

KWASI WIREDU'S CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY: TOWARDS A PATH OF REALIZATION IN THE MAJORITARIAN HEMISPHERE

FASINA, Julius Adekunle

Abstract

Wiredu's work titled *Democracy and consensus in African traditional politics: A plea for a non-party polity* (1996) has generated so many reactions so much, that scholars on African politics have argued in support of and against on justificatory and logical grounds. Basically, a summary of the arguments of Wiredu in this work are as follows: (1) He offered a consensus-based non-party ideology as a fundamental tenet of political theory and democratic practice in Africa. (2) He avers that the majoritarian democracy in practice has failed to put the interest of the minorities into consideration in the decision-making process. (3) He views consensual democracy as a workable and suitable substitute for majoritarian democracy. He feels that the rights and the interests of the minorities which are not taken care of in majoritarian democracy can only be done under a consensual process. In this paper, I submit that there is a need to muddle consensual democracy principle which are positively inclined and significant as replacements to parts of the places in which majoritarian democracy has fallen short. The paper employs the science of muddling through theory by Charles Lindblom to reiterate to justify this notion. The aim of this work is to demonstrate that there are aspects of consensual democracy that are inherent in majoritarian democracy but which are not really taken cognizance of. Also, consensual democracy can still come to realization in practice and applicability if and only if the positive and useful features of it can be employed in majoritarian democracy. The paper employs both the analytic and expository methods respectively in showing the logical and practical possibility of reconciling majoritarian and consensual democracy.

Keywords: Africa, Consensus, Decision-making, Democracy, Majoritarian, Science, Muddling

Introduction

The word consensus has been used by different political scholars to suit their discourse on political matters both from the majoritarian and traditional consensual points of view. At every stage in the consensual discourse both in the precolonial and postcolonial era, what consensus entails is 'agreement'. This agreement is the benchmark for reaching consensus among any group members in any decision-making process. The process of reaching this agreement unanimously among these members is another thing either through by majority or total agreement as contended by Victor and Martin (Martin, 1995, Victor, 2020, 4). Either consensual democracy involves a collective or total agreement or other means derived, the basis for it is that agreement needed to be reached at.

In establishing a kind of democratic system that is most suitable for inclusive governance in contemporary Africa, Wiredu (1996) calls for a return of consensual democracy in contemporary African societies (Wiredu, 1997, 310, Masaka, 2019, 69). He did not only call for its return but argued strenuously that it should be substantively institutionalized (Wiredu, 1996). This call is premised on his belief that majoritarian democracy in principle, practice or application has failed to have the rights of minorities reflected, with the attendant implications for cohesion and stability in postcolonial African states. If Wiredu's consensual democracy has been criticized and described as one that cannot work due to difference in ethnicity and cultures in African societies as argued by Bodunrin (1991) and Hotonundji (1996) or from the ground of rationality and practicability according to Eze (2000) and Ani (2014), what then is making majoritarian democracy as a system of governance fail in delivering the expected benefits of democratic practice? Put in another way, since it has been acclaimed by scholars like Eze (1997), that it is not the ideology itself that is faulty but the people upholding the ideology makes it looks faulty. As

further argued and posited by Eze (2000) and Ani (2014) that the features that Wiredu has argued for can be found in majoritarian democracy, what then is the cause of its failure? Did the failure come from its principle, practice or application? The paper seeks to address this question from a critical point view. This paper is divided into three basic sections.

The first section explicates Wiredu's consensual democracy. I showcase in detail, how Wiredu discussed extensively how consensual democracy is inherent in the pre-colonial African societies. Section two of the paper, focuses on the arguments for and against. Here, I bring into limelight reactions through corroborations, criticisms and complementarist evaluations by scholars. Section three demonstrates how consensual process can be realized in the majoritarian hemisphere.

Kwasi Wiredu's Consensual Democracy: An Account

It has been argued by Wiredu (1997, 303) that the *modus operandi* in decision-making process in traditional African settings and governance was a rule by consensus. Undeniably, the precolonial African societies employed communalism as an ideology and in principle in execution and action via means of free discussion varying from series of disagreement to agreement on salient issues that either makes or mar the society in question. It is on this basis that Wiredu contended that in reaching a total agreement on salient issues among elders in the society, consensus as a rule was taken to be axiomatic (Wiredu, 1997, 303). What this literally means is that for consensus to be reached on amidst diverse opinion on any particular issue meditated on, it requires dialogue, conflicts, negotiation, reconciliation, and resolution. This shows that consensus even at the expense of reaching a partial or total agreement as reiterated by Martin (Victor, 2020, 4) cannot be attained easily (Wiredu, 1997, 303-304).

