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# Group and associations in the governance process of states in Africa

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It has increasingly become evident that the system of government inherited from the colonial powers in Africa have proved to be a failure, because of the reasons of uninhibited particularism and the inherent contradictions found with western systems of democracy in Africa. The advent of global political and economic reforms initiated by most countries in Africa since the attainment of independence has necessitated a pursuit for countries in Africa to renovate themselves democratically. The compelling political challenge being to mobilize the collective will of group and associations and civil societies to work in concert with formal institutions of government so as to bring about democratic governance and sustainable development. This paper adopts the Weberian theorem of rational-legal domination as its tool of analysis to argue for the fact that leaders (politicians and bureaucrats) occupy a position of trust which compels them to respect the social contract. Importantly, it has to be made clear that even though civil societies are informal bodies, their operations becomes formal once it is able to establish recognition as the vehicle for mobilization by members. Therefore, both the formal and informal organs of administration are presented as importing rationality in the attainment of set objectives through the means of effective co-ordination and control and an emphasis on the depersonalization of an office. The conclusion here is that neither the formal nor the informal bodies are being recommended to substitute one another in the governance process. Rather, there should be a convergence between formal governmental bodies and renovated civil society, group and associations in what could be termed the fit between societal and state norms and expectations. Africa faces grave challenges and the most urgent of these are eradication of poverty and the fostering of socio-economic development, in particular, through democracy and good governance. New partnership for Africa's development, declaration on democracy, political, economic and corporate governance (Durban South Africa, July 2002).

**Key words:** Governance, group and associations, states, Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

Several of the countries in Africa have a robust history of traditional institutions and the roles which these institutions have played in the course of governance and administration. The defining factors for placing these institutions in their proper perspectives and for evaluating the roles that they have played in the stages of growth and development in Africa rest squarely on the factors of colonialism and its attendant legacies, pressures from within and without and the omnibus factors of the influence of westernization.

The concern expressed by NEPAD in 2002 as quoted above was a clarion call for countries in Africa to wake up to the challenges of having to have a vision for effectively developing the people and their institutions of gover-

nance and administration. This vision was further accentuated when countries in Africa joined the rest of the world to adopt the millennium development goals. These declarations represent a commitment for a concerted pursuit of programmes that would bring about an overall development of the African continent. These commitments cannot be achieved if the problems inherent in modern governance institutions are not identified and addressed. Also, African states should be able to identify and pursue the roles that traditional institutions have to play in the practice of modern governance and administration in a globalized world. More often than not, countries in Africa have been known to be plagued by the diseases of corruption, inability to enforce the rule of law,

human right abuses, lack of transparency and accountability in governance and administration, war and conflicts, underdevelopment, hunger and starvation. All these identified problems amongst several others not mentioned here bring about retardation in social, economic and political development. The presence of these insalubrious factors has given rise to certain identifiable features in the governance process of African states. These features are highlighted below:

- i.) The alienation of the state from society.
- ii.) Unethical conduct by politicians, military leadership and public officials.
- iii.) Lack of patriotism and allegiance.
- iv.) General poverty and underdevelopment.

The preponderance of these distasteful anomalies have given rise to an enquiry why citizens expectations of state actions are quite often disappointingly low. The state in modern governance consideration represents the ultimate elixir for the rule of law, impartial arbiter, the provider of the good life and the last hope for the oppressed and down-trodden. By the theories of the state, the social contract theory sees the state as a necessary evil, a system of power and public authority to which society submits for its own good. Without some order and authority, argued Hobbes (1957), society would be totally destroyed by the selfishness of its own members. Rousseau (1913), accepts submission to authority as the product of a rational choice in society, a contract among citizens which establishes the limits between public authority and the domain of the individual and one which of necessity preserves individual sovereignty as the highest form of freedom when in society.

