‘We the People’: In Praise of the Politics of Inclusion

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Introduction

It would be correct to say that a number of the policies and actions of democratic governments in the world often run counter to the wishes and desires of a great majority of the people in the nation. This is because those policies and actions are adopted by the government and some lawmakers that comprise a relatively few people, thus exclusive of the inputs, preferences, and wishes of a large majority of the people. It is not enough, surely, for the people to be included—and to participate—only in the periodic election of those who are to govern and to make laws for the state. The consequences of the exclusion of large segments of the population from the decisions of the government that affect the lives of the people have been public demonstrations to protest government policy and action and to indicate the preferences of the people. Political conflict, violence, rancor, and misunderstanding have also resulted from the exclusion of the people from decisions and choices of their government. In consequence, actual political harmony has not been a palpable feature of political activities either in the state as a whole or in law-making assemblies, i.e., Parliaments, Congresses, and others. In the state, i.e., outside parliament or congress, the people feel that their wishes and preferences are ignored by the government and oftentimes also by their own representatives; in law-making assemblies the members of the opposition political parties feel—in fact they complain—that their ideas, views, and proposals are cavalierly set aside almost routinely by the majority party and that, even though they have the constitutional opportunity—and utilize that opportunity—to express their opinions and present arguments, their influence on government policy is very minimal if it exists at all.

People want to feel, surely, that they are involved in the decisions of the government, that their ideas and opinions matter and, if equality means anything, should be of the same weight as those at the helm of affairs who were elected by them. In short, people yearn to be included in government decisions that affect their lives. The politics of inclusion is
what needs to be fully appreciated, recognized, and instituted, if democracy is worth practicing. I must state from the outset that by ‘inclusion’ I am not at all referring to gender or ethnic or racial or immigrant groups in a nation that are or may be excluded from the political process. I am referring, rather, to ordinary citizens who have electoral and other political rights but have, nevertheless, been politically excluded or marginalized when it comes to the actual work of government, ordinary citizens whose voices have thus for a very long time been in the wilderness.

And, yet it would be correct to say that democracy, as a form of government, is most probably held by most people or cultures of the world as the best form of government. This assertion is based on the fact that a great many nations in our contemporary world that were previously—not very long ago--practicing different or non-democratic forms of government have turned to embrace the democratic form of government. It is not that the way democracy is practiced by the latter-day converts is flawless—no democratic practice in any part of the world, not even in the ‘old democracies’, is in fact flawless and beyond criticism; even so, the appreciation of the virtues of the democratic system of government by new converts is itself a victory for the political value of democracy. But, while democracy has received great attraction, its weaknesses and discontents are yet to be addressed. Now, how do we understand democracy, the word that everybody claims to know or to have some idea of?

**Defining Democracy**

Defining the concept of democracy may not be difficult. The famous and perhaps the most widely accepted definition—that of Abraham Lincoln-- is that it is ‘the government of the people, by the people and for the people.’ The centrality of the notion of ‘the people’ clearly indicates that Lincoln’s definition was inspired by the Greek etymology of the word ‘democracy’. For, the Greek word *demokratia* means ‘the power (*krateia*) of the people’, ‘the rule of the people’, ‘the control of the people’. It is clear that the notion of ‘the people’ (*demos*) is central to any definition of democracy; it is that notion that accounts for the attractiveness of the democratic form of government. And, yet it is that
same notion that, paradoxically, has been the bane—the unnecessary bane—of
democracy, for the centrality of the notion of ‘the people’ has not, it seems, been fully
appreciated and given its full place in the actual democratic practice. This has been the
causal background of the discontents of democracy.