In getting rid of ambiguity, Wiredu's consensual form of democracy was borne out of the precolonial consensual form of governance. Society in the precolonial era was either with a centralized mode of governance or with a less centralized mode of governance. The societies with centralized mode of governance or authority is controlled by a government machinery. This government machinery which according to Wiredu may be regarded as government (Wiredu, 1997, 304). The less centralized mode of governance on the other hand, is the one without government machinery which can be tagged as anachronistic. The Zulu (of South Africa), the Ngwato, Bemba to mention but a few are found in the first category. The Tallensi (of northern Ghana), the Logoli (of western Kenya) and the Nuer (of southern Sudan) is found in the second category (Wiredu, 1997, 304). The Ashanti society are classified under the centralized mode of governance. For a proper analysis on his notion of consensual democracy, Wiredu limits his account of traditional notion of consensus to the political system of governance among the people of *Ashantis*. The Ashantis are a matrilineal group with centralized authority (Olowoniye, 2021, 2) with units "consisting of all people in town or village having a common female ancestor, which, as a rule, is quite a considerable body of persons" (Wiredu, 1997, 305). It is evident that consensus was taken to be a means of reaching agreement at all levels among the Ashantis. This level which is hierarchical in nature comprises of the appointments from the council which is done through the appointment of a head that automatically becomes a member of the council which is the governing body of the town or village (Wiredu, 1997, 305) to the municipal council which is comprised of the lineage heads and headed by what Wiredu calls the *Chief* so to say a "natural ruler" (Wiredu, 1997, 305) and to the divisional unit headed by the *paramount chief* then to the highest, which is the national council as reiterated by Wiredu is the conglomeration of people from the divisional council presided over by the *Asantehene*. This is the peak of the system of governance in the Ashanti traditional government. It is imperative to note however, that in the selection process of various representatives from the lineage at the various level, "every lineage in a town or village had been elected by consensus on grounds of seniority, reputation of wisdom, and rhetorical abilities. Lineage here means all the individuals of a common ancestry" (Fayemi, 2010, 5).

Either in the centralized or less centralized mode of governance, consensus is taken to be natural or inherent which is regarded as immanent in decisions and social interaction. And that, consensus is never achieved ordinarily but through occurrence of conflicts. This shows that consensus is not achieved on the platter of harmony as such without going to the processes of dialogue, conflicts, reconciliation, to mention but a few which serves as features to consensus. As reiterated that consensus is not based on unbroken harmony, it requires rationality as a criterion. This is evidently seen among the Akans in general and Ashantis particularly that they “prize rational discussion as an avenue to consensus among the adults that the capacity for elegant and persuasive discourse” (Wiredu, 1997, 307). Without mincing words, rational discussion is of cherished and valued discourse in any rational gathering. This is suitable when salient issue is considered to be looked at on rational ground from different perspective among the discussants. Rationality indeed, needs to be valued and protected. Because it will leave room for examination and re-examination of various solutions proffered through dialogue on burning issues at hand.

The call for a return of consensual democracy, came as a reaction towards the apparent inadequacies that majoritarian democracy has been bedeviled with. As such, the pursuit for consensus was a deliberate effort to go beyond democratic decisions by majority opinion (Wiredu, 1997, 307). As Wiredu puts it, it is for the interests and rights of the minorities to be taken care of. As such, majority opinion is not in itself good enough for decision-making, for it deprives the minority of the right of representation in the decision in question (Wiredu, 1997, 307). The arguments of Wiredu against majoritarian democracy and a call for consensual democracy as a substitute can be summed as follows: (1) majoritarian democracy is antithetical to genuine democracy (Eegunlusi, 2022, 7) which has failed to put the rights and interests of the minorities in the decision making (Wiredu, 1997:307; Victor, 2020, 5). Put in another way, consensual democracy takes better care of the interests of the minority than majoritarian democracy (Victor, 2020, 5). (2) In terms of adequate and substantive representation, consensual democracy offers substantive representation (Wiredu, 1997, 307; Olowoniye, 2021, 3) over and above formal representation (Wiredu, 1997, 307; Matolino, 2012, 112). Through formal representation, majoritarian democracy has failed to substantively represent the interest of the minorities. Also, “the formal representation is for the sake of the substantive. Not only that, substantive representation is a matter of a fundamental human right. Each human being has the right to be represented in the council, but also in counsel in any matter relevant to his or her interests or those of their groups” (Wiredu, 1997, 307).

