

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

Philip Adah Idachaba

Federal University of Lafia, Lafia

Abstract

The discourse on democracy and development in Africa is caught in two opposing systems. On one hand, those who challenge the operationalisation of democracy in Africa are of the view that consensus, which is traditional to Africa, will be a superior starting point for realising the democratic goals and aspirations of the continent. On the other hand, we have the recommendation that the success of majoritarian multiparty democracy must be allowed to take root if the continent is to be successful. Both positions are problematic because, a return to the good old days is no longer possible and secondly, a total consumption of the more modern materials has not been fruitful either. The hypothesis of this paper is that what is required is a hybrid of the traditional and the modern. To accomplish this hybrid, the essay does a hybrid of the works of Ali Mazuri and Joseph Agbakoba. Mazuri had solid suggestions to make about hybridity in democratic practice and Agbakoba has a lot to say about hybridity with regard to development. The attempt here is to bring both hybrid perspectives together in order to conjecture at a hybrid proposal for democracy and development in Africa, using the critical and analytic philosophical methods.

Keywords: *Africa, Consensus, Hybridity, Democracy, Development*

Introduction

In the aftermath of the Cold War and the triumph of the capitalist West in that armless struggle, certain significant changes were taking place all over the world.¹ Changes that were so impactful that Francis Fukuyama had to declare the end of History.² Significant among these was the penetration of democratic/capitalist ideals into regions of the world that were hitherto considered as socialist strongholds or Iron Curtain Countries. This transformation was not only so for the socialist blocs, it was also taking effects on the African front as well. In the words of Claude Ake, “in 1989 thirty-eight of the forty-five

¹ Samuel Huntington in describing the three waves of democracy, the end of the Cold War, which is the point of reference here, falls within the Third Wave of democracy. Details of this are contained in his essay “Democracy’s Third Wave” (1991).

² F. Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *The National Interest* no. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18. This was subsequently followed by the full text, *The End of History and the Last Man* in 1992.

countries of Sub-Saharan Africa were being ruled either by an autocrat, the military or single party. By 1994, military or de facto military regimes had become a curiosity; all but a handful of African countries are now at some stage of democratic transition.”³ At the policy level, as at 1990 various meetings were being held and policy documents were being adopted with regard to the status of development on the African continent and how democracy could positively affect this process of accomplishing development for Africa.⁴

Sequel to the developments above, military rule, one-party systems and personal rule which were quite popular in Africa started to lose appeal and were beginning to be perceived as exceptions to the rule, rather than the rule itself. Thus, now “an impressive number of African countries can boast of electoral competition, constitutionalism, popular participation and responsible human rights record.”⁵ These efforts at democratisation in Africa seems to have been happening only at the Eastern, Western and Southern fronts of the continent. But recently and from 2010 in particular, the Northern front of Africa has also keyed into this democratisation process.⁶ Amidst this dawn of democracy in Africa, Augustine KwasiFosu opines that, “... Africa appears to have turned the corner on its economic development outcomes. This record is supportable by further improvement in governance.”⁷ He goes further to note that, “as more and more African countries have become relatively democratic within the multiparty framework, an important challenge has arisen: will political outcome be

³ C. Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2001), p. 135.

⁴ See, International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa, *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation* (Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 1990), pp. 17ff; See also, The World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth: A Long-Term Perspective Study* (Washington DC, 1989) pp. 322; and Organisation of African Unity, “Declaration on the Political and Socio-economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World,” Para. 10, Decl 1 XXVI_E.pdf.

⁵ Ake, *Democracy and Development*, p. 135.

⁶ A demand for deeper democracy was one of the major motivations for the Arab Spring/Awakening. The Arab Awakening/Arab Spring is a concept denoting a revolutionary sweeping tide of demonstrations, protests and other forms of opposition to the authorities (both violent and non-violent), riot and protracted civil wars in the Arab territories which started on December 18, 2010 (See, Elfatih A. Abdel Salam, “The Arab Spring: Its Origins, Evolution and Consequences... Four Years On,” *Intellectual Discourse*, 23:1 (2015) 119-139). These revolutions came in the form of a long-awaited civil uprising mainly of Arab youths in the Middle East, an effort to give rise to the democratic wave in the region (MohdIrwan Syazli Saidin& Wan Kamal Mujani, “The Arab Spring and Theories of Democratization,” In *Arab Spring: Factor and Impact* Edited ByWan Kamal Mujani and SitiNurulizah Musa (Ukm: Fakulti Pengajian Islam, 2015), 71-79).