The definition of democracy, as given above, implies, as it must, that the standard by
which to judge the democratic nature of a political system is the degree of adequacy
allowed for the expression of the will of the people, the extent to which the people are
involved or included in the decision-making processes that affect their lives. The problem
of democracy, however, is simply the problem of how to give institutional and practical
or functional expression to the will of the people, how, that is, to make the will of the
people explicit in real and concrete terms, how to make the will of the people constantly
and resiliently bear on the policies and actions of the government—and not occasionally
but most, if not all, the time. [In the US elections held three days ago (today is 5
November) President Barrack Obama and the Democratic party lost so many seats
because, it was said, they ‘did not listen to the American people’; in other words, they did
not take into account the will of the people.]

**Democracy and Inclusion**

Now, democracy, as a rule of the people, not a rule of the majority, mandates—should
mandate—the politics of inclusion, which in turn should feature the politics of consensus,
of compromise, of bipartisanship, and what has come to be called ‘participatory
democracy’. We will take up each of these normative features of democracy in turn.

It would be correct to say that the notion of inclusion is the defining feature or
characteristic of democracy; that it is central to the practice of democracy. Thus, a
political system that fails to allow adequate space for inclusive politics would not have
enough claim to democracy. There is a great deal of justification to advocate the politics
of inclusion. For, a reasonable and legitimate assumption can be made that each citizen in
the state or each member of a law-making body (such as Parliament) has the capacity to
spawn ideas, demonstrate wisdom, and make some worthwhile contribution to the matter under discussion.

In this connection, the utterance of a Ghanaian traditional sage or wise man is worth noting: ‘Wisdom is not found in the head of one person.’ This philosophical utterance implies, among other things, that it is not just one particular individual who can be said to be wise or, for that matter—and in the context of this lecture—wisdom would not be found only in the members of one political party. The utterance thus implies that other individuals in other parties in an assembly may be equally wise and capable of producing equally good, if not better, ideas and arguments, that one should not regard one’s intellectual position as impregnable or final but should be prepared instead to modify or abandon one’s position, should one sincerely consider the ideas or arguments of the other or others as more convincing. In the political context, the utterance enjoins rulers and members of an assembly (parliament, congress) not to be dogmatic but should instead be willing to accept criticism and compromise and give due consideration to the words of wisdom and truth that may be contained in the presentations of other members of the assembly, including the members of the minority opposition parties. It underlines not only the need for but also the acceptance of criticism, accommodation and compromise, just as it points up the need to respect the views of others, another prescriptive feature of the politics of inclusion.

**Bipartisanship**

To give due and serious consideration to the views of others, particularly those in the opposition parties and incorporating those views in the policies that will finally emerge from the ruling government will place both the members of the majority ruling party and the members of the opposition minority party (or. parties) on the path toward bipartisanship, a strong pillar of inclusive politics. Political experience seems to indicate that it is not easy to achieve bipartisanship because of ideological rigidity on the part of some, often most, of the members both of the majority and minority parties. The result of ideological rigidity is what the immediate past president of Ghana, J. A. Kufuor described
in a speech to mark Ghana’s independence anniversary in 2006 as ‘excessive’
partisanship. In that speech Kufuor bemoaned what he referred to as ‘excessive political
partisanship’. It is of course part of the logic of multiparty system that there should be
political partisanship, since the various political parties would have ideologies and
political programs different among themselves in at least some aspects. But that logic
does not mandate excessive political partisanship. In other words, excessive political
partisanship is not a logical or necessary feature or consequence of the multiparty system
of politics.

Excessive political partisanship is a political behavior that makes members belonging to
one political party refuse to change or modify their opinions, positions or perspectives
despite strong and convincing arguments or criticisms that suggest that they should do so.
They thus refuse to acknowledge the wisdom in the ideas or arguments or proposals of
their opponents and so fail to see the need to integrate their (i.e., the latter’s) positions for
the common good of the nation. Excessive political partisanship eliminates negotiation,
compromise and reconciliation. It breeds the politics of exclusion, not of inclusion and
accommodation, and will not bode well for the political unity of the nation—any nation.
Yet, the person with whom you disagree in democratic politics quite often has something
to say that is worth considering. Democratic politics does not necessarily consist in the
competition of diverse and selfish interests over power and resources.