What should be considered significant at this point of discussion is the logic in the fact that when state practices deviates substantially from stated norms, values, expectations, order and trust, an alternative medium that would encapsulate the grievances and yearnings of the people now takes over. Citizens' control over the operations of government is a core necessity in every democracy. It can not be attained when there is insufficient knowledge on the fit between what citizens' desire and what governments offer. By electing a government, people lend, alienate or give up their power to rules on condition that it is used to satisfy certain of their most important needs (Hampton, 1986). These needs which are security, social order, welfare, availability of facilities, general well being, etc. must be delivered by government, otherwise the social contract becomes useless since the basic tenets of democracy no longer exist. Palfrey et al. (1992) and Rhodes (1987), argued that a good government must take into consideration social welfare, equity, equal opportunities and fair distribution of public goods to all citizens.

The failure of the formal institutions of government in Africa now leads to the search for an understanding not only of the explanations for their failure, but also an effort

to understand the resilience and effectiveness of community organs which have continued to provide essential goods and services required by the citizens both in the urban and rural areas (Erero, 1996). It has become well known that the formal structures of government have increasingly become a friction in governance. The services they provide have declined sharply in quality and quantity and in several respects these services are no longer being delivered by government agencies. For this reason, Erero was categorical when he said that:

“Poor quality service has led to the development of alternatives either in terms of security, improvement/maintenance of roads, water facilities etc. These alternatives come either as private provision or community based provision”.

The emergence of group and associations and community organs such as trade and professional guilds, women groups, religious organizations, social clubs, kindreds, age groups and village associations, all arose to fill the vacuum created by Africa's governance system. They play active role in the socio-economic transformation and general improvement of the people's lives. This paper attempts explanations as to why citizens question the operations of the formal structures of government and why informal institutions have gradually become very relevant in the governance and administration process of Africa states.

### Framework of analysis

The idea of democracy requires politicians and administrators to be responsive to the popular will of the people (Stivers, 1994; Stewart and Ramson, 1994). While responsiveness is frequently considered problematic concepts in public administration, it is critical to politicians, bureaucrats and citizens alike. A responsive politician or bureaucrat according to Vigoda (2000) must be reactive, sympathetic, sensitive and capable of knowing public needs and be conversant with their opinions. Continuing, Vigoda opined that since the needs and demands of a

“...heterogeneous society is dynamic, it is vital to develop systematic approaches for its understanding. In many ways, this is the key to securing a fair social contract between citizens and rulers”.

This is where Max Weber's theorem of rational-legal domination comes into play. Leaders (politicians) and bureaucrats occupy a position of trust and service. They are voted into power and appointed into positions of authority, because the institutions in which they perform have statutorily designated it as such. Rules are made which becomes the binding force in the social contract. These rules and legal provisions must be obeyed and applied in all facets of engagement-whether elective or appointive.

The reliance on formal structures and authoritarian assumptions as a means of achieving and maintaining efficiency and a fulfillment of the social contract is the principal characteristic of the classical school to which Weber belongs. Group and associations, community organs etc. although informal when compared to established institutions like government; their structures become formal, once it has assumed that recognition as the vehicle for mobilisation by members. Therefore, the structures (formal and informal) are presented as importing rationality in the attainment of set objectives through the means of effective co-ordination and control, consistency and predictability and an emphasis on the depersonalization of an office.

Weber's contribution to knowledge is his classification of organizations or institutions by reference to their type of internal authority system and in particular the basis upon which authority establishes a claim to legitimacy (Weber, 1947). This means that the exercise of authority does not depend upon the strength of traditional association, or on the charismatic qualities of an individual, but rests instead upon the general recognition of the legitimate right of a particular office within the hierarchy to exercise such authority. This is what Weber calls the 'spirit of formalistic impersonality'.

Weber's theory of rational-legal domination or the ideal type of bureaucracy was developed within the environment of modern western societies. This does not seem to take full account of non-western and highly traditional cultures just like Fred Riggs prismatic societies characterized under-development with African societies (Riggs, 1946).

Ideal structures immediately lose their sacrosanct nature when they are located in an environment which is different from that in which they were conceived. They become subject to alteration or modification in accordance with the demands of the environment. Perhaps, it is true that structures may be designed independent of its environment. It is equally true that structures may not be immune to possible alterations by forces in the environment. The degree to which the structures of an organization is altered depends on the relationship of such structure to the environment. Based on this assumption, Onabanjo (1992) observed that "if the forces of the environment are dominant, one will expect the structures of the organization to change with little or no resistance in response to the forceful demands of the environment". Therefore, the ability of these informal institutions to operate to the point of becoming more acceptable than the formal organs of government is what matters here. What confers this resilience and what keeps them waxing this strong? This is where Weber's theorem becomes relevant.