⁷ A. K. Fosu, “Governance and Development in Africa: A Review Essay,” Working Paper Series no. 298, African Development Bank, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, p. 14.

consistent with the desired economic outcome?”⁸ The trends that are emerging from empirical studies of the correlation between governance, particularly, democracy and development have resulted in arguments from different perspectives which can also be termed controversies on the issues. The focus of this paper is to highlight the various arguments that make up this controversy in order to conjecture at a proposal for democracy and development in Africa

Conceptual Framework

The key concepts for this essay are: democracy and development. Etymologically, democracy is understood as a combination of the Greek words *demos* meaning ‘common people’ and *kratos* meaning ‘rule’. Thus, democracy means the rule of the common people. While this definition of democracy is clear enough, problems arise at the level of the operationalisation of the rule of the people.⁹ How is the rule of the people to be understood in concrete terms? Given the size of societies and states today, even though direct rule was possible at some time, such a rule is no longer feasible today. On the basis of this reality, it becomes pertinent that a few must be selected to oversee decision making for all. This is the perspective of J. S. Mill in his *Considerations of Representative Government*. Commenting on this perspective from Mill, Lewis avers that democracy had two meanings: its primary meaning is that all those who are affected by a decision should have the chance to participate in making that decision...its secondary meaning is that the will of the majority shall prevail.¹⁰ By this understanding, democracy as the rule of the people is the arrangement of government such that all those affected by a decision participate in it and the position of the majority prevails. Party-politics, elections and voting seem to have been the most popular ways of realising majority rule or operationalising it. The current fancy for democracy has not always been the case. In ancient and medieval times, there was no fancy for democracy.¹¹ The current fancy for democracy was as a result of certain factors. Some opinions are of the view that liberalism, on the basis of its emphasis on

⁸Fosu, “Governance and Development,” p. 14.

⁹ D. T. Osabu-Kle, “Western Democracy: Is it Applicable in Africa?” *The Bulletin of Fridays of the African Union Commission*, vol. 1, no. 3 (April, 2008), p. 2.

¹⁰ W. A. Lewis, *Politics in West Africa* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 64.

¹¹ See, Plato, *Statesman*, in *The Collected Dialogues including Letters*. Edited by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) 297b7-c; Aristotle, *Politics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 1. Edited by Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 1279a30-1279ab10; See, J. N. Figgis, *The Divine Right of Kings*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: The University Press, 1914), pp. 432.

individual autonomy, was the forerunner of recent western democracy.¹² It is within this new wake of its emergence that democracy has subsisted today and it is within this context that Africa has entered into its experience.

Development has had various definitions attached to it. In very simple terms, development can be understood as a type of change. This type of change is positive and it is not haphazard or accidental. It is rather a purposeful and goal-oriented change. The change of development presupposes a knowledge of the goals or end-state to which the change aspires. Beyond this knowledge of end-state, this kind of change also requires value choices. That is, some values need to be upheld in the process of accomplishing this kind of change. With regard to human beings, the end-state of this kind of change is self-realisation. Thus, development can be understood as the “process by which human beings seek the maximum realisation of themselves...”¹³ It is a positive and progressive transformation of capacities and capabilities as well as the freedoms thereof. This is a sense of development as positive freedom which is central to Armatya Sen’s idea of development as freedom. This idea of development as self-realisation through positive freedom has universal and particular dimensions. The values, orientations, attitudes, ideas, practices and object which are for the realisation of people across the globe are its universal dimensions. The modification and adapting of ideas and practices of universal interest of development to suit particular geographical and/or socio-cultural situations, refer to the particular dimensions of development.

From all of the foregoing, development can be understood as positive freedom for self-determination and self-realisation. The centrality of freedom in this regard has to do with the fact that freedom is both an end and a means for accomplishing development. By this definition, the understanding of development is at two levels. Development is first in terms of the satisfaction of basic everyday stuff such as a dignified existence free of hunger, unemployment, and disease. Secondly, and more importantly, it could be deliberate efforts at fulfilling political imperatives such as freedom of the individual, equal and fair treatment before the law and freedom from

¹² F. O. C. Njoku, *Philosophy in Politics, Law and Democracy* (Nekede: Claretian Institute of Philosophy, 2002), p. 169. See also, C. B. Macpherson, *The World of Democracy* (Toronto: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1965), pp. 6-9. Aside Macpherson, Barrington Moore’s view that capitalist economic development creates growing pressure for democratisation by fostering the emergence of a middle class lays credence to this position as well. In this opinion, without a bourgeois, there is no democracy (See, Goran Hyden, “Development and Democracy: An Overview,” in *Development and Democracy: What we Have learned and How*. Edited by Ole Elgstrom and Goran Hyden (New York. Routledge, 2002, 7ff.).

