

**IN SEARCH OF A DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY FOR THE FLEDGLING AFRICAN  
ECONOMIES**

By

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## ABSTRACT

The socio-economic underdevelopment which has been the bane of the post-colonial African states has often been attributed to a failure of leadership.<sup>1</sup> The big question, though, is: Why have virtually all African states failed in leadership?

While the failure of leadership in Africa can be attributable to many factors, colonialism, in many ramifications, created African states that were designed to fail. To begin with, the clash of cultures between traditional African societies, on the one hand, and the foreign Western ideals, on the other hand, dealt a heavy blow to the Africans. It effectively turned the African into a schizophrenic creature who, as it were, is trapped between ‘the anvil and the hammer,’<sup>2</sup> neither here nor there. He has lost a grip on his traditional values yet can’t get a hold of the foreign ones. This picture of the modern African man shows why he is destined to fail. Moreover, the political structure created by colonialism did not take cognizance of the traditional/cultural peculiarities within the various local communities. The infamous scramble for Africa which started with the Berlin conference of 1884, and the subsequent colonial rule, saw countries created by mapping out land areas, without taking into consideration the varying and often polarized ideologies of the different ethnicities in these new countries. In Nigeria, for instance, there are over 250 ethnic nationalities/cultures/languages all lumped into one country and named so by the colonialists. Most of these constituent groups do not agree on anything. Little wonder that shortly after independence, the country had to break into a bloody civil war that claimed over 3 million lives. This is the story of not just Nigeria, but indeed most of the sub-Saharan African states. These states were plunged into bloody coups and countercoups, genocidal wars, and power tussles in the absence of true nationalism.

In the face of these socio-political realities, whither Africa? Colonialism came with a predominantly capitalist system of economic development, and its concomitant democracy, but many traditional African communities were socialist states that didn’t have a centralized government. This thesis attempts to explore some of the reasons why most of the post-colonial African democracies have not fared well, as well as examine some possible alternatives/solutions to the problem. This is done with a view that the African intellectual elite, more than any other class, should be saddled with this responsibility.

This thesis, therefore, discusses politics and economics in sub-Saharan Africa. Although a large part of the essay references Africa in general, since there are similar problems of underdevelopment, the peculiarities of each region however require that the scope be narrowed down to Africa south of the Sahara, where the countries share a lot more in common in terms of history and heritage. The thesis is an attempt at forging a way forward in dealing with the crises of governance in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the thesis takes liberal democracy and doctrinaire socialism, the two major competing political theories in the world today, as reference points in this discourse. The reason for this is not only due to the fact that most African states currently practice some form of democracy, but also because the pre-colonial structures in these

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 1984.

<sup>2</sup> In the words of the famous Ghanaian poet, Kofi Awoonor.

states had some elements of either or both of these theories. I, therefore, try to figure out how we can build a stronger, more progressive state structure that could lean on, but is not entirely dependent on either/ or both liberal democracy and doctrinaire socialism. The thesis will be divided into three parts. The first part attempts to establish that there is a nexus between development and economics., and to show that most African states are in fact under-developed. The second part discusses why the post-independent African democracies have not thrived, while the third part explores alternatives/ solutions to the problem.

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## INTRODUCTION

When the first European explorers led by Bartolomeu Dias landed on the coast of Sub-Saharan Africa in 1488, their primary target was to outmaneuver Islam, locate a sea route to India's wealth, and uncover new food sources. Although the expeditions initially produced lackluster results, they marked the beginning of the integration of the continent into the new world economy and European supremacy over native populations. The intruders noticed many differences between them and the natives ranging from racial differences to environmental differences. They had superior weapons, mainly guns, and more sophisticated equipment such as ships, steamboats, compasses, textiles, and other processed goods, as against the natives who had comparatively less sophisticated weapons, such as axes, machetes, etc., and goods such as gold, ivory, etc. This noticeable difference in technology engendered some air of superiority among the foreigners, who had other plans than just trade and exploration. They saw that they needed manpower back home in the plantations, and cotton fields, particularly in the newly discovered Americas where the soil was rich and needed to be cultivated. This sparked off the trade in slaves.

By the end of slavery in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, approximately 10-15 million slaves had been moved from Sub-Saharan Africa into Europe and the Americas.<sup>3</sup> The end of the slave trade coincided with the technological boom/industrial revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Trade in slaves was no longer profitable since new machines could do most of the work previously done by the slaves.<sup>4</sup> Then came a new phase of the scramble for Africa, which was initiated by King Leopold II of Belgium, and formalized by Otto von Bismarck of Germany. This saw Africa partitioned on

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<sup>3</sup> See also J. Fraser, "Slave Trade: International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade" in *United Nations: International Decade for People of African Descent 2015-2024*.

<sup>4</sup> Of course, this is not in any way an attempt at undermining the humanitarian efforts behind the abolition, but ample evidence suggests that ending the trans-Atlantic slave trade was a long process that involved changing economic circumstances in Europe in the late 18th century. European economy had begun a major shift from agriculture to industry. There was rapid expansion in the Caribbean sugar plantations in the late 18th century which led to overproduction and a fall in the selling price of sugar. The French in particular, with huge new plantations, were flooding the market with cheaper sugar, which undercut their British rivals. This reduced Britain's profit levels. Still further, plantation owners were no longer able to pay their debts to European bankers. The latter, who had previously invested heavily in sugar and the slave trade, now found it more profitable to invest in new manufacturing industries at home, and more importantly, quicker machines that produced goods at amazing rates replaced human labor. See M. Zayyad Umar, "Economic Reasons Rather than Humanitarian Reasons Contributed to the Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade" in *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies* Vol. 7 (5), pp. 85-88, June 2020. See also Drescher (1986), Roger (1975), and Oldfield (1999).

paper for the European powers, namely: Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Belgium. The aim was to harness the resources in the continent of Africa in a four-pronged strategy of invasion, annexation, division, and colonization. The Industrial Revolution came with a great need for raw materials to feed the industries, and there was an abundance of rich raw materials in the continent of Africa ranging from diamond, gold, metals, and petroleum, to palm oil, ivory, and rubber, among others. Moreover, industrialization created significant social issues in Europe—unemployment, poverty, homelessness, social exodus from rural areas, etc.—another factor contributing to European interest in Africa. Settler colonies were established partly because Europe perceived the colonization of Africa as a chance to acquire a surplus population. Thus, many European nations saw Africa as a resource at their disposal after this invasion.

The scramble kicked off with a meeting in Berlin on November 15, 1884, which lasted until February 26, 1885, and saw colonial powers dispute about geographic limits in the interior of the continent while ignoring the ones already set by the native indigenous African population in terms of language and culture. In the end, about fifty erratic countries were created in Africa by combining various geometric boundaries. The pre-colonial world was very diverse, with societies that were either stateless, ruled by states, or ruled by kingdoms. The idea of communalism was generally recognized and followed. Although other goods like livestock were privately owned, land was kept collectively and could not be purchased or sold. Local chiefs and one or more councils oversaw the everyday operations of the tribes in those cultures that were not stateless. Furthermore, before the colonial era, communities were distinguished according to cultural or linguistic affinities, and usually had their borders drawn in accordance with these factors. But with the advent of colonialism, communities that had existed for a long time were divided by lines that are now recognized as country borders, just as others that previously had no cultural affinities became suddenly merged into one. This naturally created some friction among such communities. Many of the types of administration that emerged as a result of colonialism are still in use today. However, before colonialism, Africa had a variety of political structures, from strong empires to decentralized bands of pastoralists and hunters.

The prevalence of oral tradition in pre-European African societies was another distinctive feature of these cultures. Stories were verbally transmitted down the generations. This puts these

tales in danger of dying out since crucial details were often lost or repeated in a different way. This general absence of literature played a huge role in the ‘invention of Africa’<sup>5</sup> by the West. Most of the earliest writings about Africa were by European authors, and they were mostly biased, factually incorrect, and misguided.

By the time most African countries got their independence in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a lot had changed by way of structure and systems of governance, as well as culture. In place of tribal/cultural boundaries, there were countries that were often a conglomerate of hundreds of tribes/cultures. Instead of a common local language, there were foreign *linguae-francae* that necessarily replaced the mother tongues in official settings. Some of the revered institutions such as the cult of titled men, the council of elders, the masquerade cults, etc. were no longer recognized as strong forces in the political dispensations of the new states; rather, in place of these, democratically elected leaders were constituted, with all their corollaries. This new system did not easily work out with the natives. In fact, they have grappled with it to the present day. For one thing, the amalgamation of various ethnicities into one did not yield many positive results. Aside from the linguistic and cultural differences, there were often ideological differences that made it difficult to build a progressive state. Moreover, some of these ethnicities were tribal neighbors who fought wars against each other and really couldn’t come to terms with the fact that they were now a united entity. The immediate consequence of this, among other things, was the absence of a nationalist spirit, a vital ingredient in nation-building. Thus, the new states, post-independence were mostly characterized by a culture of corruption among the ruling class, frequent military coups, and bloody civil wars.<sup>6</sup>

The colonial masters -mostly Britain and France- came with a system of government, namely electoral democracy, as well as a capitalist economic system which they bequeathed the new African states. But as earlier mentioned, the pre-colonial systems were not entirely

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<sup>5</sup> V.Y. Mudimbe satisfactorily dealt with the idea of the invention of Africa in his 1988 classic: *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. According to Mudimbe, the African reality is distorted in the expression of African modalities in non-African languages: “It is inverted, modified by anthropological and philosophical categories used by specialists in dominant discourses”, and this critique is not limited to Western scholars, but extends to African intellectuals who remain unwitting heirs to a colonial “philosophy of conquest.” Cf. V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.), p.199.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, M. Duzor & B. Williamson, ‘By the Numbers: Coups in Africa’ in *VoA News*, Last Updated: February 2, 2022; Also C. Ezeanya-Esiobu “Origins of Corruption in Africa” in *The Pan-African Review*, October 6, 2019.

democratic, and in places where there were quasi-democracies, there were other cultural adaptations that ensured they worked, adaptations which were mostly uprooted by the new structures. A typical example is the Igbo ethnic group in south-eastern Nigeria which had a decentralized democratic system where the council of elders (representative of each family) took decisions binding on the entire community. The pre-colonial Igbo society was acephalous and egalitarian in nature. Although there were kings in some clans, these generally did not have authority over the people as regards decision-making or governance. The titled men or council of elders were the ultimate decision-makers, and they often appointed and instituted kings. This was in sharp contrast to the Yoruba and Hausa tribes that had a centralized system in which the Oba or Emir had absolute, god-like power over the subjects. The new country, Nigeria, comprised of these three major ethnic groups, and hundreds more, is like an amorphous entity with multiple seams that are ready to burst at any slight interference. And what is more, this is a typical scenario in most other African countries. This is the true story of the outcome of Western colonial interference: gather a number of nations into one entity, in spite of their divergent ideologies, and give them a new name, then thrust unto them a political system that totally neglects their roots. The result? A boiling cauldron of a nation.

That the emergent post-colonial states have grappled with governance for many decades after independence is a pointer to the need for a reevaluation. What is wrong with the system that makes it impervious to positive change and development? Many suggestions as to the cause of the problem have been made by various thinkers, both of African and non-African descent. There is for instance a widespread belief that neo-colonialism has a stranglehold on Africa, and that there is an insidious yet deliberate attempt to keep Africa grounded by the dominant other.<sup>7</sup> Samir Amin's theory of de-linking, despite the practical challenges that confront it, seems a plausible answer to this neo-colonialist thesis. Nonetheless, it is pertinent to give an account of the basis of growth in any society while seeking solutions to development. This basis is ideological. A political ideology that is incongruous with a people's culture is likely going to fail, not because it is a bad ideology, but because it is not rooted in the system. It is bad enough that the emergent African nations are not homogenous, it is yet worse that they adopted a

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. S.K. Tehrani, *Neo-Colonialism in Africa. The Most Dangerous Form of Imperialism?* (2020); also A. Chowdhury & J.K. Sundaram, 'Africa Struggles with Neo-colonialism' in *CETRI: Southern Social Movements Newswire*, September 13, 2022.



governmental system that totally ignored their roots. Yet, negotiating a way out does not promise an easy course either. Some of the nascent African democracies would have fared better as socialist states, and some would have bloomed with totally different versions of democracy. For sure democracy in the West developed out of a different cultural demand which makes it adaptable in the West, albeit with its challenges. Marxist socialism has its history too, as an answer to capitalist pitfalls, but these systems would need tweaking to be adaptable in Africa bearing in mind the obtainable cultural nuances. Above all, the need for restructuring beckons. An amalgam of different states will not just make a new state if not rightly structured. It would rather make a new non-state. The challenge before African nations, nay African intellectuals, is to chart a course adaptable to each state given its history and its present political predicaments. I should emphasize the present as much as the past because the new African is a hybrid of both traditions which means that an atavistic turn-around to the past, in addition to being a difficult, maybe an unrealizable ideal, may not prove a soothing solution.

This thesis is an attempt to examine the above issues with the view to finding a lasting solution to the African politico-economic predicament. It would be presumptuous to imagine that this thesis has an answer to all the problems of African development. It is in fact a perspective of viewing the problems, and it is based on the conviction that the onus lies on the intellectual elite of the continent to factor out ways to deal with these hydra-headed problems. This thesis is therefore an invitation to a robust discussion on development philosophy in Africa. It discusses some of the causes of underdevelopment in Africa and suggests ways of dealing with these problems. At the heart of these suggestions lies political restructuring as a basic strategy in dealing with the ideological dissonance among the component units that make-up each of the post-colonial African states.

## CHAPTER ONE

### How Underdeveloped is (Sub-Saharan) Africa?

“A man who does not know where the rain began to beat him cannot say where he dried his body”- **Igbo proverb.**

#### **i. Is Development Reducible to Economics?**

Ever since Adam Smith the Scottish moral philosopher and economist published his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (1776), the interests of political economists have centered on those indices by which some nations are deemed wealthier than others. For Smith, political economy as a science should concern itself with providing a plentiful revenue of subsistence for the people and supplying the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for public service.<sup>1</sup> Following a further transformation witnessed in the discipline of economics, especially in the early twentieth century, societal development has essentially been interpreted in economic terms, as economic development that could be measured in terms of industrialization, technological progress and the Gross National Product (GNP), per capita income, level of dependence and indebtedness, etc. In this line, American sociologist, Everett Rogers conceived development as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced to produce higher per capita income and levels of living, through more modern production methods and improved social organization.<sup>2</sup>

The term ‘development’ is an ambiguous one, but the most consistent element therein is ‘change’; a purposeful or goal-oriented change as distinguished from a purposeless or random change characteristic of inanimate things. This implies that the entity that undergoes such a change has some knowledge of the end state or goal. In this thesis, we shall concern ourselves with development in human society. At this level, development assumes two dimensions:

- i) *The individual dimension;*
- ii) *The societal dimension.*

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<sup>1</sup> E.A. Obi., *Political Economy of Nigeria*, (Onitsha: Abbot Communications Ltd. 2005) p.3.

<sup>2</sup> See E.M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Toronto: Free Press, 2003.

*At the level of the individual, development implies increased skill and capacity; greater freedom; creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.*<sup>3</sup> Individuals can increasingly engage themselves in activities in which they can realize themselves such as music and art, and even those who find fulfillment in productive labor - intellectual and /or physical - can afford to speculate, theorize, etc., as they please. At the level of social groups, development implies “the capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships.”<sup>4</sup> The societal dimensions of self-realization (development) consist of those values, orientations, attitudes, practices, and objects that are necessary (either as preconditions or as enhancing conditions) for the realization of people across the globe. The self-realization of people requires that basic needs - food, shelter, clothing, health, individual and communal security - be adequately met.

There is a strong link between the two aforementioned dimensions of development. The more effectiveness there is in meeting basic needs, the better foundation there is for individual self-realization. Thus, the individual like the proverbial goat in tethers, can actualize himself within the confines and limits of societal conditions. As Karl Marx conceives it, changes in the material conditions of people are necessarily accompanied by that in their conceptions and worldviews.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, society is only as developed and great as the individuals within it. It is the individual, through his ingenious capability to handle tools, that transforms society for the better.

Furthermore, there is an ontological basis to development in that development is tied to the nature of man<sup>6</sup> as a rational being. Man necessarily develops because he is a dynamic being, a being with a purpose or an end in view. His rational nature serves to accomplish these ends. Moreover, as Karl Popper noted, all things living are in search of a better world. For Popper, “men<sup>7</sup>, animals, even unicellular organisms are constantly active. They are trying to improve their situation or at least to avoid its deterioration. Every organism is preoccupied with the task of solving problems.”<sup>8</sup> But the human species embarked upon a unique line of development because “man has the capacity to make and use tools ... in historical terms, man the worker

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<sup>3</sup> W. Rodney., *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Abuja Nigeria: Panaf Publishing Inc., 1972 (2005 ed.)) p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p.2.

<sup>5</sup> D. McLellan, *The Thought of Karl Marx: An Introduction.*, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 1980) pp.135-136.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Men’ here should be understood in the generic sense.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> K.R. Popper, *In Search of a Better World* London: Routledge 2000, p. vii.

[Homo Faber] was every bit as important as man the thinker [Homo sapiens], because the work with tools liberated men from sheer physical necessities”<sup>9</sup> characteristic of other animals. “No other animals by natural gift dispose themselves of this capacity to work...By virtue of work, man creates for himself his own environment (houses, roads, cities); procures food and clothing for himself, produces means of communication, transportation, diversion, etc.”<sup>10</sup>

It is therefore not incorrect to view ‘development’ in an economic sense, the justification being that the type of economy is itself an index of other social features. A society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity for dealing with the environment: “This capacity is dependent on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature (science), on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology), and in the manner in which work is organized.”<sup>11</sup> There are obviously very many indicators of development and some of these may not be directly about economics. In fact, the Sustainable Development Goals, which place a greater emphasis on social indicators of development like education and health, go all the way down to much more esoteric development indicators like happiness. The list of these indicators of development seems endless.<sup>12</sup> When we take a more critical look, however, it is easy to see how these indicators are still indirectly related to economics. Better economic well-being gives more people more access to education, which entails more enlightenment that ensures social change for the better. This also explains why economically advanced nations usually rank high in development ratings using the above indices.

Talking about underdevelopment presupposes a scale for measuring the developed and the underdeveloped: “Thus, underdevelopment makes sense only as a means of comparing levels

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<sup>9</sup> W. Rodney, *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> B. Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Miroslav A. Cidzyn (Transl.); India: Theological Publications in India; 2005 p.173.

<sup>11</sup> W. Rodney, *Op. Cit.* p.2.

<sup>12</sup> Examples include: Total Nominal Gross Domestic Product, Gross National Income per capita (PPP), the percentage of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day, the percentage of people living below the poverty line within a country, the unemployment rate, the Human Development Index score, *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (overlaps with many other aspects)*, school enrollment ratios, PISA educational achievement rankings, percentage of population in tertiary education, the infant mortality rate, healthy life expectancy, the gender inequality index, the global peace index, total military expenditure, carbon dioxide emissions, the corruption index, the Happiness Index, etc.

of development.”<sup>13</sup> *For every people had shown a capacity for independently increasing their ability to live a more satisfactory life through exploiting the resources of nature; every people developed in one way or another.* Viewed in this sense, development is never totally achieved. There is always room for improvement even in the so-called developed world. This view of course seems pitted against the degrowth or diminishing returns theories, but the point here is that the human species, by their transcendent nature, are always ‘in search of a better world.’

Contrary to what some authors, mostly of African descent, think, the fact of Africa’s underdevelopment was already established by the time of European contact, which most notably began with the trans-Atlantic slave trade (c.1444).<sup>14</sup> For such authors as Walter Rodney and J. Obi Oguejiofor, Africa’s underdevelopment started squarely with the slave trade and culminated in colonialism.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Rodney for instance holds that there was an even development between Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world up until the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> I totally disagree with this view. On the contrary, Africa was already comparatively underdeveloped at the point of her contact with Europe. For if Africa’s underdevelopment began with subjugation into slavery, the big question that immediately follows is: “...why weren’t Native Americans, Africans, and Aboriginal Australians the ones who decimated, subjugated, or exterminated Europeans and Asians?”<sup>17</sup> It is those historical inequalities that have cast long shadows on the modern world; “because the *literate societies with metal tools* have conquered or exterminated the other societies.”<sup>18</sup> I however agree with Rodney that European contact (in the form of slavery and colonialism) greatly altered the trajectory of development in Africa and created a structure that makes it difficult to enhance its pace. This will be discussed in greater detail in the latter part of this thesis.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid p.15.

<sup>14</sup> H. Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870.*, (London: Papermac, 1998) p.21.

<sup>15</sup> See Ibid. pp.108-160; J.O. Oguejiofor, *Philosophy and African Predicament*, Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd., 2001 pp. 24-5; 29-48.

<sup>16</sup> See W. Rodney, Ibid., pp.36-85.

<sup>17</sup> J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*; (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc. 2005,) p. 15. The attempt to answer the above question which he captioned ‘Yali’s Question’ may be considered Diamond’s sole project in the over 500 paged volume. Diamond thinks (and I totally agree) that environmental conditions such as unfavorable climate (which engendered more inventions), lesser longitudinal/latitudinal stretch (which ensured easier transfer of writing, and technology), etc. led to an easier and faster development in Eurasia as against Africa. So, while civilization started in Egypt for instance, it couldn’t spread to sub-Saharan Africa with ease.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p.13.

