

Review

The role of elections in boosting good governance

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This paper presents a discussion on the role of elections in boosting good governance. The first part provides a historical background on election. The second part reveals challenges to accepting the elections results by various political parties. The paper further indulges in narrating the functions of elections and the need for skilled labor in managing elections for achieving good governance. It also reveals that in order for elections to be vital concerning good governance, voter education must be provided to the voters, which will articulate the importance of electing competent leaders at the expense of weak leaders. Good governance cannot exist unless good leaders exist. The paper has concluded that the preparation of elections processes, registration of voters, voting, counting, collation and declaration of the winner in any election, effective elections management is crucial. The entire public administration depends much on the electors. The stability of Judiciary, the Parliament and the Executives is highly dependent on how elections are carried. The weak the electoral organization the more likely is the elected leaders, in this case the appointing authority and finally the appointees, which will finally determine the integrity of governance.

Keywords: Governance, elections, executives, parliament, judiciary.

INTRODUCTION

The essence of good governance took a new dimension after Second World War II, which took place between 1947 and 1953. The cold war was essentially spearheaded through the big two: United Soviet Socialist Union (USSR) on the one hand, and the United States of America (USA) on the other. The practices of the leaders who were felt to have in one way or the other propagated the war and the impacts thereof, including the explosive bombs on Hiroshima, which was done by USA appealed for new dimension of expounding and coming up with the best way of controlling the execution of power so that authorities, irrespective of their coming into power should comply with proper use of power (Ascher, 1976). In addition, the Origins of the Cold War are widely regarded to lie most directly in the relations between the Soviet Union and its allies the United States, Britain and France in the years 1945–1947 (Goldstone, 1966). Those events led to the Cold War that endured for just less than half a century. Events preceding the Second World War, and even the Russian Revolution of 1917, underlay pre-World War II tensions between the Soviet Union, western European countries and the United States. A series of events during and after World War II exacerbated ten-

sions, including the Soviet-German pact during the first two years of the war leading to subsequent invasions (Bunyan and Fisher, 1934). The perceived delay of an amphibious invasion of German-occupied Europe, the western allies' support of the Atlantic Charter, disagreement in wartime conferences over the fate of Eastern Europe, the Soviets' creation of an Eastern Bloc of Soviet satellite states, western allies scrapping the Morgenthau Plan to support the rebuilding of German industry, and the Marshall Plan (Avrich and Alexander, 1973).

The essence of proper use of power means that power must be used for the furtherance of development of the people (Norman, 2005). It is through this period after Second World War II, particularly after realizing the type of leaders and the way they got into power, the need for proper process of getting into power was crucial. Hence, the period of year 1939 to 1948 there had existed some meetings and forums, which appealed for: 1) Describing the age to elect leaders, which was set as 18. 2) Each person that has attained the age of 18 (permissible) should participate in electing his or her leader. 3) The need for rules and regulation that could

govern the exercise of voting. Therefore in 1948 the convention, popularly known as Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created. It stipulated among other things the need for participation of every citizen who has attained the age permissible for voting to do so. It further appealed for participation of voting without coercion. It is therefore; right to argue that most constitutions have drawn the rights of citizen from the convention of human rights of 1948. Much has been done to deal with the improving of the processes of electing and being elected. However, the summary of all efforts can be summed as ensuring the realization of electoral processes that ultimately bring forth good governance hence development.

Therefore, this paper attempts to link elections management and its role in boosting good governance. The thrust of the paper rests on the fact that there are three accepted organs of the state namely the Executives, the Legislature and the Judiciary, commonly known as the checks and the balances. Although the three are checks and balances, yet the mandate of the three, differ and suggest ranking them in terms of mother and son or daughter relation or father and son or daughter relation. It is thus prudent if the screening and scaling down of the organs is assessed through a comparative analysis of the head of the organs. In order to amplify the relationship of the three organs, it crucial that two relations be established: Executive –Judiciary relationship, and Executive Legislature relationship. The emphasis is on which is the dependent organ versus independent. We all know the world over that it is the head of executive in the name of president or prime minister, depending on the nature of the government, who appoints the Chief Judge, and in most case including the entire five countries of East Africa which include Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, the presidents appoint all judges.