On the ground of rationality and logic, it turns out at times that, with the intervention of reasoning one finds out that the minorities opinion if count, may or can pave way for a better mode of governance in any society as seen in the case of the Ashantis as put forward by Wiredu. Through consensus, Wiredu (1997, 307) contended that it is crucial for deliberations that are concerned with what is to be done and not what is ought to be done. This involves continuous talks until agreement is reached at in discussions pertaining significant deliberations. To achieve this consensus, a non-party system is utilized, meaning that the system does not incorporate political parties as competing entities aimed at deciding which party gains power, while the unsuccessful ones are excluded from power. Here, this type of consensus however, seeks for the consent of the people which Wiredu regards as the “legitimate means” to arrive at any decision-making process. This non-party system however, does not in any way require political parties or competition that will make representatives or contestants to deploy any means necessary to attain power. Put in another way, since democracy is “a government by consent”, liberal democracy's multiparty and majoritarian structures are incompatible with true democracy, as contended by Wiredu. He reiterated further that, the partisan and majoritarian aspects of liberal democracy lead to disappointments and portray human political existence as being plagued by ongoing power struggles among the numerous political parties that are currently in existence (Eegunlusi, 2022, 8). Therefore, people may get tense due to irascible actions and moral deficiencies. He supports a no-party, consensual democracy as an alternative to partisan majoritarian liberal democracy. According to him, in such a framework, consensus

on what the society ought to do can be reached with ease through compromise, unencumbered by the requirement to have a shared understanding of morality and truth.

Arguments for and Against Wiredu's Idea of Consensual Democracy

Wiredu's call for a return of consensual democracy as upholding the African indigenous political system to replace majoritarian democracy in contemporary African society has generated corroborations, criticisms and complementarist evaluations by scholars. There however, exist two major schools of reaction - the constructivist and de-constructivist.

The de-constructivist scholars are those that have argued against Wiredu's consensual democracy. They argued against the type of democracy that is consensual in nature that Wiredu proposed as a suitable system of governance that can at best save African political ideology and system of governance, and that which will cater for the interest of the minority. Wiredu's consensual democracy has been criticized on the ground of rationality, ethnicity and cultural differences, population and practicability as contended by (Bodunrin, 1991; Hountondji, 1996; Eze 1997; Ani; 2014, and Fayemi, 2010).

To begin with, Hountondji (1996:47) has argued from the ground of cultural differences. He contended that Wiredu fails to take into cognizance the fact that Africans and African societies consists of diverse cultures and traditions. In fact, each society at best, has its own tribe, language, traditions, ways of doing things, and language. Not omitting the fact too, that each and every society has its unique values, customs and goals that is distinct from others are however, connected to its unique traditional system of government. These aforementioned differences for Hountondji (1996, 47) are enough reasons and justifiable not to foster agreement to reach any consensus. He went as far as disagreeing and criticizing with Wiredu's consensual democracy which assume that Africa is composed of diverse people with different cultural background, and that in this diversity lies a collective will that will make them to agree. This assertion by Wiredu, for Hountondji is full of error. This made him to conclude that his position can at best be regarded as "the myth of primitive unanimity" (Hountondji, 1996, 47). Hountondji (1996, 48) reiterates that the idea of African communalism that has been evoked as the basis for consensual democracy has been overemphasized and argues that Africa must make a "clean break" from the past because he is skeptical of the African consensus. According to him, such unnecessary emphasis entails denying important issues like the social and economic crisis, from which Africa urgently needs emancipation. Hountondji implies that the economic problems in post-colonial Africa are the base root from which Africa's political problems have emerged. To resolve this problem does not require the retrieval of pre-colonial political traditions, but a critical development of the minds of African people to innovatively tackle the problems (Hountondji, 1996, 48). It is important to state here in clear terms that maybe Hountondji is oblivious that this socio-economic crisis that emerged in the post-colonial Africa are as a result of the political ideology practiced. In applying the rule of *modus ponens* for instance, which says P implies Q, P, therefore Q, shows here however, that the political ideology practiced in the post-colonial era gave birth to the socio-economic crisis. The question at this juncture is what has led to the crash of majoritarian democracy in some African countries lately? Is it the ideology itself that has fault or the mode of practice? These questions would be attempted in the latter section.