¹³ J. C. A. Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective* (Köln: Rudiger Köppe Verlag, 2019), p. 55.

being victimised by the state.¹⁴ At the first level of the understanding of development, authoritarian states can also accomplish development. But at the second level of development, only democratic social arrangements can be said to have the disposition to accomplish such level of development. It will also not be incorrect to conjecture that it will be almost impossible for a state which allows for the liberties at the second level of the understanding of development to be unable to guarantee the first level of development. This is what makes democracy a worthwhile arrangement of society to pursue. It has the double advantage of meeting development at both the first and second levels. Authoritarian arrangements are most likely only to meet development at the first level. This level of interconnection between democracy and development is what will be the discussions here.

From the Rhetoric of Self-Governance to the Grammar of Development in Africa

Post-development scholars have emphasized in their works, the fact that the problematization of poverty, most especially in colonial spaces, was as a result of the contact between such places and ethno-European modernity. It is within such modern understanding that poverty becomes a problem and addressing the problem refers to efforts at development.¹⁵ Thus, the discourse of development became the focus of scholarly and governance attention only at a certain point in time. This experience is also the same on the African continent. Colonialism was an attempt at developing Africa within the context of the modernisation understanding of development. But all through the experience of the domination of colonialism, Africa's reaction to the domination was couched in the rhetoric of self-governance. In this rhetoric, the emphasis was on expelling the coloniser so that Africans can govern themselves. It was in the aftermath of colonialism that grammar of development was born.

The emergence of post-colonial Africa was primarily as a result of the effort of independence movements across the continent. These movements ensured the end of colonial rule and the accomplishment of self-governance for many African states. Despite the success of nationalist movements, it was obvious from the beginning of independence that power and not development was the driving force for the nationalist movements. The quest for raw power had engendered quite a number of negative sentiments among the African peoples. "Besieged by a multitude of hostile forces that

¹⁴ B. Matolino, *Consensus as Democracy in Africa* (Grahamstown, South Africa: African Humanities Program, 2018), p. xii.

¹⁵ See, K. Willis, *Theories and Practices of Development* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 28. See also, Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.21ff and M. Rahnema, "Global Poverty: A Pauperising Myth," *Interculture XXIV*, 2 Issue 111 (Spring 1991), pp. 4-51.

Philosophical Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Africa

their authoritarianism and exploitative practices had engendered, those in power were so involved in the struggle for survival that they could not address the problem of development. Nor could they abandon it.”¹⁶ Even though the idea of development was already vaguely implicit in the ideology of nationalist movements, the full adoption of the grammar of development (ideology of development) was based on the fact that the rhetoric of self-governance had run its course. Something was needed to replace it.

The argument was that in order to eradicate the humiliation of colonisation, Africa needed to catch up. Catching up meant developing. As it eventually turned out, the popularity of the grammar of development amongst African leaders shortly after independence “was not so much an ideology of development as a strategy of power that merely capitalised on the objective need for development.”¹⁷ The implication of this was that, African leaders, in their quest to sustain themselves in power, made every effort to show that they were now offering development, since colonial rule was no longer an issue. For some opinions, these African leaders continued with the same strategies with which they ended colonialism in the quests for development. But the strategies required to accomplish the task of ending colonisation was completely different from that required for accomplishing development.¹⁸ Consequently, Ake submits that, “the ideology of development itself became a problem for development because of the conflict between its manifest and latent functions.”¹⁹ It was while Africa was embroiled in this crisis of development that the wave of democracy, described in the introduction, hit the continent.

Part of the argument in this wake of democracy is that, a largely popular based political process is what would ensure development in Africa. Yakubu Ochefu in writing on “Democracy and Development in West Africa,” first defines democracy and development and then goes on to submit that, “from our definition of democracy and development, it is clear that both are inexorably linked. Development is primarily an economic concept and is operationalised at the level of society by political systems such as democracy.”²⁰ Furthermore, Larry Diamond avers that, “Africa cannot develop without democracy, and democracy in Africa ultimately cannot be sustained without

¹⁶ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 9.

¹⁸ See, G. B. N. Ayetti, *Africa Unchained: The Blueprint for Africa's Future* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) pp. xxff.

¹⁹ Ake, *Democracy and Development*, pp. 9.

²⁰ Y. A. Ochefu, “Democracy and development in West Africa: How Integral is the Relationship” *NESG Economic Indicators*, January – March 2007, p. 26.

development.”²¹ The positions above suggest that, in whatever form, the accomplishment of development in Africa has links to democracy and the survival of democracy in Africa has much to do with the perpetuation of development in Africa.