**ii. Economic Indices Pointing to Africa’s Underdevelopment.**

In what follows, I will make a statistical survey of the global economy to establish some facts about Africa’s underdevelopment. These data will be gathered from two different post-independence eras, and from two different scales of measurement.

*Technological dependence: Selected socio-economic indicators (averages expressed as medians for 1970 or the latest year available) [Adapted from UNCTAD in Africa. Vol.11 No.2, June 1977.]*

<b>Science and Technology</b>	<b>Developed Market Economy</b>	<b>Africa</b>
The ratio of total Stock Engineers per 10,000 population	112	5.8
The ratio of Technicians per 10,000 population.	142.3	8.8
<b>High-level Manpower</b>		
Professionals and Technicians as % of Economic Active pop.	11.1	–
% of Econ. Active pop. employed in manufacturing	25.4	3.5

Fig. 1<sup>19</sup>

Fig. 2<sup>20</sup>

<b>Countries/Continents</b>	<b>Per capita income in US dollars (2021)</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Per capita income in US dollars (2021)</b>
Canada	52,051.4	Morocco	3,496.8
USA	69,287.5	Ethiopia	944.0
France	43,518.5	Egypt	3,876.4
United Kingdom	47,334.4	South Africa	6,994.2
World	12,262.9	Tanzania	1,135.5
Europe	38,234.1	Nigeria	2,085.0
North America	67,514.0	Ghana	2,445.3
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	1,645.5	Malawi	642.7
D.R. Congo	584.1	Kenya	2,006.8

<sup>19</sup> Cf. C. Ake; *A Political Economy of Africa*; (Nigeria: Longman Nigeria PLC., 1981), p.105.

<sup>20</sup> Excerpts from [World Bank National Accounts Data, and OECD National Accounts Data Files](#)

More recent statistics show that over 30 African countries rank among the world's 50 poorest nations, while not one African country is among the 30 most industrialized nations. Nigeria for instance is the second wealthiest African nation, trailing behind Egypt; but she ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in the world by 2008/9 UN standards.

### **iii. Proof from the Point of View of the Development of African Philosophy**

In the African continent, where underdevelopment is endemic, it is not surprising that academic philosophy is very much concerned with its role in development. Indeed, with the possible exception of the search for identity, which can summarize many apparently disparate philosophic discourses in contemporary Africa, the issue of the link between philosophy and development is the most recurring theme in recent philosophic discussions in Africa.<sup>21</sup>

African philosophy as an organized discipline is one borne out of the struggle for self-assertion amidst an atmosphere of denigration. The discipline was formally established in an era when nationalism in the face of colonial rule was a trend across much of Africa. To be sure, African nationalist movements sprung up in reaction to many decades of colonial domination which as earlier stated was a 'logical' consequence of the abolition of the slave trade, and slavery itself was a consequence of comparative underdevelopment. The nationalist movement was a revolt against colonialism and its pre-supposition that Africa was a land of brutes, half-human, half-animals who were in desperate need of civilization. This narrative was propagated by Western missionaries, colonialists, explorers, anthropologists, and philosophers alike. It barely conceded humanity to Africans, albeit not on the same level as the Westerners. In the absence of available literature by Africans, the onus was on these foreigners to paint a picture of Africa that soothes their imagination and justifies denigration. Lucien Levy Bruhl (1922) for instance distinguished between the 'primitive' African mind, and the 'modern' European mind; the former being incapable of logical reflections unlike the latter, only relating to reality by 'mystical participation'. Prior to Bruhl, renowned thinkers from the West held similar views. David Hume thought that blacks were inferior to whites since there has not been any invention, any sign of

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<sup>21</sup> J.O. Oguejiofor, "Philosophy of Development or Development Philosophy? A Dilemma in Contemporary African Philosophy", in *UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol.10, No.2, 2009, p.251.

civilization among the blacks. None of them has shown any sign of ingenuity.<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Kant asserts that ‘so fundamental is the difference between the two races of men and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capabilities as in color...*this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid*’.<sup>23</sup> Other Western philosophers such as G.W.F. Hegel, and M. Montesquieu, thought along the same line.<sup>24</sup> We can summarize their line of thought thus: Material and economic under-development is indicative of mental incapacity.<sup>25</sup>

It was in the face of this culture of denigration that African philosophy was officially birthed, although tracing the history of its development has been a most complex and controversial issue for African philosophers. This controversy stems from the protracted debate on the existence, or otherwise of such a thing as African philosophy. This debate was kick-started with the publication of Fr. Placide Tempels’ *Bantu Philosophy* in 1945.<sup>26</sup> As earlier stated, the context of Tempels’ work was that of denigration. So, in publishing this work, he was literally blowing against the current<sup>27</sup> in trying to prove that Africans, with the Bantus as a case

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<sup>22</sup> D. Hume, *The Philosophical Works* (T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (eds.), London, 1882; repr. Darmstadt, 1964), III, p.253.

<sup>23</sup> I. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1960) p.113. During the 1780s, as Kant was developing his universalistic moral theory, he published texts in which he defended the superiority of whites over non-whites. Commentators such as Robert Bernasconi and Thomas E. Hill see this as evidence of inconsistent universalism or of consistent inegalitarianism, and they generally assume Kant's position on race remained stable during the 1780s and 1790s. However, some argue against this stand, that Kant radically changed his mind during the 1790s, restricting the role of the concept of race, and dropping his hierarchical account of the races in favor of a more genuinely egalitarian and cosmopolitan view. See for instance P. Kleingeld, “Kant’s Second Thoughts on Race” in *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 57, No. 229, October 2007, p. 573.

<sup>24</sup> See J.O. Oguejiofor Op. Cit., pp.77-86.

<sup>25</sup> This pejorative conception lingers even in contemporary times. S. Onuigbo writes that: “...In the summer of 1994, a T.V. broadcast in Germany began showing a documentary on different African countries ...the broadcast presented Africans as still living in veritable Plato’s cave,...they showed people practicing magic wands, voodooos, witchcraft and human sacrifice... inter-tribal wars and political fracas were highlighted; how the poor crack nuts, hew stones, trade on gravels to feed... and the reporter [rhetorically] asked: ‘Is there any African country that can produce modern weapons?’ They showed how Africa waits for Europe and America for her problems.” Cf. S.N. Onuigbo, “*Afrika: Der Zukunft Ist Schwarz*” (Africa: The Future is Bleak), in C. Umezina (ed.) *Essays in Philosophy*; (Nsukka: Afro Orbis Publishing Company Ltd; 2005) p.20.

<sup>26</sup> This was written originally in Dutch. The French version was published in 1945 as *La Philosophie Bantue* and translated to English in 1959.

<sup>27</sup> Tempels’ modest attitude towards the Bantu and his intercultural openness to their life philosophy caused his exile from the missionary community. Tempels’ manner as a student rather than a master of the Baluba Bantu made the Belgium Congo’s Bishop Jean-Felix de Hemptinne, a conservative Christian, decide to advise Rome to condemn *Bantu Philosophy* as heretical and a sympathizer of Bantu nationalism and to expel its author from the country. Consequently, in May 1946, Tempels had to leave the Belgium Congo to spend his time in a monastery in Hasselt in Belgium. In 1947, however, Rome decided that he was allowed to return to Belgium Congo (Apter, 1992; Clement, 2018).



study, were at least human and rational, and had a philosophy too, although this philosophy might be quite different from that in the West. Thus, he writes:

Celui qui pretend que les primitifs ne possèdent point de système de pensée, les rejette d'office de la classe des hommes. (He who pretends that primitive people have no system of thought, rejects them from belonging to the class of human beings).<sup>28</sup>

Tempels did not portray the Bantu as having a "primitive mind," incapable of ratiocination. Instead, he referred to his thesis of "vital force" as the core of Bantu philosophy; as "Bantu ontology." Although he counsels his audience to embrace the Bantu ontology as a foundation for Christianization, he realized that the Bantus had an intelligible core from which their actions emanate. Clearly, the work was written for a non-African audience, his fellow colonists whom Tempels addresses directly, and asks them to reconsider their notion of the Bantus and Africans as senseless savages, and understand their philosophy, in order to make easier their work of evangelization and civilization.<sup>29</sup> As a missionary, he observed some difficulties and challenges which his crew encountered with the natives in their work of conversion to Christianity. He had studied the people's traditional religious beliefs and worldview, saw some 'elements of rationality' therein, and made his conclusion that for a successful mission, the results of his studies needed to be taken into account. Thus, with Tempels, there's a slight elevation of the African as a rational human, capable of 'a philosophy', but still in urgent need of civilization, and evangelization. His (the African/Bantu's) philosophy, although rational is different from that of the West, and of course inferior, but still a philosophy nonetheless; his religion though intelligible, is heathen. Tempels was not alone in this newly formed, condescending view of the Westerners in regarding the Africans. 20th-century Anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Evans Pritchard had all begun to conduct less stereotypical research on Africans and had promptly come up with results that challenged the old beliefs.<sup>30</sup> Tempels' work was therefore

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<sup>28</sup> P. Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantue* (Presence Africaine Paris, 1948,) p.16, (translation mine).

<sup>29</sup> See P. Tempels., *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959, pp. 11-15.

<sup>30</sup> In *The Savage Mind*, 1962, Lévi-Strauss analyses primitive thought generally—which, he claims, far from lacking a conceptual structure, rests upon one—and primitive scientific thought in particular—which, he contends, is full-blown scientific thought and not, as generally believed, some pre-logical, non-rational counterfeit of it. Lévi-Strauss argues that just because primitive science is organized in terms of aesthetics and mythology and is connected to the world of perception and imagination—the phenomenological world of the immediate, felt qualities of things—does not entail that it is a less sophisticated or theoretically flawed branch of knowledge. It rather symbolizes an approach to nature that is just different from, but not less than, the one used by modern science. Similarly,

like an act of faith in the humanity of the African. It served as a catalyst that ignited the development of African philosophy as an academic discipline. In the debate that raged in the 1970s, following the publication of a follow-up to Tempels' work – John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* - so many schools of thought/trends emerged. Henry O. Orika in July 1978 named four of them: ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, nationalist ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy.<sup>31</sup> Other trends that emerged subsequently include the hermeneutical current, the historical trend, and the literary/artistic trend.

Ethno-philosophy, arguably the first among these trends, was a term coined derogatorily by Paulin J. Hountondji to denote the works of Tempels and a circle of African philosophers writing in the 1970s. For Hountondji, 'ethnographic works', such as Tempels' should not be tagged 'philosophy' as such. They were at best, an 'ethno-philosophy.'<sup>32</sup> Philosophy, he vehemently insists, does not dwell within collective beliefs, practices, and other behaviors waiting only to be discovered and redescribed. His fierce criticism of Tempels' work, as well as criticisms by other African philosophers of his ilk, was based on a number of arguments, namely: the 'non-philosophical' content of the said philosophy, the non-African nationality of the writer, the motive of the work and the non-literary (ethnological) source of the said philosophy. Hountondji goes on to define what constitutes African philosophy. His definition reeks of power politics, but this is understandably so if we are to consider that it was a reaction to power politics that birthed such philosophy in the first place. Antonio Gramsci's, and later, Omehdi Ochieng's view of what constitutes an African intellectual/African philosophy are similar. As Gramsci points out, "whereas everyone in some sense is an intellectual, not everyone in a society has the function of performing intellectual work."<sup>33</sup> And for Omehdi Ochieng, "One is designated an 'intellectual' by processes of recognition and credentialling that are inflected by power relations. By 'African philosophy', then, I mean discourses produced by those interpellated as African

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Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, 1937, argues that the belief in witchcraft and magic among the Azande is just as logical as Western religious, and even scientific beliefs; they just stem from different premises.

<sup>31</sup> H.O. Orika: "Sagacity in African Philosophy" in T. Serequeberhan Op. Cit. p.49.

<sup>32</sup> See Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Henri Evans (transl.), (USA: Indiana University Press, Indianapolis,) 1983.

<sup>33</sup> Antonio Gramsci, "Intellectuals and Education", in *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935*, ed. David Forgacs, (New York University Press, New York, 2000,) p. 304.

philosophers by institutions of power such as schools, ‘universities’ and the media.”<sup>34</sup> The problem with power politics, however, is that while it often tends to overly promote a particular group or opinion; it at the same time deprives and stifles the other, and as such closes doors of opportunity for a robust exchange of ideas and knowledge. Hountondji’s definition of African philosophy as a “set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans and described as philosophical by their authors themselves,”<sup>35</sup> clearly buttresses this point. In his idea of what constitutes African philosophy, there is no possibility of a non-African such as Tempels contributing to the corpus, in a way that St. Augustine of Hippo is a huge contributor to what is today regarded as Western philosophy. Furthermore, the only criterion for a text being a work in African philosophy is that its writers designate it so. It doesn’t matter that, hypothetically speaking, they may be texts in Mathematical Algebra, or Medicine. This stance clearly contradicts Hountondji’s primary reason for discrediting ethnophilosophy, which is that it is a work in ethnography, rather than philosophy.

However, Alexis Kagame among others championed the course of ethnophilosophy.<sup>36</sup> The whole project of the ethno-philosophers was to demonstrate the humanity of the Africans by showing that they had a philosophy, since “philosophy is tacitly and surreptitiously... privileged as the true measure and standard of the humanity of the human as such.”<sup>37</sup> To do this, they resorted to ethnographic literature that outlined the customs, folklore, and belief systems of the people. Some of them tried to compare the philosophies of other cultures such as India, and Asia to show that there are similarities between them and African ethnophilosophy. The aim here was to show that philosophy was a culture-specific enterprise that need not conform to Western standards.<sup>38</sup>

The ‘professional philosophers’ or the critical and analytical current, stand on a parallel plane against the ethnophilosophers. These aforementioned, namely Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi

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<sup>34</sup> O. Ochieng, “The African Intellectual: Hountondji and After”, in *Radical Philosophy*, Issue 164, Nov./Dec. 2010, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Henri Evans (transl.) (USA: Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1983,) p.33.

<sup>36</sup> P. Hountondji, “Occidentalism, Elitism: Answer to Two Critiques”, J.K Chenda (transl.) in C. Neugebauer (Hers.): *Philosophie, Ideologie Und Gesellschaft in Afrika*; (Wien 1989 Lt. am Maim; Bern; New York, Paris, 1991) p.39.

<sup>37</sup> T. Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Culture: Horizon and Discourse*, (New York: Routledge, 1994,) p.3.

<sup>38</sup> See F.U. Okafor ‘In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy’ in *Philosophy: East and West*. Volume 47, No.3. (University of Hawai Press. July 1997,) pp.363-381.

Wiredu, Peter Bodunrin, C.B. Okolo, among others, contend that philosophy is not and should not be reduced to ethnology. While they have individual opinions as to what constitutes philosophy,<sup>39</sup> their main thesis is that philosophy is a conscious enterprise requiring a high level of mental exercise and disposition. Thus, not everybody can philosophize and not every culture has a philosophy. African philosophy for them was still in the making.

Henry Odera Oruka's sage philosophy came as mediation between the two camps. For Oruka, not everybody is a philosopher, but there exists in every society, sages who are the philosophical think tanks of the community and who may be interviewed for sediments of philosophy. He distinguishes between the folk sage who is merely a repository of the community's popular beliefs, and the philosophic sage who subjects these popular beliefs to rigorous ratiocinative scrutiny.<sup>40</sup>

The nationalist ideological current (H.O. Oruka) or simply the ideological current (Nkombe Oleko and A.J. Smet), or African political philosophy (C. Sumner), "comprised mostly of politicians whose main interests were hard-core politics, and not philosophy. They may however be called philosophers in spite of themselves."<sup>41</sup> Among them are such figures as Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo (Nigeria), and Leopold Sedar Senghor (Senegal). These figures engaged in pre- and post-independence struggles for political, economic, social, and psychological freedom of black peoples. This freedom struggle takes both a negative and a positive aspect. On the negative side, freedom from colonialism and white imperialism, racism, oppression, and denigration. On the positive side, freedom to self-realization, political, economic, and cultural autonomy. The entire project of the nationalist ideological current often summarized by the term Pan-Africanism was to regenerate Africa by glorifying her past, and inculcating pride in her values.<sup>42</sup> Senghor and his companions propounded the philosophy of *Negritude* which takes pride in the blackness of the African; in the affirmation of the being of the black man. He went as far as making the rather preposterous statement that 'reason is Greek while emotion is Black', to show that the allegedly

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<sup>39</sup> For Hountondji, writing is a prerequisite, as well as the African origin of the writer of African philosophy. For Bodunrin however, writing can be instrumental, but not necessary. He projects autonomy of thought: "Not everybody is a philosopher" See P.O. Bodunrin's "The Question of African Philosophy" in T. Serequeberhan. Op. Cit. p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> H.O. Oruka Op. Cit. pp. 50-54.

<sup>41</sup> J.O. Oguejiofor, Op. Cit. p. 112.

<sup>42</sup> P.O. Esedebe, *Pan Africanism: The Idea and Movement*, (Washington D.C.: Howard University Press, 1982) p.3.

non-rational, and therefore non-philosophical Africans had something which the West had not, and for which they should be proud, namely, their sentimental attachment and consideration for their brethren. Kwame Nkrumah advocated a socialist philosophy, as well as Julius Nyerere who opted for *Ujamaa* socialism, a brand of socialism similar to the extended family life of the traditional African.<sup>43</sup> Nkrumah propounded a philosophy of *African Personality*, a term which was first used by Blyden in 1893<sup>44</sup> but was promoted by Nkrumah. The aim of the project was for the African to make her own impact in the world, and no longer to ‘speak through the voices of others.’<sup>45</sup> From the above, it is clear that the whole effort of the nationalists was to draw Africa out of the conceptual and factual quagmire of subjugation in which she finds herself in the international community.

The literary and artistic current agrees with Geoffrey Parrinder that art is a means of expressing the basic philosophy of life. This approach aims to establish the proof of the existence of African philosophy by recourse to the literature and works of art by African geniuses which reflect philosophic insight. This includes such works as Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, Jomo Kenyatta’s *Facing Mount Kenya*, and Wole Soyinka’s *The Lion and Jewel*. Also, they cite African proverbs, wise sayings, and folktales as sources of philosophy. In this regard, J.S Mbiti writes that “it is in proverbs that we find the remains of the oldest forms of African religious and philosophical wisdom.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, William Abraham observed from the study of the Akan people of Ghana that as they could not write, they expressed philosophical and religious ideas through art.<sup>47</sup> They over and above all toe the line of the ethno-philosophers in arguing for the existence of philosophy in Africa by recourse to pieces of literary and artistic elements of culture.

The hermeneutical current professes that authentic African philosophy can be possible through the approach of factual interpretation of African culture and tradition. This current emerged from a unique bent given to the whole enterprise of African philosophy by Theophilus Okere in his *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of*

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<sup>43</sup> C.B. Okolo *African Social and Political Philosophy: Selected Essays*; (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing company, 1993) pp. 31-32.

<sup>44</sup> B. Abanuka, *A New Essay on African philosophy*; (Nsukka: Spiritan Publications 1994,) p.6.

<sup>45</sup> C.B. Okolo Op. Cit. p.48.

<sup>46</sup> J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (London: Heinemann, 1970,) p.86.

<sup>47</sup> See W.E. Abraham, *The mind of Africa*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press: 1966.)

*its Possibility*.<sup>48</sup> This work holds that the affirmation or negation of the existence of African philosophy should be preceded by study and rigorous interpretation of African culture to ascertain the presence or absence of philosophical content. (African) Philosophy, for Okere, consists in this interpretative exercise itself. The trend aims to mediate between the position of the Universalist conception of philosophy as a sort of pure reason spinning on itself, and the particularist conception that takes philosophy as cultural-universal. Thus, Okere maintains that Philosophy is interpretation, a work of art, a personal reading of life and experience. According to him, we move from non-philosophy to culture and finally to philosophy. It is the task of the philosopher to extract philosophy from culture through a rigorous interpretative exercise. African philosophy therefore should not just be a bunch of ethnographic literature, but the work of a philosophical genius. Other philosophers in this circle include Nkombe Oleko, and Tsenay Serequeberhan.

The historical trend insists that “African philosophy both as a *weltanschauung* and as a science had existed long ago.”<sup>49</sup> African philosophy is not new but has a long history which dates back to ancient Egyptian times. Advocates point to the philosophical works of Origen, and Augustine of Hippo as instances of philosophy in ancient Africa. Also, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle are said to have been taught in Egypt. These thinkers go as far as periodizing African philosophy into ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary epochs, as in Western philosophy.<sup>50</sup> They further point out themes such as epistemology, anthropology, cosmology, ontology, and ethics, as already established themes in African philosophy. Such philosophers as Innocent Onyewuenyi, I.M. Osuagwu, Keita Lancinay, among others, belong to this camp.

These various trends that emerged post-Tempels can be grouped largely into two: those that favor the already established existence of African philosophy, and those in search of this philosophy. The first group thinks that African philosophy is already in existence and can be found in African cultural wisdom, oral tradition, history, artworks, and literature. The second group thinks that African philosophy is still in the making. But the deluge of voices and

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<sup>48</sup> Okere however professes allegiance to the traditional Western philosophers of Hermeneutics namely Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur. See T. Okere, “My Philosophical Odyssey: An Interview with Msgr. T. Okere” in Oguejiofor & Onah(eds.) Ibid. p.356.