Hence, it is right to argue that the Judiciary is born of the Executive; it is a daughter and or son of the Executives. The president is an elect person from the votes of the citizen. Therefore, powers vested to the president are essentially a resultant of elections. In this regard, Norman asserts that the beauty of the president depends on the competence of the elections management body in complying with rules and procedures that were set through competent organs (Norman, 2003). In addition, the competence of the leader depends also on the competence of the electors/voters. It follows that the competence of appointed persons through presidential power depends on the competence of the leaders.

On the other hand, elections bring the members of parliament into saving the public. Hence, the parliament is brought into power through elections. Nevertheless, the competence of members of parliament can be said is dependent on the competence of the electors/voters on the one hand, and the good of the rules and procedures

of managing elections on the other. As noted earlier elections are there for the purpose of enabling the led to make choice of their own leaders so as to have good governance. The assumptions behind elections is that, people will vote without being bribed, no voting that will be driven by other ventures such as tribe, religion, and friendship rather competence- ability to realize problems of the people and facilitate the removal of those problem. Norman (2004) asserts that when bad laws and or incompetent voters have managed to elect a competent leader, the circumstance or situation should be expressed as 'chancing'. It is right for incompetent electors under incompetent laws to elect an incompetent leader and the vise versa. The logic further suffices that it is also right for competent appointing authority such as president to appoint competent appointees and the vise versa can also be true. Hence the central course of good governance and or development is dependent on how well elections are organized and managed. Henceforth, there is need to digress on the role of elections in fostering good governance.

Elections an African Perspective

In the last decade the quest for good governance has become an important area of concern in Africa and the world at large. A number of countries have moved away from hitherto dictatorial regimes to an adherence to democratic principles (Otlhogile, 1998).

The electoral process is an essential tool for decision-making in a democracy and for institutionalization. Once clear elections are held, they gain respectability and credibility. Therefore, an election is a foundation of a true democracy. It is from such perspective; Byakagaba indicated that elections are a very important aspect of the democratic process, which requires careful planning and handling (1998:142).

Elections as we have come to know them may not be new in Africa. Even before colonialism, but after AD, some clans, had to conduct elections basing on who was mostly acceptable in the entire family (Norman, 2001). However, first formal elections in Africa were conducted in Sierra Leon in 1830s (Haywane, 1988; Mobutsi, 1998). Nevertheless, the history and culture of election would have been effectively carried, had it been the continent being nipped in the bud by the century long colonial era, which was undemocratic. Moreover, the culture of one party state adopted by many African states a few years after attaining independence can be said to have reduced the continuity of exercising choice among the people, which may reflect a more democratic practice.

To-date about 96% of African heads of governments is in power through democratic elections (The Head of governments of the Commonwealth African countries have until the conduct of the study, been in power through elections of the majority. However, there have

been some shortcomings in some countries such as Zimbabwe. The commonwealth suspended the country so as it could adjust it self and regain values of the commonwealth countries. Pakistani was also suspended and regained membership in 2004. In November, 2007 Pakistan was suspended again by the Commonwealth for lack of conformity to Commonwealth values). In addition, about 98% of active members of Commonwealth Africa head of governments have attained presidency or prime ministerial through democratic elections (International Institute of Training Research and Consultancy, 2008). Noting the fact above, it can be relevant to argue that elections are the pyramid of democratic decisions, both in economic, social and political. Thus, adherence to such practices increases influence on the tripartite economic activities, political

spheres, and social aspects. In this connotation, elections sets parameters for development, not to mention peace, which is well accepted by any sane person as a causal of democratic processes through elections management.