I have reason to believe that one law-making body where the idea or practice of
bipartisanship is frequently touted, where law-makers demonstrate a deep, even a
passionate, concern for bipartisanship, is the United States Congress. For there is often
much talk there about the need for the two political parties (Democrats and Republicans)
to work together and listen to each other to achieve a common purpose. Thus, there is the
desire to work on bipartisan basis. But it appears that rhetoric is one thing; actually doing
what it takes to succeed in fashioning a bipartisan policy or legislation is quite another. A
glaring disconnect often exists between the rhetoric of; and the desire for, bipartisanship
and taking concrete steps to produce a plan or policy that results from bipartisan
deliberation. Most law-making assemblies round the world tend to tinker with the notion
of bipartisanship; they seem to have lackadaisical attitudes to working together with the other political party (or political parties). The language of bipartisanship is to all intents and purposes absent in the parliament of Ghana—hence excessive bipartisanship. Is bipartisanship something difficult to achieve? Is it ever achievable? If bipartisanship is unachievable, that would be a worse prospect for the politics of inclusion.

**Consensual Politics**

The consensus procedure in arriving at political decisions in parliaments would certainly be a remarkable feature of the politics of inclusion. Consensus is born of the pursuit of the social ideal or goal of solidarity, itself inspired by a belief in the identity of the interests and aspirations of all the members of an assembly or a nation. Consensus is also inspired by the recognition of the political and moral values of equality, reciprocity, and respect for the views of others. It may be true to say that in all kinds of deliberations the aim is to achieve consensus. The pursuit of consensus inevitably prolongs meetings; but it allows for argument or debate, extensive deliberation, persuasion and the exchange of ideas. Consensus allows for everyone an opportunity to speak his or her mind and to contribute to a debate on the issue at hand; it promotes patience, mutual tolerance, and an attitude of compromise—all of which are necessary for democratic practice in which everyone is expected to appreciate the need to modify or even abandon their position in the face of more persuasive arguments by others.

The pursuit of consensus nurtures the spirit of negotiation. Through the pursuit of consensus the will of every individual becomes effective to a degree and is not cavalierly set aside. Thus, consensus allows the opinion or position of the minority to be reflected in a decision, and thus makes for the politics of inclusion. Even though consensus may not result in total agreement as such, it may nevertheless leave every participant in a decision-making assembly satisfied, more or less, without feeling that he or she has been ignored or left in limbo. As a method of reaching decisions by an assembly or parliament—decisions that are generally aimed at common purposes and goals—consensus gives rise to sober thinking and analysis, while eliminating rancor and
heckling. Consensus must therefore be considered a democratic virtue, an ideal for any
democratic decision-making body.

It seems to me that the democratic principle of popular sovereignty, i.e., the supremacy of
the will of the people, requires a stronger consensus than the simple majority method of
arriving at political decisions can offer, even though consensus formation is not easy to
obtain and absolute consensus is nearly always impossible to attain. The simple majority
method effectively excludes members of the minority party members of the decision-
making assembly from having their views represented or included in a decision; at the
national level, it excludes other citizens of the state from continuous participation in
political decisions that affect their state and their own lives. For this reason, a
supermajority method of reaching decisions may be appropriate if it can be satisfactorily
worked out. In the 1992 Ghana Constitution, for instance, decisions on certain matters
require, not a simple majority, but a supermajority—a two-thirds majority. Such matters
include: removal of the president from office, reversal of presidential veto, amending a
non-entrenched constitutional provision, and passing a vote of censure on a minister. In
the American democratic system, also, decisions on amending the constitution,
overriding a presidential veto, impeaching the president and some other matters require a
two-thirds majority. Implicit in the two-thirds majority—which is a supermajority—
method of reaching decisions is the notion that consensus (or something nearer that) is an
ideal method: two-thirds majority is certainly nearer to consensus formation than the
simple majority of fifty-one percent. The aim of supermajority is to achieve the politics
of inclusion.