In a similar vein, Eze (2000) disagrees and criticized Wiredu's consensual democracy from the delimitation between the western adversarial style and African consensual mode of democracy. He reiterated that what Wiredu thought of that makes him thinks and call for a return of consensual democracy as against majoritarian democracy is such that it is not the political ideology (majoritarian democracy) that has issue itself, rather, it is those that uphold this political ideology both in practice and governance that makes Wiredu thinks majoritarian democracy is inadequate for the contemporary African societies. He highlights that African leader, rather than the majoritarian democracy, have been a major cause of many of the problems in post-colonial Africa. He particularly mentions that the post-colonial

dictators, through greed and selfishness, have created conflicts in Africa. Furthermore, Eze argued that he did not understand Wiredu's assertion that leaders were only granted legitimacy by their powerful speeches rather than by appealing to gods or ancestors. Put differently, he finds it hard to comprehend why Wiredu claims that chiefs' legitimacy came solely from their ability to persuade others, not from their ability to invoke the gods and ancestors. This relates to Wiredu's assertion that chiefship was sacred because it served as a conduit between the people and its ancestors and that it was not only political but also divine (David, 2021, 22). According to Wiredu, the ancestors are superintendents in charge of human affairs. Eze suggests that the sources of governmental legitimacy and authority in this view are directly linked to ancestors' and gods' powers. Thus, he disproves Wiredu's assertion that the king in the old system relied solely on persuasion to sway decisions.

Matolino expressed dissatisfaction on Wiredu's consensual democracy from the non-party's point of view. He agrees and converges with Wiredu from the consensual point of view. The divergence comes in when he finds a problem with the idea of the distinction of no-party and one-party system. Matolino contended that there is no difference between this two. In his *The Nature of Opposition in Kwasi Wiredu's Democracy by Consensus* (2013), he asserted that the only difference he finds between the two systems is that whilst the one-party system endeavors to achieve common interest through the vision of a single leader, Wiredu's non-party polity seeks to reach the general good through the vision and efforts of all citizens. As stated by Matolino (2013), the issue with these two systems is that they both operate under the assumption that every member of the society has a common interest that needs to be pursued by every member of the society. According to Matolino, this assumption forces members to act in the same ways, think the same thoughts, and hold universal values.

It is important to state here that Matolino fail to take into cognizance that before the collective interest can emerge, it must undergo different processes that involves critical discussion. And that is why Wiredu contended that before any agreement can be reached upon, it will involve dialogue, disagreement, reconciliation, persuasiveness (Wiredu, 1996, 304). Through these processes, it can be deduced that every member in the society prior common interest may/will have diverse interests before any agreement can be reached at the time of decision-making. But before this common interest comes to take place or before any agreement can be reached at, criticality and rationality has come to play. Furthermore, (Matolino, 2013) criticizes Wiredu's dialogical procedure for reaching consensus. From Wiredu's theory, Matolino gathers that consensus is a product of logical and persuasive deliberation. This dialogical procedure in Matolino's view does not take into consideration the diversity and plurality that mark the contemporary African polities.

According to Matolino, it is easy to attain consensus in a small society such as the traditional past. But it is not easy to reach consensus during deliberation in a complex society. Matolino implies that the post-colonial Africa was complex and characterized by cultural diversity. Cultural diversity gives rise to diverse beliefs and values in a society (David, 2021, 26). Matolino (2013) argues that there is no established or formalized mechanism in Wiredu's theory of consensual democracy that guarantees consensus. He contends that the only mechanism Wiredu prescribes for ensuring consensus is the notion of consensus itself. For Matolino, this is only a mere appeal for the need for consensus. Hence this is not how to reach consensus. He argues that mere dialogue does not entail consensus; there should be a properly laid down mechanism for consensus which is independent of mere desire for consensus. It imperative to also state here that what Matolino also argued against here that consensual democracy falls into as in the case of dialogue instead of logicity, majoritarian democracy also has fallen into same pit hole. There are so many instances that in majoritarian democracy, logicity has been neglected for dialogue. So to say, 'political dialogue'. This word has been employed overtime to settle matters and reaching agreement amidst the complexities, diversity and plurality that marks contemporary African societies. Nigeria in this case is a very good example.

Another critical perspective on Wiredu's concept of consensual democracy was presented by Ani (2014). He objected to Wiredu's portrayal of consensus and deliberation as being purely African, logical, and inherent. According to Ani, this kind of classification is essentially the same as the one that identifies superiority or intelligence as inherently White. In lieu of this, Ani challenges Wiredu's particularizations, arguing that they create an unwarranted division between the Western and African paradigms (David, 2021, 24). As contended by Ani, consensus is the product of deliberation and is viewed as a process worldwide. Therefore, consensus cannot be said to be innately African as acclaimed by Wiredu. He argues that every political action is preceded by deliberation. Consensual political acts are also predicted. He claims that as a social and political ideal, consensus has normative significance. It is this ideal that deliberators aim to attain. Ani (2014) compares the formal voting process and the consensus-building process in his study of governing systems; Similar to consensus decision-making, Ani contends that voting is a fundamental human method of resolving collective decision-making issues (David, 2021, 25).

