

Bridging the Great Divide: A Case Study of Ghana Community Policing as a State-Society Synergetic Developmental Approach

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Abstract

The need for an effective public-private partnership, in which the civil society plays an active role in development agenda, has been stressed upon by researchers and global institutions alike since the 1990. Using the social contract theory and the structural functionalist theory, the paper reviews existing literature on state-society synergy for development and further draws on the concepts of social capital, complementarity and embeddedness as well as coproduction to examine the Ghana Community Policing System (CPS) as a case study. The paper finds that although the Ghana community policing system is diverse in nature, the applications of these strategies are not necessarily conflictual but complementary. The study concludes that efforts to synergize state and civil society must consider local context in order to develop the most appropriate strategy that will address the specific need of the society to enhance an effective developmental agenda. The finding is a significant contribution to the development literature because it identifies a new developmental approach that highlights collaboration between the state and civil society to address the developmental needs of Ghana and developing countries in general.

Keywords: state - society synergy, complementarity, embeddedness, social capital, community policing

INTRODUCTION

Development paradigms over the past decades have revolved around certain predominant actors - the state, governmental, and intergovernmental actors such as the World Bank, IMF, etc., and local governmental groups as the core agent of promoting development. However, contemporary theories of development have shifted their attention to focus more on a fundamental inclusion of the private sector in development (Evans, 1996a). From the 1990s, a state - society synergy in which a public - private sector partnership becomes the main engine of development has been championed in the development circles. In this regard, development scholars and international organizations promote an effective public-private partnership, whereby the civil society plays active roles in the development agenda (World Bank, 2004; OECD, 1996; Ostrom, 1996; Evans, 1996a).

For instance, the World Bank country assistance and poverty reduction strategies in recent times recommend a strong synergetic partnership between the state on one hand, and the civil society (local citizens and communities groups) on the other hand as a precondition for a successful implementation of any development agenda. On the contrary, Øyhus (2013, p.1) argues that, there is a general lack of confidence and trust between the state and the civil society. He maintains that a great number of people try their possible best to avoid the state

agencies/apparatus as evident in the high levels of tax evasion. These two contentions create a dilemma in the development literature that needs to be addressed by a scholarly study. Therefore, the study uses the Ghana's Community Police System as a case study to examine in detail the feasibility of a state - society synergy as an engine of development in Ghana in particular and developing countries in general. In this regard the objective of the paper is two-fold. Firstly, to examine how the Ghana Community Police System helps to bridge the gap between the Ghana Police Service - a state institutions - and civil society as a way of explaining the synergetic relationship between the state and the civil society. Secondly, to understand how the synergetic relation helps to explain the new trend of developmental approach in Ghana in particular and developing countries in general.

State and Civil Society

The State is defined in the context of a geo-political entity in which a group of people live under certain laws and regulations (Constitution). As the state is inanimate, it is represented by the government; a set of institutions put in place to ensure the smooth administration of the state. As the representative of the state, the government exercise basic functions towards meeting the needs of the citizens by the use of state capacity-at local and national levels (World Bank, 2004). The operationalization of state is therefore in this context to examine how the

government seeks to provide the developmental needs of the people.

Alternatively, the discourses explaining the concept of civil society have often been broad and sometimes vague. For example, the World Bank refers to civil society as a wide array of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations that have a presence in public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others, based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations (World Bank, 2013). Without discrediting such wide definitions, this study operationalizes civil society in a narrower scope to give a limited scope of analysis for better understanding. Specifically, civil society is considered as a local community whereby ordinary citizens operate as individual or groups to promote the collective interest of the society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are lots of theories that have been used to justify a synergy between state and society in the development circles. However, this study adopts the social contract theory and structural functionalist perspective due to the direct explanation they give to the context of study. The Social contract theory was propounded by the 18th century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to advocate for a direct rule by the people as the only means to achieve citizens' liberty (Øyhus, 2013, p. 3). Rousseau, drawing on the ideas of John Locke (1632-1704), argues that humans by nature possess the right of "unlimited popular sovereignty" and to protect these rights, individuals collectively consented to give up some of their rights so as to be subordinate to an overarching authority in exchange for security, protection and common goods (Øyhus, 2013, p. 3).