### **Explanation of the concepts of governance and democracy**

Excellence in public service delivery is believed in certain

quarters as the yardstick for measuring good governance. This has led to the government performance Legislative act (GPLA) in the U.S.A., best value in the UK or the Bassanini reform in Italy (Bovaird and Löffler, 2003). Certain other quarters have made us to understand that excellence in services delivery is not enough yardsticks. This excellence also has to be in the areas of politics, environment and social responsibilities (U.N., 2002). Adamolekun (2002), simply defines it as "the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs". Governance as an idea involves not only the public aspect of services provision but also the much more fundamental aspect of human feelings, emotions, relationships and responsibilities. This is the reason why governance in many circles is discussed under "good governance", "public governance" or simply as "good public governance", depending on the context.

The context under which governance is discussed in this paper falls within these two operational scope:

- i.) The ways in which stakeholders interact with each other in order to influence the outcome of public policies.
- ii.) The negotiation by all the stakeholders in an issue of improved public policy outcomes and agreed governance principles, which are both implemented and regularly evaluated by all stakeholders.

These 2 positions highlighted above conforms with the thinking of governance international (2003) in the internet. The 2 key areas in their definitions are;

- i.) Improvement in public policy outcomes and
- ii.) Implementation by all stakeholders of a set of principles and processes by means of which appropriate public policies will be designed and put into practice.

The several positions discussed above points the way forward for us that although governance is a highly contested concept, it is best understood against the backdrop of the quality of services enjoyed by the citizenry of a nation, and the improvement in the quality in life, both in overall and in specific dimensions.

### **Democracy**

Confusion over words and their context appears also in the attempt to define what democracy means. The Greek writer in the fourth Century B.C categorized types of states to be:

- i.) Those where power is held by one man, that is, monarchy.
- ii.) Where power is held by a few, that is, aristocracy.
- iii.) Where power is held by the mass of the people, that is, democracy (Aristotle, 1986).

Most of these words are still being used, but they describe appearances rather than realities. The presence of

of a queen suggest that the United Kingdom is a monarchy, the sight of millions of people eligible to vote suggest democracy, the power of press magnates to influence opinion and of a great industrialist to influence policy, supports the view that oligarchy or plutocracy reigns.

When the power of control belongs to the whole people, the state is a democracy. We should not mistake the existence of parties opposing a government as evidence of democracy. The government may decide to hold on to power and use force and coercion to continue to violate the fundamental rights of citizens and to manipulate election results. Some South American and African states have these forms of democracy but the reality of dictatorship. It is often more better to understand how the government of a state works in practice than to decide what label to place upon it, particularly in Africa. For the purpose of classification, I will draw extensively from the fillip provided by Nyong'o (1993). He opined that democracy is a system of government that is based on the following characteristics:

- i.) Formation of a political community by free citizens having the obligation to obey, by their own active consent, rules and law that govern them.
- ii.) Establishment of this system of government through a process in which all individuals participate on the basis of equality, either directly as free and sovereign citizens or indirectly through their representatives.
- iii.) Ensuring the moral, intellectual, social and material development of every individual and social group that is part of the political community, thus avoiding any sort of discrimination that may introduce any inequality, political oppression or economic exploitation based on gender, caste, race, ethnicity, colour or any other social category;
- iv.) Distribution of public goods and reward on criteria that every citizen, qua citizen, can achieve.
- v.) Making sure that the governors are controlled by the governed and that this system of control and accountability can only be subjected to change through a plebiscite in which all citizens participate or through a principle of majority decision on which all citizens concur.

Thus, democratic societies are governed by the rule of law and the respect for inalienable human rights which are often enshrined in written constitutions (Laski, 1981). The point being made is that democracy is deeply embedded in that type of government that belongs to the people, works for the people and entirely depends on the will of the people (Mukoro, 2003). In this light, all democratic actions must be a response to the wishes, aspirations and desires of the people. John Locke in his government by consent and as discussed by Cranston (1984) asserted that:

“The whole trust, power and authority of the civil ruler are vested in him for no other purpose but to be made use of for the good, preservation and peace of men in that society over which he is set...”