Challenging the Operationalization of Democracy in Africa

Despite the position above with regard to democracy and development in Africa, there are still opinions that challenge the operationalization of majoritarian democracy in Africa. The operationalization of democracy is mostly through party politics. In this system, political parties put forth candidates in an election contest for power. The candidate with the highest number of votes becomes the representative of his/her party and people. In postcolonial Africa, there were positions that challenge this mode of operationalising democracy, insisting that this mode has only devastated development in Africa rather than contribute to it. For example, “one valid point which was made again and again by one-party persuaders is that there is no necessary connection between democracy and multiparty system.”²² In fact, for Julius Nyerere, African parties have a different source of motivation when compared to political parties in Europe and America. For him political parties in Europe and America

... came into being as the result of existing social and economic divisions - the second party being formed to challenge the monopoly of political power by some aristocratic or capitalist group. Our own parties had a very different origin. They were not formed to challenge any ruling group of our own people; they were formed to challenge the foreigners who ruled over us. They were not, therefore, political "parties" i.e., factions but nationalist movements. And from the outset they represented the interests and aspirations of the whole nation.²³

On the basis of this difference in basic motivation, party politics in Africa need to be one party systems as against having oppositions.

Kwasi Wiredu's advocacy for a non-party politics in Africa represents another version of this challenge to the operationalization of democracy in Africa. Wiredu insists that democratic elements exist in African culture in the form of consensus where people gathered under trees to talk in villages until they agree. The aim of this

²¹ L. Diamond, “Democracy, Development and Good Governance: The Inseparable Link,” Maiden Annual Democracy and Governance Lecture of the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, Accra, 2005.

²² A. Kasanda, “Analyzing African Social and Political Philosophy: Trends and Challenges,” *Journal of East West Thought*, 5:1 (2015), p. 46.

²³ Quigley, “Perestroika African Style,” 616. Nyerere makes this point noting that while more than one party emerged, they were united on the goal of independence and had little or no program for the future, post-independence period.

Philosophical Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Africa

negotiation is “reconciliation rather than the mere abstention from further recriminations or collisions.”²⁴ This reconciliation is possible because at the end all the talking, “ultimately the interests of all members of society are the same, although their immediate perceptions of those interests may be different.”²⁵ In this kind of consensus democracy where there are no political parties, representation is not just formal, it is also substantive. It is substantive in the sense that representatives are directly loyal to their constituents because there are no political parties to mediate the loyalty of the representative to his/her constituents. For Wiredu, party democracy is adversarial and breeds struggle in the polity. Non-party democracy does not. Along the lines of Wiredu’s thought, Joe Teffo makes the case that there is democracy in traditional Africa. In substantiating his case he highlights the fact that in traditional Africa a king is born not elected and his powers are regulated by a group of elders in council.²⁶ Still on consensus in the African context, Edward Wamala introduces demographic component into the efforts at highlighting democracy in the traditional Africa. In his opinion, democracy emerges in Africa just as it emerges in the Greek polis, from the smallness of the population which allows for the full participation of the citizenry. The rule of personality as it operates in this context suggests that the monarch knows his subjects individually and works with them as persons.²⁷

All the positions as presented here have come under various forms of criticism. Various reasoned arguments have been put forth to show the poverty of the one party politics as panacea to the African predicament.²⁸ Aside theses reasoned arguments, the vigorous agitations against and eventual collapse of the one party system of politics is also often considered as a testimony to the poverty of such a system. In the case of the non-party polity of which Wiredu is the leading advocate, his position has come under scrutiny from various perspectives. But what is of interest for this essay is that, his understanding of non-party politics has been classed as a type of the one-party system.

²⁴ K. Wiredu, “Democracy and Consensus in Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity,” *The Continental Review* 39:1 (1995), p. 53.

²⁵ Wiredu, “Democracy and Consensus in Traditional Politics,” p. 57.

²⁶ See, J. Teffo, “Democracy, Kingship and Consensus: South African Perspective,” *Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu (Blackwell: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), pp. 443-448.

²⁷ See, E. Wamala, “Government by Consensus: An Analysis of a Traditional Form of Democracy,” pp. 435-441.

²⁸ See, P. A. Nyong’o, “Africa: The Failure of One-Party Rule,” *Journal of Democracy* 3:1 (1992), pp. 90-96.