The constructivist school on the hand has moderated and re-construct Wiredu's consensual democracy. Here, a unique assertion or point of convergence amongst all these scholars however, is that consensual democracy can still be actualized amidst the complexities, diversity and plurality. The actualization of this consensual theory however, has been defended by these scholars differently. Kwame Gyekye (1997), Edward Wamala (2004), Joe Teffo (2004), Omoregbe (2010), Odei, M. Ajei (2016), and Hallen (2020) have all endorsed and strengthened Kwasi Wiredu's idea of consensual democracy.

Gyekye (1997) on his part carried out a comprehensive study on the feasibility of consensual democracy in contemporary Africa. He claimed that the growth of post-colonial society was influenced by both pre-colonial and Western civilizations. He asserts that the modern Africa is more complex and diversified than that of the pre-colonial Africa. According to him, the three primary pillars of Wiredu's consensual democracy are inclusive government, diversity in engagement, and public discourse. Adopting the pure pre-colonial system would be very difficult for these reasons. The aforementioned pillars listed by Wiredu, according to Gyekye, are all included in the constitutions of the majority of African countries (Gyekye, 1997). In particular, he mentioned decentralization, which is regarded as essential in the majority of African nations. Gyekye suggests that a collaborative and consensus-based approach to decision-making is supported by the multiparty system of government.

Teffo (2004) looked at Wiredu's concept of African consensual democracy. His research led him to the conclusion that majoritarian democracy in Africa is illogical. Because of this, a unique cultural context may have a strange kind of government. He believed that democracy needed to adhere to the same values. That is to say, he believes that while the majoritarian system is at odds with African culture, Wiredu's consensual democracy is consistent with it.

Wamala (2004) uses the traditional Ganda as an example to present arguments that generally support Wiredu's point of view. He claims that traditional Ganda had an Akan-style democratic system of government. This is because political discourse in that society is built on consensus. Wamala contends that a chief's authority in Ganda society was constrained, much as the Akan theory of government has demonstrated.

Ciaffa on his part supported Wiredu's consensual democracy. In his article titled *Tradition, and Modernity* published in 2008, he analyzed Wiredu's consensual democracy and multiparty system. He reiterated that the traditional African mode of governance is communalistic in nature. And that, attainment of good will can only be pursued and actualized holistically through the promotion of individual interest. For Ciaffa, a democratic society must uphold the concepts of justice and representation. This concepts for him, are intertwined. Democracies ought to create structures that let

people voice their desires and opinions. He contends that this type of political ideology has to defend and uphold the fundamental liberties and rights of every person. It must also guarantee justice for every member in order to prevent the emergence of a totalitarian majority inside popular rule.

Omeregbe (2010) on his part defended the idea of consensual democracy from the communalist perspective. He contended that the consensual mode of governance is unique and peculiar to Africans, while the majoritarian system of governance is categorically unique to Westerners. It is worthy to note that, the idea and invention of multi-party system in Africa's mode of governance inappropriate. Therefore, the majoritarian system of governance is alien to Africa and that we lack the skills, formal education and discipline to sustain this majoritarian democracy.

Williams (2014) argued in defence Wiredu's consensual democracy on the basis that when reaching any decision-making in consensual democracy, it is normative. And that human beings are egoistic in nature but he believes that recognising national interest as the cornerstone of government could lead to a high degree of agreement. Williams contends that even if a person may be motivated by self-interest, if the common good is known, he may also be motivated by it. Therefore, people may be persuaded to agree if the interests of the common good align with their own. However, over time, a system like this might provide a higher level of sustained consensus than one driven by party interests. If legislators are motivated by the interests of the country, this could ensure that an agreement can be reached in the multiparty system.

Ajei (2016) on his part critically analyzed Wiredu's consensual democracy by constructing it in a supportive manner. Ajei (2016), who argues that the approach is appropriate for Africa. He rejects the idea of a majoritarian government, much like Wiredu. Ajei and Wiredu both argue that multi-party democracy has resulted in violence in Africa and has given an undue amount of authority to the majority party. This indicates that there is an alternative to majoritarian democracy for him as a subscriber to this ideology.

Another foremost defender of Wiredu's thought on consensual democracy is Barry Hallen. In his work titled *Reconsidering the Case for Consensual Governance in Africa* (2019), he did not only argue in support of consensual democracy, he also calls for a re-visitation and a return of it to be taken seriously. This position held by Hallen can be deduced from the political instability and crisis that the liberal democracy in the post-colonial Africa has been bewildered with.