The authority on the other hand has the responsibility of protecting the rights by involving the individuals in the process because these rights are inalienable (Brown, 2008). However, the individuals are expected to support the authority in the protection of their rights and provision of security to ensure an effective administration of the tasks entrusted to the authority. Similarly, the structural functionalist perspective postulates that all organizations - including the state - work as a system; with mutually dependent parts that complement each other to achieve and maintain holistic equilibrium. It argues that organizations operate like the human body and all parts are needed for the effective function of the person.

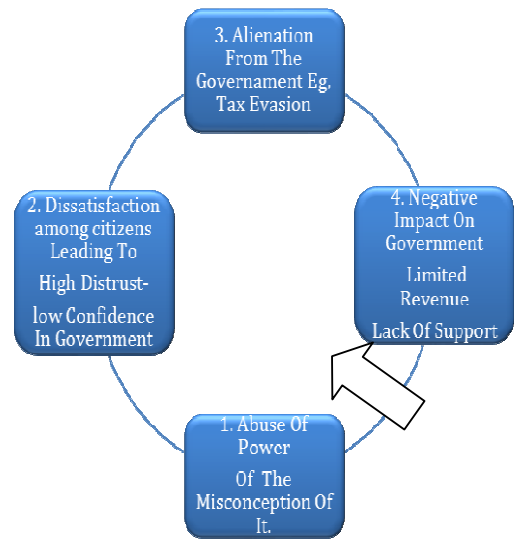


Figure 1: Vicious Cycle of the Great Divide (Source: Developed with information adopted from Øyhus, 2013)

The dysfunction of any part has a direct impact on the system, which can cause disequilibrium. These two theories are drawn upon to analyze the data collected through the review of articles and other secondary materials to examine how the Ghanaian community policy helps to understand the synergy between the state and society in promoting development. It needs to be noted that the two actors of interest in this analysis have existed in society since time immemorial. Both the state (government apparatus) and civil society (local community) have in diverse ways sought development independently in the society, which have resulted in what is referred to as a *great divide* or *public – private divide* with its antecedent characteristics that hamper development (See Figure 1 above).

State - Society Synergy As A Strategy of Bridging The Public - Private Divide

A growing number of scholars on development agrees and projects a synergy between state and society (public – private partnership) as an essential approach to addressing the issue of development (World Bank, 2004; Evans, 1996a; Ostrom, 1996). This consensus to a large extent stems from the past failures of the state (governments as a lead actor) in tackling developmental challenges (Bruce, 1994). Even though there is a general agreement on a state – society synergy in promoting development, the scholars have divergent views on the nature that synergy or relations should take (Finke, 2007). While a school of thought within the consensus believes that the relations between the state-society should be concerned with popular control of governmental power by independent societal actors who are not involved in the direct administration of governmental business, scholars from

the 'integrative' approach presume that the state and civil society should maintain an associative relationship whereby the involvement of civil society contributes to democratic political governance (Hirst, 1994 cited in Finke, 2007).

The study uses the interpretative approach in its analysis of how a synergy between the Ghana Police Service and the members of the local communities helps to understand the public – private partnership in managing the affairs of the state. It is important to note that, the extent to which civil society can complement government apparatus in promoting government business is dependent largely on how the synergy between the two is forged. An effective synergetic relationship between the state and civil society will result in high trust and support from citizens to enhance development.

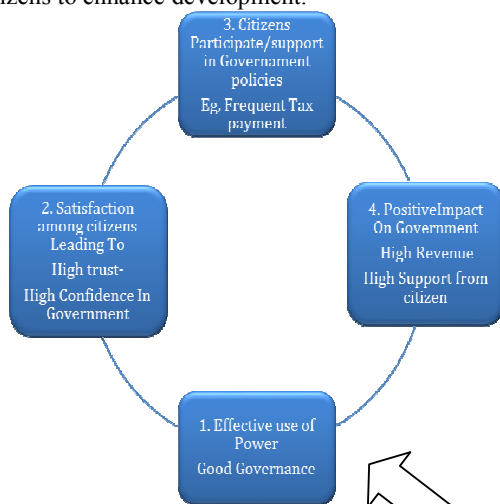


Figure 2: Virtuous Cycle of Synergy source: Developed with information adopted from Øyhus, 2013).

Strategies of Forging State-Society Synergy

Scholars have postulated different approaches to bridging the great divide between the public and private sector in promoting development. Among the approaches presented are the endowments view and the constructability perspectives, which are considered two distinct effective approaches for promoting a synergy. The endowments view emphasizes the extent to which state-society relations depend on preexisting features of the society and polity while the constructability perspective focuses on the possibility of building synergistic relations in the relatively short run (Evans, 1996a, p 1036). However, the concept of social capital represents arguably one of the well-known elements of creating an effective synergetic partnership.

