the European's Union Parliament and Commission. The capital and in the same time the biggest city is Harare. Zimbabwe is a diverse country regarding ethnicity and has 16 official languages, three of them being the most used (English, Shona and Ndebele).

Since the 11th century until the present-day Zimbabwe has been the site of several organised states and kingdoms as well as a major route for migration and trade. The British South Africa Company of Cecil Rhodes first demarcated the present territory during the 1890s, and due to this fact, Zimbabwe became the self-governing British colony of Southern Rhodesia in 1923.

In 1965, the conservative white minority government unilaterally declared independence as Rhodesia. As consequence, the state endured international isolation and a 15-year guerrilla war with black nationalist forces, but thankfully, this culminated in a peace agreement that established universal enfranchisement and *de jure* sovereignty in April 1980. The country then rejoined the Commonwealth of Nations (later suspended in 2003), and became a member of the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Zimbabwe was a colony for ninety years a British colony that was administrated by the British South African Company and the Responsible Government under the name of Southern-Rhodesia, of course that both of the administrative systems were under the British monarchy.

Ian Douglas Smith was a man that took the initiative in making Zimbabwe an independent country. In 1965, after Ian Douglas Smith made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain, Zimbabwe gained its autonomy and was led by a segregationist white government.

“From June 1979, the Republic of Southern Rhodesia was replaced by Zimbabwe-Rhodesia after Abel Tendekayi Muzorewa won the first majority elections. Lacking international recognition, after about three months, the country was taken back into the hands of Britain, as per the Lancaster House Agreement which was meant facilitate transition. The country once again became a British colony known as Southern Rhodesia.”[10]

On 18th April 1980 Zimbabwe or Southern-Rhodesia as it was known, gained its independence from the British. This day also marked the end of racial segregation after a war of liberalization that ended with many lives taken.

Before the independence, Zimbabwe was practically split into two groups of interests: the white people and the Africans. Of course that even if the democracy was present in the country, it was in the favor of the white people, and the black ones didn't have seen a proper democracy.

For understanding better this statement, we can take as example how the elections were taking place. Even if the elections were held on specific times provided in the constitution, all the rulers of the country were white. If some African people qualified as being able to rule the country, not all of them bothered to take place in the elections.

From the political point of view, Rhodesia was characterized by two tendencies. The first one was the trend toward Illiberalism[11] that had as a result the Unilateral Declaration of Independence but limited in African majority rule, and the other one was the dominant one-party rule and this explains why in between 1933-1978 Rhodesia had only five prime-ministers.

Rhodesia wasn't only a history about two nations, in the same time it represented a history about two nations economically. It was like the second nature for the whites to deprive the Africans economically through legislation, but they also used the covert measures that weren't necessarily codified but were perceived as the operative rules of the game. And so, we are the witnesses of a dual economy supported by a dual system.

The people from Zimbabwe are strongly against the military rule. For them, the people working in the military field should just stick with protecting the country, not leading it. This is rather appreciable because, knowing the African history, the militarist regime is rather a

troublesome issue due to the fact that many countries from Africa tend to have a regime based on military ruling.

They are also against the “one man rule” and in their opinion if the power is split between the leading institutions, then the situations encountered are more easy to be handled.

In conclusion, the people from Zimbabwe are against non-democratic alternatives but they don't try to find a solution how to solve them. For them the most important thing is that even if their democratic system has flaws, they are happier with this one, rather than with the authoritarian alternatives to multiparty systems or reverting to the old colonial order.

Since achieving its independence, Zimbabwe is characterized by having only two presidents. The not changing presidency as in the developed countries is a specific trait for the developing ones, especially in Africa when the presidents are ruling for life if they don't do something outrageous to be deprived of their presidency. We can say that this trait is specific for Zimbabwe too.

Canaan Sodindo “Banana was selected to become Zimbabwe's first president after the main opposition leader Joshua Nkomo turned down the post because it carried no real power. Banana, who like Nkomo was from the country's Ndebele minority, was chosen so the new government would be seen to have an ethnic balance; his appointment offset that of Mugabe, who, as head of government, represented the Shona majority. Banana carried out the largely figurehead duties of president from 1980 until 1987, though at the end of his term he helped bring a halt to the ethnic violence that had wracked Matabeleland.”[12]

The second, and in the same time current president of Zimbabwe is Robert Gabriel Mugabe which came to power in December 1987. He was one of the people that had risen against the white minority rule, in 1980 was elected as prime minister and he also led the Zimbabwe African National Union -Patriotic Front since 1975.

Since 1998 Mugabe's policies have increasingly elicited domestic and international denunciation. They have been denounced as racist against Zimbabwe's white minority. Here we observe a quite different perspective of racism from the normal one, where usually the white race oppresses the other races. Mugabe has described his critics as “born again colonialists”, and both he and his supporters claim that Zimbabwe's problems are the legacy of imperialism, aggravated by Western economic meddling. According to *The Herald*, a Zimbabwean newspaper owned by the government, the United Kingdom is pursuing a policy of regime change.

Robert Mugabe was made guilty for the economic downfall. The African editor for `The Economist`, Robert Guest states that the president of Zimbabwe is to blame for the downfall. His arguments are that before Mugabe came to power, the economy was doing great, and a Zimbabwean dollar was worth more than an American one. Since 2003 the average incomes also dropped considerably and the president didn't do anything to stop this.