For Hallen, consensus is "the intentional, negotiated, rational exchange that are taken as a conventional part of everyday life" (Hallen 2019, 5). What this means however is that, consensus in pre-colonial African communities serves as a widespread and inherent tool used to promote social harmony and means of exchange among individuals in the society. Barry Hallen adds that interpersonal connections in African communities have always been largely consensus-oriented, meaning that on any given level, interpersonal relationships in African societies have always prioritized consensus. Hallen supports Wiredu on the need to revisit consensual democracy on the need to curtail any form of authoritarianism. For him, this type of ideology is alien to traditional Africa practices. Through a need for re-visitation consensual process, he believed that it will cater for the interest of the minority. He refuted the claim that the political structure in pre-colonial traditional African society is built on authoritarianism.

To this end, this made him to go against the assertion that authoritarianism is dominant in the pre-colonial traditional African society and that through his submission that, every member regardless of age or sex, can adequately be a partaker in the consensual discourse. He called this 'Palaver' (Hallen, 2019, 16). According to Hallen (2019, 12), majoritarian form of democracy as it is practiced in postcolonial Africa "is essentially antithetical to both (indigenous) traditions of democracy and the complexities of contemporary situation (in Africa)". He claims that consensual governance in traditional African societies

was “essentially democratic” (Fayemi, 2020, 38). He argues that the complex issues facing post-colonial Africa today, such as corruption, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, refugee crises, terrorism, poverty, and poor governance, are partly explained by the “incompatibility” between the traditional African conception and practice of democracy and the contemporary, Eurocentric version that is widely adopted in the continent (Fayemi, 2020, 39).

As reiterated by Hallen, the majoritarian democratic model has many drawbacks, including the following: it discourages genuine and continuous citizen participation in governance; it alienates minorities and election losers from the political process; and it places a great deal of emphasis on political parties as a means of securing political power in a region with a diverse population, such as Africa, which in turn encourages African leaders to align their parties with the more politically dominant ethnic group, thereby fostering ethnic rivalries and unrest in African nation states (Hallen, 2019, 13-14). To make consensus worthwhile in the postcolonial African setting, Hallen uses John Rawls' concept of “overlapping consensus” to reach political agreement about justice and the principles of social organisation among plurality of ideas that cut across different individuals' belief systems, such as religion, ethics, and aesthetics. He further demonstrates the relevance of consensus to postcolonial African societies, even if they are multicultural or multiethnic. This is because consensus is a non-party system that promotes and sustains effective citizen participation in governance (Hallen 2019, 18).

From the foregoing, it is evidently deduced from Hallen's position that (1) he posits for a re-visitation to the consensual model of democracy that is been practiced in the pre-colonial Africa due to the failure of majoritarian model of democracy in practice that has failed to deliver adequate participation in governance and accountability to citizens. (2) this failure has led to different crisis in post-colonial Africa giving room for corruption and other political crisis. (3) he strengthened the consensual model of democracy using Rawls concept of “overlapping consensus” to justify a consensual theory of democracy that will carry everyone along regardless of the diversity, plurality, complexities and ethnicity.

However, Hallen's position has under heavy brickbat by Fayemi. Fayemi (2020) in his article titled *Against Consensual Democracy: A Reply to Barry Hallen* rejects the call for a return of consensual democracy. Amidst his refutation lies a complementarity approach to the issue of political that is at best suitable for post-colonial Africa.

Wiredu and Consensus: Towards Realization in the Majoritarian Hemisphere

The mode and manner in which most post-colonial Africa countries conceive and use the concept ‘democracy’ calls for greater scrutiny. Many scholars have described democracy as a system of governance and concept, in ways that suggest that post-colonial African societies practice it. At this juncture, there is a need to ask if truly post-colonial African countries truly have this democracy? Do they have it in principle, practicability, or applicability alone? First, by principle, does it refer to having it as a theoretical possibility or framework? Second, by practicability, it is needed to note if it is realistic or not as a sociopolitical ideology. Third, by applicability, does it address its relevance or usefulness in a democratic setting as portrayed? These questions of democratic ideology in principle, practicability, and applicability may appear to have been answered by scholars and readers from different perspectives. It is imperative to note that both consensual and majoritarian democracy are culturally embedded and influenced.

The assertion made by the opposers of Wiredu's consensual democracy are tenable to a very large extent but not to the extent of refuting it totally. Recently, the majoritarian democracy of countries like Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have been overthrown by the military (Coup de' tat). The political settings of these countries have not only been distorted but the situation has generated some unrests among the electorates. It can be deduced however, that the reason for the overthrow of elected governments in these

democratic nations is due to what Wiredu has tagged as formal representation lacking substantive representation (Wiredu, 1997, 307). The lack of substantive representation in sub-Saharan African countries is as a result of these elected candidates muscled their ways by ‘any means necessary’ into power using the instrument of the state to retain it. Here, they now use the instrument of the state to oppress and suppress the people all in the name of protecting them.