This perspective to Wiredu was first hunched at by T. Carlos Jacques.²⁹ Helen Lauer reacts to the hunch of Carlos Jacques when she insists that Wiredu was quite clear in his efforts at drawing the lines between his propositions about a non-party polity and the widely practiced one-party polity in Africa.³⁰ Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze also raises critical concerns about Wiredu's non-party polity proposal. An outstanding case Eze makes against Wiredu is that the interest of all human beings cannot be the same. The only point when interest could be completely identical is when no one in the society has the capability to "develop an *individuated* structure of *desire* – the absolute guarantee against (inclination to, or suspicion of) greed and (infliction of, or fear of) domination."³¹ This situation is practically impossible in human societies and this brings to the fore the difficulty in practically accomplishing the reconciliation which Wiredu thinks consensus can bring.

Furthermore, and although Bernard Matolino insists that T. Carlos-Jacques' reasons for classing Wiredu's non-party politics as same with one-party are not cogent, there is every reason to take seriously Jacques' case against Wiredu. For Matolino, a close reading of Wiredu's idea of Party1, Party2, Party3 and Party3,1, shows that such understanding of party is not tenable and that by those categories a non-party polity is not different from a one-party polity.³² Matolino further states with regard to Walama's case for consensus that, consensus could be a form of majoritarianism as against what its advocates will have us believe. Beside the case against Wamala, Matolino still takes on Wamala and Teffo together, in another place insisting that, "what is needed is not so much a spelling out of the traditional scaffolding of consensus, as we see in Teffo and Wamala, but an attentive demonstration of how these scaffoldings will work as transformed modern scaffolding and what modern institutions it will subsequently develop and argue for."³³ How some of these traditional elements will fair in modern Africa will be the focus of this essay subsequently, but our attention right now will be on exposing some of the faults of the consensus approach to democracy and invariably development.

²⁹ See, T. C. Jacques, "Alterity in the Discourse of African Philosophy: A Forgotten Absence," in *Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities Through African Perspectives*, Vol. II, edited by Helen Lauer and Kofi Anyidoho (Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2012), pp. 1017-1075.

³⁰ See, H. Lauer, "Wiredu and Eze on Good Governance," *Philosophia Africana: Analysis of Philosophy and Issues in Africa and Black Diaspora*, 14:1 (2012), pp. 41-59.

³¹ See, E. C. Eze (ed.), *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 313-323.

³² B. Matolino, "Ending Party Cleavages for a Better Polity: Is KwasiWiredu's Non-Party Polity a Viable Alternative to a Party Polity?" *Acta Academia* 48:2 (2016), pp. 101ff.

³³ Matolino, *Consensus as Democracy in Africa*, p. 188.

Aside all of the foregoing critical points against the efforts to challenge the operationalisation of democracy in Africa, the positions of Jeffo and Wamala still requires further scrutiny. Predominantly, kings are born not elected in the African context. Jeffo was quite correct on this. However, he wrongly proceeds from this position to justify the democratic credentials of the African experience. His process of thought seems faulty in this case because, although elements of democracy can be deciphered from governance in traditional African, evidence from such times points in the direction that traditional governance was largely autocratic. Precisely, the fact that a king is born not elected implies that the people do not have any direct influence on the constitution of kingly powers. Consequently, they cannot make any legitimate claims to how such a power operates. Even the council of elders that are referred to as checks to the powers of king in the traditional setting, at best, only play advisory roles. A clearer picture of power constitution in the African context and checks on it is properly construed when attention is focused on the metaphysical basis of power constitution. In traditional African society, political power/authority derived from possession and control of the vital force of a political unit. This is a spiritual force which can exhibit its influence on both physical and no-physical nature.³⁴ Thus, the power which is sought after is metaphysical. In many African settings, the process of the birth/appointment, coronation and installation of a king eventually transforms such a king into a deity. This means, the person who exercises such power becomes of the same nature with such a power: a metaphysical being. Within such context and following the African flow of hierarchy of being, which holds that the vital force of influence resides in the superior being and not the inferior, the king cannot offend his subjects, only his subjects can offend him. Given the enormity of power bestowed on the king, his powers can only be regulated by: (i) the taboos attached to the office and (ii) fear of incurring the wrath of the patron deity or spirits that protect and oversee the welfare of the group or society.³⁵ It is only by these means that there could be checks on kingly powers in the African context. Thus, whether the political system is a kind of hereditary monarchy, non-hereditary monarchy or even exhibits democratic elements, the authoritarian principle is present and the powers of the king are only divinely limited. In this context, kings do act arbitrarily because it is incumbent upon them to maintain a kind of cosmic and spiritual balance in their territories.³⁶ In line with this, Eze is quite correct in his submission about Wiredu's idea of consensus democracy in Africa that,

³⁴ J. C. A. Agbakoba, "Traditional African Political Thought and the Crisis of Governance in Contemporary African Societies," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 7 (2004), p. 143.