Knowing that this position of trust is revocable, a leader and a society betrayed its trust when it forsake government according to settled process of law in favour of inconstant, uncertain, unknown and arbitrary government.

While governance should be seen as encompassing a wide range of concern over the effectiveness of a state's institutional arrangements, decision-making process and capacity for implementation etc., democracy expresses popular sovereignty, equality and representativeness. That is when there is the presence of free expression and the supremacy of the popular basis of sovereignty, equity, free and fair elections, general freedom, liberty, unfettered communication, respect for human right and the rule of law (Birch, 1993; Nwabueze, 1993; Laski, 1981; Duverger, 1980).

The questions that come to mind at this junction are whether governance and democracy are new to African people and whether it was properly bequeathed in theory and in practice by the colonialising powers to the African states?

### **Group and associations in African states governance process**

The African people appears to have succumbed to the pitfalls of colonial mindset and its epistemology which privileges the western culture and denigrates whatever is African. According to Ake (1993), the denigration arises from seeing Africa through believed concepts such as the state, civil society and bureaucracy which look like abstract universal but are in effect descriptive terms abstracted from western experience.

Unfortunately, the entire apparatus of Africa's political, social and economic considerations are prone to this type of skewed representation, which makes our institutions to lose integrity and entitlement to civilized courtesies. For example, we conceptualize bureaucracy, the rule of law, democracy, civil society etc, as a universal rather than a specific cultural construction. Whatever the western books say is accepted in faith without a recourse to history.

The project of establishing western form of political domination has not succeeded in Africa because of the colonial legacy and the determined resistance of African cultures. What the colonialist established while building the African state was according to Ake (1993) "...not so much a state in the western sense as an apparatus of violent repression". He went on to state that the colonial state needed a great deal of arbitrary power to subordinate the colonial territory, to exploit it and to protect it from the hostilities unleashed by it's dehumanizing treatment of its victims that put it in a permanent state of war against indigenous society. According to Mutahaba, Baguma and Halfani (1994), 'colonialism, to a great extent, supplemented or suppressed the various traditional administrative organizations and with them their administrative cultural values'.

History has it that before the colonization of Africa, many of the present African state had well organized communal/community or indigenous governance systems that was well organized with well defined traits of the Weberian postulates and western political teachings and civilization (Coleman, 1986; Dudley, 1981; Rodney, 1974). The posturing of the western states were completely antithetic to those of African societies that it was disconnected from their experience and became resisted. The licentiousness and tendency for exploitation of the colonialist caused contradictions and disintegration of the territories that it was suppose to govern. Instead of constructing an economy, its inclination was towards promoting enclave and economic disarticulation. Politics was now viewed as warfare and this was the toga that was carried into independence by nationalist and the leadership. Mutahaba et al. (1994) made this point clearer when they argued that in most parts of Africa, the traditional administrative organizations were done away with and replaced by bureaucratic organizations styled after the system in the mother country. In this, the civilizing mission of the colonial masters had limited scope. It was mainly concerned with pacifying the natives for purposes of facilitating exploitation of natural resources. As such, little investment was put into the development of complicated administrative infrastructures. The administrative systems consisted of skeletal organizations, only large enough for the purpose of extracting revenues and ensuring orderly governance.

Therefore, the new political power block (nationalist) became isolated, which resulted in their dependence on force to suppress a people that have become inclined to revolting against a government that have turned into a pariah. It was Dudley (1981) who observed that "one obeys the state because the state contributes to the greatest happiness of the greatest number". He went on to state that where the state is not able to contribute to the welfare of the citizens, the citizens would revolt. The alienation of state from the civil society breeds forms of informal policies that become parallel to and in competition with the state. These informal societies/groups appear in the shapes of ethnic groups, village associations, clan group, co-operatives, social clubs, civil societies etc, which now constitute and become the focus of loyalty. At this stage, loyalty to the community or group is seen as the paramount virtue (Dudley 1981). Local community groups, ethnic groups, and nationalities are taken as political force by an oppressed people to shield themselves against the state and to compete for the appropriation and exploitation of its power. These informal bodies enjoy the loyalty of the people and the state is displaced. They are able to tendentiously constitute themselves as welfare systems to provide necessary services, which the official state is in no position to provide, including infrastructures such as water supply, electricity, clinics and markets. Powerful as the states may appear in most African countries, it is most often quite

irrelevant except as a nuisance (Ake, 1993).