Not omitting the problems surrounding consensual democracy, it is important to state that majoritarian democracy is not the type of democracy that is peculiar to Africa. Factually, it is foreign to African settings. And when a particular thing is alien to a culture, its practice can either be successful or unsuccessful. Similarly, ethnic and cultural diversity, leadership and governance, rule of law and respect for human rights, institutional strengths and public participation are some of the factors that can make it successful and unsuccessful. Hence, since it is alien to African system of governance to manage and develop it will be very difficult. Overtime, majoritarian democracy in Africa has lacked transparency, accountability, and also used as a veil for civilian authoritarianism, to mention but a few.

To actualize consensual democracy amidst the majoritarian practice in post-colonial Africa, there is a need to employ and apply the *Science of Muddling Through Theory*” of Charles Lindblom (1959). The theory suggests an alternative to the traditional rational model of decision-making, known as the “incremental model of the policy-making process” (Lindblom, 1959; Maryam et al, 2012, 38). The theory suggests basically that in complex decision-making situations, it is more practical to make small, incremental changes rather than trying to find a perfect solution all at once.

As contended by Maryam et al (2012, 39) the science of muddling through decision making is characterized by the following traits: First, before any decision can be finalized, it will undergo a number of minor changes. Policymakers recognize the legitimacy of current policies due to the uncertainty around the effects of new or alternative policies. That is why Wiredu reiterated that in reaching a total agreement on salient issues among elders in the society, consensus as a rule was taken to be axiomatic (Wiredu, 1997, 303). What this literally means is that for consensus to be reached amidst diverse opinions on any particular issue meditated on, it requires dialogue, conflicts, negotiation, reconciliation, and resolution. The second trait of the *science of muddling through* as put forward by Maryam et al (2012, 39) is that it requires mutual adjustment and compromise. Significantly, Lindblom’s *Science of Muddling Theory* will aid consensual democracy in actualization within majoritarian democracy by solely promoting incremental decision-making and fostering collaboration among diverse groups, allowing for broader consensus rather than simply majority rule. The measure of a good decision is consensus rather than goal attainment. It can be deduced however from the following assertion that that consensus was taken to be a means of reaching agreement at all levels among the Ashantis. As such, the pursuit for consensus was a deliberate effort to go beyond decision by majority opinion (Wiredu, 1997, 307).

However, the concept of the *science of muddling through* is relevant both in the consensual and majoritarian context. While the majoritarian system of democracy tends to focus on the majority rule, and that instead of trying to impose a decision on the acceptability of the majority opinion, the majoritarian system of democracy should encourage incremental changes and compromises through open dialogue and negotiation. This is in synonymity to the eclectic model that Fayemi (2020) highlighted as referendum. The shortcomings or bad attributes of majoritarian democracy in post-colonial Africa can easily be get rid of through the infusion of the positive aspects of consensual democracy. Continuous encouragement to dialogue, inclusivity, provision of long-term solution cum negotiation to salient societal issues, and legitimate participation in decision-making process to mention but a few all positive aspects of consensual democracy. Arriving at a final decision should not be hinged only on the majority opinion alone, there is a need to embrace a democratic process that is inclusive and finding common ground to making progress. Overall, consensual democracy encourages inclusion of diverse groups and minority opinions in the decision-making process leading to policies that better reflect the interests of the entire population.

The majoritarian democracy however, has imbibed the spirit of dominance lacking broad agreement and lack of better representation. As such, in seeking broad agreement and reducing majoritarian dominance, consensual democracy can lead to more stable and enduring policies. This can be achieved through the broader support base and reduced opposition. More so, majoritarian democracy has really fallen short when it comes to conflict resolution. By incorporating mechanisms for negotiation and compromise, consensual democracy can be effective in resolving conflicts and preventing deadlock. All in all, consensual democracy promotes a more inclusive, stable, and cooperative political environment, leading to decisions that are broadly supported and sustainable. With the aforementioned about consensual democracy and majoritarian democracy, it is important to state here that, there is a need to employ the *science of muddling through theory* to moderate the majoritarian democracy in Africa through the incorporation of the good aspects of consensual democracy. With this, majoritarian democracy will be a better and a suitable system of governance in Africa.

Conclusion

Rather than castigating consensual democracy to the extreme end of not being suitable or practicable anymore in contemporary African societies, there is a need for its re-consideration if not wholly but partially. In this instance, the positive and reasonable aspects of it. By adopting the *science of muddling through* by Charles Lindblom, it will further strengthen the majoritarian system of governance in Africa. This can only be done through the importation of the positive aspects of consensual democracy to as a replacement or substitute to solving the inadequacies inherent in majoritarian democracy. By applying this method, it will further enhance majoritarian democracy in practicability and applicability. The concept of the *science of muddling through* is relevant both in the consensual and majoritarian context. While the majoritarian system of democracy tends to focus on the majority rule, and that instead of trying to impose a decision on the acceptability of the majority opinion, the majoritarian system of democracy should encourage incremental changes and compromises through open dialogue and negotiation.