³⁵ Agbakoba, "Traditional African Political Thought," p. 144.

³⁶ Agbakoba, "Traditional African Political Thought," p. 147.

I think that Wiredu might need further evidence to make a successful case that the king and chiefs actually ruled, and believed, along with their subjects, that authority could be legitimised on through the secular virtue of persuasiveness of ideas (rather than through religious and sometime clearly superstitious – appeal to the sacred, god or ancestors):...³⁷

Thus, one gets to see that the efforts at demonstrating democracy from an African standpoint seems to have missed the point about what kingly/political power actually is in the African context.

Furthermore, the understanding of the rule of personality as presented by Wamala is not a complete reflection of the practice in the African context. This point is underscored by the fact that vitalism is very important in the African ontological outlook. For the African, vital force is what drives change in things and what a thing is depends on its vital force. That is, a thing is essentially the forces and power it displays. This leads to the idea of voluntarism in African traditional thought. Voluntarism in human beings stresses the role of self-preservation in this world and the perfection of the self in the struggle for dominion as the highest good. This is the basis for the voluntaristic personality who tends to personalise all social relations and exhibits a rule of personality as against the rule of law. In this context, the rule of personality portrays an aversion to the realisation of social relations based on formal structures and the rules that spell out rights and duties which are supposed to be operated as objectively and impersonally as possible.³⁸ This understanding of the rule of personality aligns more with the reality in African political contexts than its overly simplistic presentation in Wamala's works. Understood in this way, the rule of personality explains the excesses of power in the precolonial setting, which have continued to hold sway even in postcolonial times.

Democracy as Conducive to Development in Africa

Despite the arguments about how democracy has adversely affected development in Africa, there is still some general disposition to accept that democracy is largely conducive to development in Africa. One of the most popular and cogent efforts to demonstrate this relationship between democracy and development in Africa is Claude Ake's *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Though, a Political Scientist, Ake's intuitions in this regard carries huge philosophical baggage that warrants close attention

³⁷ E. C. Eze (ed.) *Postcolonial African Philosophy*, pp. 313-323.

³⁸ J. C. A. Agbakoba, "Values and Developing Administrative Instruments for the African Cultural Environment," *Uche Journal of the Department of Philosophy University of Nigeria*, Nsukka, 16 (2010), p. 8.

Philosophical Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Africa

in an essay of this kind. Ake's work is poised to show how conducive democracy is to development in Africa. He argues that even with the forays the newly industrialised countries (NICs) from Asia are making despite being anti-democratic, there is a tendency to pass aside the democratic credentials of this anti-democratic regimes. For him, these NICs have incorporated qualities like accountability, transparency predictability, rule of law, competition which are 'redeeming features' that have made the *Asian Miracle* possible. This goes to show that democratic ideals are part of a genuine effort at development. How have these two played out in Africa?

Ake begins to answer the question above by noting that, "...it is not so much that development has failed as that it was never really on the agenda in the first place."³⁹ This means that the African experience is not that of a failure of development, but developing Africa has never been the focus right from colonisation even to the postcolonial experience. He argues that the nature of colonialism in Africa was antithetical to any form of development on the continent. In the postcolonial period, "...the gaining of independence was not a matter of nationalists marshalling forces to defeat colonial regimes. More often than not, it was a matter of the colonisers accepting the inevitable and orchestrating a handover of government to their chosen African successors, successors who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests."⁴⁰ Since postcolonial leaders were selected based on the level of their alignment with the ideals of the erstwhile colonisers, these did not also have development on their agenda. They only mouthed development as a rhetoric to retain themselves in power. Even when efforts were made to develop by African leaders, such efforts were often at variance with the agenda of the metropolitan sponsors of power holders in Africa. This led to what Ake calls *a confusion of agendas*. In spite of this confusion, the effort of African leaders with regard to development could at best be termed *improbable strategies*. This is why development was not on the agenda. Beyond the inefficiency of the effort of African leaders in the development quest, there is also the issue of "the development by underdevelopment by the agents of development."⁴¹ This points at the marginalisation of Africa in world economic affairs. Thus, Africa now occupies a marginal position with regard to the rest of the world which is as a result of a deliberate marginalisation of Africa. This is part of the reason why the development project cannot kick off in Africa.

To kick start development in Africa, Ake outlines what he calls *a residual option* as an appropriate paradigm to accomplish development in Africa. This option is

³⁹ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 4.