The failure of governmental structures built in the mould of colonial firmament according to Erero (1997), "has stimulated renewed interest in indigenous knowledge and institutions in recent years". This renewed interest is based partly on the fact that these institutions have proven to be resilient and the fact that they are more effectively institutionalized and are relied more upon by African people to provide them with required goods and services. Such goods and services as listed out by Erero include; security, roads, bridges, schools, post offices, mechanisms for conflict resolutions, common-pool resources management, capital formation and credit provision to mention a few. It is to these local polities that people turn to for security, emotional support and social welfare. These polities are highly participatory and operate on the principles of consensus building. In all of these, one may need to paraphrase Wolpert (2001), when she asked why the questioned civil society is needed if governance is transparent, participatory, representative, responsive, accountable, equitable, cost-effective and just. And why governance is needed if civil society itself has all these virtues? The possible and ready explanation that can be given to the above puzzle is that civil societies, groups and associations or community organs evolve functionally to address checks and balances and comparative advantage issues. Shortcomings, failures and excesses in one sector elicit corrective remedies in the other.

### Cases and citations

Otite (1976) stated it clearly that Nigeria is not the only country that shows features of both tradition and modernity. According to him, all contemporary nations in the world including to the United Kingdom, Belgium, USA and Russia shows various degree of the mixture of traditional norms and values and new modern features.

Recent conceptualization of governance suggests a new interdependence of governmental and non-governmental agencies, a new collectivity of action and a move away from assumptions about the primacy of the state as the site of political activity (Judge et al., 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1997; Wunsch and Olowu, 1995). These new points of view emphasize how a wide range of actors and agencies are now required to contribute resources and skills to a tangled web of policy making and how in so doing, the very meaning of government is being altered. Discussed below are some existing cases of group and associations in the governance process of some African states.

Malawi or the former Nyasaland in the southern part of Africa is inhabited by several groups comprising mainly the Nguru's, Anguru's and Yaos. They suffered the problems of land alienation, labour migrancy and labour exploitation (White, 1983), during colonialism. The British system of government in Nyasaland generated heated contradictions against white settlers. The grievances

generated by these contradictions were responsible for the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 (Lipede, 1990). Soon after this uprising, the various groups became stronger and were able to mobilise against white domination. These groups in large part facilitated the struggle for self rule. The relevance of such similar groups are still very much high in other countries in southern part of Africa, like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana (Martin, 1983; Ranger, 1976).

As for Zambia, a kind of work alliance already existed between informal structures and the colonialist before independence. After independence in 1964, government quickly integrated existing groups into the formal structures through the village registration and development act of 1971, 1980 and 1981 (Olowu, 1995). Kenneth Kaunda referred to these groups as 'the excellent barometer or mouthpiece of the people' (Kaunda, 1976).

The Tanzania Arusha declaration of 1976 somewhat integrated all forms of informal structures into the government pursuit of decentralization being tied to rural development. The cornerstone of the decentralization programme was the promotion of communal farming within "Ujamaa" or "familyhood". Although, the socialist ideology adopted in pursuing the decentralization programme did not give room for discontent, local participation suffered (Kasfir, 1983). However, the programme was able to bring together families into the mainstream of governance. An interesting dimension to the Tanzania case was the civil service reform programme (CSRFP, 1997). The message in the reforms was for a gradual retreat of the state from direct production and management of the economy. Thus, the CSRFP aimed at reducing the government's role and functions to affordable levels, enhancing the involvement and participation of NGO's and the private sector in the economy, as well as in the delivery of goods and social services and expanding and strengthening democratic institutions and promoting good governance (Mogella, 1999).

The situation in Kenya seems to present an interesting picture. The absence of formal political organizations that could confront the state in the period 1982 and 1991 left civil society as the only credible alternative (Barkan, 1992; Mantaga, 2000). But even after a multi-party system was re-established in late 1991, the emergent opposition parties were riddled with schisms along ethnic and personal ambitions for power. This rendered them completely weakened and therefore incapable of challenging the moi regime. This ensured a continued role for informal bodies like civil societies, groups and associations (Southall, 1998).