<sup>49</sup> F.I. Ogunmodede “The Problem of History and Historiography in African Philosophy” in F.I. Ogunmodede (ed.) *African Philosophy Down the Age: 10,000 BC to the Present*. (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2004.) p.37.

<sup>50</sup> For Francis Ogunmodede, there are eight periods in the development of African philosophy. See Ibid, pp. 44-62.

perspectives gave rise to different trends, and these voices were in response to an established culture of denigration which Tempels sought to break the Bantus, nay Africans, free from. Therefore, the whole project of African philosophy right from its inception (or re-invention) with Tempels, to its contemporary status, strongly has Africa's underdevelopment at its base, both as a catalyst and as the raw material for the philosophy itself. This is clearly understandable since philosophy does not exist in isolation but finds its corpus in the vicissitudes of human life and existential situations. A philosopher philosophizes in the context of his environment and culture - their physical, social, economic, and political problems. With the formal development of African philosophy and the situation that surrounded it, Africa's underdevelopment was examined not just from a material/economic dimension but from an ontological one. It became a question of the establishment of the full humanity (or otherwise) of the Africans. The ideological battle that raged raised a lot of issues about who an African is, bordering on identity, race, and culture. It didn't help that Africans were not part of the discussion initially, or rather they were passive objects of the discourse. But sooner rather than later, with the spread of literacy and cross-cultural exchange aided by a few African intellectuals who studied abroad, there came a deluge of voices that strived to change the old brutish narrative of the Africans. Many contemporary African philosophers are rather concerned with the need to keep reinventing philosophy in Africa, in response to colonial development. The deconstructionists and poststructuralist school in African philosophy such as V.Y Mudimbe, are particularly interested in this task. Therefore, from the context of the development of African philosophy, from the content of this philosophy itself, and from its prospects in the contemporary era, the fact of Africa's comparative underdevelopment is glaringly obvious.

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHY POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN DEMOCRACIES ARE NOT THRIVING

*“A culture is a total way of life. It embraces what people ate and what they wore; the way they walked and the way they talked; the manner in which they treated death and greeted the newborn.”* Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

Democracy, which essentially means a people-controlled system of government, has many variations, just like most other forms of rule, each of which is usually determined/defined by the values upheld in it, or by the way it is structured. We can distinguish a few prominent contemporary forms, namely:

1. Liberal democracy: wherein policies are made with an emphasis on respect for individual rights, private ownership of property, and free commerce.
2. Representative democracy: wherein citizens participate through elected representatives as opposed to direct participation.
3. Direct democracy: wherein the electorate decides on policy initiatives without elected representatives as proxies. This differs from the majority of currently established democracies in the West, which are representative.
4. Capitalist democracy: wherein there is an emphasis on support for an open market economy and private ownership of property.

These are to mention but a few. Some of these types of democracy are not mutually exclusive in the sense that a country’s democratic system can adopt both a liberal, representative, and capitalist outlook at the same time. For the purpose of this thesis, the version of democracy mostly under review is what is obtainable in most Western nations, which is liberal, representative, as well as capitalist democracy. However, an effort shall be made to specify at each point in time which version of democracy is being referenced, especially where a non-Western version of democracy is being talked about.

Democracy in Europe developed in situations quite unique and remarkably distinct from that in most parts of Africa. One reason why the newly democratic states which colonialism bequeathed Africa didn’t work could be because the historical situations through which government developed in Africa were quite different from those in Europe, and these situations



were largely neglected by the colonialists. This chapter attempts to examine this claim in detail with concrete examples as to why the democratic African states failed. Other theorists have other reasons, bordering on corrupt leadership and tribalism, which I shall briefly examine as well. Nonetheless, the course of governance in any nation should necessarily take into cognizance the peculiarities of such a nation, in as much as it strives to meet the global demands of modernity.

#### **A. The Politics of Capitalism, Liberalism, Socialism, Democracy**

Every democracy is founded on representation/citizen participation. Liberalism, a defining feature of most modern democracies, concerns itself with how institutions, contain and mitigate the violent power of states.<sup>1</sup> It is based on the moral argument that ensuring the right of an individual person to life, liberty and property is the highest goal of government.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, liberals emphasize the well-being of the individual as the fundamental building block of a just political system. There seems, however, to be a basic contradiction underlying every democracy. This contradiction was captured by Kojin Karatani: “Modern democracy is often a composite of liberalism and democracy, that is to say, liberal democracy. It attempts to combine, therefore two conflicting things: freedom and equality. If one aims for freedom, inequalities arise. If one aims for equality, freedom is compromised. Liberal democracy cannot transcend this dilemma. It can only swing back and forth like a pendulum between poles of libertarianism (neoliberalism) and social democracy (welfare state).”<sup>3</sup> Therein lies the major challenge facing most modern democracies: to strike a balance between individual freedom and social equality. But most emphasize the former to the detriment of the latter as we shall see later; this is largely because most modern democracies operate a capitalist economy.

Capitalism is an economic system in which private actors own and control property in accord with their interests, and demand and supply freely set prices for commodities and labour

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<sup>1</sup> J. W. Meiser, “Introducing Liberalism in International Relations Theory”, *E-International Relations*, February 18, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> K. Karatani, *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy*, trans. J.A. Murphy, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017,) p.16.

in markets.<sup>4</sup> For Marx, it is a stage in economic development, a stage characterized by the transformation of labor into an abstract quantity that can be bought and sold on the market, essentially leading to the exploitation of the proletariat (the working class) by the bourgeoisie—the owners of the means of production. The capitalist stage was itself a development of the earlier feudal stage where the lords exploited the serfs through payment of taxes and tributes. Marx thinks that this exploitation leads to alienation, and the continued class struggle of this stage means that it would soon be toppled by another stage that tries to address its shortcomings, namely socialism.<sup>5</sup> Capitalism operates on the liberal principles of a free market economy, and most liberal democracies operate a capitalist economy. The essential feature of capitalism is the motive to make a profit. Capitalism is founded on private property ownership, self-interest (through which people pursue their own good without regard to socio-political pressure), competition through freedom to enter and exit markets, and freedom to choose with respect to production, consumption, and investment.<sup>6</sup> Capitalism is economic, but it creates a big problem for democracy in terms of social/economic inequality.

In contrast to capitalism, socialism is a politico-economic system characterized by social ownership of the means of production, as opposed to private ownership in a capitalist system. Marx sees socialism (lower communism) as one of the stages/modes of economic development; a stage that would succeed the capitalist stage, and that would be free of its various ills such as exploitation of the labor class. This stage for Marx will climax in higher communism wherein the state, as we know it, will wither away and distribution will take place on the principle 'from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.'<sup>7</sup> Socialism criticizes the existence of social, economic, and political inequality (which capitalist/ liberal systems wittingly or unwittingly encourage in society), and seeks to lessen this class inequality, by calling for a redistribution of power from the affluent owners to the working class.<sup>8</sup> In so doing, however, it

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<sup>4</sup> S. Jahan & A. Mahmud, "Economic Concepts Explained" in J.L Rowe et al (eds.) *Finance and Development*, a publication of IMF.

<sup>5</sup> See D. Felluga, "Modules on Marx: On the Stages of Economic Development" in Felluga D. (ed.), *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*, Jan., 2011., also, Karl Marx, & Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Samuel Moore (Transl.) (London: Feedbooks, 1848,) p. 7ff.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> See K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Program', in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Vol. III p. 13-30 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/gotha/ch01.htm> (4 of 8) [23/08/2000 17:32:50, Also Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> A. Whitehorn & W.D. Young, "Socialism" in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, February 7, 2006.

tends to compromise another major pillar of most modern democracies, namely liberal freedom. Socialism as a political system is often de facto diametrically opposed to liberalism, though not necessarily so, de jure. This is because contra-liberalism, it promotes communalism rather than individualism. While most modern democracies emphasize liberalism to the detriment of equality, most socialist governments emphasize equality/communalism to the detriment of liberalism/individualism. Socialism as an economic system is the polar opposite of capitalism, and it is in this sense that it is mostly understood and used in this thesis.

## **B. Democracy in the West Versus Governance in Pre-Colonial Africa**

Democracy in the Western world has been a long time coming, with lots of internal wrangling. Contrary to popular belief that seems to associate democratic origins in Solon,<sup>9</sup> the oldest (and by far more pristine) democracy in the West was probably Ionia, an ancient region notable for its distinctive isonomic/egalitarian lifestyle. The Ionian society was largely cosmopolitan and classless. Ionian democracy was essentially an ‘Isonomia’ - ‘no-rule’,<sup>10</sup> a concept which makes sense ‘when understood as an absence of the need for rule, absence of the need for distinction between ruler and ruled, between a ruling class and a ruled class.’<sup>11</sup> However, with the invasion of Ionian city-states and the subsequent political crumble, the Ionian lifestyle in general, including its democratic practice was spread to the nearby cities, notably Athens:

In the public square were mixed people who had no chance of participating in public affairs: foreigners, women, slaves. If democracy was operative in the assembly, it was isonomia in the agora. That is to say, in Athens, isonomia was only possible in the agora. Hence, by limiting his activities chiefly to the agora, without consciously realizing it Socrates reinstated an Ionian style of thought.<sup>12</sup>

Athenian democracy was a direct democracy, and it was distinguished by two elements: the random selection of leading property owners to occupy the few administrative and judicial

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<sup>9</sup> Solon and Cleisthenes are generally regarded as laying the foundations of Athenian democracy through their legislative contributions in shaping the politics of Athens. But before Athens, there was a thriving democratic lifestyle in Ionia. Athenian democracy owes a lot to the Ionians, many of whom migrated to the neighboring Athens after the fall of the city. See K. Karatani, *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy*, (trans. Joseph A. Murphy), (Durham: Duke UP, 2017.)

<sup>10</sup> From the Greek ‘isos’-equal, and ‘nomos’-law.

<sup>11</sup> P. Trnka, “Review of Kojin Karatani, *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy*” in *Analecta Hermeneutica*, Volume II, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> K. Karatani, *Ibid.*, p.122.

positions in the government, as well as a legislative assembly made up of all Athenian citizens.<sup>13</sup> Citizenship in Athens however excluded women, slaves, foreigners, and youths below the age of military service. Similarly, the Roman Republic adopted a system of weighted voting, and most high officials, including members of the senate, came from a few wealthy and noble families, thus denying the lower and middle-class full suffrage.

The story of democracy is not different in more recent history, where a country like the USA adopted universal white male suffrage, similar to the ancient Athenian pattern, up until 1920 when white women were included in the voting population for the first time, though black people were yet excluded. A similar scenario holds across most Western nations. On this note, Francis Fukuyama observes that:

There are a number of nations like Russia which have known a variety of authoritarian forms of government, but until recently never true democracy. Other nations like Germany have had terrible difficulties achieving stable democracy, despite their firm rooting in the Western European tradition, while France, the birthplace of liberty and equality, has seen five different democratic republics come and go since 1789.<sup>14</sup>

What Fukuyama's assertion points to is that the process through which a stable democracy is finally achieved is one of bumpy experimentation with the niceties of such a system, as well as with other forms of government. One could argue that this is currently the stage of African democracies. According to this argument, almost all African countries are barely a few decades post-independence, by contrast to some Western countries which have had centuries of democratic rule. The USA, for instance, obtained its independence from Britain in approximately 1776; France's first republic formed after the abolition of the monarchy in approximately 1792, and Canada became a democratic nation only in approximately 1867. The list goes on. Therefore, we are not to worry. Africa would soon come of age with democracy. In a similar argument, Sheri Berman insists that prior to the end of World War II (1945), the idea of a 'consolidated liberal democracy' was non-existent. By consolidated liberal democracy, Berman means a democracy in which 'all groups are allowed to participate in political life and voice their demands, as long as they do so within the "rules of the game"; the basic rights of minorities and

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<sup>13</sup> This is quite similar to the decentralized democracy practiced in the pre-colonial Igbo society of South-eastern Nigeria which I shall discuss in a bit.

<sup>14</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Op. Cit. p. 212.

individuals are respected by the government as well as other citizens; and support for democracy is principled rather than conditional.’<sup>15</sup> By a consolidated liberal democracy, therefore, Berman simply means a stable democracy, one which is unlikely to revert to authoritarianism without an external shock, such as is obtainable in most parts of Europe, and North America.

A more radical argument has been advanced by B.K. Nehru in explaining the dilemma of democracy in Africa and, in general, most third-world countries. Nehru thinks that a totalitarian system, or a socialist state in which the executive wields some level of unrestrained power would be more suitable for the economic advancement of the third-world countries, at least at the nascent stage, rather than a liberal democratic system. He also thinks that this was how the ground for democracy was cultivated in the West before its eventual reign in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. He further asserts that while economic growth is a condition precedent for it, democracy can neither be established nor can it maintain itself, unless men's minds have been opened for the reception of rational and non-dogmatic ideas and thus for the acceptance of the values on which a democratic form of government is based. Thus, without the Renaissance and the Reformation in Europe and the Age of Reason which followed and without the influence of the thinkers of the Enlightenment, there would have been no acceptance of democratic ideas. Nor would the successes which democracy has secured, have been possible had there not been a long tradition - in England, for example, beginning from the Magna Carta - of liberties broadening down from precedent to precedent till they reached the common man in the twentieth century. The radical and revolutionary ideas generated in Europe between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries had no native counterpart in the Third World.<sup>16</sup> The rejection of the sanctity of authority and its replacement by the Law of Nature, as interpreted by Reason, on which philosophical concepts the modern democratic state is founded, were imported into the Third World from Europe. These ideas, Nehru affirmed, were absorbed by the few elite subjected to them, and became the inspiration for local movements for change. But before these new ideas could penetrate below the very thin crust of the Western-educated elite, the Third World democracies adopted the foreign-based institutions which were regarded as the embodiment of

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<sup>15</sup> S. Berman, *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day*, (UK: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 7. Indeed, Berman's claim is that democracy got consolidated in Europe only post-1945, and after over 150 years of instability and violence.

<sup>16</sup> B.K. Nehru 'Western Democracy and the Third World' in *Third World Quarterly*, (Taylor & Francis Ltd. (Publ.), Apr. 1979,) Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 55.

those ideas. No Third World country has any indigenous tradition of democratic institutions, at least on the national scale. Their wholesale adoption has led to institutional instability.<sup>17</sup>

Nehru's penultimate claim in the above paragraph is fallacious if we consider that there are many tribally homogenous nations within the African continent pre-colonialism, and some of these nations operated democratic forms of government much similar in structure to those practiced in most parts of the Western world. I shall explore this further later in this chapter. But a salient point in his assumption is that there was a fundamental ideological/structural difference between the Western world and the post-colonial countries which copied their democratic systems. This difference ensured that Western inherited democracy was a huge failure in the third-world countries. Furthermore, Nehru claims that liberal democracy cannot successfully remove poverty in an already poor country because 'virtually the only way to ensure economic growth is to increase capital investment', which in practical terms involves more taxation and more hardship for the already impoverished masses. (Unless this capital comes from outside through an alteration in the terms of foreign trade, through foreign aid, or by means of foreign investment, it must be raised internally.) This means that the government would become very unpopular, and in a typical electoral democratic setting, such a government would not win the popular franchise, nor would it win a re-election bid.<sup>18</sup> For Nehru, economic development in any country requires initial sacrifices, a phase which the Western world has long passed, and which was not democratically driven.<sup>19</sup> The inability of democratically elected representatives to take unpopular actions is not, of course, a disability restricted to less developed countries. But the damage to the rich countries from this disability is small compared to the other advantages that accrue from a free society, for they have long passed through the stage when incomes were so low that savings meant substantial sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> At these initial stages, these countries, particularly England and France, did not practice liberal democracy. The restrictions on the franchise and the manipulation of the electoral system ensured that the power of the state remained in the hands of men of birth, wealth, and education; the electors merely changed the individuals who acted as agents of this class:

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp. 57-59.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 58.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the state exploited the working class quite shamelessly by permitting it to consume only a small fraction of the product of its labor. Hours were long so production was high; wages were low, so consumption was rigorously restricted causing hardships well known to students both of economic history and English literature. Thus, was capital generated and invested again for further increases in production while consumption remained restricted as before. The process was repeated till society had become rich enough for these restraints to be removed. This began to happen about the same time as the emergence of democracy.<sup>21</sup>

The story was similar in the rest of Western Europe.

The process through which communist party countries developed and are developing is not so different from the above capitalist mode, and the suffering caused thereby is similar. The difference is that under communism the exploitation of labor is done directly by the state instead of through the agency of the individual owner of capital. The resentment which used to be felt, and often still is, in Western societies against the capitalist, is consequently felt in Communist societies against the bureaucrat. They are both agents, though in different ways, of society for the augmentation of national wealth.<sup>22</sup> Nehru further argues that countries like the United States and Canada in the Western Hemisphere and Australia and New Zealand in Oceania might, at first sight, seem to be exceptions to the rule. But they are not. In the formative years of their history, they were no democracies; but colonies governed directly and autocratically from London. As they gradually evolved into self-governing democracies, they had already moved above the poverty line. And throughout their period of development, they had to rely heavily on the flow of external capital.

Nehru, therefore, suggests a totalitarian government, that is more willing to make hard economic decisions in the early stages of economic growth in the post-colonial countries. Totalitarianism is for him the only panacea to underdevelopment in such countries. To support his argument, he makes a comparison between China and India, two ancient Asian civilizations that started off in a somewhat similar way but witnessed different results due to the difference in their paths to economic development. Both were countries with large land areas and enormous populations of gifted people who were at the same time very poor:

The Indian leadership adopted the Westminster pattern of government. After thirty years the form of government continues to be democratic and such individuals as can afford it

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp.58-59.

continue to enjoy the rights and liberties that the constitution confers on them. No great sacrifice has been demanded of individuals. Where laws have been passed which might have inflicted such hardship, the courts have often held them as being in violation of the rights of the individual and therefore unconstitutional. The benefits of this freedom in terms of removing poverty are not, however, equally apparent. The economy has grown at a rate of 3.4 percent, the population grows at a rate of 2.3 percent, and per capita income increases by 1.1 percent per annum. Nearly 47 percent of the people are officially recognized as living below the Indian poverty line, which means below the level of subsistence.<sup>23</sup>

In so saying, Nehru is obviously associating India's comparative underdevelopment/economic stagnation with its adherence to liberalism in the early stages of independence. There is no sufficient proof of this. In any case, it would be surprising, to say the least, if India became a totalitarian state. Hinduism, the country's dominant religion, seems to naturally promote liberalism and may be somewhat averse to a totalitarian system. Hinduism, with its strong belief in 'Atman' and 'Karma' has a sort of pantheistic view of the world, that might favor liberalism rather than totalitarianism. 'Atman' in a nutshell is a belief that living creatures have souls, which are all part of the supreme soul, while 'Karma' is a belief in the eternal cycle of inevitable consequences of every action. Furthermore, there is the geographical factor, which plays a huge role in development. It seems that in general, countries farther up north/south of the equator were geographically conditioned to a faster technological development due to adverse climatic conditions which necessitated inventions to cope with these adverse conditions, and thus, technological growth.<sup>24</sup> India has a considerably more clement climate than China, which is sitting up north over India on the globe. Nehru continues:

Chinese leadership by contrast chose Marxism-Leninism as the base on which to organize their country. The introduction of the thoughts of Mao transformed China into a system fitted to the peculiar needs and requirements of China. All power was concentrated in the hands of a small and highly sophisticated elite well aware of the realities of the modern world. There was no pretense that the rights of the individual were enforceable against the state. There was no freedom in the choice of residence or occupation or association, nor could such monstrosities as the right to strike be even imagined. The individual had to live where he was told, do whatever task was allotted to him and accept whatever remuneration he received in return. There was no hesitation in the infliction of hardship in the national interest; the number of people liquidated in the earlier years of the regime

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp. 63-64.

<sup>24</sup> This subject has been dealt with in greater detail in the previous chapter. Jared Diamond in *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997) suggested that geographical/climatic conditions, more than any other thing determined which countries had the advantage in economic/technological development. It also determined which were decimated by which diseases or conquered by which enemies.



is generally accepted as running well into seven figures. The rate at which the economy has improved, and poverty removed is however quite remarkable. GNP is growing at 6.6 percent; the annual growth of population has been reduced to 1.7 percent and per capita income is increasing at the rate of 4.9 percent per annum. But the most impressive return that China has earned through becoming a closed totalitarian communist society is in its external image. Though India is today among the ten largest industrial powers in the world, its image in the 'free' world is still associated with Oxfam's pictorial appeals for charity. The image of China, on the other hand, has been transformed into that of a fearsome nuclear power not to be trifled with, capable of destroying the world.<sup>25</sup>

The idea that totalitarianism is the way forward for Africa's economic development is contestable for two main reasons: most African states, post-independence, have practiced some form of totalitarianism without any tangible economic results, mostly by way of military dictatorships. Between 1960 to 1999, a period of 39 years, Nigeria for instance witnessed 29 years of military rule. The economic decline recorded within these years was a testament to the horrible leadership and poor management that the country witnessed. The value of the Naira went from 1 Nigerian pound = 2.80USD, in 1960, to 1 USD= 24 Naira. And what is more, the number of impoverished Nigerians increased astronomically during this period. Instead of massive economic growth, what was witnessed was an unprecedented level of corruption and gross embezzlement. Government officials used public funds to acquire choice properties abroad. Some went as far as building refineries abroad while the ones in their home country were left in a state of disrepair. This is not to mention the monstrous human rights abuse and government-sponsored assassinations that became the order of the day. The story is the same in many other African countries including Uganda, Rwanda, and Cameroon, to mention but just a few. Totalitarianism is never, in my opinion, a solution to underdevelopment because of the tendency of absolute power to corrupt, and there is no guarantee that the one who gets the mantle of leadership has the capacity to drive economic growth. Even if the leader in a totalitarian system were to be knowledgeable in economic management, there is still the risk of his less competent cronies mismanaging key sectors of the economy, which is why there is an absolute need for checks and balances.

The other reason why absolutism may not be necessary within the African context is that taxation, which Nehru sees as the major means of increasing capital growth, may not be the key source of government funding in most African states, having been privileged with an abundance

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64.

of natural resources. Some countries of the world, by virtue of their rich resources, can afford to do away with taxation entirely. Citizens in some countries like Oman and UAE do not pay income tax because the government has enough resources to fund projects through oil revenues. To suggest that taxation is the major means to generate revenue internally is therefore not entirely based on fact. Many African countries have an abundance of crude oil, precious metals, and other agricultural resources which can sufficiently generate funds for the government. Nigeria for one is the largest producer of crude oil in Africa, and one of the largest in the world. Her oil revenue alone if managed prudently could be enough to sustain the country economically. This is not to include other numerous agricultural and non-agricultural resources. Similarly, Ghana is one of the top producers of gold globally, Botswana, DR Congo, and South Africa are top producers of diamonds, and the list continues. The key seems to be the proper management of these resources.

The assumption that democracy develops over a *longue durée* sort of justifies the quagmire of most Sub-Saharan African democracies. One might conveniently argue that democracy in Africa is barely a few decades old, and it is only natural that at such a nascent stage, things may not be smooth sailing. But one major difference we point out between the evolution of Europe's democracy versus that of Africa is that the former was more organic, springing from internal political situations while the latter was from an external interruptive force. In Renaissance Europe and North America, revolutionary overthrow of totalitarian regimes sprung from the masses who were fed up at one point or another. Such overthrows did not imply an automatic jettisoning of their culture and tradition. In Africa, an external, apparently hostile force came to overthrow not just the sitting kings and emperors but to uproot their long-held linguistic and cultural ideals. This sudden and arbitrary overturning of long-established culture makes for difficulty in adapting to new ideals not necessarily suitable to the colonies. Later in this chapter, we will examine how colonial interference disrupted Africa's cultural and political development, especially among the French colonies. But for now, let me quickly observe what African pre-colonial regimes looked like. It is important to note here that Islam as a rival force had already spread through most of northern and parts of sub-Saharan Africa beginning from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. This invasion by Islam which happened through trade, and sometimes forceful conversion had begun to shape the politics and culture of the natives. The spread of Islam throughout Sub-Saharan Africa facilitated the rise of political empires,

promoted trade, and particularly grew the slave trade. Islam was more alluring to kings because its concept of the caliph blended political and religious authority.

As earlier stated, there were myriads of political dispensations just as there were cultures and languages within the African continent pre-colonialism. These included forms of democracy, theocracy, monarchy, confederacy, plutocracy, etc. We can however roughly list three major categories:

**(i) The Centralized Kingdoms and Empires:**

As the title suggests, in these states, political power was concentrated in the hands of a few elites usually the king/Emir/Oba and his councilors. Examples here include the ancient Egyptian empire, Songhai empire, and Mali empire. These may be compared in many ways to the great empires in the west such as the Roman empire, though not as large and organized. This system was typically oligarchic and thrived in those areas where Islam was a major force. There was no separation of powers. The king's authority was frequently dependent on his capacity to command and utilize an army to protect his throne as well as to amass wealth and tribute, typically via controlling trade. The absence of independent judicial systems was another factor. The king chose officials who oversaw the criminal justice system. The king served as the country's principal executive, legislator, and judge. While there were many factors that facilitated the development of these strong kingdoms, three key factors have been generally identified by historians as a constant in all, namely: expansion of agricultural production, expansion of trade, and development of metal technology. These large kingdoms, however, did not last forever. A strong kingdom may occasionally be conquered and deposed by a new set of kings who then form a new kingdom, as happened when the Kingdom of Ghana was replaced by the Kingdom of Mali. In other instances, a kingdom may have lost some of its authority due to various circumstances, such as ineffective leadership or the disappearance of a significant source of power. For instance, the diminished significance of trans-Saharan trade was one of the factors contributing to the Kingdom of Songhai's loss of power.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See I.O. Ewa, "Pre-Colonial West Africa: The Fall of Songhai Empire Revisited" in *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. 26 (2017), p.20.

### **(ii) Centralized Small Kingdoms and City-States:**

There were smaller centralized political entities in addition to the great kingdoms. These were also referred to as city-states because they had sizable urban-like regions. These minor states in terms of geography have much in common with the bigger African kingdoms. The main distinction is size. Similarly to the bigger kingdoms, they had a system of government that concentrated power in the hands of a king and a supporting caste of political counselors and elites. Additionally, the creation and upkeep of these lesser republics depended on trade dominance and a potent military. Typical examples included the old Oyo and Mombasa empires.

### **(iii) Decentralized or Stateless Political Societies:**

A great number of the people of Africa on the eve of colonial rule lived in stateless or decentralized societies. These were often composed of a collection of nearby towns or villages without any political ties to a bigger kingdom or country. Most of the decentralized communities lacked a hierarchical structure. Some of them did, however, have chiefs. The office of the chief was not that powerful and was frequently not hereditary in these civilizations. In such a system, chiefs were chosen for their reputation as people who impacted the tribe rather than their family connections. Some of these societies did not have chiefs but were governed by a council of elders that was comprised of representatives of each family/kindred. In most decentralized societies in Africa, the elders held social, economic, and political power. The decentralized societies had a quasi-democratic outlook like those of the ancient Greeks where age and gender played huge roles in determining franchise. A typical example here is the ancient Igbo society.

In summary, then, liberal democracy developed in Europe over a long history of experimenting with other systems of government. It moreover grew as a result of yearnings from the lower class for a more inclusive approach to governance in the face of various dictatorial regimes that cared less about the populace. It also grew as a result of the devastating effects of two catastrophic world wars, after which the people more than ever before yearned for the devolution of powers from the dictators to the common man. By contrast, pre-colonial Africa largely tended towards oligarchic/totalitarian governmental systems with a socialist economic outlook, rather than a democracy. These political systems were mostly fueled by a theocratic

(Islamic) system that encouraged subservience to central authority. In addition to these, however, others who lived in non-centralized societies practiced some forms of democracy and would probably have adapted easily to the colonial systems, but colonialism came with two tragic approaches that ensured that governance was a disaster even in the non-centralized states:

- i. It mapped out countries without taking cognizance of their varying political leanings. Many of the new countries are made partly of centralized and partly non-centralized states. This created a conflict of political interests and dispositions.
- ii. It neglected the cultural subtleties of the natives. The colonial version of democracy, though with a potential of adaptability in the non-centralized states, was not in tune with the culture and belief systems of the natives.

## **B. The Flaws of Democracy**

In examining why democracy has been rather ineffective in Africa, it is pertinent that we also examine the internal flaws inherent in any democratic system. This is because, even in established democracies, there appears to be quite a great deal of fumbling, and everything is not Eldorado. Care should be taken to observe the deficiencies within any democratic system in order to as much as possible maximize its potential while limiting these shortfalls. As Karl Marx argued, one of the biggest threats posed by liberal democracy is the potential of its capitalist economic system to exploit the weak labor force.<sup>27</sup> This singular tendency to oppress the weak manifests itself not just as an exploitative bourgeois power over the proletariat, but also in numerical parlance. Electoral democracy tends to suffocate the minority opinion/interest under the weight of the majority rule, and this poses a great challenge to its sustainability in the long run, as it raises questions about its ability to deliver the dividends on which its appeal rests, thus giving a large room for rival political ideologies to flex their muscles. The problem with majority rule is not just that a simple majority may not always represent an overwhelming majority or a vast majority, but also, there is a more crucial issue which is that the majority is not always right. This problem has for so long been associated with democracy, even in the ancient Greek era. Aristotle for one saw democracy as a dangerous tool in the hands of the ruling class who pander

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<sup>27</sup> D. Mc Lellan, "The Materialist Conception of History 1844-1847" in D. Mc Lellan (ed.) *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000,) p. 203.

to the whims of the gullible masses, the hoi polloi, in order to win their votes and hold onto power.<sup>28</sup> In his era, some Athenian democrats ruled well, namely Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles. However, many others were incompetent, and immoral, and gained power by tricking the Athenian people, the *demos*. The earliest to do so was Athens' first tyrant, Peisistratos. According to Aristotle, Peisistratos was widely recognized as an extreme democrat by the *demos*. Though he supposedly supported democracy, Peisistratos was able to seize supreme power in Athens multiple times by deceiving the people. In his first tenure, Peisistratos faked an assassination attempt on himself and successfully petitioned the state to grant him a bodyguard, which he used to establish his tyranny around 561 BCE.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly, numerous demagogues were able to easily buy popular support by giving large sums of money to the populace. Aristotle provided examples by citing the cases of Cleophon and Callicrates. By establishing a payment of two obols every day to a variety of Athenians, Cleophon gained control of the *demos* in the latter decade of the fifth century. Callicrates then succeeded in ousting him by waging a three-obol campaign.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle despised this practice of buying over the *demos* and advised any fledgling state that “Where there are revenues, the demagogues should not be allowed after their manner to distribute the surplus; the poor are always receiving and always wanting more and more, for such help is like water poured into a leaky cask.”<sup>31</sup> For Aristotle, therefore, the lower class is not in the best position to make a sound judgment about governance, but democracy being a game of numbers gives them this dangerous power, and they often make the wrong choices. Consequently, Aristotle tended to favor aristocratic government rather than democracy.<sup>32</sup> This worry about the majority making the wrong choice seems to be re-emphasized by John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville. In *On Liberty* (1859), Mill sought to free the individual from what was first referred to as the ‘tyranny

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<sup>28</sup> T. Lee, “Why Aristotle Hated Athenian Democracy” in *The Collector*, Aug. 16, 2022.

<sup>29</sup> See T. Lee, *Ibid.* Also, *Politics*, Bk. III.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Politics* 6.1320a.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle also noted the tendency for an aristocracy to relapse. He sought to strike a balance between democracy and oligarchy, and ultimately opted for a government controlled by the middle class (that is the not-so-rich, yet not-so-poor). This is in line with his principle of the ‘golden mean’. He called this ideal balance *politeia*, usually translated as “polity” or “constitution.” This imagined government would be predictably characterized by its moderation. See *Politics*, Book III.

of the majority' by Alexis Tocqueville,<sup>33</sup> a situation in which the majority of an electorate pursues exclusively its own objectives at the expense of those of the minority factions. This results in the oppression of minority groups comparable to that of a tyrant or a despot. One of the immediate fallouts of this scenario for Tocqueville is the abandonment of rationality: when the society takes a decision "which bases its claim to rule upon numbers, not upon rightness or excellence."<sup>34</sup> Electoral democracy tends to polarize the citizenry between the strong and the weak whether this be in relation to numbers or might, and bestows boundless powers on the strong while at the same time stripping the weak of all powers, thus creating a winner-takes-all situation. This is demonstrated more in the capitalist open market economy which often operates in a liberal democracy. Tocqueville warned that modern democracy may be adept at inventing new forms of tyranny.<sup>35</sup> He believed that the majority may tyrannize unpopular minorities and marginalized people if public opinion became an all-powerful force.<sup>36</sup> This, apart from creating the potential of silencing the best of opinions, would in the long run engender more subtle effects such as less freedom of discussion and independence of mind.

Karl Marx highlighted this tendency to stifle the economically weak in a capitalist democracy. In fact, with Marx, this tyrannical impulse becomes a class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Marx ultimately sought to free the proletariat from the tyranny of labor that capitalist economic systems imposed on them. He advocates a communist alternative and insists that this alternative until fully actualized, was going to haunt political Europe, and by extension the rest of the world.<sup>37</sup> Marx's affirmation of communism was premised on the prevalent events of the time. It was the era of the industrial revolution, when the former serfs and merchants became the capitalist bourgeois owners of industries and labor, and exploited the working class with low wages and poor working conditions. There were revolutionary labor

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<sup>33</sup> See A. Tocqueville., *Democracy in America*, H. Reeve (Transl.), (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Publishers, 2002,) pp.217, 287.

<sup>34</sup> P. J. Deneen "Equality, Tyranny, and Despotism in Democracy: Remembering Alexis de Tocqueville" in *The Imaginative Conservative*, March 15, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> See James Wood. "Tocqueville In America" *The New Yorker*. May 17, 2010.

<sup>36</sup> In *Democracy in America* (1835), Tocqueville lays out his solid argument regarding the potential of every democracy to tyrannize marginal opinions, particularly in America. Tocqueville's work became one of the most influential books written about America and political philosophy in general at the time, and even now. He sets up his position in Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 7, "Of the Omnipotence of the Majority in the United States and Its Effects," using a number of carefully selected constitutional, historical, and sociological examples.

<sup>37</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *Manifesto of the Communist Party*; Samuel Moore (Transl.) (London: Feedbooks, 1848,) p.5.

unions scattered across Europe, particularly England, France, and Germany, and it was possible to envisage a larger more globally united labor front that would overthrow the capitalist bourgeoisie. But beyond the master vs worker conflict, Marx gave a more spiritual/intra-personal dimension to the communist struggle:

In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labor which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus, in the very nature of things, it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production... Beyond it [the realm of necessity] begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with the realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the workday is its basic prerequisite.<sup>38</sup>

But things did not quite go as envisaged. The general image of communism was dented with the crumble of Leninist Communism, and capitalist democracies seemed, in the twentieth century, to wax stronger, so much so that some political philosophers like Francis Fukuyama assumed that it was going to be the endpoint of human socio-political evolution because it guarantees ‘the realization of the Christian ideal of freedom and universal human equality...’<sup>39</sup> This he argues is imbued in its open market economy which satisfies the yearning for recognition, a natural human yearning.<sup>40</sup> But rather than guarantee freedom and satisfaction, it seems capitalism on the contrary ensures enslavement through labor in an insatiable quest for recognition through the accumulation of wealth. Capitalism is inherently exploitative, alienating, unstable, and unsustainable, and creates massive economic inequality, commodifies people, and leads to an erosion of human rights while incentivizing imperialist expansion and war. Two decades after Fukuyama’s projection that liberal democracy with its capitalist corollary would signal the endpoint of history, this projection has not only failed to materialize but, on the contrary, rival ideologies have become stronger in China and the Arab world, so much so that even Fukuyama himself has reneged on his previous assertion.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, Capital Volume 3, quoted from *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Robert Tucker (ed.), (New York: Norton, 1972,) pp.19-20.

<sup>39</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History, and The Last Man*, (New York: Penguin Books Ltd. 1992,) p.199.

<sup>40</sup> F. Fukuyama., *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>41</sup> See F. Fukuyama., “At the End of History Still Stands Democracy” in *Wall Street Journal*, June 6, 2014, also by same author, *Our Post Human Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*, (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2002,) p. 15.



### **C. Military Dictatorships in Africa: an Extension of Absolute Monarchism**

A comprehensive account of governance in post-colonial Africa would most definitely reference a history of military dictatorships, coups, and countercoups. Africa's transition from pre-colonial totalitarian systems to democratic rule was not and was never going to be a smooth one, not with Islam as a religious/cultural system still a vital aspect of people's life. The former centralized empires and city-states were beginning to adopt a system that is essentially decentralized and gave more powers to the people rather than the leader. But this required a reorientation which was lacking. If anything, religion reinforced the old system. With the former decentralized colonies, where incidentally, Christianity rather than Islam was a dominant religion, the transition to a Western-styled democracy could have been much easier, but the amalgamation of these different political systems into one meant that there was no unifying ideology that the people could build on. Many of the new states where Islam was prevalent soon slid into military dictatorships with various regimes trying to oust the others in often bloody encounters. Military regimes were essentially a reenactment of the former emirates/empires where the rulers had so much unrestricted power over the people.

It is thus not a coincidence that about 50 percent of military coups that happened worldwide since 1950 occurred in post-colonial African states, and over 85 percent of those are either in predominantly Islamic states or were instigated by Islamic adherents in their states.

<b>REGION</b>	<b>COUP ATTEMPTS</b>	<b>SUCCESSFUL</b>	<b>FAILED</b>
Africa	214	106	108
Latin America	146	70	76
East Asia	49	27	22
Middle East	44	21	23
Europe	17	8	9
South Asia	16	10	6
Global	486	242	244

This is not in any way an attempt to associate military rule solely with Islam. There are many other human factors that have led to coups across the continent, namely: greed, selfishness, mismanagement of diversity, mismanagement of opportunity, marginalization, abuse of human rights, refusal to accept electoral defeat, manipulation of constitutions, corruption, etc. But it has been observed that those people/states which were formerly Islamic Emirates/empires, with monarchical/totalitarian systems of government have a greater proclivity to rebel against the democratic rule and slide back into a form of totalitarianism.<sup>43</sup>

#### **D. The Culture of Corruption and the Reason for its Intractability**

Philosophers of the Hobbesian school have argued that humans in the state of nature required the taming of the law, which implies that humans have a natural tendency to be corrupt. This is of course debatable, and the question of the role of human nature in politics is a polarized one. Thomas Hobbes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are two notable figures in this debate. Hobbes argues that while human nature has some positive aspects that can foster peaceful relations, its more negative aspects (including envy and a desire to have power over others) will inevitably cause conflict without a powerful government to keep us in line. It is society that tames man through the social contract. Hobbes' *Leviathan* perceives humans in the state of nature as being wolves unto fellow humans, and human life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."<sup>44</sup> It is society through the institution of government which tames man such that he submits his will to the state, the Leviathan. Rousseau on the other hand has more optimism. For Rousseau, society tends to corrupt man. Rousseau thinks that humans are driven by two major instincts: self-preservation and compassion, and, so long as he does not resist the internal impulse of compassion, he will never hurt any other man, nor even any sentient being, except on those lawful occasions on which his own preservation is concerned and he is obliged to give himself

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<sup>42</sup> See M. Duzor & B. Williamson, 'By the Numbers: Coups in Africa' in *VoA News*, Last Updated: February 2, 2022. The above data shows that out of 54 countries on the African continent, 45 have had at least one coup attempt since 1950, with 36 successful at least once.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster,) 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* in Edwin A. Burt, ed., *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill*, (New York: Modern Library, 1939,) p.161.

the preference.<sup>45</sup> We have to accord some merit to the arguments from both the Hobbesian and Rousseian schools. The structure created by the state determines which channel the human tendency is going to move. A structure that makes it difficult for people to be corrupt, for instance, one based on transparency, checks and balances, etc. will produce less corrupt humans by stifling the innate tendency to be corrupt and letting the good side of the individual flourish. Conversely, when the societal structure leaves room for people to be corrupt, the result can be abysmal. People then tend to live in the Hobbesian ‘state of nature’ where ‘everyman is enemy to everyman’, and ‘in continual fear, and danger of violent death.’<sup>46</sup>

Corruption, like cancer, is fast eating into the fabric of most African states. It is so endemic, and seemingly intractable that the renowned Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe once remarked about Nigeria: “Keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is like keeping a goat from eating yam.”<sup>47</sup> Achebe’s observation is radically honest and brutal. He goes on to clarify:

This is a bad way of putting it...A goat needs yam because yam is food for goats. A Nigerian does not need corruption, neither is corruption necessary nourishment for Nigerians. It is totally false to suggest, as we are apt to do, that Nigerians are different fundamentally from any other people in the world. Nigerians are corrupt because the system under which they live today makes corruption easy and profitable; they will cease to be corrupt when corruption is made difficult and inconvenient.<sup>48</sup>

Although there had been, in Africa’s pre-colonial political history, cases of corruption in leadership among the ruling class, colonialism in many ways contributed to the prevalence of corruption in present-day African states. The repudiation of indigenous values, standards, checks and balances, and the pretensions of superimposing Western structures destabilized the well-run bureaucratic machinery previously in existence across pre-colonial Africa. The end is what is rampant across Africa today: conspicuous consumption, absence of loyalty to the state, and oppressive and corrupt state institutions, to mention but a few.<sup>49</sup> In both centralized and decentralized pre-colonial African communities, governance was conducted with the utmost seriousness as the laws were often couched in supernatural garb to instill fear and reverence

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<sup>45</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1913,) pp. 157-158.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> C. Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Op. Cit., p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> C. Ezeanya-Esiobu “Origins of Corruption in Africa” in *The Pan-African Review*, October 6, 2019.

among the citizenry.<sup>50</sup> Pre-colonial Africa, for the most part, was founded on strong ethical values sometimes packaged in spiritual terms, but with the aim of ensuring social justice and compliance. Copious examples of strong moral institutions in pre-colonial Africa abound. The Asante Confederation (in present-day Ghana) was a kingdom that lived and prospered by its severe laws. The Kingdom was founded by seven clans near Kumasi, and it was held together by the Asante-Hene Golden Stool as a symbol.<sup>51</sup> It was known that the confederation had implemented several modernization policies in its administration, including fostering advancement by merit and the growth of state enterprise through public investment. The Asante were able to “build roads and promoted agriculture, commerce, industry, and education through self-help and self-reliance.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the institution of *Oyo-Mesi*, the king-making body, served as a check against the misuse of power by the *Alafin* (the Oba) or the King of Oyo among the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria. The *Alafin* was compelled to exercise restraint and regard for his subjects while in power. Since he could not be removed from office, the Oyo-Mesi would, in the words of Yunusa Salami, "present him with an empty calabash or parrot's eggs as a sign that he must commit suicide" when it was established that he had engaged in actions that undermined the interests of his subjects, such as gross miscarriage of justice for personal gain.

Among the precolonial Igbo society of southeastern Nigeria, the absence of any overarching authority alone gave the people the power to lead, which is the pinnacle of accountability and good government. To discuss the more complicated aspects of government, the titled chiefs sat together. The Igbos have a proverb that says a "titled man does not lie." One merely needed to obtain the impeccable body of titled men to hear the case in question if one wanted to hear the truth and receive impeccable justice in accordance with the accepted norms. Accordingly, most titled men lived up to this standard of honesty and impeccability due to the demands of the rigorous rituals that conferred titles on them, but also due to the urge to keep up to their long-standing reputation as men of honor and integrity.

Pre-colonial Rwanda had a very well-organized, effective, and centrally located administrative structure. Although the king reigned supreme in an autocratic and hierarchical setting, there were mechanisms for checks and balances among clan leaders. *Ubukonde*, a kind of

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

land ownership, was widespread in Rwanda before colonization. The Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa had a mutually beneficial labor exchange ritual that was based on predetermined principles. Ubukonde was widely accepted at the time it was in place, and anyone who attempted to gain land and wealth outside of the Ubukonde system did so to the King's chagrin.

The above examples are but a few. But as further noted by Ezeanya-Esiobu, British Indirect rule turned leadership in Africa into a corrupted enterprise where instead of holding power in trust for the people, the rulers held power in trust for the colonial authorities.<sup>53</sup> Governance evolved as a divisive tool for coercively gaining the compliance of the populace. Several times, British authorities promoted community rejects and never-do-wells who had previously been denied a voice in the community to the position of warrant chief. These often governed the people with vengeful intent, rather than doing so in the interest of the people. The top levels of government were corrupted by those without morals who sought money in exchange for influencing the colonial overlords. The people considered bribery to be their only option if they wanted to be permitted access to even the most fundamental privileges without being punished for the 'serious crime' of being citizens. Colonial masters imposed flat-rate taxes known as hut taxes on the colonies. The method of paying taxes was frequently violent, with district commissioners or warrant chiefs having the authority to detain any non-payer. Similarly, while the police and military were introduced in several other parts of the world to protect the lives and properties of the citizenry, in Africa they were established primarily to crush civilian opposition to colonial rule. Police engagement with the populace was founded on the need to enforce hateful and debilitating colonial laws, including forced taxation, segregation, and quelling of anti-colonial uprisings.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the government became a symbol of oppression for the people. After colonialism ended, the newly independent African government inherited institutions that had become ingrained with a tradition of extortion and citizen tyranny. The police and military in the immediate post-colonial period were set up to terrorize unarmed civilians, and people had mastered the technique of buying their way out of unjustified encroachment.

Moreover, Ezeanya-Esiobu argues that colonialism uprooted a culture of success through hard work, where accomplished farmers and traders were revered and honored in the society, and replaced this culture with a lazy lure for the rich lifestyle of the colonial masters who as far as

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

the people could see, did little or no work, but lived in big houses, drove in fanciful cars, and treated the natives with disdain. This lifestyle of affluence with little or no hard work soon became aspirational among Africans, many of whom were hired by the colonialists as houseboys, miners, clerks, and in other menial capacities. The monetization occasioned by this introduced an unprecedented form of greed and consumerism in the history of the continent, and the culture has remained to date. This picture echoes Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon's perspectives on colonialism, and why decolonization promises such a violent struggle. With Fanon, however, this cultural brainwashing becomes a kind of schizophrenia. Fanon in *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) detailed the psychological effects of colonial oppression on the oppressed, and the potential solutions for the oppressed. Fanon thinks (and rightly so) that colonialism worked in the psyche of the colonized in a way that leaves them oblivious, nay desirous of the ills of colonialism. In the colonists' mind, Fanon argued, there is this Manichean mentality that could reduce or even eliminate cognitive dissonance brought about after committing harmful, even immoral acts against the natives.<sup>55</sup> The colonist reduces the colonized subject to an absolute evil, a savage being in need of structure and aid from foreign occupants; this mentality, therefore, justifies the colonizer's actions. For the colonized, however, this denigration drives them into a state of mental disorder — "A normal black child, having grown up with a normal family, will become abnormal at the slightest contact with the white world."<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, he explains the presence of mental disorders in the colonized as a result of colonialism constantly forcing them to ask the question, —Who am I in reality?<sup>57</sup> The dynamics of unresolved grief include symptoms and manifestations that affect every aspect of an individual's life. Fanon hypothesizes, backed with knowledge of the Algerians' pre-independence struggles, that until a revolution occurs, oppressed, colonized people will turn inward and commit self-destructive acts.<sup>58</sup> In essence, these theories propose that abnormal behavior exhibited by the colonized is due to the creation of an internal, unresolved conflict.

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<sup>55</sup> B.T. Hilton, 'Frantz Fanon and Colonialism: A Psychology of Oppression' in *Journal of Scientific Psychology*, December 2011, p. 51.

<sup>56</sup> F. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. Quoted in B.T. Hilton, *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

#### D. Tribalism and the Absence of National Consciousness

Fukuyama talks about the rational liberal democratic state (as in a state devoid of traces of racial, ethnic, tribal, or religious prejudices) as the quintessence of liberalism. For him, true democracy should be based on the principles of universal human equality, for nation-building, rather than on ‘irrational’ or ‘nationalist states.’<sup>59</sup> In the same light, Sheri Berman notes that building a liberal democracy requires, among other things, strong states, cohesive national identities, and political cultures in which citizens and politicians buy into what she calls “the rules of the game.” But impediments to them can span generations. She gives the example of 19th-century Italy. The warring kingdoms and city-states that ruled the Italian peninsula were scorned as a "geographical expression" rather than a nation. Italy underwent a top-down consolidation process to create a state, with the more prosperous north serving as the leader and the rest of the nation being incorporated through pressure and corruption. The end consequence was a weak state that was vulnerable to Mussolini and the Fascists even after the introduction of universal manhood suffrage in 1912. After World War II, Italy finally experienced liberal democracy in its entirety, in large part due to Mussolini's centralization. Even now, the effects of those formative years are still being felt.<sup>60</sup> The ingredients required in nation-building, namely the absence of divisive sentiments and attachments, are conspicuously lacking in most of the new African states due to tribal/religious affinities. The problem of tribe in most African nations, and its difference from Europe, America, and Asia, is that it is laced in other ancillary affinities such as religion, which help to widen rather than bridge its gap; and it is moreover complicated by a history of conflicts and wars. On this note, Carola Lentz observes that Pluralism theorists like M.G. Smith, L. Kuper, or P. Van den Berghe regarded the African states as ‘plural societies’, which were shaped by the dominance of such ethnic, religious, or otherwise traditionally demarcated ‘collectivities’, and by ‘a social structure characterized by fundamental discontinuities and cleavages, and a cultural complex based on systematic institutional diversity.’ Lentz observes that Immanuel Wallerstein harbored the hope that tribal and ethnic particularism might, in the long run, give way to cultural homogenization and national integration; and that such optimism soon disappeared in the face of

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<sup>59</sup> F. Fukuyama, Op. Cit. p. 201.

<sup>60</sup> See Max Strasser, “The Unsteady Evolution of Democracy”, a review of Sheri Berman’s *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day* in *New York Times*, April 18, 2019.

obvious 'ethnic' conflicts such as the Biafran War in Nigeria.<sup>61</sup> Lentz further notes that "according to Kuper, instead of assuming the quasi-automatic political and cultural modernization of African societies, we should expect that phases of 'de pluralization' - diminishing ethnic group ties and increasing institutional integration - will alternate or even coincide with phases of 'polarization' - 'an increasing accentuation of plural division based on race and ethnicity.'"<sup>62</sup> Unfortunately, Kuper's predicted 'de-pluralization' phase has been a long time coming in most African states. What is rather more manifest are the phases of polarization. Since independence, thousands of cases of tribally instigated civil wars, genocide, riots, and political unrest have been witnessed across the continent. These leave long traces of bad blood and ensure further disunity among the nations.

Tribalism has become a potent tool in the hands of corrupt African politicians, who play on it to enhance their corrupt selfish interests and evade unanimous condemnation. It has ensured that the possibility of a collective revolutionary action springing from the masses remains a mirage since the masses are not united in purpose.

### **E. The Problem of Neo-colonialism**

On attainment of independence by most African states from their colonial overlords, it was extremely difficult to disentangle from the colonial perfected role for the state because of the systematic disarticulation in the indigenous economy and the intrinsic tying of same with the external economy of the colonizers.<sup>63</sup>

The problem of neo-colonialism in African economics and politics is so endemic and hydra-headed that one cannot possibly exhaust all its facets; however, it is a big factor that ensures underdevelopment in the previous European colonies. It is as point-blank in some cases as it is insidious in others, the glaring examples being, for instance, the fact that France holds about \$500 billion of its former African colonies' wealth in its central bank and that money is controlled by the French Treasury. Interestingly, the African countries who own this money are

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<sup>61</sup> C. Lentz, "Tribalism and Ethnicity in Africa: A Review of Four Decades Oof Anglophone Research", in *Cahiers des Sciences Humaines Institut Francais de Recherche Scientifique pour le Developement en Cooperation*. 31 (2) 1995) pp. 311-312.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 312

<sup>63</sup> S. Ocheni & B.C. Nwankwo., "Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa" in *Cross-Cultural Communication* Vol. 8, No. 3, 2012, p. 46.



allowed access to only 15% of this money. If more is needed, it must be borrowed from the remaining 85% at commercial rates. However, they can only borrow a limited amount of money. Only 20% of the previous year's public revenue can be accessed.<sup>64</sup> Neo-colonial exploits come in many other bold forms such as external policy interference and economic controls, massive brain drain created by the massive devaluation of labor and raw materials from the south; and even in more subtle ways such as the psychological disposition of the average African to favor foreign products over locally made ones.

The main reason why neo-colonialism seems to be an intractable problem is that it has deep foundations laid mostly during the colonial era. Colonialism sought to integrate the African subcontinent into a global world order which sees the colonies at the lowest level. The effects of these are largely what sustains neo-colonialism. For instance, due to the fact that industrialization in Africa was discouraged during the colonial era, African countries today still have to rely largely on imports and the aid of foreign donors.<sup>65</sup> Another significant effect of the polarization of the world economy, observes Prabhat Patnaik, is that wages in the north rose along with labor productivity while wages in the south remain tied to a subsistence level because of the vast labor reserves there, generated through the destruction of local craft production under colonialism.<sup>66</sup> Although new imperial superpowers such as the United States and more recently China have become major global power brokers, the pattern has not changed at all. The main idea behind neo-colonialism is to block growth in developing countries and retain such dependent nations as sources of cheap raw materials and cheap labor.

In a nutshell, the major issue with neo-colonialism is that it creates a culture of perpetual dependency that sees the colonies impoverished rather than enriched while maintaining a face-value claim to economic assistance. The big challenge for the colonies is to break away from this cycle while maintaining diplomatic relationships with the rest of the world. I am going to examine this theme in more detail in the following chapter.

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<sup>64</sup> Sadegh Khalili Tehrani, "Neo-Colonialism in Africa. The Most Dangerous Form of Imperialism?" Project Report, 2020.

<sup>65</sup> David Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa – Instructions to History*, (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, London: UCL Press, 1995,) pp. 1 – 7.

<sup>66</sup> P. Patnaik in Maha Ben Gadha et al (eds.), *Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa*, (London: Pluto Press, 2022,) p. vii.

## **F. The Bane of Governance in Post-Colonial Africa: The Problem of Structure**

The singular most significant impediment to a progressive government in most African nations is, in my opinion, the presence of a dysfunctional structure, and I shall explain why I believe so. The political arrangement of a state (otherwise structure) determines, to a large extent, how the said state operates, just like in any system, be it biological, ecological, or political. Every political setting should be properly studied, and the structure determines the system of government to be used. A dysfunctional structure could be disbanded and restructured to suit the system of government that the state wishes to adopt. Even in the colonial era, the socio-political structure of the native community, and how much the colonialists operated within this framework marked the difference between the successful colonial administrations and the less successful ones. It is for instance a well-known fact that the British generally had a more successful colonial operation in Africa than the French. The reason for this was that the British adopted a method that was more adaptable to the political structure already in place in the colonies, than the French. We shall examine this claim forthwith.

The French ‘assimilation policy’ (otherwise known as ‘direct rule’) failed woefully because it entirely neglected the native culture and pre-existing structure. As the name suggests, the policy tried to literally assimilate the natives into the French system and culture. Under this policy, the existence of political parties or any political associations was forbidden. Also, the policy imposed the French religion, law, mode of dressing, etc., on the natives. Education was limited/restricted as only the French authority could establish schools. It further divided the people into citizens and subjects. The colonies were subjects whereas every member of the French system was a citizen. A subject could attain citizenship through a series of rigorous processes that included being educated in and being able to speak the French language. The policy totally disregarded the pre-existing leadership structure and didn’t make use of native rulers in enacting/enforcing the laws of the state. Consequently, the policy turned out to be not only too costly to maintain but unsuccessful in the long run since the natives had a hard time jettisoning their long-held practices for this new system that did not consider their cultural, linguistic, and religious leanings and prejudices. In the face of various revolts and unsuccessful attempts to assimilate the natives, the French colonists had to switch to the policy of association which was somewhat like British indirect rule.

Contrary to the assimilation policy, British Indirect Rule made use of the local chiefs and leaders to control every other member of the society. It, moreover, made use of the native police, and on many occasions respected native laws and customs, merely modifying them where they deemed necessary, to suit their motives. Another significant aspect of Indirect Rule was the appointment of warrant chiefs who were usually natives. Essentially, Indirect Rule had more devolution of powers, and it was more inclusive of the native population. As a result, it cost much less to maintain and was by contrast comparatively successful, though not so much in those clans with a decentralized, somewhat acephalous system of governance. In Nigeria for instance, the British achieved relative success in northern Nigeria which had emirs, as well as south-western Nigeria which had the *obas* as powerful rulers, but in the south-eastern Igbo parts with a decentralized system, encountered substantial obstacles.

The legacy of colonial rule has had an impact on the subsequent economic development of the colonies up until the present era. It seems that the ex-British colonies have fared better in this regard, partly due to a more efficient structure of governance bequeathed by Britain to its colonies, and partly due to the fact of France having a greater neo-colonial stranglehold than Britain on its former colonies. As David Brown observes:

Recognizing human capital's role in determining long-term economic growth, it appears that a country's colonial past -specifically whether it was under French or British rule- will have an important impact on future economic development. Economic performance has varied dramatically between the former French and British colonies. In terms of growth in GDP/capita, the former British colonies grew 33 percent between 1970 and 1980. Former French colonies grew much slower: over the same period, their mean growth rate was 11 percent. The huge difference is not explained by outlying cases. When comparing median rates, the former British colonies' economies expanded 21 percent compared with 10 percent for the former French colonies. Factors other than human capital (geography, natural resources, civil war, etc.) surely help explain some of the variance in economic performance. Nevertheless, colonization's impact on the accumulation of human capital must explain an important part of the disparity. The implications of this study are not limited to developmental outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa, however. The patterns of enrollment observed over time -the growing difference in primary enrollment between the former British and French colonies- suggest we need to consider the possibility that institutional influences do not always diminish with time. Instead, the growing disparity between the former British and French cases implies when political institutions die, their effects not only persist, they may actually grow.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> D. Brown., *Democracy, Colonization, and Human Capital in Sub-Saharan Africa* Studies in Comparative International Development, Spring 2000, Vol. 35, No. 1, 20-40.

Brown's assertion is a pointer to the fact that once a structure is established, its impact persists as colonial legacies persist in present-day African economic/political systems, and pre-colonial traditions still find their way into present discussions. The workability of any political system, therefore, depends to a large extent on the prevalent structure within the locale.

To properly understand how the political structure of a place determines its viability, I shall illustrate using the Nigerian situation.<sup>68</sup> The amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates by Lord Lugard in 1914 saw the uniting together of multiple ethnic/ religious nationalities. The northern part of the country is predominantly Muslim and is comprised of numerous sub-ethnic groups generally with a previously centralized system of government under various emirates and empires. The southern part of the country by contrast is comprised mostly of Christians; it also had numerous tribes and ethnic nationalities most of whom had a decentralized system of government pre-colonialism. Given this scenario, the amalgamation was and remains a big mistake that was done to enhance colonial control, without any consideration of the consequences for the colonies. After independence, a new constitution was formed with a bicameral legislature, closer to the US system than the British, but the details of the constitution didn't allow for ethnic minorities to thrive alongside the majority. It gave recognition to the major ethnic groups, completely ignoring the minorities in areas such as resource allocation, state creation and legislative representation. Furthermore, it gave more power to the center rather than the grassroots, much like with the colonial administration. This ensured limited grassroots development and enhanced the culture of dependency on federal allocation. It also gave room for corruption and embezzlement by the ruling class, since allocation came as dole-out funds from the center, and accountability was very minimal. A more viable constitution could have, for instance: made provisions for a rotational presidency to ensure inclusivity; devolved power to the grassroots, and by so doing ensured more economic development and more accountability at the center. There have been continuous cries of marginalization by numerous minority groups in Nigeria; and calls for secession which have led to political unrest, a bloody civil war, and the loss of millions of lives, not to mention economic stagnation. The call for a restructuring of the

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<sup>68</sup> Nigeria is in many ways representative of Africa. It not only harbors the largest population of people of color in the world, but with over 250 ethnic nationalities/languages, it also in many ways represents ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity in Africa.

political structure has remained unheeded due to many factors directly or indirectly linked to corruption: The leaders do not want to amend the constitution and restructure the country because a restructured system would strengthen the grassroots and weaken the center, giving room for more accountability in government. The masses are not likely to seek a revolutionary option because there is a chasmic absence of cohesion among them due to strong ethnic affinities, and the politicians exploit this a great deal to keep the country unstable. So instead of the masses forming a united front against the political thieves, there is often this tendency for a particular section of the masses, usually the ones with tribal links with the said politicians, to rise in their defense, not minding the absurdity of it. In the end, public resources become a national cake for any privileged person to partake of, and extend a few crumbs to his cronies, rather than a national treasury for all to guard jealously, and appropriate judiciously.

### **G. Synopsis**

By way of summary then, this chapter suggests that the reasons why most African countries are nowhere near political/economic stability despite many decades of democratic rule, are various, but the most significant ones bear on the absence of a suitable structure to match the versions of democracy being practiced, and vice versa. This is because many of the newly formed African states were mapped out by the colonialists without taking into consideration the differences in cultural/ ideological leanings of the component ethnicities in the new states. The perennial problem of leadership borders on this too. Things are not likely going to change unless the leaders operate within a functional structure or otherwise create a structure that is workable with the governmental system in place. The fact that the colonial administration bequeathed a system of government inimical to the pre-established culture, and averse to cohesive growth, means that most of the new states may need to be disbanded, with some split into multiple states that are more cohesive in structure. Democracy for sure is not a flawless system of government as we have seen above. It is therefore vital that its inherent flaws be contained by adapting it to the peculiarities of the culture in which it operates. This was largely neglected by the colonialists, and it has ensured a dysfunctional government in most African states. The rest of the problems including corruption in leadership, tribalism and political unrest, and even neo-colonialism all in one way or the other have a bearing on this.

The problem of leadership in Africa, in my view, is essentially the problem of inflexible and non-adaptive political structure. I shall shed more light on this in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

This chapter is an attempt to examine a few of the political options and decisions available for the various African nationalities, without necessarily recommending a particular ideal. It, however, makes suggestions where need be, bearing in mind that what works in one specific case might not necessarily work for another specific case. Furthermore, it is the opinion of this thesis that in the face of competing options, democracy remains a good ideal for a modern African state, but the version of democracy to be adopted by any state does not necessarily have to follow the inherited colonial model. It must be adapted to the cultural niceties and necessities of the new states, bearing in mind that culture grows and changes as well. In addition to this, the versions of democracy practiced in the various African states should be adapted to the demands of modernity and a fast-globalizing world. No nation exists in isolation and the cross-cultural interactions among the nations of the world in trade and politics means that every nation adapts and adjusts to trends. Africa has been changed so much by interactions with the Western world, but the Western world has also been influenced in many ways by her cross-cultural interactions with Africa and the rest of the world. A rigid recourse to tradition, without room for cross-cultural adaptations, could therefore prove inimical to development in the new African states.

Most African states remain sadly at the searching stage for a political/economic system to build upon. This experimental stage of leadership has proven not only an excruciating one in which numerous lives and resources have been wasted but also a very important one that will eventually make or mar the entire political life of the continent in the future. What happens now will determine whether Africa will eventually rise from the shadows of imperialism and underdevelopment, or whether she will perpetually play second, even third fiddle in the global superstructure. Many important decisions must be taken, and many risky choices must be made. Obviously, there will not be unanimity across the continent. The all-important task of restructuring, I believe, should not be left in the hands of the politicians, but be given to the intellectuals and philosophers. The association of leadership with the intellectual elite of society has always been a profound one since at least Plato, who seemed to suggest that a just state would only be realized when philosophers become kings or those who are kings are made to

become philosophers.<sup>1</sup> This is not inconsistent with Plato's view that to know the good is to do the good. But as we have seen, for Aristotle, the knowledge of the good does not always amount to doing the good, for the weakness of the will is, and can often be, a debilitating factor.<sup>2</sup> Leadership entails not just knowledge, but a charismatic ability to execute what one knows. Leadership is a skill that can be acquired through habit.<sup>3</sup> In light of this, a different reading of the *Republic* should be considered here as well.

According to the Straussian school,<sup>4</sup> the ideal state sketched in the *Republic* must be recognized as a facade for the dialogue's 'real teaching', the impossibility of ideal political arrangements. The surface of the *Republic* must be peeled away in order to reveal an inner message that is quite the opposite of what the *Republic* has often been taken to convey.<sup>5</sup> Leo Strauss claims that the early political philosophers were persuaded to distinguish between political ends and means. They came to see that attaining knowledge of the essence of virtue, the ultimate purpose of political activity, could not be achieved through political means but rather through a life dedicated to reflection, to "philosophy." Consequently, according to Strauss, "political philosophy transforms itself into a discipline that is no longer concerned with political things in the ordinary sense of the term."<sup>6</sup> This view (that classical political philosophers were led to turn away from ordinary political activities) can be referred to as the 'separation thesis'. Closely related to the 'separation thesis' is the 'limitation thesis', the view that the Classical political philosophers recognized severe restrictions upon what could be accomplished by traditional political means.<sup>7</sup> Given these limitations, they believed that philosophy and politics were not easily to be reunited. Accordingly, the Classical political philosophers understood that political reality is insurmountable and that attempts to mold it in accordance with some preconceived design or pattern inevitably fail. Political idealism, the desire to alter reality, is a

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<sup>1</sup> See Plato, *The Republic*, Bk. V.

<sup>2</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1150b 19.

<sup>3</sup> See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I-II.

<sup>4</sup> See Leo Strauss, *The City and Man*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> G. Klosko, "The Straussian Interpretation of Plato's *Republic*" in *History of Political Thought*, Summer 1986, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1986), p. 279.

<sup>6</sup> Leo Strauss, 'On Classical Political Philosophy', in *What is Political Philosophy? and Other Essays* (New York, 1959), p. 91.

<sup>7</sup> G. Klosko, *Ibid.*



pointless urge that may result in serious harm.<sup>8</sup> According to Allan Bloom and Strauss, Plato realized this truth and expounded it in the *Republic*. As Bloom writes in his 'Interpretive Essay':

Socrates [i.e., Socrates in the *Republic*] constructs his utopia to point up the dangers of what we would call utopianism; as such it is the greatest critique of political idealism ever written.<sup>9</sup> The striving for the perfectly just city puts unreasonable and despotic demands on ordinary men, and it abuses and misuses the best men. There is gentleness in Socrates' treatment of men, and his vision is never clouded by the blackness of moral indignation, for he knows what to expect of men. Political idealism is the most destructive of human passions.<sup>10</sup>

The Straussian reading of the *Republic* directly confronts the stance of this thesis that the intellectually sound individual is better placed to direct the affairs of leadership in society. It moreover seems to make political economy an effort in futility, a utopian dream. If it were so, then humans had better stay away from such futile dreams and 'destructive passion'. Ironically, however, how do we completely detach from that which is considered a human passion, an instinctive drive, as it were? How does one commit oneself to a life struggle against a natural desire to improve on the status quo? Plato seemed to construct an ideal political arrangement which Strauss thinks is impossible to attain. Plato in the *Republic* seems to think that the real world is an imitation of the ideal world of forms. Plato was influenced by a tradition of skepticism, including the skepticism of his master, Socrates. But does Plato really discourage us from such imitations? Strauss seems to think so, but this is a controversial claim.

Many of the ancient Greek philosophers saw that true knowledge -that is knowledge that is everlasting and unchanging- is difficult to come by. Plato in the *Republic* suggests that true and reliable knowledge rests only with those who can comprehend the true reality behind the world of everyday experience.<sup>11</sup> To perceive the world of the Forms, individuals must undergo a difficult education. Plato's philosopher-kings are required to perceive the Form of Good(ness) in order to be well-informed rulers. We must be taught to recall this knowledge of the Forms, since it is already present in a person's mind, due to their soul apparently having been in the world of the Forms before they were born. Not everyone is suited to be king in the same way as not everyone is suited to mathematics. In Socrates, Plato apparently sees this quintessence of a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> A. Bloom, *The Republic of Plato*, (New York, 1968) p.410.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Plato, *The Republic*, Bk V, 475-476

philosopher king who is fit to rule, even though he (Socrates) never sought to dabble into civil service, having been barred from such by his daimon.<sup>12</sup> Socrates' extraordinary intelligence and his unique ability to scrutinize and expose the faults in the ordinary way of thinking of Athenians had won him Plato's great admiration, such that most of Plato's works were about Socrates. Plato, therefore, saw, with Socrates that it was possible to attain such philosophic sagacity required of a ruler. Plato was directly influenced by Pythagoras who taught that man could be purified in the Orphic order to attain a state of release from their bodily prison, even while still on earth; that is to say, to become a philosopher. Pythagoras' discovery of a dual world of physical objects, on the one hand, and abstract objects comprising of numbers led him to believe that man could transcend the physical realm and arrive at eternal truths.<sup>13</sup> This he believed was possible through ritual and educational training. Pythagoras built an order ruled by a philosopher, through which he hoped to transform society, and Plato's idea of the Academy, and moreso, his theory of forms were more or less copied from Pythagoras.

Plato seems to imply that only special people are fit to rule. His firm belief in Aristocracy, and in the power of education is a testament to this. Who are the special people who can recognize the Forms? For Plato the answer is straightforward: only philosophers have the ability to discern the Forms. Plato goes on to say that it is only when such a person comes to power that the citizens of the state will have the opportunity to step out of the cave and see the light.<sup>14</sup>

Irrespective of the side of the argument that one chooses to expound, one obvious takeaway from Plato is that knowledge should be at the base of any good leadership. If we are to follow the Straussian reading and concede that the striving for political idealism/utopianism is a human passion, then the Philosopher/intellectual cannot help but be driven by this passion. It is the intellectual elite that builds the base from which the socio-political structure of every society emanates. The history of Western political development reveals a major role played by the intellectual elite in creating a viable political culture or modifying the existing ones. What we

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<sup>12</sup> Plato, *Apology*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> See M.J.B. Allen, "Pythagoras in the Early Renaissance", in Huffman, C.A., (ed.) *A History of Pythagoreanism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014,) pp. 435–453.

<sup>14</sup> See Plato, *The Republic*, Bk V, 473 c-e.

have as Western liberal democratic ideals, an open market economy, as well as the educational systems, and in general, popular culture, were largely shaped by the heroic contributions of the Western intellectual elite particularly during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment periods.<sup>15</sup> From Thales to Socrates and Plato, from Aristotle to Descartes and Kant; from Hume to Locke, Hobbes, and Marx, and to Peirce and Dewey, philosophy came through when the West needed it most. It has lived true to its name as the great beacon of light that shone when the world was in the dark.<sup>16</sup>

### **A. Philosophy, Ideology, or Theory? A Clarification of Key Concepts**

When Placid Tempels published *Bantu Philosophy* (1945), the plethora of criticisms his work received was based on a range of arguments, but particularly on the ethnological content of his work. Discussions around *Bantu Philosophy* soon became about what is meant by the word ‘philosophy’, either in Tempels' work, or elsewhere in the general literature. These discussions, with respect to African philosophy, were soon to produce two broad schools of thought: the first school thinks that ‘philosophy’ is a strict academic discipline requiring a high level of intellectual ability privileged to only a few, and that it was audacious, nay unacceptable, for Tempels to have labeled his work ‘philosophy.’ The second school thinks that philosophy is not a sole prerogative of any, and that “philosophy is tacitly and surreptitiously... privileged as the true measure and standard of the humanity of the human as such,”<sup>17</sup> and that anyone “who pretends that the primitive peoples have no systems of thought rejects them from belonging to the class of humans.”<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, Tempels work has become a precursor to, but also a substantial topic of discourse, in modern and contemporary African philosophy “in the strict/academic sense”, so much so that a history of African Philosophy without more than a cursory stop at Tempels would be deficient. Many African philosophers even in the first school have come to appreciate the ‘philosophic’ relevance of *Bantu Philosophy*, and admit that there need not necessarily be rigid rules in the

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<sup>15</sup> See M. Jurdjevic, “Political Culture,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance*, M. Wyatt (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014,) pp. 298-319., Also, see F. Chabod (1958), and G. Mattingly (1988).

<sup>16</sup> This could be taken in a literal sense in that the great Renaissance philosophers who succeeded the Dark Ages of Europe shaped much of what is enlightenment culture in today’s Western world.

<sup>17</sup> T. Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Culture: Horizon and Discourse*, (New York: Routledge, 1994,) p.3.

<sup>18</sup> P. Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantue*, (Presence Africaine Paris, 1948,) p.16.

game of philosophizing. Philosophy need not be some esoteric business requiring a certain degree of humanity. The early Greek philosophers' works, for instance, were hardly distinguishable from natural science.

In light of the foregoing, the sense in which the word 'philosophy' is used in this chapter, nay in the entire thesis, is often with nuance. There is no absolute/definite meaning attached to the strict/academic usage, or the general sense in which it is somewhat synonymous with something like 'ideology.' However, the context of the discussion at each point should shed some light on which sense is referenced. Similarly, a theory may be distinguishable from a philosophy in the sense that the former deals with empirical/ historical findings arguably at a lower level of abstraction while the latter occupies a higher, metaphysical level of abstraction. But there is often a link between the two. A political philosopher may work on the findings of a political theorist, for example. In this thesis, I have (often concurrently) engaged both fields, namely, African politics and African political philosophy, bearing in mind that philosophy often finds its root in the human environment and its existential circumstances. The acceptance of the role of the context in the outcome of philosophizing is the background of the understanding of philosophy as hermeneutics, championed by such eminent thinkers as Paul Ricoeur, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Philosophy becomes not just a reflection on abstract principles but a reflection that is fertilized by the thinker's particular history and surrounding. This fact tailors the understanding of the task of philosophizing. It can also be seen as the social concern of the philosophic agent.<sup>19</sup>

The African predicament takes on relevance in African philosophy because, in contrast to the ideological superstructures created by sociologists, psychologists, historians, artists, and scientists, in their respective fields, philosophy harmonizes experiences and viewpoints from all academic disciplines in a critical way. As such, philosophy is the common stem that supports all other branches. Philosophy claims all disciplines by not claiming any one of them.

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<sup>19</sup> Olusegun Oladipo, *The Idea of African Philosophy*, (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1992.)

## B. Gandhism?

In my life, I have always looked to Mahatma Gandhi as an inspiration, because he embodies the kind of transformational change that can be made when ordinary people come together to do extraordinary things. -Barack Obama<sup>20</sup>

By way of definition, Gandhism is a set of religious, moral, social, economic, and political ideas adopted and developed by Indian philosopher Mahatma Gandhi, first during his period in South Africa from 1893 to 1914, and later in India. This eponymous ideology has myriads of connotations in various circles, and yet, these various interpretations could find a common bearing. In the religious circle, it implies accepting the fundamental oneness of all creation in the cosmic spirit. For Gandhi, all living things are illustrative of the eternal divine reality. Like Karl Marx, Gandhi thought that attaining one's own self-realization was the ultimate aim of life. He, however, held that the definition of self-realization was "seeing God face to face," which is to say, "realizing the absolute truth" or "knowing oneself."<sup>21</sup> He thought that in order to achieve it, a person had to identify with all of humanity. In social circles, the term 'Gandhism' is associated with the principle of truth and non-violent resistance. Gandhi believed that non-violence and tolerance require a great level of courage and patience acquired through habit; thus, they are not principles to be confused with cowardice, and as Gandhi himself noted in a 1920 essay, just after World War I, "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence."<sup>22</sup> He himself made efforts to recruit for the British military during the war, as per his belief that, at that time, it would demonstrate that Indians were willing to fight. Further, it would also show the British that his fellow Indians were "their subjects by choice rather than out of cowardice."<sup>23</sup> As a politico-economic ideology, Gandhian philosophy was a thoughtful engagement with modernity and its drawbacks. Against the troubles of industrialization, materialism, and selfish pursuits, he suggested 'swaraj', 'swadeshi', trusteeship, and a minimal state vested only with co-coordinative powers.<sup>24</sup> 'Swaraj' is Hindi for 'Right', 'Truth', 'Liberty', and 'Freedom', just as 'Swadeshi' means 'creation of national wealth and power'. Gandhi's idea of 'a minimal state vested only with co-coordinative powers' could be interpreted to mean the

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<sup>20</sup> B. Obama, as quoted in *The Economic Times*, July 11, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> See "Political Ideologies: Gandhism" in *Civil Service India.*, March 2023.

<sup>22</sup> Also see "A Letter," *The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 11, p. 286-287.

<sup>23</sup> R. Sagar, David M. Malone; et al. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy.*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2015,) p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> 'Political Ideologies: Gandhism' in *Civil Service India.*, Ibid.

devolution of powers to the grassroots and advocacy of individual autonomy, which is essentially what 'Swaraj' and 'Swadeshi' clamor for.

Moreover, Gandhism and Marxism seem to intersect in that both advocate for the creation of a classless and stateless society. Gandhi's teachings on non-violence are apparently pertinent to a modern world infested with militarism, violence, and power politics. Among the tactics which he considers alternatives to violent resistance are: negotiation and arbitration; agitation (demonstrations such as mass meetings, parades, and slogan-shouting); issuing of an ultimatum; economic boycott, and forms of strike (picketing, dharna, non-violent labor strike, and general strike); non-cooperation; civil disobedience; and usurping of the functions of government.<sup>25</sup> For Gandhi, it was only with the people's consent that enslavement and exploitation were possible. The government could not work effectively if citizens refused to cooperate. Hartals, picketing, and other forms of non-cooperation are examples. Hartal involves ceasing work as a form of protest, and its goal was to stir both the public's and the government's imagination. According to Gandhi, hartals should be voluntarily organized, and nonviolent methods may be employed for them to be successful. Use of force is not advised when picketing, either. Coercion, pressure, rudeness, burning of images, and hunger strikes should not be used during picketing.<sup>26</sup>

I chose to briefly examine Gandhism in the context of African development due to several discussions held in my circle about the possibility of violent revolutionary action as a lasting solution to Africa's political dilemma. Some have argued, following Frantz Fanon, that the corrupt political elite that has exploited and disheveled the system needs to be gotten rid of to begin a new untainted page of Africa's political progress. These pundits cite the French Revolution and/or the American Revolution as typical instances of substantial positive changes brought about through violent action, which they deem inevitable when dealing with the ruling class. The alternative group cites the Gandhian non-violent revolution as a better alternative course of action. But Gandhism, although it is undoubtedly a political philosophy, is considerably more of a socio-religious philosophy of life than a political ideology. It is meant to be a guiding principle of life which among other things requires a certain level of asceticism. Gandhism in my opinion would not work as a political philosophy in many African states,

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<sup>25</sup> 'Political Ideologies: Ghandhism', Op. Cit.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

though it may serve as a base for a cultural change. Most of the military leaders on the continent, have only been moved by sheer force. Many African countries, including those that are under democratic regimes, have witnessed a wanton violation of human rights, ranging from arrest and torture of the opposition to assassinations, and manhandling of unarmed protesters by the government. A Gandhian (non-violent) form of resistance is likely going to be met with brutal force by the government in many African states. This is, however, not to say that a violent revolutionary resistance will be automatically successful. For one thing, the success of the French and American Revolutions depended on the unity of the middle class, a unity conspicuously lacking in many African nations due to tribal affinities. This notorious absence of unity is in my view a singular most dangerous obstacle to a revolutionary change in most African countries.

There have been several instances in many African countries when revolutionary actions were initiated against a bad government policy/organization by a certain section of society, but these revolutionary movements were either sabotaged or entirely doused no sooner than they were started, by another section of the society due to political manipulations. I shall illustrate by citing an example of the #EndSARS incident in Nigeria: the #EndSARS protest was essentially a series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria, which rocked the nation in October 2020. The slogan calls for the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian police with a long record of abuse on Nigerian citizens. Massive protests took place in many of Nigeria's main cities, and there was a loud outcry on social media. Also, in several major cities throughout the world, Nigerians in the diaspora and supporters held solidarity protests and demonstrations. The protests stood out for being supported by a demographic of only young Nigerians. Soon, the protest began to extend beyond #EndSARS and police brutality to #EndBadGovernance. Properties owned by corrupt politicians were being vandalized. It was as if the great moment of change had finally come. Then, suddenly, things went sour. Some politicians had bribed a section of the youths, mostly in the northern part of the country, to begin a pro-SARS protest. That was the beginning of the end of #EndSARS. The government went as far as clamping down on the protesters with the army, opening fire on them, despite being unarmed. Many casualties were recorded including dozens of deaths and injuries. Many were captured and detained, and their bank accounts were frozen. It was a nightmarish reminder of the fact that revolution was a very unlikely solution to the problem of leadership in

the country. A similar situation has been recorded in other African countries: Uganda, Zimbabwe, Egypt, South Africa, Ghana, Cameroun, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger Republic, Burkina Faso, to mention but a few.

Nonetheless, Gandhi's political philosophy is a huge influence in the contemporary world, notably in India, where recent political considerations increasingly make provisions for the decentralization of power. Gandhism could serve as a long-term base for cultural change in many African states, which would in turn influence the political life of the people. But as a political course of action in the present era, it most probably would be ineffectual.

### **C. Socialism: The *Differánce***

Socialism as an alternative political philosophy to liberal democracy is generally associated with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. But socialism is not alien to African culture. In fact, shreds of evidence suggest that socialist systems were some of the oldest political systems in traditional Africa.<sup>27</sup> Socialism<sup>28</sup> formed the basis of cultural revival, which most nationalist ideological philosophers in Africa clamored for in the wake of the pre-independence and post-independence struggles in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> And not a few African thinkers have suggested that it is in going back to these 'political roots', rather than in adopting the foreign modes of political and economic systems, that Africa shall find the answers to her political dilemmas. To this effect therefore, we shall examine some of these socialist ideologies, as well as the Marxist version of socialism, in a bid to find what may or may not be adaptable to contemporary African political evolution. This is still bearing in mind that the multifarity of the African states means that there might not be one jacket that fits all, for all the numerous African politico-economic governments.

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<sup>27</sup> See J.K. Nyerere, "Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism", April 1962, p.3ff: <http://www.jpanafrican.com/edocs/e-DocUjamma3.5.pdf>; also K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1964.)

<sup>28</sup> See p.17 for a working definition of socialism.

<sup>29</sup> Among them are such figures as Kwame Nkrumah (*Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*, 1965), Julius Nyerere (*Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, 1971; *Freedom and Development/Uhuru Na Maendeleo: A Selection from Writings and Speeches*, 1968-1973), Nnamdi Azikiwe (*Renascent Africa*, 1937); Leopold Sedar Senghor (*Négritude et Humanisme*, 1945).



## 1. Julius Nyerere: Ujamaa Socialism

The first notable thing about Nyerere's brand of socialism is that he sees socialism as a mental attitude that is needed to ensure that the people care for each other's welfare, rather than a 'rigid adherence to a standard political pattern.'<sup>30</sup> From this standpoint, he goes on to delineate the basic tenets of this socialist ideal. His emphasis is on the modes of wealth distribution rather than its method of generation.<sup>31</sup> He emphatically condemns the insatiable desire to acquire wealth in a capitalist society and sees it as the inherent wrong in this mode of socio-economic distribution:

Acquisitiveness for the purpose of gaining power and prestige is unsocialist. In an acquisitive society, wealth tends to corrupt those who possess it. It tends to breed in them a desire to live more comfortably than their fellows, to dress better, and in every way to outdo them. They begin to feel they must climb as far above their neighbors as they can. The visible contrast between their own comfort and the comparative discomfort of the rest of society becomes almost essential to the enjoyment of their wealth, and this sets off the spiral of personal competition –which is then anti-social.<sup>32</sup>

Nyerere, in so speaking, essentially condemns capitalism and its spirit of insatiable acquisition of wealth; and thinks that it is un-African. Another important aspect of Ujamaa socialism is the contribution of every member of the society to the labor force, so much so that idling is considered unthinkable. In support of this, Nyerere quotes a famous Swahili adage:

“Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe!” He retorts that “In actual fact, the guest was likely to ask for the hoe even before his host had to give him one – for he knew what was expected of him and would have been ashamed to remain idle any longer. ‘Thus, working was part and parcel, was indeed the very basis and justification of this socialist achievement of which we are so justly proud.’”<sup>33</sup>

Following this principle, society also deems it a responsibility to cater to the disabled and the elderly: because they have a genuine reason for their inability to contribute, and because they have (as in the case of the elderly) paid their dues by contributing when they were young and able. In so saying, Nyerere seems to suggest that every member of such a society is conscientious and wouldn't need to be forced to work in the first place. Nyerere's view of man as inherently inclined towards good here is remarkable and calls for a deeper reflection. For him, the idea of

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<sup>30</sup> J.K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism*, April 1962, p.1: <http://www.jpanafrican.com/edocs/e-DocUjamma3.5.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p.2.

<sup>33</sup> See Ibid. pp. 3-5.

the Hobbesian man who is a wolf unto his fellow man is alien and un-African. He re-emphasizes this belief in association to Marxist socialism:

European socialism was born of the Agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution which followed it. The former created the “landed” and the “landless” classes in society; the latter produced the modern capitalist and the industrial proletariat. These two revolutions planted the seeds of conflict within society, and not only was European socialism born of that conflict, but its apostles sanctified the conflict itself into a philosophy. Civil war (which they call “class war”) was no longer looked upon as something evil, or something unfortunate, but as something good and necessary. African socialism, on the other hand, did not have the “benefit” of the Agrarian Revolution or the Industrial Revolution. It did not start from the existence of conflicting “classes” in society. Indeed, I doubt if the equivalent for the word “class” exists in any indigenous African language; for language describes the ideas of those who speak it, and the idea of “class” or “caste” was nonexistent in African society.<sup>34</sup>

The word ‘worker’ in the African sense is used in contrast to the ‘loiterer.’ This differs from the European sense in which it is used in contrast to ‘employer’. Nyerere’s distinction between the African brand of socialism and the European/Marxist brand is quite notable: within the African context, socialism was born out of the need for fraternal coexistence between members of the community. It is rooted in the African sense of community and communitarianism. It is essentially an extension of family life, thus *Ujamaa*. European socialism, on the contrary, was born out of a class struggle between the former lords turned bourgeoisie, and the former serfs turned proletariat. It is thus rooted in classism and the need for unionism. The former (African/*Ujamaa* socialism) is largely cooperative and acquiescent while the latter (European/Marxist socialism) is largely revolutionary and reactionary. The former developed more organically from the traditional values of the people, while the latter was more or less created to solve a problem in society, namely: to quell the capitalist exploitative drive of the bourgeois class.

Furthermore, this principle of *Ujamaa* suggests that those who contribute more to the economy on the basis of the value of their trade should not necessarily earn more. They should, rather, earn a fair share in relation to the rest of the members of the community. A diamond miner should not, because diamond is a very valuable commodity in the market, earn more than

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.7.

say a farmer.<sup>35</sup> For Nyerere then, African socialism is encapsulated in *Ujamaa*, a Swahili word that means ‘familyhood’:

The foundation, and the objective, of African socialism is the extended family. The true African socialist does not look upon one class of men as his brethren and another as his natural enemies. He does not form an alliance with the “brethren” for the extermination of the “non-brethren”. “Ujamaa”, then, or “Familyhood”, describes our socialism. It is opposed to capitalism, which seeks to build a happy society on the basis of the exploitation of man by man, on the basis of enslavement of labor and capital; and it is equally opposed to doctrinaire socialism which seeks to build its happy society on a philosophy of inevitable conflict between man and man, between the worker and the employer.<sup>36</sup>

In a nutshell, Ujamaa socialism seeks to create a welfarist state, built on a conscientious neighborliness principle devoid of exploitation and classism. Ujamaa socialism is rooted in African traditional values of mutual coexistence and neighborliness, which makes it a unique brand, different from Marxist socialism, which developed from the need for unionism by the European labor class. Nyerere is not opposed to democracy as a principle of governance. Having said that, the major benefit of Ujamaa socialism, I think, is its welfarist approach, which is adopted by most modern democracies presently. The idea of supporting the less privileged, the aged, and the disabled has become a norm within most democratic governments, including those in the West. This idea is certainly a noble and indeed recommendable one in any society. Its justification rests on the fact that by virtue of the social contract, any member of society deserves some level of care and protection in as much as the society demands allegiance and contribution within the subject’s ability. It is on the same grounds that income taxes should be according to what one earns, and not on an equal basis. The elderly and disabled are to a certain extent incapacitated and as such are not able to maximize the potentials the society offers. On this ground, society should take care of them, so long as they are responsible and law-abiding. But to suggest that people would gladly give their maximum contribution to the labor force without any incentive is to expect too much of human nature. By contrast, what capitalism ensures is that labor is incentivized to a limitless maximum. This can be unhealthy and detrimental as Nyerere suggests, but a functional government can also curb these excesses by stifling monopoly and supporting the small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in every possible way. Nyerere’s traditional African society, because it was a less complex one, might have adopted this

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p.6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p.8.

conscientious work ethic that ensured maximum cooperation by the labor force, but there is no guarantee that the modern, more sophisticated African society will function under such socialist assumptions. Nyerere performed creditably well as Tanzanian president while implementing the Ujamaa principles. His TANU government recorded considerable success in many spheres, but this was unsustainable given the social change that modernity came with.

## **2. Kwame Nkrumah: Philosophical Consciencism**

Fueled by an influence from reading the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Kwame Nkrumah proposed a socialist philosophy of change which he would later adopt for his newly independent Ghana; he also proposed it for the entire continent before his ludicrous ousting and eventual untimely death. If Nyerere's brand of socialism is considered retrograde in the sense that it seeks to take us back to the roots, then Nkrumah's socialist ideals are by contrast progressive in trying to incorporate the past and the present with the future in view. Like Nyerere, Nkrumah was a nationalist thinker, who sought to actualize the political freedom of his native Ghana, and the entirety of Africa from the iron hands of colonialism and imperialism. Both agreed that colonialism came with a capitalist taint which was alien to traditional African communalism/egalitarianism. But Nkrumah thinks that the influence of not just Western imperialist culture, but also Islamic society and religion, have both become permanent realities that must be factored in while forging a new socialist philosophy of change for emergent African states. Nkrumah writes:

With true independence regained, however, a new harmony needs to be forged, a harmony that will allow the combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa, so that this presence is in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society. Our society is not the old society, but a new society enlarged by Islamic and Euro-Christian influences. A new emergent ideology is therefore required, an ideology which can solidify in a philosophical statement, but at the same time an ideology that will not abandon the original humanist principles of Africa. Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such a philosophical statement I propose to name Philosophical Consciencism, for it will give the theoretical basis for an ideology whose aim shall be to contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of the traditional African society, and, by gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd. 1964,) p. 69.

It is easy to see from the above, the striking difference between Nkrumah's brand of socialism, and that of Nyerere's. The former is more of a realist approach towards the African predicament, whereas the latter is sort of an idealist/utopian yearning for the ancient ideals of the good old days. Nkrumah distinguishes between the anthropological approach and a scientific approach to socialism.<sup>38</sup> The former dives backward in history, while the latter is futuristic, and is therefore to be pursued. Therein lies the difference between his socialist approach and that of Nyerere. For Nkrumah, a new social synthesis is introduced by socialism in Africa, one in which human values and contemporary technology are reconciled, allowing for the realization of an advanced technological society without the horrifying social divisions and schisms that characterize a capitalist industrial society. Meaningful socialization of the productive and distributive processes is necessary to advance true economic and social growth.<sup>39</sup> Nkrumah's Philosophical Consciencism could therefore be summarized thus: It is a socialist ideal that seeks to synergize the three major ideological influences in present-day Africa, namely, Christianity, Islam, and Traditional practices, with a view to forging a new philosophy of change, modeled on scientific growth within the ambiance of modernism. He denies the argument expounded by Nyerere that pre-colonial African society was classless and insists that the existence of such a society was a utopian ideal. No society can be founded on the equality of its members although societies are founded on egalitarianism. Nkrumah's distinction between egalitarianism and equality is a remarkable one. An egalitarian society is one principled upon human equality, especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs. Such a society tries to create equal opportunity for its members. But equality based on classlessness is utopian at best. Every society is socially stratified, and often hierarchically structured, including the ones with the belief in the equality of all human beings as humans. The social hierarchy keeps the society organized and ensures the division of labor. It has nothing to do with the acknowledgment of equal human rights and dignity. Nkrumah insists that precolonial Africa was socially stratified and not classless. There was indeed feudalism, and slavery in pre-colonial Africa, although the earlier European contact gave slavery in Africa some of its most vicious characteristics:<sup>40</sup> 'Colonialism deserves to be

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<sup>38</sup> K. Nkrumah, "African Socialism Revisited" in *Africa: National and Social Revolution*, D. Tweedie (Transcr.) (Prague: Peace and Socialism Publishers, 1967.)

<sup>39</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Ibid.* p.2.

<sup>40</sup> The Trans-Atlantic slave trade was notorious for its inhuman treatment of the slaves which included torture, starvation, putting in shackles, and murder in most cases.

blamed for many evils in Africa, but surely it was not preceded by an African Golden Age or paradise.’<sup>41</sup> Traditional African society he admits was founded on principles of egalitarianism:

In its actual workings, however, it had various shortcomings. Its humanist impulse, nevertheless, is something that continues to urge us toward our all-African socialist reconstruction. We postulate each man to be an end in himself, not merely a means; and we accept the necessity of guaranteeing each man equal opportunities for his development. The implications of this for socio-political practice have to be worked out scientifically, and the necessary social and economic policies pursued with resolution. Any meaningful humanism must begin from egalitarianism and must lead to objectively chosen policies for safeguarding and sustaining egalitarianism. Hence, socialism. Hence, also, scientific socialism.<sup>42</sup>

Nkrumah rightly argues that when one society meets another, the observed historical trend is that acculturation results in a balance of forward movement, a movement in which each society assimilates certain useful attributes of the other. Social evolution is a dialectical process; it has ups and downs, but, on balance, it always represents an upward trend; and by upward trend is meant a synthesis of the component cultures involved in this dialectic. Islamic civilization and European colonialism are both historical experiences of traditional African society, profound experiences that have permanently changed the complexion of traditional African society. They have introduced new values and a social, cultural, and economic organization into African life. Modern African societies are not traditional, even if backward, and they are clearly in a state of socio-economic disequilibrium. They are in this state because they are not anchored to a steadying ideology.<sup>43</sup> What Nkrumah means by a steadying ideology can be deduced from the entire project of Scientific Consciencism: He thinks that the previous African leaders have either sought to embrace the foreign trends introduced by the Western colonialists, and totally jettison their traditional roots, or they have tried, as with Nyerere, to make a futile turnaround towards tradition, completely jettisoning the foreign ideals. Neither of these approaches, Nkrumah thinks, would provide the much-needed solution to Africa’s socio-economic crisis. He proffers a solution:

The way out is certainly not to regurgitate all Islamic or Euro-colonial influences in a futile attempt to recreate a past that cannot be resurrected. The way out is only forward, forward to a higher and reconciled form of society, in which the quintessence of the human

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<sup>41</sup> K. Nkrumah “African Socialism Revisited”, *Ibid.* p.3.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

purposes of traditional African society reasserts itself in a modern context-forward, in short, to socialism, through policies that are scientifically devised and correctly applied.<sup>44</sup>

Nkrumah's disapproval of capitalism is not because it does not give some level of satisfaction, but that the satisfaction which it gives is insufficient. It is in effect exploitative and unjust, ensuring that one (the capitalist) reaps where another (the worker) sows: "The evil of capitalism consists in its alienation of the fruit of labor from those who with the toil of their body and the sweat of their brow produce this fruit."<sup>45</sup>

One big puzzle which Consciencism failed to solve, however, is how to properly reconcile the three dominant and in many ways contrasting ideologies to forge a synergy. The African conscience is certainly a crisis-ridden one that may not necessarily form the basis for future political construction. Is the humanism which Nkrumah emphasizes not a vestige of the old that does not characterize the modern African man? Then again, how does one move from ideology to materialism? A good number of the problems with many African states, in my view, lie in this fact of irreconcilable ideologies co-existing in a particular political system. Consciencism attempted a materialist epistemology in solving this problem (which Nkrumah likens to the Gordian knot).<sup>46</sup> But how does one adopt a materialist approach in dealing with an ideological problem? Nkrumah tries to explain materialism in terms of the view that asserts the absolute and independent existence of matter.<sup>47</sup> Matter is a plenum of forces that are in antithesis to one another. The dialectical materialist thesis has as its implication that matter is one, even when it appears in various forms. In the same way, even though they exist in varying cultural and historical contexts, humans are still one. This is the component of Philosophical Consciencism that is egalitarian. This identification of the unity of the human species with a non-spiritual element, thus by-passing forms of relativism that can vitiate attempts at finding certain commonalities in human societies, has been noted by Wiredu. Wiredu was writing from the background of a topical issue in African philosophy, namely: identity. The quest for identity has dominated the discourse in African philosophy since the advent of such philosophy. Two main reasons behind this search for identity can be identified: one is the unfavorable effects of colonial

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization*, Ibid. p.75.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p.86.

<sup>47</sup> K. Nkrumah, "Consciencism." In *I am Because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy*, Fred Lee Hord and Jonathan Scott Lee. (eds.) (USA: University of Massachusetts Press., 1995,) p.56.

dominance and exploitation in Africa which has engendered a deeper interest in subaltern studies. The second is the use of ethnocentrism in Western scholarship to disparage all things African. At the base of this Western intellectual denigration of Africa is the Hegelian claim that:

[Africa] is no historical part of the World; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it—that is in its northern part—belong to the Asiatic or European World.... Africa is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.<sup>48</sup>

Hegel's thesis that historical movements in North Africa belong to the Asiatic or European world immediately raises the question of who or what qualifies as African. Moreover, the anthropological support of Emile Durkheim (1912), J. Frazer (1922), Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1949), and Robin Horton (1981) to the ethnocentric, racist, and imperialist claims that rationality is a prerogative of Western civilization, while the Africans are mentally primitive, show that Hegel is not alone in this epistemic ethnocentrism. The enormous contribution of Western academics and former Western imperial lords to the representation and treatment of the African people as inferior and deserving of external control necessitates that African scholarship in the post-colonial era should be active in the deconstruction of this battered identity (Balogun 2007, 1). Two approaches are predominant in this effort by Africans to define their own identity. The first rejects the hierarchy of cultures while supporting the cultural pluralism stated by Western studies. By focusing on Africans' own previously ignored particularities, this initial orientation is concerned with the discovery of real and distinctive African identity. Scholars in this group include William Abraham (1966), J.S. Mbiti (1969), Olubi Sodipo (1975), K.C. Anyanwu (1983), Placide Tempels (1959), and Leopold Senghor (1991). These academics believe that all philosophies are cultural philosophies and that no philosophical truth from one culture can be applied to another. Within this orientation are the ethnophilosophers, the defenders of negritude, and other cultural nationalists. The second response to the African academic community's problem of self-identity rejects the cultural relativism and ethnocentrism upheld by Western anthropological studies. It argues that although human cultures still share some fundamental characteristics that enable cross-cultural comparisons and interactions, certain features of social cultures remain distinct. Therefore, adherents of this viewpoint - Peter Bodunrin (1985), Paulin

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<sup>48</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1956,) p.99.



Hountondji (1983), K. Appiah (1992), Marcien Towa (1991), and Kwasi Wiredu (1980) - insist on cultural universalism.

According to Wiredu, there are some biological traits that all humans possess, even though they are cultural beings. Human communication is one. He believes that communication is essential for survival. No human community is possible without communication.<sup>49</sup> The implication of this view for the triple heritage thesis<sup>50</sup> is clear: human beings, no matter our cultural orientations, are bound together by certain (physical and biological) elements that make us distinctively human. Therefore, despite their differences, the traditional, modern, Christian, and Islamic cultures can coexist. Nkrumah further observed that no matter the change experienced in the ethical rules of a society, the cardinal principles of egalitarianism are preserved. A line of criticism against Nkrumah's stressed reference to the tripartite heritage springs from the fact that he makes no mention of the nature or amount of the influence of Islam on African culture. Therefore, it is unclear whether the humanist and egalitarian foundations of traditional African communities are consistent with or in opposition to the values underpinning the Islamic heritage. By contrast, however, the Euro-Christian component of the tripartite is frequently delineated in Philosophical Consciencism, and Nkrumah links this legacy to the "evils" of colonialism and neo-colonialism, which are driven by the ideas and ideologies of feudalism, capitalism, and individualism. These values, he insists, run against the traditional African society's communalism, humanism, and egalitarianism in addition to being unfamiliar to them. That notwithstanding, since Nkrumah believes that the three groups have "competing ideologies", we may assume that the Islamic tradition adheres to different values than the traditional African cultures do. However, without any description of the ideology and guiding principles of one of the tripartite's segments, without knowing what and how its ideology competes, if it actually does, with the other two, we find a lukewarm forge in which the alloy is

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<sup>49</sup> K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996,) p.21.

<sup>50</sup> The term 'Triple heritage' as regards African Philosophy was first used by Ali Mazrui (1986). However, there is every reason to believe that Mazrui himself derived the term from Nkrumah's doctrine of philosophical Consciencism. According to Mazrui (1986), the Triple Heritage Thesis refers to the three main cultural influences on Africa: traditional African culture, Islamic culture, and Western culture. See A. Mazrui, *Africans: A Triple Heritage*; (London: Ravensbourne University Press, 1986.)

only partially fused.<sup>51</sup> This forms a weak link in Philosophical Consciencism. Nkrumah's stint as Ghanaian president was deemed repressive and overbearing by many, qualities not uncommon with many socialist regimes. Nonetheless, one of the merits of Consciencism, it has to be said, lies in its ability to factor in the present realities in its analysis and understanding of the African predicament. It moreover adopts a futuristic attitude to these realities in its dialectical nature. Traditional African society is, in many ways, different from Christian culture, and Christian culture is, in many senses, different from Islamic culture, but given the unique realities of their being the product of both the root and the crown, there seems to be no other way than to accommodate the realities presented by these traditions. In other words, the African person cannot be identified with her historical past as representative of the traditional African realities because such historical realities cannot fully define him, nor can he with successful ease go back to this past.

In summary, then, Consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western, Islamic and Euro-Christian elements in Africa and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality (as Nkrumah sees it) is itself defined by the cluster of humanist principles which underlie traditional African society. Philosophical Consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience.<sup>52</sup>

### **3. Marx's Socialist Ideals**

In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things, it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilized man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> See also, R. Kwesi, "The Logic of Consciencism" in M. Ajei (ed.), *Disentangling Consciencism: Essays on Kwame Nkrumah's Philosophy*, Philpapers, 2017, pp. 185-188.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.79.

<sup>53</sup> K. Marx, *Capital III*, Ernest Untermann, Charles H. Kerr & Co. (Transl.), (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1909,) p. 954.

Herein lies the danger in capitalism as Marx views it: it has the tendency to enslave man through the instruments of labor and insatiable accumulation of material products. The aim of socialism, therefore, must be freedom from these, and Marx continues:

With his development the realm of natural necessity expands; because his wants increase; but at the same time the forces of production increase, by which these wants are satisfied. The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis.<sup>54</sup>

The foregoing summarizes the Marxist socialist principles in a few points:

- i. The aim is to liberate man from the tyranny of labor (under capitalist auspices) and self-alienation.
- ii. It hints at a struggle in the course of this liberation. This struggle is that of class: between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Also, it is a struggle for self-actualization, which is the ultimate goal, and as it were the vanishing point of the communist revolution.
- iii. This struggle is and will always be a necessary one.

With Marx, capitalism becomes a monster that man must free himself from. In the *Communist Manifesto*, he suggests that the entirety of Europe, and indeed the whole world would in the end yearn for this freedom. Socialism, for Marx, was never as such the fulfillment of life, but the condition for such fulfillment. When man has built a rational, nonalienated form of society, he will have the chance to begin with what is the aim of life: the "development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom." Marx would never have imagined that the goal of his conception of socialism would be the establishment of a well-fed and well-dressed "welfare" or "workers' state". Man, in Marx's view, has created in the course of history a culture which he will be free to make his own when he is freed from the chains, not only of economic poverty, but of the spiritual poverty created by alienation. Marx's vision is based on his faith in man, in the inherent and real potentialities of the essence of man which have developed in history. He looked at socialism as the condition of human freedom and creativity, not as in itself

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

constituting the goal of man's life.<sup>55</sup> Socialism, therefore, becomes a route toward self-actualization, just as communism<sup>56</sup> would be the ultimate quintessence of socialism.

But why, one may ask, has socialism failed to reign supreme in the contemporary era? Why didn't Nyerere or Nkrumah each succeed in establishing a sustainable socialist state in their respective countries despite each being at the helm of affairs at one point in time?

The freedom which Marxist socialism seeks may not be found in any economic policy that does not give room for the individual to exercise his thymotic yearnings. A defect of a socialist economic system is that it encourages minimal competitive-advantage incentives, a major point in favor of an open-market capitalist economy, for Fukuyama for example, who affirms a thymotic human nature with a yearning for recognition.<sup>57</sup> This yearning drives the competitive spirit and makes one strive to be better and to excel amongst others. Fukuyama holds that this drive is satisfied in a capitalist system with its open market economy and is, conversely, stifled in a socialist system where everyone has equal wealth, and there is minimal incentive to work because one does not receive rewards for work well done. Fukuyama argues that the liberal democratic state with its capitalist system rests on the twin pillars of economics and recognition.<sup>58</sup> The former is based on the desiring part of the soul while the latter is based on the thymotic part of the soul.

Marx's dialectical materialism answers Fukuyama, in a way. Fukuyama's argument follows a "metaphysical" mode of thought, which views things in abstraction, each by itself and as though endowed with fixed properties. Thus, all men are driven by the thymotic urge,<sup>59</sup> and this urge is, as it were, an undying human quality that will determine their political disposition, irrespective of the epoch or other environmental considerations. In opposition to this, Marx (and Engels), to a large extent, following Hegelian dialectics, consider things in their movements and changes, interrelations, and interactions. Everything is in a continual process of becoming and ceasing to be, in which nothing is permanent, but everything changes and is eventually superseded.<sup>60</sup> All things contain contradictory sides or aspects, whose tension or conflict is the driving force of

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<sup>55</sup> Erich Fromm, *Marx' Concept of Man*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing., 1961.)

<sup>56</sup> See p.17 for a working definition of communism.

<sup>57</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History, and The Last Man*, Op. Cit. p.204.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> See F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Op. Cit. p.181 ff.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. A. Wood, 'In Defense of Materialism' in *In Defense of Marxism*, March 5, 2021.

change and eventually transforms or dissolves them. But whereas Hegel saw change and development as the expression of the world spirit, or Idea, realizing itself in nature and in human society, for Marx and Engels, change was inherent in the nature of the material world. They, therefore, held that one could not, as Hegel tried, deduce the actual course of events from any “principles of dialectics” rather the principles must be inferred from the events.<sup>61</sup> If this is so, history, including human nature, is in a constant state of unfolding. There is no absolute certainty about the nature of humans. It is only tied to each historical epoch, and subject to the interactions with the environment.

Furthermore, Marx envisages a higher stage in historical evolution: the stage of communism. According to Marx and Engels, human civilization has manifested itself in a series of organizational structures, each determined by its primary mode of production, particularly the division of labor that dominates in each stage. The first stage of history is the tribal form, a society that has no social classes but is structured around kinship relations, with hunting the province of men and domestic work the province of women. This is the stage of primitive communism: “the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a *city* by agreement or by conquest.”<sup>62</sup> During this stage, the concept of private property begins to develop.<sup>63</sup> The next stages in Marx’s economic development ladder are feudalism,<sup>64</sup> then capitalism. These would be followed by socialism, and finally communism. Marx believed the maturity of capitalism would create intense class conflict between the proletariat (labor class) and the bourgeoisie (capitalist class). Ultimately, the working class would unite against the state controlled by the capitalist class through a revolution. Marx predicted two stages of communism that would come after the predicted fall of capitalism in his posthumously published work, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875). The first would be a transitional system in which the working class would control the government and economy but still feel the need to pay people according to how long, hard, or well they worked, and the second would be fully realized communism—a society without class divisions or government, in which the production and distribution of goods and services would be based on the principle “From

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> D. Felluga, "Modules on Marx: On the Stages of Economic Development" in *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*, Jan.31, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> See p.17 for a working definition of feudal and communist relations.

each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”<sup>65</sup> Determining the true needs of man in Marx’s communist society is certainly not an easy task. Marx thinks that this would be made possible “only when production serves man, and capital ceases to create and exploit the false needs of man,”<sup>66</sup> a stage which as of yet is a speculative one, and which outcome, if we are to follow Marx’s line of thought, would be decided by people to come.

The fact that socialism encourages minimal incentives in contrast to open market capitalism posits a weak link to its system, at least within the present epoch. Incentives increase economic productivity for all people and the loss of those effects would lead to economic stagnation. As Mark J. Perry observes, a capitalist system with a structure of incentives ensures that (1) prices are determined by market forces, (2) There is a profit-and-loss system of accounting, and (3) There are private property rights. The failure of socialism can be traced to its neglect of these three incentive-enhancing components.<sup>67</sup> Socialism tends to offer a minimal reward for hard work which capitalism by contrast ensures. Socialism tends to douse the competitive spirit in man, and its promise of spiritual freedom (from self-alienation) for man might not be actualized if this fact is not addressed. Its insistence on common ownership of the means of production often leads to economic stagnation.<sup>68</sup> A socialist/communist economy, some could argue, might not be a way forward for any African state given these realities, although a few socialist ideals such as welfarism, governmental bailouts, etc. are encouraged even in a capitalist system. We shall investigate this a little more later.

### C. De-linking: An *Aminian* Perspective

*De-linking* is a concept that Samir Amin, an Egyptian socio-political philosopher uses to describe the refusal to submit national development strategy to the imperatives of globalization.<sup>69</sup> A similar though narrower concept that explains this is the concept of de-westernization, which is not a geographic but a political concept that refers to all States (corporate states) that are

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<sup>65</sup> K. Marx, ‘Critique of the Gotha Program’, in *Marx/Engels Selected Works*, Vol. III p. 13-30

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1870/gotha/ch01.htm> (4 of 8) [23/08/2000 17:32:50

<sup>66</sup> K. Marx, *Capital III*, quoted in Erich Fromm, *Marx’ Concept of Man*, New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing., 1961.

<sup>67</sup> M.J. Perry “Why Socialism Failed”, in *Foundation for Economic Education* Wednesday, May 31, 1995.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> S. Amin, “A Note on the Concept of Delinking”, N. Peiris (Transl.), in *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Winter, 1987, Vol. 10, No. 3 p. 435.

consolidating their economies without following the dictates of the US, the EU, the IMF or the World Bank.<sup>70</sup> Delinking, in this case, means independence from the instructions of the World Bank, the IMF, and related institutions. It also does not equate to autarky.

Amin spent most of his life in Africa, attempting to build African academic and political institutions to challenge the dependencies created through imperialism. He was critical of Eurocentrism as a divisive and ideological global project that reinforced imperialism and systemic inequalities. Eurocentrism legitimizes a global system that expropriates resources and exploits people in the Global South. Amin identified himself as part of the school of global historical materialism, in which the historical spread of global capitalism is the key to understanding the polarization between the core and the periphery,<sup>71</sup> the core being the global north, and the periphery, the south. He devoted his time to working on how to change this unjust system, having admitted that his motive was deliberately political rather than merely epistemological. His ultimate solution was ‘delinking.’ In *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World* (1990), Amin contends that it is impossible to replicate elsewhere the particular circumstances that allowed for the development of capitalism in Western Europe in the 19th century. He, therefore, put up a new paradigm of industrialization fashioned by the revival of non-capitalist peasant agriculture, which, in his opinion, would entail dissociation from the demands of globalized capitalism. Delinking does not require cutting all ties to the rest of the global economy. It entails refusing to adapt national development plans to the demands of globalization. Instead of merely agreeing to be unilaterally adjusted to the needs of the global system, it seeks to shape a political economy suitable to its needs. A nation would create its own production systems and put the needs of its citizens before the demands on foreign capital in order to achieve this aim of greater sovereignty. Amin was not the first to suggest a philosophy based on delinking for the economic autonomy of the African continent. Before him, a host of African nationalists including Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, and Kwame Nkrumah had conceived a united Africa based on a socialist ideology, a union that they believed could birth a strong world force to counter imperialist ideals. Nkrumah was most notably particular about this

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<sup>70</sup> W. Mignolo, *Delinking, Decoloniality & Dewesternization: Interview with Walter Mignolo (Part II)*, May 2, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> I. H. Kvangraven, “Beyond Eurocentrism” in *New Frame*, May 18, 1922.

dream but met strong internal and external resistance. His ousting from power and eventual death were not unconnected with this, as was the case with Muammar Ghaddafi of Libya.<sup>72</sup>

Amin also hinted at the challenges of delinking in a fast-globalizing world, and pointed out that a 70 percent success would be a remarkable achievement.<sup>73</sup> Such difficulties would be more so for smaller countries with lesser military and economic might. He advocated for more south-south cooperation, strong domestic support, and investment in long-term infrastructural development.<sup>74</sup>

Delinking is a helpful idea in dealing with southern marginalization by the global north in relation to global market prices and the low valuation of labor in the south. China is a particularly good example of a country that has considerably delinked from Euro-American dominance. Yet, delinking requires strong political leadership, considerably lacking in many African states. A heavy investment in infrastructural development would be a starting point. Much of the infrastructure previously built by the colonizers was built for surplus extraction and capital accumulation by the colonizers.<sup>75</sup> In the face of a huge international debt crisis bedeviling most African countries, most of which is owed to G20 creditors/multilateral institutions from the global north, this task seems a very difficult one. Africa has a long way to go to successfully delink from Euro-American imperialism.

## **E. The Need for Restructuring**

The reason why liberal democracy has not become universal, or remained stable once it has achieved power, lies ultimately in the incomplete correspondence between peoples and states. States are purposeful political creations, while peoples are pre-existing moral communities. That is, peoples are communities with common beliefs about good and evil, about the nature of the sacred and the profane, which may have arisen from a deliberate

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<sup>72</sup> There is a strong belief in many circles that this duo at some point became despotic in their quest for the politico-economic autonomy of Africa, which ultimately led to their downfall. Both, for instance, sought to perpetuate themselves in power, a feat which does not mark good of a selfless leader after the welfare of his people. But the often-untold story is the Western connection in the downfall of these leaders. Their quest to end imperialist/neocolonial influence saw a fierce network of resistance engineered by the West. See for instance S. Jama, "How Gaddafi became a pan-Africanist" in *The Patriot*, March 28, 2019; also B.E. Ofori, "Western Involvement in Nkrumah's Downfall" in *Africa Today*; Bloomington Vol. 62, Iss. 4, (Summer 2016): 77-80. A host of other ex-African leaders, including Patrice Lumumba of Congo (died 1961) have similar stories of Western connection in their extermination.

<sup>73</sup> I. H. Kvangraven, Op. Cit.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> M.B. Gadha et al (eds.), *Economic and Monetary Sovereignty in 21st Century Africa*, (London: Pluto Press, 2021,) pp.3-4.



founding in the distant past but which now exist largely as a matter of tradition. As Nietzsche says, "every people speaks its language of good and evil," and has "invented its own language of customs and rights" that are reflected not just in the constitution and laws, but in the family, in religion, in class structure, in the daily habits and the ways of life that are honored.<sup>76</sup>

The problem of structure, as I have noted earlier, is the single most significant problem of the post-colonial African states. A viable political structure ensures that there is coherence between the constituent units because such units devolve from a common ideology, pursue common goals, and above all put these common goals ahead of individual interests. In a situation wherein this is not the case, the system suffers terribly from a disjunctive interest. Perhaps the biggest obstacle in achieving a stable democracy in Africa is the wide disparity in shared values and customs between the constituent micro-units of the post-colonial African states. The immediate solution to this I propose is an immediate restructuring or disbandment, in extreme cases, of the new states. In Nigeria for instance, a more impactful solution would be the disbandment of the constituent regions that make up Nigeria into say, six countries or three at the least. The reason for this view is that the constituent units that makeup Nigeria do not share a common ideology about the what and the how of a state.<sup>77</sup> The former centralized kingdoms, mostly in the northern part of the country, due in part to their Islamic religious influence, are still very much predisposed to a certain form of subservience to the center. This is in sharp contrast to the former decentralized acephalous southern part which mostly favors a weak center (a good reason why the 1914 amalgamation should not have happened in the first place). For a similar reason, the masses down south are by far more educated and enlightened in comparison to those in the north, which gives more room for manipulation by the northern political elite. Since the masses are more educated in the South, politicians down South are generally held more accountable by the electorate, than in the north. Ironically, the masses in the northern part of the country are more likely to come to the defense of the same thieving politicians who keep them uneducated and poor.<sup>78</sup> It is, therefore, difficult to form a united front among the masses in the country. A disbanded Nigeria could probably see a northern part with a socialist government, and a southern part with a capitalist democratic government. This could prove a more workable solution.

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<sup>76</sup> F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Op. Cit., pp.212-213.

<sup>77</sup> This thesis has been explained in greater detail earlier in this essay.

<sup>78</sup> See F. Louis, "Northern Nigeria and the Weaponization of the Poor and Uneducated" in *Gbetu: The News They Are Not Telling You*, February 23, 2023.

In the event that disbandment is not a consensus option for the constituent units, then an immediate restructuring is inevitable for progress. This restructuring should see the devolution of powers to the grassroots rather than the center. It would ensure grassroots development and minimize corruption at the center in a process that would further ensure government accountability. A good restructuring agenda should therefore take into consideration the tripartite heritage of Africa which, as we have seen earlier, has largely influenced the ideology of the modern African man. While this suggestion may not be the solution to a number of other African states, it is my view that it is the panacea to the problems of the greater majority of the African states judging by the similarity in the historical conditions that gave rise to these states, as well as the course of developmental struggles and challenges endured so far. Most of these new states, like Nigeria, are multi-ethnic and multi-religious in composition. Most have endured bloody civil wars fueled by inter-tribal differences. These states still suffer terrible hangovers from these wars, and fresh conflicts are brewed on a regular basis in a vicious circle of revenge. Most of these states have faulty governmental structures that give power to the center rather than the grassroots.

#### **F. A Socialist Democracy?**

Governance, in my view, is and has always been a fluid negotiable concept which does not and should not have rigid principles of operation. This is because human beings make rules according to what best suits them, taking into consideration their cultural and environmental peculiarities which are often subject to change. It is for the same reason that we can speak of different democracies or different socialist governments in the world. By “socialist democracy”, I do not suppose anything new. In fact, what is meant by a socialist democracy is what is obtainable in most modern democracies, namely a system of government which is largely liberal in nature, but with a fair degree of government-controlled (that is socialist) welfare programs. It is very similar to what is generally dubbed welfare state, in its various forms. Countries like Sweden, India, USA, Canada, UK, to name but a few, are all “welfare states.” As a matter of fact, it is difficult to point at an exclusively liberal democratic system, by which is meant a system that is devoid of any socialist practices. Most advanced democracies in the world today adopt some socialist principles in their operations, such as welfarist government bailouts, a

central healthcare system, etc. This is because these principles have been found useful in the sustenance of any government and its polity, in the building of public trust, and in the maintenance of some level of social equilibrium between the haves and the have-nots in any society. Conversely, China is a socialist republic: Chinese politics takes place in a framework of a unitary Marxist–Leninist one-party socialist state under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).<sup>79</sup> But China conducts periodic elections, a practice characteristic of most democracies.

Fukuyama thinks that capitalist-democratic systems would ultimately signal the end of human socio-political evolution, thus the end of history, because satisfaction of the thymotic man would be unmatched by any rival ideology. He points to the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War as evidence that socialist governments were not satisfying human spiritual needs.<sup>80</sup> However, Eric Fromm draws attention to Marx's distinction between the true needs of man, and the synthetic, artificially produced needs of man.<sup>81</sup> Marx thinks that man's real needs are rooted in his nature; and that this distinction between real and false needs is possible only on the basis of a picture of the nature of man and the true human needs rooted in his nature. Man's true needs are those whose fulfillment is necessary for the realization of his essence as a human being. As Marx put it: "The existence of what I truly love is felt by me as a necessity, as a need, without which my essence cannot be fulfilled, satisfied, complete."<sup>82</sup> Purely subjectively, false needs are experienced as being as urgent and real as true needs, and from a purely subjective viewpoint, there is no criterion for the distinction. In modern terminology one might differentiate between neurotic and rational [healthy] needs. The task of the analyst of society is precisely to awaken man so that he can become aware of the illusory false needs and of the reality of his true needs. Fromm continues: the principal goal of socialism, for Marx, is "the recognition and realization of man's true needs, which will be possible only when production serves man, and capital ceases to create and exploit the false needs of man."<sup>83</sup>

There seems therefore to be an endless dialectic of interests in both liberal democratic and socialist systems. But the fact is that both ideologies have merits to them and could serve a system if adopted with cautious modification. In reality, no present-day democracy can be said to

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<sup>79</sup> T. Rory, *Making Autocracy Work*, (London: Cambridge University Press, October 28, 2016.)

<sup>80</sup> See F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Op. Cit. p. 211 ff.

<sup>81</sup> E. Fromm, *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

be entirely democratic with no socialist adaptations in the forms of state-sponsored basic amenities for the public, a centrally planned economy, etc., and vice versa. Every government needs to strike a balance between individual liberty and rights, and social welfare interventions.

## G SYNOPSIS

What I have attempted in this chapter is to examine some of the options available for the building of viable political institutions in Africa, and as we have seen, the tripartite heritage of Africa means that any atavistic solution would be deficient in answering the numerous questions about African development; so is any solution that proposes a citizenry-initiated revolutionary action, such as Gandhism, since there is a remarkable absence of unity of purpose among the citizens in most African states. Are we then to consider a socialist alternative, given that democracy has not generally fared in the modern African states, and if yes, what brand of socialism? To effectively answer these questions, it is important to observe that socialism is not new to Africa, as some of the traditional African societies practiced some forms of socialism such as *Ujamaa* which, it is safe to say, did not guarantee satisfactory politico-economic advancements for these societies. The problem might, after all, not be solely a problem of which system of government to use, but mainly, a problem of what political structure is in place. S. Amin thinks that a structure that is substantially delinked from Euro-American imperialism would thrive politically, but beyond this, I think that a structure that primarily considers grassroots leanings in the constituent tribes that make up each of the new African states would fare better. There is a need to disband/restructure most of the states along tribal/religious lines, and fit the constituent parts each into a political ideology that suits it. If this is properly done, then, democracy/socialism or a resourceful combination of both would thrive in any of these states.

## CONCLUSION

Africa, pre-Europe's invasion, was not Eldorado. There was a considerable gap in comparative development between the two continents by the time the first Portuguese merchants arrived on the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa in the fifteenth century AD. The conspicuous absence of writing in most parts of Africa meant that storage and transfer of information were hampered, and technology was generally poorly developed. However, the European intrusion altered her trajectory of growth and further exacerbated her developmental woes. The trans-Atlantic slave trade, the colonial partition of Africa, and the subsequent annexation that followed saw the emergence of colonies that were designed to fail. This is also due in part to the fact that Islam was already a strong force in Africa and had controlled quite a number of empires and caliphates, with a quasi-totalitarian ideology that had already begun to take root in the people's culture. An unhealthy clash of cultures was therefore inevitable. And what is more, these colonies have struggled ever since their independence, bedeviled with myriads of political problems including civil wars, military dictatorships, absence of national consciousness, and systemic corruption. These problems are further compounded by an imperialist global superstructure that has an exploitative stranglehold on these countries. There is an obvious capitalist expansion that tends to homogenize the world by means of a gradual intensification of transnationalization. Thus, we can speak of the center/core (that is the global north), and the periphery (the south). Some broad general trends that define this global capitalist structure - at least three obvious ones - are: the development of the forces of production, the intensification of interdependence (transnationalization), or "worldwide expansion", the generalization of a certain number of forms characteristic of capitalism (wage labor, urbanization, certain kinds of organization of labor and of ownership of the means of production, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

The dilemma of development in Africa, is that it is fraught with many challenges, most of which are internal or structural in nature, but some of which are external and intrusive. The continent has come a long way through history, and it is only normal to imagine that a lot has happened within this span. Therefore, a suitable philosophy of development will not only consider the historical situations that formed present-day Africa, but it will also have to account for the multifariousness that characterizes its people, cultures, and heritage. It will in addition

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<sup>1</sup> S. Amin, *Delinking, Towards a Polycentric World*, M. Wolfers (transl.) (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1990,) pp. 2-3.

take into cognizance the demands of an increasingly globalizing, and technologically driven world which means that some of the age-old ideals that are fast becoming redundant in the face of modernity will have to be jettisoned. Some of the political ideologies proposed by some of our founding fathers have been either insufficient in accounting for and/or dealing with challenges of modernity, or they have been inadequately implemented. But the question of who interprets and implements what policy is also of great importance. In Africa, the bane of leadership is that it has been left mostly in the hands of people who should have no business with it in the first place: the morally and intellectually bankrupt. Therefore, the question of the role of the intellectual/philosopher in development/politics becomes a core one in the context of African politics. The issues that gave rise to the emergence and development of contemporary African philosophy differ profoundly from those that gave rise to the growth of its Western counterpart. While Western philosophy kickstarted as a leisurely activity of the contented elite in ancient Greek communities, Contemporary African philosophy is a reactionary development: a reaction to the problem of denigration, but more importantly, to the issues that gave rise to denigration in the first place, namely a comparative socio-economic underdevelopment. Thus, aside other themes like identity and race which frequently assume center stages in African philosophy, the issue of development is probably the most talked about issue in African philosophy. The various forms in which this issue arises are often phrased in questions such as: what is development? What is the role of (African) philosophy and the philosopher in (African) development?

Furthermore, political structure creates a platform that sees people in leadership. The work before African intellectuals, therefore, is bigger than imagined. The African ‘philosopher-kings’ need not just ascend the throne, they have to build one, one that is strong, and that stands the test of time. Only then can we think of sustainable development in the continent. In other words, the greatest contribution to leadership by the African intellectuals would be to build an impregnable structure where corruption, tribalism, and other socio-political malaises would be contained to a satisfactory minimum.

Moreover, democracy as it is practiced today in most African countries is a colonial legacy bequeathed by the imperialists. Democracy is a wonderful political ideal when it is adapted to the niceties of any culture. But a botched-up democracy can be quite detrimental to the economic and political growth of any system. What we have thus far seen in most African

states is at best years of experimenting with democracy. It doesn't help too that neo-colonialism and imperialist exploitations seem to abet the perpetuation of a failed system in these states, which makes Samir Amin's call for delinking very apt. Delinking however is a Herculean project as we have seen and can only be more so in the face of globalization. Given these palpable difficulties, the humongous load of work ahead cannot be overemphasized.

What I have attempted to do thus far is to articulate some of these problems and suggest a few pathways to dealing with them. It is not the supposition of this project that every solution proposed here is going to work for all the numerous states within the continent. This thesis is therefore a clarion call to African intellectuals to come up with answers to her problems; to be actively involved in solving these problems, and to wrestle power from the maniacs who have hitherto grabbed and grappled with it. So let a million flowers bloom and a thousand schools of thought contend; let all hands be on the deck to see to a better, brighter, and bolder Africa.

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