The international conventions have set the importance of people to participate in the governance of the states. Article 21 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that:

- (1) *Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
- (2) *Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country.*
- (3) *The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will, shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*

Review of Literature on the Importance of Governance

The terms "governance" and "good governance" have increasingly been used in development literature to connote the level of functioning of the government. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of most evils within our societies (UN, 1998; Norman and Senguji, 2002). Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aid and loans on the condition that reforms that ensure "good governance" are undertaken. We would like to echo the common appeal of Norman (1998) when indicated that providing definition of the key terms of article and paper writing renders no option. Since academic papers need to be understood by all people, even those, which are not professional in the field of which the literature is oriented.

In this view, defining governance is imperative. Governance is the process of decision-making and the

process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision (Hutchinson, 1999; World Bank, 2000). Most literatures that have covered on governance and or good governance do not narrate on how good governance can be achieved, and when they do, the focus is on qualities of good governance but they do little on qualities of people who are the custodian of governance. Hence, a need to relate the role of elections on boosting good governance since the leaders and systems of governance are in essence created through elections.

Governance is highly appreciated as a key in managing resources and enhancing development. The importance of governance is generally seen to be crucial in government undertakings (Norman, 2005). However, governance has huge positive or negative impact on various ventures of social, political and economical spheres. In this regard, Ezirim (2010) narrates that the major problem of the African continent can be succinctly stated to be that of poor governance – either at the political, economic, social or cultural levels. Governance relates to decisions that define expectations, rant power, or verify performance in terms of accurate account of accruals from resources. On the other hand, Botswana's achievement in reducing poverty and improving her economy is linked to good governance (Tsie, 1996; Theobald and Williams, 1999; Holm, 2000; Sebudubudu, 2010). Governance is a pillar in proper utilization of the scarce resource the world is claiming to face. Good governance is imperative not only in government undertaking but it is a crosscutting need for governments, Non-governmental organisations, and private organisations (Norman, 1999; Todaro and Smith, 2006).

Functions of Elections

It has been suggested that elections can perform three basic functions: to provide for succession in power within a political system; to ensure connectivity or an element of representation or consent, between the government and the governed; and to contribute towards the political socialization of the people (McAuslan, 1969:270). Although McAuslan, did not point out clearly on the functions of elections as connected to good governance, it is impliedly covered. Proper succession of power is by itself good governance.

Drawing the three functions of electing, it can be covered in tripartite, through elaborating the essence of each function. Provide for succession in power within a political system. Connotatively, the phrase reflect taking over power from one governing body to another, peacefully, as opposed to removing the governing body through force, coercion, to mention a few. Further, elec-

tions ensure connectivity or representation element or consent, between the government and the governed. This phrase suggests surety of the transfer of power, and willingness demonstrated through people voted for such a governing body, and those representing such people, the governed, in the respective government. This function become essential when accomplished peacefully, hence paving a way for development.

The third function is to contribute towards the political socialization of people. The phrase focuses on political socialization, which means, activities that are political, yet socialized through the electorates. Deducing the meaning through elaborating the key words politic and social; politic mean ruling by the consent of the governed; hence, political socialization refers to activity whereby solutions to social economic problems are arrived at, and different aspirations are met by the process of discussion and compromise rather than by the application of decree or force (Hutchinson, 2000:856). It is an activity based on diversity: diverse opinion about aims to be achieved and means to achieve them (Crick, 1962). So to say, politics accepts this diversity as a fact of life and seems to resolve conflicting views by discussion and compromise. Social as drawn from society, refers to the organization of people into communities or groups (Jamrozik, 2001; Bomani, 1995).

Observing the two concepts, the political socialization would be attained when good governance is a focal of every undertaking. Literally, and generally, elections are fundamental if communities desire peace. Good governance finds root when the entire community or society is peaceful. Functions of elections can be summed in different ways pending the level election referred to. Literally, the function of General elections can be summed as:

- a) To provide head of the state (president or Prime minister)
- b) To provide ministers as appointees of the President
- c) To provide legislature (a team of representatives mandated to debate bills, make laws, and play the over sight on the government).
- d) To provide the Judiciary and the associated organs –Judges are appointees of the president or the Prime minister.
- e) To provide lower structures of the government and affiliate institutions ranging from chief executives of various organizations to board of directors.
- f) To provide hope to the people on the likely future of their wellbeing through the type of leaders elected.