Regarding Francophone west Africa of Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania, the leadership had the inclination to adhere to the Jacobin myth of the "one and indivisible" nation inherited from France (Nwokedi, 1999), that concentrated power at the centre. This posturing created a lot of discontent which in turn recognized the need to incorporate

voluntary associations that thrived in the civil society. The belief was that these various bodies have the political function of upholding civil obligations and promoting private (group) interest by countering the hegemonic pretensions of the state (Bayart, 1986). The rise of civil society in the democratization process in francophone west Africa was the logical consequence of the dismal failure of the one-party state in both political and economic management (Nwokedi, 1999).

Back home in Nigeria, the presence of these groups and associations abound in virtually all the "over 250 ethnic groups" in the country (Oтите, 1976). An account by Tangban (1996), spoke of the Mgbe society made up of people from the south eastern area of Nigeria (Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states), as a very formidable association. The Mgbe is a graded and prestigious society that performed socio-economic and political functions as it acted as an instrument of inter-group authority and united the people in the area into a kind of cultural commonwealth. It can explicitly be stated here that the research group on local institutions and socio-economic development has a rich array of literature on indigenous governance system in Nigeria. This research group examined the phenomenon of indigenous federalism in Abeokuta just like other accounts spoke about Aiyetoro's communal lifestyle and the British factor in Egba-Ijebu relations. The research group also examined the lofty roles that women play in the governance of Ijero Ekiti of Ekiti state and on how the presence of a traditional political and a non traditional political institution serve as the vanguard of the people of Ilawe and Awo Ekiti communities. In their own ways, both the Olode and Ifetedo communities of Osun state are able to mobilize their traditional associations for self help and development.

A journey to the northern parts of the country in Nigeria together with the minority areas of the niger Delta exposes the paradox that is Nigeria. The patrimonial nature of the Nigerian state promotes the relevance of group and associations. The frequent call for sovereign national conference in recent times is an indication that many ethnic/communal groups are not satisfied with the state of the nation. At every corner, you meet with pockets of discontent and such hydra-headed groups as the Odua people's congress (OPC) the Bakassi boys or vigilante group of south eastern Nigeria, the Egbesu boys of Ijaw extraction and the Arewa people's congress (APC) whose mode of operations have become vicious and despicable. All these movements are pursued with a view for people to extricate themselves from the tyranny of the state and settle for a platform that would accommodate, assimilate and project their relevance in the "mere geographical expression" (Awolowo, 1958) called Nigeria.

### **Group and associations search for relevance in the governance process of African states**

As the interest in good governance spreads, it becomes

inevitable that attempts be made to explore how to operationalise it and to test whether it can be empirically demonstrated within the African context.

Although, a lot of invectives have been poured on formal state institutions as a result of their below standard performance, traditional institutions only serve as stop gap or plausible alternatives to state structures so long as they continue to fail to meet the expectations of the people.

In Britain for example, under the labour government of Tony Blair, there is the change of attitude in governance from the previously functional networks based on central or local government departments for the addition of new actors and agencies from the private and voluntary sectors. Government institutions have been differentiated and pluralized, with the result that service delivery systems have become fragmented.

The key role of central and local government has been reduced to one of seeking to co-ordinate or manage policy networks through facilitation and negotiation. (Cloke et al., 2000). Changes and dynamism are common features in governance. Good leadership in government may render the importance of traditional institutions less viable. As changes are taking place, if the traditional institutions (group and associations) refuse to renovate themselves, they will become discarded as anachronistic relics of the past or be used as pawns by opportunists. Therefore, we have to know that neither the formal nor traditional institutions are being recommended to substitute one another in the governance process. Rather there should be a recommendation and convergence between formal governmental bodies and renovated traditional group and associations in what Hyden (1983) called '... a fit between societal and state norms'.

Adamolekun (2002) proffers that this fit has to come from committed and development oriented leaderships. He states that the leader should be committed to the development of the entire society over which he or she rules, ensuring the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at enhancing the quality of life of all the citizens.