Inclusive politics would not reject the majority procedure in making decisions, in view of
the difficulties in achieving supermajority. Decisions can be made on majority basis; but
consensual politics requires that the decision by the majority should include not only the
ideas, perspectives and proposals of the members of the minority parties but also the
policy or measure that issues from the final deliberation would have resulted from
nonpartisan voting. A consensual politics is an outstanding feature of the politics of
inclusion.
Participatory democracy

Now, having dealt with the politics of inclusion from the perspective of the activities within the government and an assembly (i.e., parliament, congress, etc), let us move on to deal with inclusive politics from the perspective of the citizens. Here we focus on the concept of participation.

Now, if democracy is a rule of the people or the exercise of political power by the people, then the people must necessarily participate in making decisions concerning the affairs of their nation without any hindrance. It is for this reason that the concept of participatory democracy has now gained political currency. It might be said, however, that the term ‘participatory’ in participatory democracy appears redundant in terms of the real meaning of democracy. The term ‘participatory’ would not have occurred to the citizens of Athens, the original matrix of the idea and practice of democracy, for they were already actively participating directly in the system of government fashioned by their political culture. Thus, a scholar of ancient Greek philosophy, G. C. Field, made the following observation: “It is important for a modern reader to remember that to a Greek democracy meant the continued and active participation of all the citizens in the work of government. Our modern systems of representative governments would have seemed to him in no sense democratic at all, because they involve the abdication to selected representatives of what should be the privilege and responsibility of each citizen.”

There is a striking resemblance between Field’s description of the democratic practice in ancient Greece and the account of the Ashanti democratic practice made by a British anthropologist, R. S. Rattray. Listen to Rattray:

Nominally autocratic, the Ashanti constitution was in practice democratic to a degree. I have already on several occasions used this word ‘democratic’ and it is time to explain what the term implies in this part of Africa. We (i.e., the British) pride ourselves, I believe, on being a democratic people and
flatter ourselves that our constitutions are of a like nature. An Ashanti who is familiar alike with his own and our [British] Constitution would deny absolutely our right to apply this term either to ourselves or to our Constitution. To him a democracy implies that the affairs of the Tribe must rest, not in the keeping of the few [i.e., the representatives], but in the hands of the many….To him [the Asante] the state is literally a *Res Publica; it is every one’s business*. The work of an Ashanti citizen did not finish when by his vote he had installed a chief in office….The rights and duties of the Ashanti democrats were really only beginning after the business of the ballot-box was over. In England, the Government and the House of Commons stand between ourselves and the making of our laws, *but among the Ashanti there was not any such thing as government apart from the people.*

Two statements made by Rattray regarding the democratic practice of the Ashanti that resonate with what Field says about the Greek democratic practice must be noted These are that “the rights and duties of the Ashanti democrat were really beginning after the business of *the ballot-box was over*” and “but among the Ashanti there was not any such thing as government apart from the people.” The statements of both Field and Rattray point up the active and continuous (i.e., post-electoral) participation of the people in the work of government, for, both the Greeks and Ashantis realized that in a democracy the affairs of the state must concern all the citizens of the state, that government is everyone’s business, requiring the constant attention and interest of every citizen, and that political participation must not in any way be limited to electing representatives or councilors.