Conducting Elections for Development

Elections must be conducted with a purpose to foster good governance hence development. Further, when elections are carried, with a notion of bringing about

development, much will be done to electors, so that the ultimate elect is not only accepted but also capable of executing the elected post. The paradox of acceptance is important but does not necessarily mean capability. In this vein, Norman (2008) reveals that acceptance of the contestants is imperative and should be driven by the competence of the electors. It is assumed that competent electors will end up electing competent leaders. We anticipate that competent electors will keep on monitoring the performance of the elected individual to determine his/her the fate before the expiry of the term of service.

From the perspective above, this article thoroughly examines, what the electors should do, to have elections that purport good governance hence development. It is imperative to realize that for a voter, to effectively be termed as, has fully utilized his/her vote, must vote consciously, basing on the capacities and abilities a person demonstrates and other spheres of the contestant which are developmental that persuade the voter to reach such a decision willingly. The essence of elections and voters participating in voting is to ensure that the living standard is improved, which is development (Norman, 2010; Nyerere,1994). Todaro and Smith (2009) reveals that development is a sustained elevation of an entire society and social systems towards better or more humane life, which is actually a result of good governance. The attainment of good leaders depends also on the number of factors. These factors can be summed up as the manner in which elections are conducted which can also be divided into several prerequisites. 1) to what extent the elections were inclusive 2) the extent to which the electors were informed on the importance of elections. 3) The extent to which electors were informed on the abilities/competence of the contestants. 4) The extent to which electors were informed about the key problem issues of their societies. 5) the level of awareness of the electors regarding the anticipated solutions of the problems of the community. Finally, 6) the level of awareness of the people on the development taking place in other spheres other than their constituency.

There are also a number of factors that are anticipated from the electoral management body if elections are desired to foster good governance and hence development. These include: 1) the impartiality of the electoral management body 2) the competence of the personnel of the electoral management body 3) perception of the elections stakeholders on the competence of the elections management body.

The totality of factors required for the manifestation of good governance in the processes of elections management is the competence of the cadres involved in every stage and level of elections. These include competence-based nominations within political parties as opposed to whims, which will automate competence based in the General elections. Elections are vicious in nature. Therefore the ability of elections to bring forth

competent leaders is dependent on how well the electoral management is formed, adherence to rules that echo competence based credentials, decisions of various organs that focus on development rather than protecting the interest of the particular group such as political parties.

Need for Skilled Manpower

While it is vital to have skilled practitioners in all parameters of development be that of social, political and economical; it remains that it is effective management of elections that determines the ultimate quality of leaders basing on the electorates. Observing at policy perspective, effective election management (EEM) determines the actual policy required in the respective country. Thus it is the well-managed elections that brings forth well managed policy, well set developmental strategies; and may imply development pending on the viability and liability of the electors. Assessing at peace perspective with an assumption that voters are viable and reliable, one would conceive that the effective performance of government machinery such as the police army depends, among others, on the effective management of elections (Norman, 2001). It should be realized that the NEC functions and the complexities involved in the handling electoral processes requires the support of well trained, motivated, capable and impartial staff (TEMCO, 1997:152). It is the aspiration of this literature that a just leadership is put in power by just electoral processes, managed by skilled staff, bringing about just management that yields good governance and hence development.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, it is the contention of this ingredient that in any election, the preparation of elections processes, registration of voters, voting, votes counting, collation and declaration of the winner effective elections management is crucial. The whole public administration depends much on the electors. The stability of Judiciary, the Parliament and the Executives is highly dependent on how elections are carried if good governance is a priority. The weak the electoral organization the more likely is the elected leaders, in this case the appointing authority and finally the appointees which will finally determine the integrity of governance. It can thus be summed up that in order for elections to be vital in regard to good governance, voter education must be provided to the voters, which will articulate the importance of electing competent leaders at the expense of weak leaders. Good governance can not exist unless good leaders exist. It is from this point of view that well skilled and determined personnel are needed to foster the conduct of elections hence good governance.

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