⁴¹ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 114

residual because it begins from what is left after separating out the confusions, irrelevancies, frills and distortions that stand in the way of strategizing development in Africa. It is a paradigm and not a blueprint or action plan because it is about “the logic, values, principles and general path of movement for development in Africa.” It is more of a “theoretical structure of experience whose practical operation will vary depending on historic circumstance of each country.”⁴² It is within this context of a paradigm that Ake’s residual option becomes a kind of political philosophy for African emancipation. This is built on the energy of ordinary people. The kind of democracy that will guarantee development for Africa is one which is powered by the energies of this ordinary people. It is a kind of democracy in which the people are not just voting and not choosing, but one in which ordinary people have real decision making power. Such a democracy places emphasis on concrete political, social and economic rights, as opposed to abstract individual rights. It emphasizes collective rights as it does with individual rights. It is a democracy of incorporation. He calls it ‘participatory social democracy’. The sense of participation is unique in this regard. Participation here is linked to communality. That is, “people participate not because they are individuals whose interest are different, and need to be asserted, but because they are part of an interconnected whole.”⁴³ It is the kind of democracy motivated by this level of participation which engenders development and makes ordinary people the agents, the means as well as the end of development. Using the power of decision making acquired from the participatory social democracy by the people, they can impact how their development can unfold.

One of the obvious pitfalls of Ake’s discourse on democracy and development is that he is not very clear on how social participatory democracy can be achieved in real existence. At some point, Ake avers that accomplishing this democracy,

...could mean, for instance, a second legislative chamber, a chamber of nationalities, with considerable power in which all nationalities irrespective of their numerical strength are equal. It could mean consociation arrangements, not only at the national level but even at regional and community levels. It will also entail such arrangements as proportional representation and an electoral-spread formula like the one used in Nigeria, by which a party must secure a stipulated minimum percentage of votes over a large part of the country to win.⁴⁴

⁴² Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 124.

⁴³ C. Ake, “The Unique Case of African Democracy,” *International Affairs*, 69:2 (April, 1993), p. 243.

⁴⁴ Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa*, p. 132.

The three possibilities suggested by Ake in the above have their various drawbacks, which makes his proposal quite problematic. The idea of a second legislative chamber of nationalities with equal powers irrespective of numeric strength is hardly imaginable in a nation with strong tribal leanings. As for consociation arrangements, its weak points include, "... the fixation of group boundaries and identities, the lack of competitive oppositional politics and the tendency towards gridlock and disintegration..."⁴⁵ The third suggestion of proportional representation as has been the case in Nigeria, leaves much to be desired. The suggestion could have been a good one if the arrangement is working for Nigeria. Proportional representation has simply not yielded democracy, let alone development for Nigeria. In an essay on the unique case of African Democracy,⁴⁶ Ake alludes to sociocultural realities and community politics as elements that could make for an African variant of democracy. But in this essay, his case is very sketchy and not clearly stated. It will take efforts of later African Political Philosophers to come up with more cogent proposals on how democracy can be amended for the purpose of development in Africa.

Hybridity and the Prospects of Democracy and Development in Africa

All the positions from the foregoing about 'challenging the operationalisation of democracy in Africa' and 'how democracy is conducive to development in Africa', unveils a dilemma which African Political Philosophy is yet to properly grapple with. A tenable option as will be suggested here is one which adopts elements from both sides and forms a workable democratic and development frame for Africa. The suggestion that will be hinted at here will be a form of hybrid between the traditional and the modern. This is the case because a return to the good old days is no longer possible and a total consumption of the more modern materials have not been fruitful either.

In constructing this hybrid of the traditional and the modern, this essay will also be doing a hybrid of the works of Ali Mazuri and Joseph Agbakoba. Mazuri had solid suggestions to make about hybridity in democratic practice and Agbakoba has a lot to say about hybridity with regard to development. The attempt here is to bring both hybrid perspectives together in order to conjecture at a hybrid proposal for democracy and development in Africa. For Mazuri, the primary economic problem has never been structural adjustment. The problem has always been how to carryout cultural re-

⁴⁵ Y. Mine, Mari Katayanagi and Satoru Mikami, Comparing Political Institutions: Institutional Choice and Conflict Prevention in Africa," in Preventing Violent Conflict in Africa: Inequalities, Perspectives and Institutions edited by Yoichi Mine, Frances Stewart, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and Thandika Mkandawire (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2013), p. 12.