I said a while ago that in terms of the original meaning of the concept of democracy the word ‘participatory’ was redundant, since democracy was understood as a system of politics that already mandated participation. Participation was, thus, a necessary feature of democracy. There was no need, then, to qualify democracy with the word ‘participatory’.
Yet, the word ‘participatory’ is appropriate and significant: it is used to emphasize the central and active role that the people should, and are expected to, play in the work of government. ‘Participatory’ then is not a descriptive word but refers to a normative notion, prescribing what the people should do to make the democratic government effective, in view of the politically not-too-satisfactory consequences of representation. Participation is surely an important way toward the pursuit of the politics of inclusion. But for it to be really successful and effective much depends on the adequacy or effectiveness of the mechanisms created to allow for participation. Periodic elections, which are not always fair and properly organized, are historically known to be the most manifest mode of providing opportunity for the people to participate in making political decisions. But, remember, that in elections voters directly choose people, i.e., members of parliament or congress; they do not directly choose policies and decisions. Other institutions need to be created if participation is not to be subverted or undermined by the system of representation, which, though, is a most outstanding way for the expression of the voice of the people in political affairs. But, even though participation and political representation do not exclude one another, representation has glaring weaknesses or defects and needs to be fixed if it is to serve a most useful political purpose, if it is genuinely to serve the cause of democracy.

**Representation and Inclusion**

It is the view of some radical democratic theorists that the representation system of politics undermines or detracts from the politics of inclusion and, thus, from real democracy, that representation is incompatible with inclusive politics, and that it results in the exclusion of the will of the people. Exclusive democracy is indeed an oxymoron—a contradiction in terms—and therefore ought not to be embraced. But, given the large and complex populations of states in the modern world, the representation system is necessary and unavoidable, if the large complex state is to be governed at all. Even so, it behooves democratic states to find ways of bringing the wishes of the people to bear directly and constantly on the decisions of law-making assemblies and the work of government. It requires that the power of the people in decision-making go beyond the
electoral choice, that is, the power of the people must not be confined merely to choosing
the representatives of the people who are to govern or make laws, as it appears to be the
case in most democracies in the world today. The government ‘of the people’ and ‘by the
people’ cannot exclude the people in the running of the affairs of the state, in making
political decisions.

There are several problems with representation. One set of problems relates to
communication between the representative and the constituency: how well acquainted is
he or she with the views of the constituents? How often does he/she consult with the
constituents? How broad is the consultation? Does he/she, or should he/she, consult only
the big men and women in the constituency? What should be the nature of the
consultation? Another set of problems relates to the nature of the ‘will of the people’: do
the people, even of one constituency or district, have a single will? If not, and in the
context of a plurality or perhaps cacophony of wills, whose will or position should he/she
represent or argue or speak for in the assembly or parliament? Can he/she possibly
present all the various and divergent wills of the people of the constituency? Should
he/she present some of the wills, much to the chagrin of many others in the constituency
who also look to him/her as their representative but whose wills would have thus been
neglected? Yet, one other problem is this: is it possible to identify a single will that can
be said to transcend the diversity of wills, opinions, and perspectives?

It is pretty clear that representation generates a whole gamut of questions which would
need to be negotiated if the skepticisms about its real relevance to democracy are to be
removed to make way for a full appreciation and institution of the politics of inclusion. It
would not be easy to deal with each of the above questions with satisfaction. The
representative surely does not—cannot—consult with all the members of his/her
constituency and most often, in light of the demands of his/her parliamentary duties; but
she can be expected to be acquainted with some of the views or wishes of some of the
members of her constituency. The representative cannot present or speak for the various
demands, requests, and perspectives (or ideas) coming from her constituency. The
representative may, but may not, be able to identify a single will or perspective that
transcends the diversity of perspectives coming from his/her constituency and which she could speak for. In light of the cacophony of opinions, interests, or perspectives, the representative would be in a quandary as to how to deal with this plurality of interests or wills, about how to sort them out and do so to the satisfaction of all the constituents, i.e., members of his constituency.

Those questions we raised regarding representation are well-nigh impossible to answer satisfactorily. The inability to provide satisfactory answers to those questions implies that, while representation is necessary and unavoidable in large complex societies of the modern world, as we said a while ago, it appears that it cannot, without being shored up by other ingredients, most satisfactorily serve the purpose for which it was instituted. Having said that, however, and before we go on further to critically examine the political worth of the mechanism of representation, the question that needs to be explored relates to the notion of representation itself: what is representation? What does representing some people, say a constituency, involve?