Zimbabwean's people view about their government is a negative one. “Though it is assessed slightly better in the area of social services (e.g., delivery of basic services, health and especially education), its performance in the economic sector is harshly judged. More than 75% are far from satisfied with the government record in job creation, controlling inflation and in management of the economy. The government is felt to be ineffective in handling people’s welfare. In fact, as Table 9 shows, 55% of Zimbabweans think the present government has actually been “less” effective or “much less” effective compared to the past white-controlled government. This has contributed to the lack of “pragmatic trust” in government i.e., “the belief that government

carries out its promises” (Kavanagh; 1989, 146). This perceived low capability of the government may well threaten its very existence.”[13]

In an interview about the Ibrahim Index of Democratization in Africa, asked about the way to rectify the situation in Zimbabwe, the director of the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute, Pedzisai Ruhanya, answered the following statement: “The ruling party has to change. They have to reform or they die. Without political reforms it is going to be very difficult to unlock economic reforms, to realize economic growth, to attract foreign direct investment, to attract international partners and to do business in Zimbabwe under an authoritarian regime. They want to have what I would call authoritarian capitalism in a world that is moving towards democratization. There are a lot of contradictions within the ruling party associated with President Robert Mugabe and associated with lack of political reform and lack of predictable future of the state. ”[14]

He also stated that the governance peer review of the African countries was looking just at the minimized procedural democratic index, when in fact they should have looked at the substantive democratization that is dealing with the question of livelihoods. From his point of view in developing countries you should seek deeper into their democracy, not to only rely on the civil side and how human rights are indivisible.

This statement is closer to the reality because, as we saw, even in the developed world there are problems with establishing democracy in the real meaning of the word, so for Africa, that was a colonized continent and all of a sudden other people came and set the rules without considering the need for explaining their reasons, they need to take responsibility and make sure that unpleasant situations will not occur anymore.

Zimbabwe is considered one of the most corrupt nations in the world, ranking 150th out of 176 countries on the latest Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index which took place in 2015 and is the 17th most corrupt country in the world according to this index. The organization also estimated that Zimbabwean officials received nearly \$2 billion through corruption in 2012, rivaling the economically much larger South Africa and Nigeria.

In 2008 Mugabe's government almost collapsed and the military people infiltrated themselves within the political party, designed themselves on power positions and in the same time encouraging for a possible military coup. The only reason why they didn't succeed was because, as I stated before the Zimbabweans along with the ZANU-PF stalwarts and other lower ranked military people despise a militarist government and so their plan didn't succeed.

“The MDC[15] could once again win a nationwide election, though recent rumors suggest that it would endorse another unity government to preserve “stability” and mitigate the risk of potential conflict with the securocrats. ZANU-PF could again attempt to hijack the elections through fraud and violence, but would likely back off if faced with hostility from regional leaders. For their part, the security chiefs could kill and torture scores of opponents and attempt an armed coup, but this would jeopardize their personal, long-term economic interests, making support for another government of national unity an attractive alternative.

Sadly, the current political stalemate and lack of reforms could go on indefinitely. If the dream of a democratic Zimbabwe is ever to come true, the country’s citizens, whether they sympathize with the MDC or ZANU-PF, will have to start pushing their representatives to actually represent them, to be accountable and socially responsive, and to build a legitimate political system founded on free and fair elections and the rule of law. ”[16]

Differences between Mauritius and Zimbabwe

As we saw, both countries are sharing the same type of governance. But as in many cases, differences are always present. Why such big gaps exist in their way of governance even if the countries share a history of colonization?

Mauritius is doing really well despite the fact that the country has issues regarding their sovereignty over certain territories. Maybe we can say that democracy works best in the island countries? As an example, in the developed countries, we have Great Britain that over the years managed to maintain a high position in the world.

The cause might be that Mauritius shares principles from two countries that have a rich heritage; we are talking about here of Great Britain and France. They took what was considered to be the best from the both countries and comprised it in one constitution.

Of course that as a developing country Mauritius has some problems in how to properly apply the democracy in some cases but this is happening all over the world, even in the countries that have democracy as their form of governance from a long time ago.

In Zimbabwe the situation is more complicated because the country was doing quite good in the past, when the democracy was first established but as we saw, during the years the principles were somehow lost and the country faced problems.

If democracy was followed as it should be, I think that Zimbabwe will be more powerful because as the Ibrahim Index said, their level of democracy is quite high and the only problem is that the rulers didn't find a way to use it as it should be used.

In Mauritius, democracy worked better maybe because they didn't have the problems that Zimbabwe had. I'm referring here to the fact that in Zimbabwe it was that gap between the white minority and the African people, and how the white people controlled everything and in the same time, the African people's rights weren't respected.

One of the reasons that in developing countries the democracy is lacking might be the fact that they took the example of countries like China and Russia that took over western capitalism and so, the “freedom of opinion, human rights, democratic elections, received a serious competition in the authoritarian state formula, which economically is a successful solution. And more and more countries from Africa and Asia, but also from other corners of the world are attracted by such model.”[17] But in the end, democracy is still continuing to develop so, we can hope that the abuses of the state will cease to exist in the future.

To sum up, democracy is working in the developing countries, as we saw. Of course there exists exceptions like Somalia, but I think that in time things will get better and there won't be as many bad things happening in the African countries as there are today. We can hope that the people won't die anymore because they don't have hospitals, doctors or medicine in some cases, and the hunger won't be a problem anymore.

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