Nigeria: Transactions in Freedom

By
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Lecture delivered at the 3rd Annual Public Lecture/Symposium organised by the United Action for Change

Theme: Democracy without Internal Party Democracy: a myth?
Date: Thursday, 9 August 2018
Venue: Oranmiyan Hall, Lagos Airport Hotel, Ikeja
PURPOSE OF LECTURE AND THEORETICAL CONCERN

• To illuminate the phenomenon of transactions in freedom, first as an expression of underdevelopment, and second as a weapon of control and manipulation for self enrichment through resource control, ego, feelings of territorialism and empire building. These procedural manipulations explain why internal party democracy is a myth.

• To provoke discussions on mitigation strategies to contain dire consequences of transaction in freedom by means of conventional and unconventional responses.

• Underscore the role of political philosophy in development, especially of diversity and indeed pluralism.
METHODOLOGY

- Experience sharing
- Previous Studies
- Philosophical and Political Reflections
- Observations
- Media Reports
1. INTRODUCTION

- Key Questions

- Why is struggle for freedom universal and desirable? - political communication / preference aggregation

Remember historical struggles against slave trade, colonial domination and neo-colonialism, military rule and poor governance generally; dehumanising existential realities; just two days, some members of National Assembly fought for their freedom.

- Who are merchants of freedom/markets in freedom/ small versus big men

- Should all people of all ages and gender be free?

- What do we value most in life?
Should there be transactions in freedom?

Who should transact in freedom

Booming trade in freedom; Entry points, Police check points, extortions

Transactions in freedom can be at any of several levels - politics, banks, hospital etc
2. Political Sociology of Today’s World and Implications for Freedom

- Growing social and political inequality arising from social injustice between and within nations.

- Prevalence of insecurity across the globe; arms proliferation—common assaults on freedoms – abductions and kidnapping, prison swap for ransom.

- The coming of new technology is reordering social relationships/freedom/enhancement of social mobilization to subvert assault on freedom.
Rise in dogma, social prejudice and social discrimination.

Resort to common sense conclusions instead of a sociological/scientific sense – ‘dibo ko se be’, ‘see and buy’, I m poor, so, I sell my vote’ etc.

The enthronement of the money culture which is pervasive and widespread, across ethno-religious and age groups/ How to negative toxic effect of money

Declining Civic Engagement- Voter apathy and intensified open religiosity
3. Some Elementary and substantive freedom

Thin line between elementary and substantive freedom

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<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Substantive</th>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom from want, ignorance</td>
<td>Freedom from insecurity of life and property</td>
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<td>Religious freedom</td>
<td>Primary and secondary participation in politics (membership of political</td>
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<td>association: about 68 political parties competing for space in Nigeria)</td>
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<td>Freedom to make choices of spouses</td>
<td>Economic freedom</td>
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4. Assumptions on which Transactions in Freedom Rest

- Money being regarded as the ultimate – cash and carry decide political communication, policy preference and aggregation
- Human beings cannot be trusted to act rationally and reasonably, no need to enter into any contractual relationship with the masses
- Ballot as an embodiment of freedom can be commodified – money, rice,
- Ethical Poverty
- No deferment of returns Immediate gratification as its terms would in many cases be defiled/violated
5. Political Economy of Freedom

- Poverty situation in Nigeria
- Percentage of population in poverty

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<td>Percentage</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>69</td>
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- More than 100m Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day
- The Federal State, 36 states with FCT and the crippled 774 Local Govt. as main business centres. The competition remains keen and deadly – The Slaughter’s Slab as a Metaphor
- Skewed distribution of police
- Huge Remuneration of public office holders
- Deadly nature of elective office- winners take all
6. Theorizing Freedom

- Socrates; freedom in liberal, neoliberal and autocratic states
  freedom in capitalist societies - Adam Smith – it is not from the philanthropy of the butcher....
  freedom in history- pre-colonial, colonial, post colonial, military and undertransmitten

- Plato: ethical; freedom is allowed if for the pursuit of the good, rational

- Hobbes- freedom is dangerous

- Locke- freedom is desirable
Rosseau- free contract

Amartya Sen: Development impossible without freedom

Class character of freedom- the poor are first, starved of basic needs and then, second of freedom while the rich has plenty of all. But the rich and the poor deal in transactions in freedom; the market booms more in the Southern than in the Northern hemisphere.
7. Constitutional safeguard against Transactions Freedom

- 87(1) and 4(b) (ii) and 31(1) of Electoral Act; primary elections are a bazaar of a sort, meant for big time spenders; rules and guidelines are arbitrary;

- Contending schools of thought on how candidates are to emerge
8. Possible Outcomes of Transactions in Freedom

• Unregulated transactions in freedom provokes resort to the slaughter’s slab scenario – elections as fiasco, unregulated warfare (Claude Ake’s submission)

• Diminishing frontiers of citizenship, money spent in primaries and elections had to be recovered with interest

• Voter turn out; voter apathy
• Siddon look – resignation, withdrawal, disillusionment, political despondency
• Waning of electoral dominations, electoral statistics – evidence-declining citizen’s participation
• Economic outcomes- the relocation of companies from Nigeria on grounds of non discriminatory abductions and kidnapping of foreign business elite; recall experiences of Balarabe Musa and Olu Falae among other star victims.
• Threat to security: intra-party and inter-party conflicts. The Imo and Osun examples
9. Checkmating assaults on freedom/mitigation strategies

1. Citizenship issue

- Getting involved, the American way/bring back associational life, public trust and social capital; citizens should be trusted that they will act wisely/ conventional and unconventional modes of mandate protection; getting involved, multiply acts of participation- manifest and latent –UNITED ACTION FOR CHANGE is the way to communicate and construct alternative routes to power.

- Reinforcing and multiplying ethical stand

- Diverse Acts of Volunteerisms in place of monetary rewards
2 Born to ‘rebel’

- PVC as shield/sword
- Showcase silver lining/high moral code in the context of rising social discontent and social resentment

I was offered 5,000 to vote for the party but I rejected it. I am a 73 year old retired teacher. I cannot allow the future of my children to be bought by moneybags. I don’t know how we descended to this level when people brazenly offer money to people to secure their votes. It was not like this in the past. Will our votes count with this problem? (Saturday Punch, July15, 2018, p.4)

“Shun stomach infrastructure” reject to “see and buy”- Sunday Punch, July 15 2018
9. Checkmating assaults on freedom/mitigation strategies (Cont’d)

3. **Blackmail/exposure** - use technology to expose unacceptable behaviour, networking among like minded people to demystify political godfathers etc.

4. **General activism and Humanism** - humanise your callings - breath humanism into your profession / doing well and being good simultaneously - fights oppression and political infidelity from within; speak true to power- Gani Fawehinmi, Ransom Kuti etc Don’t feel disillusioned or disenchanted
5. Adopt/empower and bring one out poverty, out of vote swapping.

6. Reform of Political Parties as oligarchy and a repressive machine-
Michel- He who sees political parties see oligarchy. Political parties as constituted need detoxification/ Proportional Representation in place of first past the post/ build elite consensus in place of elite factionalization

7. Reconstructing the School regime by allowing students union to flourish
CONCLUSION

What is perhaps the greatest cause of Nigeria’s underdevelopment is the character of Nigerian governing classes. For as has been realized world wide, no nation can engineer its transformation without a cleared-headed, determined and hard working modernizing elites. The Nigerian misfortune has been the rulership of the nation for most of the last 32 years by an idiotic ruling class. This ruling is not only greedy, corrupt and short sighted, it is rapacious in the extreme. Its members have been and remain the ruin of the nation – The Guardian, Dec. 15 1992