To represent means to stand in or be present in place of someone, to act or speak on behalf of someone. But this lexical meaning of the word is surely not adequate; it leaves several questions unanswered. Does ‘standing in for someone’ mean acting or speaking in the same way as that someone, or presenting the same ideas or arguments as would have been presented by that someone? If you are asked to represent the president of some organization and, because you were not given a speech to read, you presented your own thoughts on the matter being deliberated upon, would you have represented him/her or you would have represented yourself? You stood in alright for the president of the organization; you occupied the seat that he would have occupied and so helped to form the quorum. But in what real sense can it be said that you represented him/her? And what does it mean to speak for or in behalf of someone when you presented your own ideas? In the political arena, does the representative stand in for the constituents as in a relation of identity, acting or thinking in the way they (the constituents) would do? Thus, representation is a complex notion that needs clarification.
The political concept and practice of representation emerged in the wake of societies becoming large in terms of their population. This fact made it impossible for every member of the community to be present at a meeting to deliberate on public matters, as it was the case in ancient Greece, for instance, where democracy was a direct democracy because the populations of the Greek city-states like Athens were small and each individual could, therefore, be present himself—not be represented—in the assembly. However, if all the people in a large modern society cannot be present in the assembly or parliament, their ideas, opinions, perspectives, interests could be present through an adequate and functioning representation mechanism. Even in a developing society with a large number of uneducated or less educated members, public discussions of problems or matters concerning their interests and needs do take place all the time. Julius Nyerere made the following observation: ‘In African society the traditional method of conducting affairs is by free discussion…The elders sit under the big tree and talk until they agree. This talking until you agree is essential to the traditional African concept of democracy.’ Through such public discussions the people demonstrate their awareness of problems confronting them and deliberate on policies that may be adopted to deal with those problems. Through such discussions which often take place informally, the opinions, perspectives, interests, problems of a constituency are generally identified and fashioned. The results of such public discussions could be fashioned into public policies or could form bases for public policies. And, if the representative stays connected—not disconnected—to his constituency and has his ear to the ground, he would come to have some idea of ‘the will of the people’.

What is often called ‘the will of the people’ is indeed a cumbersome notion which would need to be conceptually unpacked. I can only be brief here. It would be correct to say that the will of the people showed itself up in the public discussions and the results that emerged from those discussions. Therefore, rather than speaking in terms of ‘the will of the people’, it would be better, more enlightening, to speak in terms of the interests, needs, opinions, perspectives as may have been distilled in the results of the public discussions. Speaking in such material terms (i.e., about interests, needs, opinions, ideas, etc.) would be much less vague and ambiguous. For it would be much easier to have
some idea of the interests and needs of the people. The assumption here is that what emerges from the public discussions represents or constitutes the collective opinions, interests, needs, and perspectives of the people in a constituency. It is these things, more concrete, less vague, which the representative will come to know and will form part of the material that he will have to present to national assembly or parliament. It is, again, these things we mean when we talk of the politics of inclusion. For these things can have influence over the policy-making enterprise of the government and may finally, in fact, be integrated into the actual policies of the government. It behooves a government to try to discern the interests and needs of the people, their arguments and positions and to give due consideration to them. That government would, then, be on the path of establishing the politics of inclusion. Inclusion, thus, makes it possible for the people to influence public policy to serve or protect their interests.