***FASINA, Julius Adekunle**

Lagos State University, Ojo.

+2347041476314

adekunle7975@gmail.com

References

- Ajei, M. O. (2016). "Kwasi Wiredu's Consensual Democracy: Prospects for Practice in Africa." In *European Journal of Political Theory*. 15(4).
- Ani, E. I. (2014). "On Traditional African Consensual Rationality." *The Journal of Political Philosophy*; 22(3).
- Bodunrin, P. (1991). "The Question of African Philosophy." *The Essential Readings*. By Serequeberhan, S. (Ed.). New York: Paragon House.
- Charles, E. L. (1959). "The Science of Muddling Through." In *Public Administration Review*. 19(2). Blackwell Publishers.
- Ciaffa, A. J. (2008). "Tradition and Modernity in Postcolonial African Philosophy." In *Humanitas: Interdisciplinary Journal (National Humanities Institute)*. 21(2).
- David, K. A. (2021). *A Critical Study of Kwasi Wiredu's Consensual Democracy*. Cape Coast: University of Cape Coast. A Thesis Submitted....
- Egunlusi, T. R. (2022). "Critical Reflections on Wiredu's Consensual Democracy". In *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) (New Series)*. 8 (2): Pp. 1-27.

- Eze, E. C. (1997). "Democracy or Consensus? A Response to Wiredu." In *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. By Eze, E. C. (Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers. Pp. 313-323.
- Eze, E. C. (2000). *Democracy or Consensus? A Response to Wiredu*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Fayemi, A. K. (2010). "A Critique of Consensual Democracy and Human Rights in Kwasi Wiredu's Philosophy." In *LUMINA*. 21(1).
- Fayemi, A. K. (2020). "Against Consensual Governance in Africa: A Reply to Barry Hallen." In *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*. 2(1-2): Pp. 33-51.
- Gyekye, K. (1997). *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflection on the African Experience*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hallen, B. (2019). "Reconsidering the Case for Consensual Governance in Africa." In *Second Order: An African Journal of Philosophy*. 3(1): Pp. 1-22.
- Hountondji, P. (1996). *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Martin, B. 1995. "The Value of Consensus". In *Society's Choices Social and Ethical Decision Making in Biomedicine*, Ruth, E. B., Elizabeth, M. B., & Harvey V. F. (eds.) Washington: National Academic Press.
- Maryam, O. Q. (2012). *Public Policy Analysis*. Nigeria: National Open University of Nigeria.
- Masaka, D. (2019). "Kwasi Wiredu's consensual democracy and one-party politics in Africa". *South African Journal of Philosophy*. 38(1): Pp: 68-78
- Matolino, B. (2012). "Democracy, Consensus and Africa: An Investigation into Consensual Democracy's Contribution to African Political Philosophy." *Philosophia Africana*. 14 (2): Pp. 105–124.
- Matolino, B. (2013). "The Nature of Opposition in Kwasi Wiredu's Democracy by Consensus." In *African Studies* 72 (1).
- Olaonipekun, V. O. (2020). "Democracy and Consensus in Traditional Africa: A Critique of Kwasi Wiredu in *Inkanyiso Journal of Humanities & Social Science* 12(1).
- Olowoniyi, M. J. (2021). "An Assessment of Kwasi Wiredu's Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non Party Polity". In *Aquino Journal of Philosophy*. 1(3): Pp. 1-10.
- Omoregbe, J. (2010). *Socio-political Philosophy: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos, Nigeria: Joja Education Research and Publication Limited.
- Teffo, J. (2004). "Democracy, Kingship and Consensus: A South African Perspective". In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. By Kwasi Wiredu (Ed.). Maiden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Wamala, E. (2004). "Government by Consensus: An Analysis of a Traditional Form of Democracy". In *A Companion to African Philosophy*. By Kwasi Wiredu (Ed.). Maiden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Williams, B. D. (2014). *Institutions and Legislative Consensus in National Parliaments*. Retrieved from <https://briandwilliams.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/dissertation>.
- Wiredu, K. (1995). "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A plea for a Non-party Polity." *Centennial Review* 39 (1).
- Wiredu, K. (1996). "Democracy and Consensus: A Plea for a Non-Party Polity." In *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, pp. 182-90.
- Wiredu, K. (1997). "Democracy and Consensus in African Traditional Politics: A Plea for a Non-party Polity." *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. By Eze, E. C. (Ed.). Pp. 303–312. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc.