



Centre for Democracy and Development

THINKING DEMOCRACIES AND THEIR STRUGGLES

By

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Introduction

A season of rude jolts has hit public governance in Africa and beyond. In January 2011, several major urban spaces in Nigeria, notably: Lagos, Kaduna, Kano and Abuja, witnessed angry mass protests against proclaimed "withdrawal of subsidy" in prices of petrol products. Demonstrators demanded immediate retreat in public policy. In the Maghreb from Tunisia, Libya, Egypt to the Persian Gulf State of United Arab Emirate saw contagious volcanic eruptions of the "Afro-Arab and Arab Spring" in which massive and relentless protests occupied public spaces; challenged state power, and sought to earn "regime change". In Egypt, millions of protesters seizing the street combined with military intervention to desecrate a one-year old democratic mandate for President Mohammed Morsi. Exclusivist and failed democracies in Kenya, Mali, South Sudan, and Central African Republic exploded, successively, into internal violence between 2007 and 2014. The contagion of mass occupation of urban spaces crossed from Lagos and the Maghreb to demonstrations inside a developed democracy against corporate capital in major American cities.

In Libya, limited protest power was aided by NATO's massive bombardments of Libya's arsenal and urban infrastructures to roll into armed civil wars; the murder of Gaddafi, and the collapse of an economy run on massive importation of labour from varied countries, including: the Philippines, China, Somalia, Eritrea, Ghana, Nigeria and Egypt. Gaddafi's military rule had lasted 40 years. In Egypt, the fall of Hosni Mubarak opened space for the Muslim Brotherhood to see its fortunes move rapidly from winning a free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections; governing for twelve months; losing that power to an alliance of mass protests, and the military's seizure of power with considerable bloodshed. The exposure of its organisational capacity combined with the depth of its mass support put at the service of its refusal to abandon the legitimacy of President Morsi's mandate, incited the "secularist" regime to declare the Muslim Brotherhood as a "banned terrorist" entity.¹

This model erupted in Thailand with the opposition, cognisant of its inability to win the popular vote, turned to tactics of mass occupation of government offices, police stations and the prime minister's offices as a form of 'social coup' whose ultimate success would depend on the military seizing power to end a cauldron of violence between the opposition party and defenders of the government. Their wish to paralyse administration had echoes of Republican legislators in the United States Congress being totally intransigent and withholding funds for running government agencies. Likewise, the rejection of an agreement between Ukraine and the European Union in preference for an economic pact signed with Russia was met with occupationist mass power in Kiev, the country's capital. The core notions in "*liberal democracy*" of bargaining among representatives of diverse interests; and reaching compromises over policy decisions; as well as patiently waiting for time-bound elections to arrive for the legitimate process of winning power through votes, are losing legitimacy. We are provided with an opportunity to join the task of rethinking the continued relevance of processes of liberal democracy and their discontents.²

A legacy revisited

In this task, we can consider three variants of democracy, namely; (1) *Direct African Community Democracy*; (2) *Liberal Democracy*, and (3) *Liberation Democracy*. *Direct African Democracy* differs from the Athenian version by not excluding slaves and women since *Ujamaa* or *African familyhood* does not differentiate among its members. It is bound together by shared labour, shared products of labour and shared love. It shares with the Athenian variant the notion of each individual achieving fulfilment in participating in making public decisions through a mechanism Nyerere describes as "talking and talking and talking till you agree or agree to disagree". Once a consensus is reached everybody is obliged to accept its legitimacy and implement it.

In various societies, notably: Nuer in South Sudan; the Tiv and Igbo in Nigeria; and the Balante in Guinea Bissau, direct democracy is anchored on a behavioural infrastructure which has been described by Evans Pritchard as "*balanced antagonism*". The concept describes a state of mind which hits back at insult or physical injury by immediately throwing back a counter-insult and injury with the option of paying "blood money". In Tiv culture, the tactic of restraining abuse of public interest by singing songs for naming and shaming the offender has often marred election campaigns as supporters of opposing political parties disrupt election rallies and speeches with dins of insults. The

injunction of not allowing another to accumulate power often gets easily abused by the injection of guns into electoral contests. 3

The explosion of armed conflict between President Salva Kiir and his dismissed vice-president, Riek Machar, may well be attributed to failure to manage the principle of "*balanced antagonism*" within cabinet and armed debate inside political party relations which expect obedience to hierarchical power. In Anambra State politics, the phenomenon of Governor Chris Ngige being locked inside a toilet because he would not honour an oath to surrender a significant portion of the State's budget to his "*god father*" *Andy Ubah*, was a manifestation of a collision between what Chinua Achebe called the "*Chi*" (or life-force) inborn to each individual and the imperative of vigorously striving to achieve maximum material and social success, and honour. Within electoral politics, the notion of accepting the candidature of another person; as well as electoral defeat, raises major challenges for the *Chi* in losers.