By social capital, Evans (1996a, p.1034) sought to move above the often narrow theory of development to incorporate the importance of informal norms (of trust) and networks (of repeated interaction) as

valuable economic assets that make people collectively productive. To create the link between the informal ties and development requires synergy (Putnam 1993, p. 42), in which “civic engagement strengthens state institutions and effective state institutions create an environment in which civic engagement is more likely to thrive” (Evans, 1996a:1034). Evans (1996a) further indicates that the actions of public agencies facilitate the forging of norms of trust and networks of civic engagement among ordinary citizens. This implies that social capital must be consciously constructed by the state (government) and tapped into mainstream development agenda. Therefore, if the state does not open-up, ties will be strained and synergy will be impossible. It needs to be stressed that the notion that mutually reinforcing relations between state and citizens can be a catalyst for development has resulted in an increasing moves to find ways that can strengthen and increase the efficiency of state institutions to open up the more.

Evans (1996b) further develops his argument using the concepts of ‘complementarity’ and ‘embeddedness’. According to him, complementarity implies mutually supportive relations between public and private actors which suggest a clear division of labor, based on the contrasting properties of public and private institutions. He argues that “putting the two kinds of inputs together results in greater output than either public or private sectors could deliver on their own”. Embeddedness however implies that creating synergy depends on day-day public - private interactions and the norms and ties that build up as a result of such interactions. He further indicates that the idea of ties that connect citizens and public officials is more novels (Evans, 1996b: p.1120). In other words, whiles complementarity creates objective grounds on which cooperation between government and citizens can be built, embeddedness generates the normative and interactional basis for realizing the potential joint gains. It is therefore possible to conclude that, complementarity is based on the constructability view whiles embeddedness is based on endowment perspective. Both concepts are meant to complement, not conflict with each other (Evans, 1996b).

In addition, Ostrom argues for ‘coproduction’, which is a system whereby the “process through which inputs used to produce a good or services are contributed by individuals who are not “in” the same organization” (Ostrom, 1996, p.1073). The idea is that, for the great divide to close, the regular producers (government) of goods and services for the clients (citizens) must give room for the clients to take active role in the production of the goods that are of consequence to them. It is acknowledged that “designing institutional arrangements that help induce successful coproductive strategies is far more

daunting than demonstrating their theoretical existence” (Ostrom, 1996, p. 1080).

From all these strategies indicated above, there seems to be significant preconditions that are necessary for a state society synergy. The strategies include but are not limited to mutually consensual agreement; value sharing between the government and the people; and most importantly, trust. It is important for the state and the civil society to join forces to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding which can form the foundation for social modernization and economic innovation (Øyhus, 2013). Using an empirical case, the discussion of Sandra Baldwinsson (Norway) and Adeel Haneef (Pakistan) are used to illustrate the point (See Figure 3 below).

The discussion above indicates clearly that there is a high level of trust between the Norwegian government and the citizens which makes civic engagement (e.g. tax paying) easy and natural. The opposite is the case between the Pakistan government and the citizens since people always alienate themselves from the “corrupt” state, making state – society synergy difficult to achieve.

Sandra proudly trust and believes in the Norwegian government due to the full support she had from the state in a time when she faced some health complications. As a result of that encounter, she has a strong bond with the state which makes her “pay my taxes with pleasure”.

In contrast, Adeel laments that “only 2.2 million pay their direct taxes out of 180 million people” in his country simply because “they don’t trust the corrupt government”

Figure 3: Comparing Trust in Two Countries: Empirical Evidence. (Source: (Atlantic group (2014) UiA Fronter discussion)

In sum, the state and the civil society must join forces to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding which can form the foundation for social modernization and economic innovation (Øyhus, 2014). It is also important to note that state – society synergy does not assume a linear approach. Rather, it possesses diversity of approaches that relates well to different local context.

At one time, it is an initiative from the local people supported by government but at other times, it is the conscious effort by government to arrange institutional capacity necessary to marry local civic engagement in the development agenda. This assertion is analyzed using the case study of the Community Policing in Ghana to examine how the Ghana Police Service and local communities have tried to solve the problem of the great divide.