It is conceivable that if politics is to be politics of inclusion, the idea of proposals for legislation originating from groups or a number of citizens of the state could be entertained by the executive or parliament. Such legislative proposals from citizens, not members of parliament, could be deliberated upon by parliament, if considered worthwhile. In the past, legislative proposals have invariably originated from the executive and considered by parliament or congress, even though in the process of deliberation alternative proposals may be made from within the parliament. In a politics of inclusion, legislative proposals do not have to originate all the time from the executive. Some legislative proposals could originate from the citizens to the legislative body, not necessarily through their representatives who are members of parliament. This idea is different from what obtains in some states in the United States, such as California, which allow some proposition, if it received the support or approval of a certain number of the registered voters, to be put on the ballot to be voted on by the electorate at the time of general elections. The suggestion being put forward would require a legislative proposal from a number of citizens—thus a non-executive legislative proposal-- to be sent to the legislative body and, if found to be of substance, for that body to give some thoughtful consideration to it, prune it, refine it as necessary, and then, pass it into law, if it enhances the public interest..
In the early years of Ghana’s political independence there was something called ‘Private Member’s Bill’. But the ‘private member’ here was a member of parliament. The bill was described as ‘private’ because it did not originate from the government, i.e., the executive. In my conception, proposals for a ‘private bill’ will originate, not from any member of parliament, but from the wider society—from groups of individuals or professionals, who, after some serious deliberations come to the conclusion that, in their opinion, it would be worthwhile for the nation to have a legislation to deal with such-and-such matter or problem. A new notion of ‘private member’s bill’ both at the local and national levels need to be evolved for the politics of participation and inclusion to have a palpable meaning. The ideas and perspectives of the citizens of the nation, fashioned on the anvil of their experiences, and equally concerned, like their representatives in parliament, about a number of problems of their nation, can have a useful impact on the legislative thinking and concerns of the members of parliament; these ideas and perspectives coming from outside the parliament may draw the attention of the law-makers to areas of the national life that need legislation but which they (the law-makers) may not be aware of.

The Virtues of the Politics of Inclusion

The virtues of the politics of inclusion are several.

First, within the legislative body itself the members of the minority parties would feel, (i) that they do, through their ideas, suggestions and arguments, make contribution to the solution of the problems of the nation, (ii) that they do make inputs in the policy decisions that emerge from parliament, and (iii) that they are not marginalized and irrelevant to the work of parliament for which they were sent there.

Second, the politics of inclusion is a recognition of the worth and equality as well as the political rights of all citizens, including the members of the minority parties in parliament.
Third, the politics of inclusion invokes in every individual citizen a sense of belonging and of being a member of the political community, without feeling that he or she has been left in limbo.

Fourth, the politics of inclusion certainly enhances the development of the nation. It would be correct to assume that all the members of the different political parties or persuasions, both in parliament and outside parliament, aim at achieving one basic objective, namely, the progress and welfare of the citizens of the nation, which is in fact the common good of the citizens. On this showing, members of the different political parties represented in parliament should try as much as possible, though this may not be easy, to agree on at least certain important programs proposed by the majority or minority, having made the appropriate amendments or refinements to those proposed policies or programs. Because members of the minority opposition parties participated in the deliberations and debates that led to a subsequent legislation establishing a particular policy or project and were involved in the decision that resulted from those deliberations, that final policy decision can be said to have been the work of all the parties involved. For this reason, it is not likely that if the opposition parties later gained power and formed the government they would abandon that policy or project on the ground that they did not have an input in the legislation adopted by a previous government that established the project. Instead, they would continue with that policy. In this way, the politics of inclusion makes for continuity and survival of very important and viable projects or measures initiated or adopted by a previous government and this enhances development.

It is common knowledge that in Ghana, for instance, successive governments tend to abandon or not show interest in some, certainly not all, of the projects or policies initiated by previous governments. At the moment in the United State Congress the Republicans are threatening to repeal some of the legislative measures passed by the Democrats in 2009/2010 session of congress, such as health care and the financial regulations that affected Wall Street, on the grounds that, even though they (the Republicans) took part in the debates that led to those measures, none of their perspectives or positions were included in the final legislation that emerged. Thus, there is a need for listening to the
views of others, objectively and fairly, evaluating them and incorporating aspects of the positions of the opposing party that do not depart much from the position of the governing party and that could, indeed, improve the quality of a legislative measure. Thus, a great deal can be said in favor of the politics of inclusion.

**Is the Politics of Inclusion a mere Ideal?**

The politics of inclusion may be regarded as a mere ideal that can hardly be most satisfactorily instituted and made to become a democratic norm. It may be considered an ideal, utopian, given (i) the sometimes irreconcilable differences between the ideological preferences, goals and aspirations of political parties and their members, and (ii) certain contingent traits of the human being such as self-assuredness and self-conceitedness, and other morally and intellectually unacceptable forms of conduct.

There is no denying that there are ideological differences and disagreements between political parties, i.e., differences in conceptions of the nature of the good society. Some of the disagreements are deep. However, I have reason to believe that the differences are often exaggerated and can be reduced to the minimum. For, the concept of our common humanity implies that there is a common good, a substrate of common or human interests and goals that human beings share and aspire to achieve or have. Thus, it cannot be seriously denied, surely, that there are certain things that all members of a society would want as rational and moral beings. This basic truth would ultimately deflate the serious tensions in the various ideological positions. Thus, ideological inflexibility can be deflated and a way—some way—made for the embrace of the perspectives of other parties or other people, thus making way also for the politics of inclusion. Ideology—the conception of the nature of the good society that involves the values of a society—would not—should not—render the politics of inclusion an ideal or utopian enterprise to be regarded as imaginary and unachievable.

Now, as to certain contingent traits or dispositions of humankind, such as self-conceitedness and the tendency to think that one is always right and to hold on
tenaciously, even belligerently, to one’s position, such traits or dispositions could be mollified through the influence of our ethical values and principles. I would like to believe that there is an ethical dimension to politics, that the politician, like other human individuals, has the capacity for virtue—to do what is right, to demonstrate concern for others, and to believe in the moral values of human dignity and respect for others. From this moral springboard, it is possible to persuade most people—including politicians-- to accept the truth that is contained in the Ghanaian maxim that says,

Wisdom is not found in the head of one person

This maxim, which has been explained in some detail earlier in this lecture, implies that many, if not most, people can demonstrate wisdom—some amount of wisdom, can think and reason about matters of public policy, though with differing degrees of plausibility, and so make some reasonable input. The utterance also implies that people, including rulers and members of parliaments, do not have to take inflexible attitudes to their own ideas and positions, while off-handedly setting aside the ideas and arguments of others, but should instead give due consideration to the ideas of others. Human beings are indeed enjoined by the principle of reciprocity to respect the views of others and to make an objective assessment of those views. Objectivity, if it were allowed some space in deliberative politics, would lead us to see the need to make concessions to the views and arguments of others, whether in a law-making assembly or in the wider society. Thus, objectivity makes for the politics of inclusion and should become a feature of political deliberation and practice.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy that the preambles of many of the written Constitutions of the nations of the world start with the words ‘We the People’. As instances: the preamble of the United States Constitution of 1887 begins with the words, ‘We the People of the United States….do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America’ The
words of the preamble of the 1992 Ghana Constitution are as follows: ‘We the People of Ghana…do hereby adopt, enact and give to ourselves this Constitution.’ The words of the preamble of constitutions are manifestly emphatic on the centrality of the status of the people in the political order that was expected to be established by the constitution. The self-referential phrase--‘We the People’---mandates, without a shadow of doubt, a political system that is an inclusive system. Without the politics of inclusion, that self-referential phrase becomes drained of real significance.

The politics of inclusion genuinely represents the ideal or essence of democracy—the rule of the people; the politics of inclusion is democracy at work. If democratic thinking were to go beyond aggregative preferences and individual self-interests, and focused on the common good, inclusive politics will not be difficult to institute and operate. It is the politics of inclusion, as interpreted in this lecture, that will, beyond representation, give adequate effect to and practical translation of the notion of ‘We the People’. If we cherish the political value of democracy, as we surely do, then we need to praise the politics of inclusion.

President of the University, Dean, Registrar, Faculty Members, Special Guests, Administrative Staff, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION