

Liberal, illiberal democracies and authoritarian rule in low income countries rep...

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



- Acknowledgements

This paper acknowledges the efforts made by all the participants who took part in the research, compiling and eventual write-up of the final draft. My research assistant, the instructor and all other classmates had a role to play in this report. Without them, it would not have been finalized in time.

- Introduction

This paper will discuss three types of democracies in relation to their applicability to a low income country. A low income country is characterized by poor economic development, infringement of workers' rights and extreme levels of poverty. The first democracy that the paper will discuss is the liberal democracy (Durham, 2004, pp. 1-30). This democracy entails a representative form of democracy whereby the elected representatives are limited from any excesses by a supreme constitution. The supreme constitution outlines all the fundamental human rights that the representatives are supposed to protect. Among the many individual liberties and fundamental freedoms that the elected representatives are supposed to protect is the right to ownership of property, freedom of conscience, right to religion of one's choice, freedom of speech as well as the right to equality before the law.

- Methodology

Most of the research was done by reviewing the various literatures by authors in this subject. There was agreement by most scholars that a very thin line lays between illiberal democracy and authoritative rule. There was also consensus that the political regime does not matter, what really matters is the economic model. Other research was done by interviewing various

people.

- Results and findings

The results of this research are presented in form of an essay in the section that follows. They are the results of our research in the literature that we considered.

- Types of democracies:

- Liberal Democracy

As outlined earlier, this paper will discuss three two types of democracies and the third topic of discussion will be authoritative rule. Most liberal democracies are opposed to majority rule when its sole purpose is to oppress the minority and infringe on their rights (Cohen, 1985, pp. 10-20). This is enabled by the existence of legal provisions on the supreme law of the land, various statutes and a powerful legislature whose main function is to enact new laws or repeal old laws that are oppressive to the minority. Citizens are also given the opportunity to provide their opinion regarding a certain decision through a referendum. Referenda are mainly conducted to allow the citizens to give their opinion on the legality or illegality of a named law and, therefore, allow the government to make a determination as to whether such a law would be adopted in a particular country's legal regime. The representatives are elected in free and fair elections (Cohen, 1985).

- Illiberal Democracy

On the other hand, the substance of illiberal democracy, as opposed to liberal democracy is to the effect that although fairly free and fair elections were conducted, either civil liberties are not embedded in a particular country's supreme law or if they are embedded, they are not guaranteed at

all. It, therefore, follows that the citizens of a particular country do not have such liberties as freedom of speech, right to individual ownership of property, freedom of conscience and the right to choose their leaders in a free and fair election. This democracy can be equated to a dictatorial rule because the wishes and freedoms of the people are not protected; they are infringed on perpetually.

- Authoritative Rule

Authoritarianism, on the other hand, entails an absolute power centered on the executive branch of the state with little or no legislative or judicial control mechanisms to check on the excesses of the executive arm of the state. It is characterized by the existence of a coercive form of power as opposed to a situation whereby the executive is elected by the people through a popular vote. The people are supposed to authoritatively obey the coercive power of the state that is often oppressive. They are not guaranteed of their civil liberties and freedoms and in many occasions the liberties are constantly infringed on. Authoritarian governments may take many forms, for example, absolute dictatorship, absolute monarchies, communism, dictatorships and theocracies(Arsenault, 2008, pp. 20-30).

- The case for and against liberal democracy in low income countries

As this paper outlined in the earlier parts of this presentation, liberal democracies are characterized by presence of a representative government elected in a free and fair general election. The democracy is guided by the rule of law and human fundamental liberties are the order of the day. As such, the rights of the citizens are protected rather than infringed on. This describes a nation guided by the principles of Laissez Faire politics which

encourages the government to grant its citizens maximum freedom (Durham, 2004). The provision of fundamental liberties in the supreme law of the land ensures that the citizens are guaranteed of protection of their rights and freedoms. The supreme law also provides remedial measures in case of violation of those rights. Liberal democracy also provides for a powerful judiciary which makes sure that there are remedial mechanisms whenever the fundamental freedoms of the people are infringed on or contravened (Doner, 1991, pp. 50-54).

This democracy, therefore, fulfills the Benthamian Utilitarianism theories of happiness, freedom and fulfillment of fundamental liberties and freedoms. When the citizens of a given country are free to exercise their rights, chances are that they will enable the economy of that country to flourish exponentially. This is because they are free to engage themselves in productive entrepreneurial activities and the supreme law of the land guarantees them of protection of their rights as they engage themselves in those activities. Research has shown that the economy of poor countries like Ghana, Zimbabwe; Senegal and Botswana has flourished well because of their liberal democracies. This makes it an ideal approach to governance in low income countries (Doner, 1991, pp. 50-54).

Furthermore, there is more accountability and transparency in liberal democracies than there is in other types of democracies. For such vices as corruption and embezzlement of public funds, it is highly possible for those carrying out such vices to be brought to book because of the availability of remedial mechanisms provided by the law granted by the courts. Whenever it is possible to question a dysfunctional government, it also becomes

possible for the same government to conduct itself in the right way and this includes making sure that public funds are accounted for. The presence of accountability and transparency is the key ingredient to economic growth. Low income countries can, therefore, engage in activities that will grow the economy of their country exponentially.

Research has also shown that there are hardly any humanitarian issues, for example, refugee crises in liberal democracies. This is because the supreme law of the land is obeyed to the letter and the people are given the opportunity to question mal-governance and maladministration. When a low income country succeeds in containing the humanitarian rights issues of its citizens by making the country secure, healthy, peaceful and under efficient leadership, there are high chances that the economy of the country will grow. This is because other countries will be free to trade with it, and they will also be willing to grant loans or any other financial assistance to the said country. The people will also be free to engage themselves in economic activities that are beneficial to them and the country at large because of the security that is guaranteed to them (Chen, 2002, pp. 18-21).

Another very common feature of liberal democracies is the access to better governance, better social amenities like health care and education facilities. Research has shown that those countries with liberal democracies are less affected by famine, disease and national disasters. An example is India who had the last famine in 1943, the famous Bengal Famine that occurred before the onset of the Second World War. This famine is, however, attributed to the effects of the Second World War.

It, however, does not follow that all liberal democracies are the most

effective for a low income country. The elected representatives may as well choose to be corrupt even though there are laws that prohibit such behavior. The elected representatives may also not do their best to steer the economy of the country forward because of their vested interests. The elected representatives may also decide to be tribal or nepotistic so that they only employ their relatives to government positions even if such persons are not qualified for the jobs. Such practices will make the economy of the country lag behind even though the model of governance is liberally democratic. This paper in its initial stages outlined the substance of illiberal democracy. The democracy is characterized by non-obedience to human rights liberties by those in power yet the same liberties are outlined in the supreme law of the country. In most cases, such democracies achieve high economic growth and are, therefore, not ideal for a low income country. Those in power are not elected in a democratic manner and, therefore, do not strive to steer the economy of such a country forward because they do not fear a situation whereby they may not be elected back into their positions. The rule is partly autocratic and partly dictatorial. Other countries, therefore, shy off engaging with trade and other relationships with such a country because of their disregard for human rights issues (Chen, 2002, pp. 18-21).

The country, therefore, rarely receives donation and loans from the already developed nations and this makes it hard for the plight of the citizens to be addressed. Because those in power rule with dictatorship and autocracy, they do not mind coming up with policies and plans that will enable them to steer the economic growth of the country. They are, therefore, not likely to engage the citizens in such economic approaches as fair trading practices,

better farming methods, restraint from unscrupulous trading practices or even making provisions for efficient infrastructure. Such a country is therefore likely to lag behind in economic growth and therefore the model is not ideal for a low income country (Cohen, 1985, pp. 15-18).

As postulated earlier in his paper, authoritarian rule denotes governance whereby an absolute dictatorship model is practiced. An all-powerful government is usually put in place, and the people must obey the said government without question. Whereas there is a case for and against the rule being ideal for sustainable economic growth of the country, it is clear that democratic nations are unlikely to relate well with authoritarian nations. This makes it highly unlikely that the said countries will practice safe trading relations with each other. The ruling executive forces the citizens of any dictatorial rule. It implies that they are not free to engage themselves in other economic models apart from those that have been imposed by the said government (Arsenault, 2008, pp. 10-20).

Whereas it is true, it would appear that there can be an economic growth where the dictatorship concerned if forward thinking, there are economic freedoms even though the political freedoms are not there and that there is freedom of investment for both domestic and foreign investors. A good example is China whose economy continues to grow exponentially despite the fact that the country does not practice democratic governance. The leaders in China are not elected by the citizens yet the country is set to be the next biggest economy by the year 2030.

- Conclusion

This paper will conclude by noting that the model of governance or the

governance regime does not matter; what matters is the economic model that a particular country embraces. There are good examples of economies that have flourished under a liberal democracy yet other economies do not flourish as much under the same model. Likewise, there are examples of economies that have grown exponentially under dictatorship, an example being China, yet others are still struggling under the same model (Hasset, 2007, pp. 1-20).

It therefore follows that the regime does not matter; what really matters is the economic model the government employs when working on the economy of the particular country. This paper has given the example of China which is not a democracy yet her economy is considered as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Some liberal democracies are even worse off some authoritarian rules in matters economy. It all depends on the government is working on its economy and also with other countries.

- Recommendations

This paper recommends that more research be done in this area of political science because the available literature does not reflect the status of the governance regimes at the moment and only discusses how it was some years ago. The future researcher should also be able to link dictatorship and good economic growth. It follows that most of the dictatorial regimes in the world have good economic growth but the same is not reflected in some democracies.

It is also important for the future researcher to consider using a different research methodology other than only making use of literature. The future researcher should actually interview the people on the ground and have their

take on which governance model supports economic growth the most. There is also need to consider paying a visit to the administrators of the various governance regimes and know how they draft their economic policies.

References

Arsenault, P. (2008). China and The Authoritarian Model: The Relationship Between Economic Freedom And Economic Growth. Rutgers University Journal, Camden.

Chen, A. (2002). Capitalist Development, Entrepreneurial Class and Democratization in China. Political Science Quarterly, 18-21.

Cohen, Y. (1985). The Impact of Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Rule on Economic Growth. Comparative Political Studies Vol. 18: 1.

Doner, R. F. (1991). Approaches to The Politics of Economic Growth in The South East Asia. The Journal of Asian Studies.

Durham, B. J. (2004). Economic Growth and Institutions: Some Sensitivity Analysis 1961-2000. International Organization.

Hasset, K. A. (2007). Does Economic Success Require Democracy? The America.