In 1965 – four years after Tanganyika's independence in 1961 – Prime Minister Mwalimu Nyerere invented election campaigns based on a maximum of three and minimum of two *candidates - from within an overwhelmingly popular single party - campaigning together and against each other in front of the community* to enable the community ask questions. It was regarded both as a process for mass education about policy issues and of giving primacy to the emergence of community consensus over who is the most suitable candidate for the enhancement of their material goals. The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), which mutated into Chama Cha Mapinduzi / the Revolutionary Party, prohibited candidates from undertaking door –to- door campaigns; appealing to race, ethnicity, religion, sex, or skin colour to win votes. The ethos of familyhood which infused this process, combined with Mwalimu Nyerere's virtuous and uncorrupted leadership, would lead to the realisation of so much "*General Will*" that Tanzanians were during the 'democracy wave' of the 1990s, not keen to accept multi-party politics and its lack of consensus.

TANU had won all seats into parliament. The vast majority of them won on the Westminster rule of a candidate being "*returned unopposed*" if by the time the deadline for submission of nomination forms passes without other parties submitting names of their own candidates, the nominated candidate is declared a winner. The only time TANU lost a seat was when a Mr Sarawat, who had been left out by the party leadership, ran as an independent, beat the party's candidate and, on being sworn in as a member of parliament, returned to TANU. Nyerere had rejected a democracy based on electoral silence in

which, due to a technicality derived from the history of British politics, voters do not cast their votes and elected officials do not feel they owe their seats to voters. In 1965 he set up a Commission which recommended contests for seats among party members belonging to an overwhelmingly popular single party.

In Kenya, the scramble for inheriting farms from European Settlers anxious to depart independent Kenya; legislation enabling politicians and civil servants to acquire shares in companies; acquiring landed property in urban areas; purchasing and renting private real estate, cumulatively yielded new conflict in post-colonial politics. Tom Mboya, the charismatic trade union leader and Secretary General of the ruling Kenya African National Union, KANU, was assassinated at the age of 38 over jostling for succession to Jomo Kenyatta. Tom Mboya, had mocked Nyerere's call for *Ujamaa* (African Socialism based on familyhood) as a formula for "sharing poverty"; but welcomed his one-party system for dictatorial reasons. Kenyatta later imposed one-party rule due to fear of losing the 1966 elections to a socialist party led by his deposed Vice-President Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and his Kikuyu allies. This legacy of *political exclusivism* would, in December 2007, plunge Kenya into a horrendous and widespread post-election violence. In contrast, Tanzania has so far avoided the military coups; election-related violence, and exclusion-related neo-genocide which hit Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and South Sudan.

Discontent with democracy soiled by kleptocracy in Mali led to a military coup in 1968. Its replay in 2011 was exploited by secessionists from northern Mali whose prospect of taking over the capital, Bamako, gave legitimacy to France sending in troops to defeat AZARD forces and enable Mali's political class hold elections and reinstate democratic politics.⁴ In Central African Republic, the failure of Bozize's democratically elected government to defeat insurgency by the "Seleca Coalition" of armed groups led to his flight to Cameroon. Given military backing by militias from Chad and Darfur, Seleca's resort to Al-Qaeda-type atavistic violence which targeted the subjugation of frightened and morally debased and demoralised Christian groups, shattered a history of post-colonial community relations based on mutual religious tolerance.

This practice of political exclusivism had plunged Kenya into a horrendous and widespread post-election violence from December 2007 to February 2008. In Nigeria, the increasing association of post-military democratic institutions with kleptocracy may have fed the violence which followed the announcement of

presidential election results in 2011 across parts of northern Nigeria. In a letter he wrote to Chief Clark, former president Olusegun Obasanjo linked violence by alienated and enraged citizens over corruption among officials:

“Chief Clark, do you know that it takes Naira 250 million a year to maintain a Senator? Look, I have warned them that when the trouble starts, all of them would be killed”;
(*Sunday Vanguard*, January 15, 2012, p.10).

Finally, in 2011, mass participation in the critique and withdrawal of legitimacy from a regime, brought down military rulers in Tunisia and Egypt. In July 2013, a combination ‘street democracy’ and military intervention terminated Mohammed Morsi’s democratically elected government. The dense texture and political resilience of his socio-economic base, the Moslem Brotherhood, has put Egypt along the path of a dormant civil war. The January 16 and 17, 2014 referendum over a new post-Morsi constitution had 38.6 per cent of the population turning up to vote; with 98.1 per cent endorsing it. The Moslem Brotherhood and groups opposed to a creeping return to military rule, boycotted the vote and declared the referendum as a “farce”. It can be said that Africa’s run with democracy has been marked by a significant record of turbulence and severe discontents.

Challenges to Liberal Democracy

Liberal Democracy was born out of protest against the structural violence and the monopoly of internal commerce and manufacturing activities as well as overseas trade by feudal classes and the monarchy in England and France.⁵ The quest for *equality* of all before the law – such as the law not to seize an inventor’s patent – was vital to new commercial and business middle classes. It would be important to working classes who demanded the right to vote and for their votes to have equal mathematical weight as those of aristocrats and wealthy better educated middle classes so that they could elect representatives who would pass and implement legislation in their favour. The business classes executed greedy kings and their feudal allies in order to free trade and industry from their greedy hold; while the working classes mounted violent protests for the power of the vote in elections to serve their material interests.

In the United States, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s forced change in a democracy which was dishonest about its real character, namely:

being a neo-slavery which denied large numbers of its population the right to vote, get employment, and get equal education, health care and housing. In 1951 Rosa Parks broke a law which required her not to sit in the front part of a bus which was reserved for white passengers. She was a secretary to NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People) – an organisation that used law courts to achieve rights for African Americans.

Under pressure from the “wind of change” blown by anti-colonial politics in Africa and calls for revolution by the socialist Soviet bloc, the American federal government enacted the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act to authorise “examiners” to prevent racist officials blocking the registration of black people to vote; suspended the use of literacy tests used to prevent black people from registering to vote; “barred discrimination in employment practices on grounds of race, color, religion, national origin or sex”.⁶

Electoral tools like “Gerry meandering” prevented African Americans from electing candidates from among themselves through boundaries of constituencies which sliced through their communities and linked them to constituencies with majority white populations. Other tools included chairmen of important committees of Senate and the House of Representatives ensuring that federal legislation meant to take financial and other social services to poor and elderly people did not include African Americans at local levels in states in the Southern United States of America. ⁷

American neo-democracy continues to contain hidden subterranean struggles; while also continuing to be a self-building process as protests and successes by one group arouses other groups to learn how to frame their demands; evolve new tactics for struggle in the media, on the streets, inside law courts and inside legislative assemblies. The Civil Rights Movement taught women’s groups, Hispanics, new immigrants and disabled peoples to fight and open up and give human dignity to their citizenship.⁸

The notion of voters choosing among candidates who are presenting them with different ways of organising public and personal affairs injects a human development element into liberal democracy when electoral and legislative debates are marked by clear and data-based arguments. In American and British politics, the emergence of clever manipulators of emotions using television and radio campaign jingles and advertisements, have swamped voters with hate, insults, revelations of sexual infidelity or alcoholism in family lives of candidates and various prejudices, over and above intelligent policy debates. In Ghana, former President J.J. Rawlings has been accused in 2011 of

introducing "dirty underwear" of opposition candidates onto Ghanaian call-in radio and television broadcasts, thereby undermining the moral fabric of public life. In these scenarios, the intellectual development and moral dignity of the citizens comes under severe erosion. As the only socialist candidate who won against the current of right wing economies of other European governments and bankers, French President Francois Hollande's sex affair with an actress in mid-February, 2014 was hit with a fury of media condemnation from outside France clearly aimed at eroding his electoral support. The African and Ancient Greek idea of politics as a space for personal development through direct and responsible participation is hereby undermined.

A challenge shared by African direct democracy is the tyranny of ever increasing complexity of governance and socio-economic economy arena. As the American presidency acquired more and more experts to provide advice on matters ranging from space exploration; national security interests embedded in minerals under seas and oceans; oil deposits in rocks in Alaska and under sand dunes in Saudi Arabia's desert, members of Congress also hired their own army of experts. Both groups became more impenetrable to average citizens. The promise of citizens joining in conducting their own affairs became more doubtful. The emergence of highly paid "lobbyists" who stand between rich clients and legislators and offices in the presidency, pushes ordinary citizens into distant lack of access.

The intrusion of foreign multinational corporations into African policy processes is likely to stalemate patriotic legislation. Their impact on state sovereignty was denounced by Kwame Nkrumah as "*neo-colonialism*", or colonial rule without open responsibility for the economic exploitation that is undertaken. The claim that liberal democracy is "government of the people, by the people and for the people" has rung increasingly hollow in both developed semi-democracies and dominated neo-colonial democratic politics. Hapless mass protests by workers, middle and working classes - against collapses in income and total loss of employment in Greece, France, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Britain since 2010 - echoed Marx's assertion that the state in capitalist economies are mere executive agents of transnational banks and branches of the "bourgeoisie".

The principle of "*accountability*" to voters gives legitimacy to representative relations between legislators and the public. Feudalism, *apartheid*, monarchy, and rule by the clergy were either accountable only to themselves or to a remote God. Protective mechanisms like: voting according to a regular time

table; voting through secret ballots, and opening competition for votes to as many political parties as demanded by civil society, are meant to frighten those in power to be accountable if they seek longevity in power. However, the practice of “*amala politics*” practiced by the late Senator Olusola Saraki (in Ilorin) and Alhaji Adedibu (in Ibadan)- a patronage system based on extracting public resources from top beneficiaries to provide at least one meal a day, money to buy medicines, pay school fees, provide kiosks in markets, admission into schools and colleges etc –is a version of legitimacy and accountability which runs outside of and both undermines and corrects failures in the rule of law in formal political structures which are supposed to be policed by democratic institutions.

When I asked community groups in Osun and Abia States about their relations with local government chairmen, councillors, state and federal legislators representing their respective constituencies, respondents reported not being visited by these elected officials after they won elections. Only Senator Jim Nwobodo had visited the constituency in Abia State to hear local views and demands. Local Government Chairmen were said to have used funds received from statutory allocations at the federal centre to establish their own private enterprises. In Osun State, respondents said they met notices like ‘**BEWARE OF DOGS**’ outside gates of officials and political party leaders after winning elections. A councillor from a Lagos State reported acquiring cars from their Chairman so that they could drive down streets past voters while pretending to be focusing on avoiding traffic accidents. The notion of accountability was robust in being subverted because it lacked a disciplinary mechanism to enforce it.

It is not clear that Boko Haram in Nigeria has articulated to its members Zawahiri’s rejectionist paradigm of accountability, thus:

“Any government established on the basis of a constitution that is secular, atheist, or contradictory to Islam cannot be a respected government because it is un-Islamic and not according to Sharia

It is unacceptable that a leader in the Brotherhood evinces respect for such a government, even if it comes about through fair elections”.⁹

Nigeria’s former president Chief Olusegun Obasanjo has claimed that the flouting of accountability by elected officials - through self-enrichment from public funds - yields a pool of resentment among the electorate:

“Let me repeat that as far as the issue of corruption, security and oil stealing is concerned, it is only apt to say that when the guard becomes the thief, nothing is safe, secure nor protected in the house. We must all remember that corruption, inequity and injustice breed poverty, unemployment, conflict, violence and wittingly or unwittingly create terrorists because the opulence of the governor can only lead to the hunger of the governed.”¹⁰ (*Daily Trust*, Thursday, December 12, 2013, p.6)

This notion of crouching citizenship waiting to strike like a viper is qualified by the proposition that there are two fields of political morality: the primary moral codes set by ancient communal world views; and the secondary one inherited from colonial structures of public administration and constitutional governance hurriedly haggled over from drafts crafted by colonial officials - as African politicians travelled in wood-framed lorries towards destination “Uhuru”/Independence. Ancient codes have often penetrated, overwhelmed and upturned these lorries as they bumped along on wobbly tires and engines fabricated from political theories derived from alien European sources..

A time for new theories

The dominant socialist variant of democracy which came to influence Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean had roots in writings and revolutionary practices of Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedung. They ignored liberal democracy and particularly European communism’s promise of redemption through conflict between the proletariat and dynamic and progress-driving capitalists. They chose to ignore European communism’s long route of waiting for capitalism to develop in their own countries and collapse from its own idiotic greed; and instead found revolutionary fire from within their countries’ experiences of brutalities, blunder, exploitation and humiliation by Euro-American capitalism. Just as theorists like John Locke, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), James Mill (1773 -1836); James Madison (1751-1836) and others had provided the infrastructure of ideas out of which core values and institutions of liberal democracy were built, Bolsheviks, Chinese Communists, Che Guevara and others started their own theories of liberation armed struggles.

‘Liberation democracy’ theory took off from outlining structures of their societies prior to external intrusion into their societies as well as the

structures of external violence on their countries in order to understand their dynamics and evolve appropriate remedies for surgical extraction and mobilisation of immunity cells to fight back and restore the road to development of their societies. Lenin, Mao and Ho Chi Minh ignored the initiative expected by European socialists from the *proletariat* and went for a centrally organised, armed and theoretically conscious "vanguard". This vanguard, unlike a capitalist state, would promote the "General Will" or public good. Forced to flee to mountains of China if they were to escape extermination, Mao would add to his vanguard a "sea" of peasants armed with guns and new awareness and used to liberate themselves from feudal oppression en route to overrunning the urban-based Kuomintang regime.

Their main contribution to democratic thought was to insist that the colonial and neo-colonial state were poisonous aberrations which must be uprooted as a precondition for adding effective access to material economic resources to the notions of equality, liberty and justice. A citizen who goes to bed on an empty stomach is a husk and not a full human being. The illiterate man is as free to move around and associate as a blind old man led by a child. In short, they demanded that liberal theorists should insist that their core principles be implemented to utmost reality, thereby making them overcome limitations of liberal democracy; and meeting with communism having travelled along a different and self-made road.¹¹

African theorists

Mao Zedung's concept of anchoring military power on the education and training of the downtrodden masses that have never been inside a factory chain of labourers, found resonance with Robert Mugabe, Agostinho Neto, Samora Machel and Amilcar Cabral.¹² Having failed to defeat the Rhodesian military, business class and farmers, Mugabe initially anchored his legitimacy on offering his fighters a vision of land seized from white farmers for distribution to the landless as key inducement for armed struggle, and later, votes. His 2013 indigenisation project will transfer 51 per cent of shares in mining gold, diamond, platinum, uranium and others to communities where the mines are located— not to individual elites from these communities. Incomes from these shares are to be used to fund needs democratically decided upon by the communities themselves. There is a commitment here to avoiding pitfalls of kleptocracy and sustaining legitimacy with mass African voters.

Mugabe's concept of a *vanguard liberation political party* as the defender of those previously deprived, is a replication of a former *vanguard colonial state* anchored on structural violence and gun-based colonial and racist government. The racist and economistic colonial state expropriated land from African communities; mobilised forced African labour for white farmers and industrial processors; obtained support from colonial banks to provide loans and insurance cover for European farmers and business classes. The notion that "the separation of the state from civil society must be an essential feature of any democratic political order" would be a case of treason to Mugabe's mission of freeing a historically brutalised and impoverished African people and returning them to the road of historic development. His mission is the other face of Obasanjo's warning against poverty as a threat to democratic governance and peace.

Mugabe has regarded opposition groups as "Trojan horses" or allies of openly and covertly hostile external groups with economic interests to defend in Zimbabwe by seeking to achieve "regime change" against his government. The notion of a plurality of political parties committed to the sovereignty of a shared political arena is likely to be regarded by him as a dangerous myth when applied to Zimbabwe's current condition. Liberation armed struggle must also liberate politics. The vicious struggle which the business classes fought against feudalism and monarchy to establish the liberty that would enable serfs to disengage themselves from rural drudgery and move to urban areas to sell their labour in factories and guilds of craftsmen, must be replicated for freeing colonial and neo-colonial serfs in Zimbabwe.

Amilcar Cabral added the concept of "mental liberation" from colonial self-contempt by "returning to sources" or a people's cultural roots. Planning and fighting liberation wars required cultural fuel which imparts confidence in self as a prerequisite for accepting the vulnerability of white colonial oppressors and their colonial troops. It is militarily dangerous to ignore and dismiss local knowledge because they are not from "civilized" sources. Moreover, respect for a people's culture is vital for winning legitimacy in their eyes. Belief in self is also vital for combatants to have confidence in local doctors who must conduct surgeries on wounded combatants under covers provided by the foliage of trees to avoid detection by colonial aircrafts. Self confidence was also vital for the take-off of a culture of production and fabrication of weapons and other tools and launching self-reliant economic productivity.¹²

Cabral linked liberation struggle and democracy through the injunction that every citizen must be targeted with education about features of her/his existing conditions; an outline of an alternative future condition which would bring her/his concrete material and socio-political benefits and, finally, the arousing in the person's awareness of the imperative of participating is an armed struggle to defeat and end forces that sustain her/his poverty and oppression. The faith in the capacity of the *village peasant or urban poor* to gain political education and use that education to animate participation in direct political struggle for the total overthrow of existing socio-economic and political structures of oppression, and the reconstruction of a just "regime change", is a major difference between him and Marx who gave that historic role to the *proletariat*.

This burden of 'adult mass political literacy campaign' was often absent in political parties which were part of a "broad front of unity and struggle" against colonial rule. In the early 1960s, these parties were found standing on sand and could not resist military coups.¹³ This weakness has continued in the post-Cold War wave of democracy across Africa. Nyerere referred caustically to its consequences thus:

"There is a common belief from outside Africa that those with money in Africa are able to buy themselves into power; that African leaders enrich themselves through corruption and through that wealth they are able to perpetuate their stay in power.....Africa is not so different from the rest of the world."¹⁴

Cabral also integrated culture into the liberation struggle for democratic politics. He, however, denounced gerontocratic attitudes and prejudices against women.¹⁵ These prejudices can block intelligent proposals by younger persons and women which would prevent colonial troops from annihilating liberation platoons conducting operations. Nzongola-Ntalaja underlines this position as follows:¹⁴

"As for cultural factors, it can be shown that the very elements that help to weaken the enemy and give the movement its basic strength in the short term also undermine it in the long run. For example, resort to cultural values and symbols, including memories of the pre-colonial past, tends to be effective in politically mobilizing people. On the other hand, it can also be effectively exploited by the enemy to divide people along ethnic lines. This tactic was successfully used by Belgian colonialists

to fan ethnic hatred during the pre-independence period..... and by the occupying forces in the northeast to weaken resistance to their aggression as in the case of the Hema-Lendu conflict. Similarly, reliance on religious beliefs tends to undermine recourse to sound strategy and tactics in guerrilla warfare, as well as active political work, as people have placed their faith in magical water, words and charms when facing the enemy in battle, or entrusted their political deliverance to a saviour called 'Moises'."

New Challenges

The above discussion has ignored "democratic philosophers" who "spring from within the popular classes to articulate through intellectual discourses the views, values and interests of the people". This matter raises the issue of opening gates in languages spoken by "workers and peasants" since language is a "banker of the way of life" - the "succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the material, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations", as well as their own ongoing modifications "with a completely changed activity".¹⁵ . The weight of this matter is reflected by Mao Zedung as follows:

"Ignorant of their country, some people can only relate tales of ancient Greece and other foreign lands".¹⁶

In the context of Nigeria's over 300 languages the task would demand a national conference of political theorising by –to paraphrase Ngugi – participants who think in "central taproots of cultural nourishment" that lie deep in their native soils, and articulate principles and theories of democracy out of past and ongoing "experiences of living and growing".¹⁷ Out of such a conference would most probably emerge recognition of similarities. Differences would, hopefully, invite a "microcosm of tolerance".

In a paradoxical moment, Chinua Achebe did identify one area of convergence in lived experiences among Nigeria's ethnic groups, asserting that:

"Nigerians of all other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo. They would all describe them as aggressive, arrogant and clannish. Most would add grasping...¹⁸

That a conference on core principles and values of democracy would be explosive and exciting, is also suggested by Achebe's assertion that:

“Every ethnic group is, of course, something of a problem for Nigeria’s easy achievement of cohesive nationhood.”¹⁶

Achebe’s attributes of Igbos has a static trait. The evolution of liberal democracy in England emerged out of a dialectical relation between rising dynamism and ambition of individuals in commerce and manufacturing on the one hand, and the obstructionist greed of members of the aristocracy led by the monarch, on the other hand. The question that raises its horns is if there is an internal dialectic between a “belief that one man is as good as another, that no condition is permanent” and access to resources and markets outside Nigeria. Will Nollywood, for example, fund political theorists of pan-Africanism to cope with African governments closing their markets to their products? In Uganda marketers have began training local actresses/actors to serve as entry points into a market which has a proactive development of translations of Nollywood’s dialogues into Luganda, the language spoken by the largest national group in Uganda. In Zimbabwe, however, a new policy of “indigenisation of retail trade” is threatening to close down shops owned by Nigerians.

A questionnaire I distributed to undergraduates at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, in northwest Nigeria, revealed an intriguing set of attitudes about “leadership”. Respondents were asked to rank how they would use public positions of leadership to distribute resources. Results showed that service for the benefit of the public was ranked lowest at number 10, while service to family members was ranked at number 1. This set of attitudes is suggestive of feudal pre-capitalist rural or peri-urban social environments. The intensive condemnation of corruption in Nigeria has filtered into the 2003 and current pre-election political campaign rhetoric may be an affirmation of the penetration of secular public institutions by “feudal” notions of “eating from power”. Wrong found that notions of “it is our turn to eat” from power had become deeply widespread in Kenya’s governance. Audu Ogbeh links leadership failure in Nigeria to her destructive trade policy:

“We need to cut down on imports....three hundred billion naira of importation from china this year alone! The same from Italy, Britain and many other countries. Fresh tomatoes from Lebanon are in our Shoprite outlets. Irish potatoes from South Africa are what you see in the hotels here while the ones produced in Kaduna and elsewhere are left to rot away in the bush. What kind of leaders are we? Nigeria is dying in our hands..... if as political leaders we can’t deal with all these, whose business will it be – the imams and bishops, or the non-governmental organisations (NGOs)? ...So it means all the money

we earn from crude oil has to be used to service the economy of Brazil, Germany, Britain and the likes. Again, our youths have no jobs here.'¹⁹

A leadership that will give priority to windows of enrichment to family members - including taking bribes to raise funds for supporting clientele networks - is likely to find no inhibitions to signing WTO and liberalised trade agreements which hurt Nigeria's development. The democratic principle of accountability of an elected representative to a constituency larger, at local and national levels, than family members, clashes with the code of filial accountability.

Must Nigeria wait for the growth of a critical mass of a bourgeoisie before core values of democratic politics can take root? Lenin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Amilcar Cabral had rejected waiting for a socialism brought by an industrial proletariat.

In the American Congress, seniority in committee membership confers advantages in getting contract benefits for interest groups in a legislator's constituency. Constituents see advantage in re-electing a representative for long periods conscious that longevity may earn vital chairmanships of lucrative committees like Ways and Means, Arms Services, Transportation, Agriculture and others. Communities interviewed in Abia and Osun States said they will only expect "dividends of democracy" to reach them when their "own son" wins the next election. The high failure to get re-elected to Nigeria's legislatures is probably attributable to high rates of 'legislator appetite' among those still standing in the rain, to re-echo Achebe. High publicity in the media about high salaries and sundry allowances voted for themselves by federal and state law-makers is likely to fan this mind set. The dismissal of a former minister of education allegedly for carrying synthetic bags full of currency notes to pay out as inducements for legislators to pass budget funds for the ministry, is likely to arouse angry disapproval among some members of the public, but appetites in others.

High dropout rates among incumbent legislators discourage investments by donor agencies in training legislative skills in them; thereby blocking development in both legislative skills and institutional memory. Lack of optimism for a return is likely to induce mercenary interest in exploiting windows of opportunity for accumulating funds for life after the legislature, including repayments of debts incurred for financing election campaigns. Accordingly, the notion, in liberal democracy, of public participation in policy

making through elected representatives is severely undermined, if not totally abandoned. With very limited access to information about issues under consideration by legislators; low level of lobbying skills among rural farmers and artisans as well as lack of alliance with and slum dwellers, members enjoy freedom from constituency opinions; while being highly susceptible to lobbying by agents of powerful corporate capital whose interests may be hurt by patriotic policy proposals developed by the executive, professional groups and NGOs. The "general will" gets severely wounded while civic anger grows.

Amilcar Cabral died before Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde won independence. His liberation mass education and the participation of its beneficiaries in struggle were not linked to post-war governance. Considering the prevalence of what Nzongola-Ntalaja calls "negotiated independence" as the midwife of post-colonial democracy, combined with often wholesale grafting of legislative organs from abroad without historical roots in local cultures; the disruption of the evolution by political parties of skills for educating and building participation by voters in political affairs in the interlude between elections, it is tempting to return to his ideas as a way of "domesticating democracy" and saving it from atrophying under cynical abuse and the alienation of public legitimacy and moral consciousness.

In polities as diverse as Ancient Egyptians, Baganda, Jukun and the Yoruba, the ruler was accountable for the public good or welfare. The Pharaoh's soul was weighed at the gates of after-life against a bird's feather. Failure to ensure justice while in power would be shown by the soul being heavier than a bird's feather. In Jukun and Yoruba political thought and practice, a failed ruler was punished by a constitutional obligation to drink poison. Professor Ali A. Mazrui celebrates this "*regicide*" as superior to Western political thought on accountability. Among the Tiv an offending clan elder is punished by being dragged through a market place by angry youths. In Buganda, those who accumulated wealth under the departed 'Kabaka' or King were stripped off them by mobs since the 'power' in the "drum" had burst and escaped. When Milton Obote and Idi Amin fell, government offices were raided and constitutionally 'looted'. Integrating these community principles into "African democracy" remains an urgent and exciting challenge.

In Nuer; Igbo; Kikuyu; Gissu; and *poro*-based societies in Sierra Leone, loyalty to, and discipline by, *age-groups* is a crucial tool for maintaining morality and civil responsibility. These age-groups restrain "balanced antagonism" by which individuals aggressively defend their dignity and rights. Former Governor of

Anambra, Chukwuemeka Ezeife has lamented current unguided individualism among Igbos; which led to those living in northern Nigeria not taking responsibility for adopting and funding the education of millions of *almajiri* (poor and malnourished children seeking religious education far away from their homes) across northern states of Nigeria. Other ugly manifestations of un-disciplined individualism are kidnapping individuals, including children and elderly persons, in exchange for millions of Naira as ransoms.

The use of these social tools for fighting corruption in the public service has received little attention. In a paradoxical way, the manipulation of the celebration of personal success has erupted as punitive kidnapping of family members of elected officials, businessmen, Nollywood artists, cabinet ministers in exchange for huge ransoms. Legislation which seeks to deter this malaise with the death penalty may only encourage kidnapers to kill their victims instead of releasing them when ransom is not forthcoming for fear of being identified by released victims. Moreover, not subjecting corrupt top political officials to the same punishment creates cynicism and outrage among the public over 'democratic' governance.

Conclusion

Amitai Etzioni writes that modern democratic theory "in its basic form, assumes that each voter will deliberate, make up his or her own mind, and then – privately, in the secrecy of the ballot box – express his or her preference. Out of the aggregation of these private choices, the polity as a public domain gains its direction"¹⁸. This atomistic ethos goes against the notion of a family or 'communitary' collectively dialoguing over who should represent their views; with such a person chosen without being subjected to the manipulations of emotions associated with religion, race, and ethnicity. Such privacy has encouraged subversive activities like "ballot stuffing", 'arithmetical rigging' through altering numbers of recorded votes, and frightening voters from polling stations with threat or use of violence.

Mwalimu Nyerere and Amilcar Cabral have asserted the intellectual creativity of African societies as actors in world history. Moreover, political independence comes with the responsibility to resume this task. As a start, the notion of "privately formed preferences" in electoral democracy is unrealistic considering the role that socialisation by families, age groups, religious and commercial or craft bodies plays in making people feel that they are because

others care about them. Democracy in Africa must be anchored on familyhood / "brotherhood". The achievements of the academic discipline of Anthropology during colonial rule needs to be revisited to enable us get views from roots as well as "from below"; including urban slum dwellers.19

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