In line with this position is the need to increase the capacity of group and associations in governments so that they can relate to modern currents of innovations. In this wise, the informal bodies can be constituted into the local organs of governance at the communities were they exist. Also, the leadership of these informal bodies and to some extent traditional rulers where they exist should be brought into the main stream of governance for the sake of cooperation and coordination of development initiatives peculiar to particular group of people. The integration of group and associations with the governance mechanism of a state according to Olowu (1997) constitute the seeds of hope for Nigeria's local democratic organs, state reform and economic growth. However, they must be creatively integrated and transformed into the local state system to increase their relevance, utility and credibility.

Group and associations scattered around in particular locations in each country can converge to form co-operatives or much more formidable organizations to give teeth to their pressures and demands. Cooperatives are conceived as voluntary associations where people organize themselves together in order to mobilize the potentials of their collective power. The intension is to establish democratically controlled structures whereby people can profit from economics of scale and the advantage of share size. These cooperatives can also serve the purpose of being the medium for coordinating the voices of rural or oppressed people in political discourse and for strengthening their position in society.

The practice of community development or animation rural for those administered by the French, fill the gap of presenting government or bringing government to participate in local affairs. Because of the scarcity of resources, development at the local level has to be initiated by local communities themselves with the state providing some capital and expertise. This approach has succeeded with many governments in Asia and Africa. In fact, many non governmental organizations (NGOs) have adopted the strategies of community development to their advantage.

Another major way for group and associations to gain relevance in governance is for the government and the traditional or informal bodies to form a participatory partnership. This means that the people are included in the planning and implementation initiatives of government either for large, small or medium scale developments, which are usually externally initiated, funded and controlled. Participation in these types of projects can be accomplished in several ways with varying degree of sensitivity and finesse. Input of opinions and ideas might be collected from local people prior to project planning by outside officials who actually prepare project plans. Or in a more crude form, authorities might bring plans that have already been formulated externally and submit them to the local people for their rudimentary comments and approval if need be. The beauty of this method is that stakeholders and beneficiaries will be involved from the point of conceptions, planning, implementation to evaluation and monitoring. The accompanying advantage here is commitment, quality, accountability and prudence.

Lastly, the cooperation being sought for government and group and associations should be based on a foundation or an ideology. There should be a mindset or working mechanism upon which partnership can be checked and goals pursued logically. The relationship must be accommodating and flexible with no party wanting to take advantage of the other. All these prescriptions are not peculiarly western or African, but a repositioning of the Weberian dictum that speaks of the ideal in matters of governance and public sector management. What we must know is that the concept of the omnipotence of the state is erroneous. Partnerships between the state, the private sector and civil society institutions have proven to

be very important in both social services delivery and policy making processes in many areas such as the protection of the environment, work conditions and social safety nets. Such success is predicated on building and maintaining an institutional framework open to diversity, which facilitates stakeholder's contributions to policy making and evaluation process. According to the report of the United Nations economic and social council committee of experts on public administration (2004), it stated that;

“Although this is not always easy, evidence has shown that success in modern government depends largely on widening the basis of citizen participation and galvanizing consensus and support for broadly shared objectives”.

## Conclusion

Many of the features that were instrumental at fostering democratic culture in Western Europe and America are simply put, very weak in the African context. This is because of the way Europeans passed on the practice of democracy to Africans. The culture of Africans, value the communalization of her society rather than its privatization which western culture values. Communalization encourages the collective consumption of wealth, it is a strong element of social solidarity and it gives resilience to poor societies to absorb economic austerity without systematic breakdown. Most importantly, it is the engine of the community self help projects which have been the driving force in the development of rural Africa (Ake, 1993).

The chances of democracy working perfectly within the context of western tradition over Africa are very slim. The competitive nature of democratic politics tends to tear apart the social fabric of many countries in Africa. Hyden (1995) observed that the institutional infrastructure that may prevent such a trend is very weak and in most cases unable to withstand the challenges of patrimonialism pursued in the guise of governance. This lapse has encouraged the flourishing of society-based informal institutions like group and associations. This may perhaps be accountable for the reasons why societies and the states in Africa have not disintegrated into anarchy.

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