Community Policing in Ghana: A Case of State-Society Synergy

There exist a high level of distrust between the Ghana Police Service (GPS) and majority of Ghanaian, mainly due to the perception of high rate of corruption among Police officials. As a result, there is limited support (such as information tip-off) for the police, since most citizens do not want to be associated with the ‘corrupt’ police system. In response to this situation, communities resorted to old philosophy of communal policing- which rested on the belief that citizens in the community have the responsibility to participate in policing their areas (Boye-Doe, 2007). A unique feature of the old philosophy is a system of raising alarm “*Awieoo-wonkye no oo!*” meaning “thief-let’s grab him!” Anytime this alarm is raised anywhere, people take to the streets to chase the alleged thief.



Figure 3: Suspected thief lynched. (Source: Bawah, PeaceFmonline, 2012)

The effect is that, through citizens’ vigilantism, lynching and abuse of rights of people became common as people took the role of policing into their own hands due to the loss of confidence in the Ghana Police Service (Boye-Doe, 2007). In response to the situation, the Ghana Police Service initiated the Community Policing System (CPS) as a means of forging synergetic relations with the local communities to tap the contribution of the people while at the same time maintaining peace and security in the society. The Community Policing Unit of the Ghana Police Service was established in June 2002 as a result of the realization that there is the need for the police to collaborate with members of the communities, stake holders, chiefs and opinion leaders in dealing with crime (GPS, 2014).

The idea was to bridge the communication and interaction gap between the police institution and the communities by establishing close relation and working in “partnership with local people to identify potential problems and take proactive steps in responding to them” (GPS, 2014). Because social capital (in form of citizen vigilante movement) had already existed in the past, forging synergy based on complementarity was possible (Evans, 1996b). What remained was how to forge a process through which

efforts to protect the local community was provided by individuals who are not “in” the same organization – coproduction (Ostrom, 1996, p.1073).

This led to the formation of the Neighborhood Watch Committees - organized group of neighborhood residents who watch out for criminals and suspicious behaviors (people) and report to the local law enforcement agency (GPS, 2014). This resulted in a shared responsibility between the local communities and the police on security issues. Mostly, the youth were encouraged to form community groups, especially in crime-prone communities (like Nima and Osu in Accra and Adum and Ashanti New town in Kumasi). The youth were then supervised to work with the local or regional police headquarters.

According to the Ghana Police Service, the most important functions of community police officials include, inter alia, responding to emergencies, gathering intelligence from their peers on the ground and interacting and assisting people in need (GPS, 2014). These functions have today established closer ties and support base between police officers and local groups, improved the quality of intelligence received from the communities, and increased local awareness of crime. The impact is partly due to the sense of ownership and pride among local communities. Since civic engagement strengthens state institutions, engaging the local communities in security was the only way by which the Ghana Police Service could forge renewed norms of trust among ordinary citizens. (Evans, 1996a:1034). As rightly noted, the community police service was based on the principle of commitment and trust to assist officers to keep the community safe (GPS, 2014).

The above case study is by no means an insinuation of total trust and confidence in the security apparatus of the state, nor is it an indication of significant decrease in crime rate. Rather, it has proven that with pre-existing social capital, the state can create effective partnership with local citizens, as a means of improving the relationship between the two. Indeed, the proper implementation of state – society synergy and possibly extending such relationships across the country remains a daunting task, which is achievable. A study by Crews and Crews (2007, p8) identified training gaps, inadequate ICT facilities and financial shortages as impediments to effective community policing. Over time, community policing is expected to change negative factors such as hostility, prejudice, apathy and ignorance to the positive corporate image that portrays the service of policing as sympathetic, accommodating, interesting and knowledgeable (GPS, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Contemporary theories of development influenced by the social contract perspective have increasingly

called for the active inclusion of civil society, to complement the state in the development agenda. There is the idea that state-society synergy can be constitutionally constructed by state action, despite the claim that there exist a mutual relation between the two. Strategies such as complementarity and embeddedness (Evans, 1996b) and coproduction (Ostrom, 1996) have been espoused as a panacea to addressing the great divide. A case study of Ghana’s Community Policing System has demonstrated the applicability of diverse strategies, even in a complementary manner to promote a synergy between the state apparatus and local community members to enhance the developmental agenda. Indeed state-society synergy does not assume unilinear approach since an approach might work well on one scenario, but fail in the other. The study argues it is important to reiterate the significance of state – society synergy especially for developing countries. However, until local context are well analyzed - in order to tailor the appropriate strategies and efforts towards synergizing the state and civil society to address the specific need of the community, bridging the ‘great divide’ will remain daunting task for developing countries.

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