⁴⁶ Ake, "The Unique Case of African Democracy," pp. 239-244.

adjustment. This re-adjustment would not be a demotion of African culture.⁴⁷ This cultural re-adjustment requires creating a balanced African continuity with cultural borrowing from western modernity. In his words, “until now, Africa has borrowed Western taste without western skill, Western consumption pattern without western production techniques, urbanisation without industrialisation, secularisation without scientification.”⁴⁸ These are the reasons Africa needs a cultural rather than structural adjustment in order to create new equilibrium in taste, values and skills. This proposal of Mazuri brings the critical cultural element into the discourses on democratising development. This element has been lacking in all previous dimensions on democracy. When cultural elements are mentioned in the discourses on democracy they are only romanticised and not critically interrogated for the purpose of democracy. This appeal to culture also resonates well with the proposal of Samuel Huntington about culture matters in democracy.⁴⁹ This attention to culture also moves the focus of accomplishing democracy from the level of institutions to the purview of agents. After all human beings make culture thus moulding them is very vital to making democracy.

Agbakoba’s thinking on development as organicist gives impetus to the intuitions of Mazuri about democracy in Africa. By the organicist conception of development, Agbakoba understands development to be more of internalist than an externalist affair. The internalist approach “holds the view that the internal state of a society initiates and directs the development of a society by responding constructively to internal and external stimuli and/or by adopting or rejecting such stimuli.”⁵⁰ On the basis of this, he is of the view that the continued insistence on colonialism as the reason for the dearth of development in Africa is no longer sustainable. His basic submission is that colonialism is as effective as it is in Africa because of certain internal dispositions in the African traditional worldview which requires critical and constructive attention. He is an advocate of what he calls the cultural-development thesis and this “emphasizes the role of culture in the development of a state or community.”⁵¹ This thesis is reminiscent of the proposition that ‘cultures count and cultures matter.’⁵² Agbakoba thinks that the agential integrity of traditional Africa led to a situation of poor cultural firewalling and that is why African agential receptivity is not strong enough to deal with

⁴⁷ A. A. Mazuri, “Who Killed Democracy in Africa? Clues of the Past, Concerns of the Future,” *Development Policy Management Network Bulletin*, IX:1 (2002), p. 17.

⁴⁸ Mazuri, “Who Killed Democracy in Africa?” p. 17.

⁴⁹ S. P. Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave,” *Journal of Democracy*, 2: 2 (1991), pp. 20ff.

⁵⁰ Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa*, p. 64.

⁵¹ Agbakoba, “Values and Developing Administrative Instruments,” p. 1.

⁵² L. E. Harrison and S. P. Huntington (eds.), *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Book, 2000), pp. xiii-xxxiv.

the effects of colonialism even long after colonisation. In his estimation, the reason why some other societies were able to recover from the onslaught of colonisation is because their cultural firewalls were strong enough to sieve out all received threats to agential integrity within such a society. In Africa this was not the case. Thus, there is a need for cultural re-adjustment so as to enable development.

So, from the perspective of Mazuri, we see the quest for cultural re-adjustment in order to accomplish the democratisation of development. Agbakoba makes effort to show cultural re-adjustment is also vital in order to accomplish development. It should be noted that the cultural re-adjustment required, must proceed from Africans themselves. Although the “coloniality of power”⁵³ could still be a threat to accomplishing unhindered democracy and development, Africa is still yet to demonstrate sufficient creativity and determination in fully exploiting the advantage of the freedom it already has. One way to accomplish this re-adjustment is to embark on a sustained and persistent critique of elite norms within the African context. Predominantly, elite norms in Africa reflect the basic elements of the rule of personality as evidenced when they flagrantly disregard the rule of law on basis of who they are and which is a signal of authoritarian arbitrariness. These norms have been so elevated in the African context to the extent that non-elites aspire to such norms. As a consequence, democracy always easily snowballs into ‘government of friends and cronies, by friends and cronies, for friends and cronies.’ Development suffers, ultimately.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a return to the starting question of the essay will not be out of place. The starting question was: as more and more African countries have become relatively democratic within the multiparty framework, an important challenge has come; will political outcome be consistent with the desired economic outcome. To address this question, the essay has considered the arguments of those who challenge the operationalisation of democracy in Africa and those who think democracy is conducive to development in Africa. From both arguments, the paper makes its own case for a hybrid approach to democracy and development in Africa. The conclusion is that internal agential considerations are very vital in the quest to make democracy work for development in Africa. Until some aspects of internal agency is addressed through the instrument of critique of elite norms, democracy and development may still be a far cry on the African continent.

⁵³ See, A. Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America.” *Nepantla: Views from South* 1. 3. (2000), pp. 533-580.