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**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**  
**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**KWASI WIREDU'S CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY AND THE PROBLEM OF  
IDENTITY POLITICS**

**BY**

**GIDEON ADJEI-MAWUTOR**

**(10404403)**

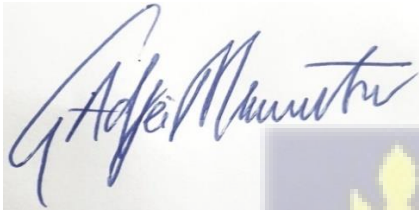
**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil  
PHILOSOPHY DEGREE.**

**JUNE 2022**

**INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS**

**DECLARATION**

With the exception of references to the works of scholars which have been duly cited and acknowledged, I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own endeavour. This work contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirement for the award of any degree in any university.



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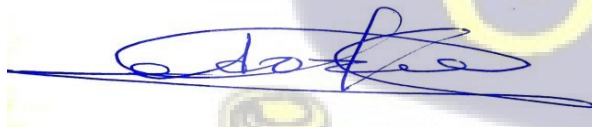
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for a critical application of Wiredu's consensual democracy to the problem of identity politics that have bedevilled postcolonial Africa. By doing so, it lays bare the present understanding of identity and identity politics and contextualises this to the African experience. The thesis, proceeding through an historico-philosophical examination of colonialism, surveys the tension between the imperial ideologies of legitimation and the anticolonial ideologies of legitimation, uncovering the deficiencies that resulted in the numerous catastrophes in the short existence of many African postcolonial nation-states. Subsequently, a case for a reconfiguration of the postcolonial African nation-state is made to divorce it from all colonial imperatives. The thesis also compares colonially inspired majoritarian democracy and indigenously inspired consensual democracy, emphasising the foundational presuppositions between these concepts as grounds for evaluation. I argue using the moderate communitarian framework that consensual democracy if applied through the primordial public allows for the hybridisation and nomadization of identities; thus, as conceived by Wiredu, political associations open the space for people to associate with different political associations that fits their perspectives. It is further argued that this reduces the dimension of antagonism among political associations (a dimension that affects political parties in majoritarian democracy) and instead transforms this dimension into agonism, thereby removing the tendency to politicise identities and thus diffusing the tendency to identity politics.



**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and siblings.

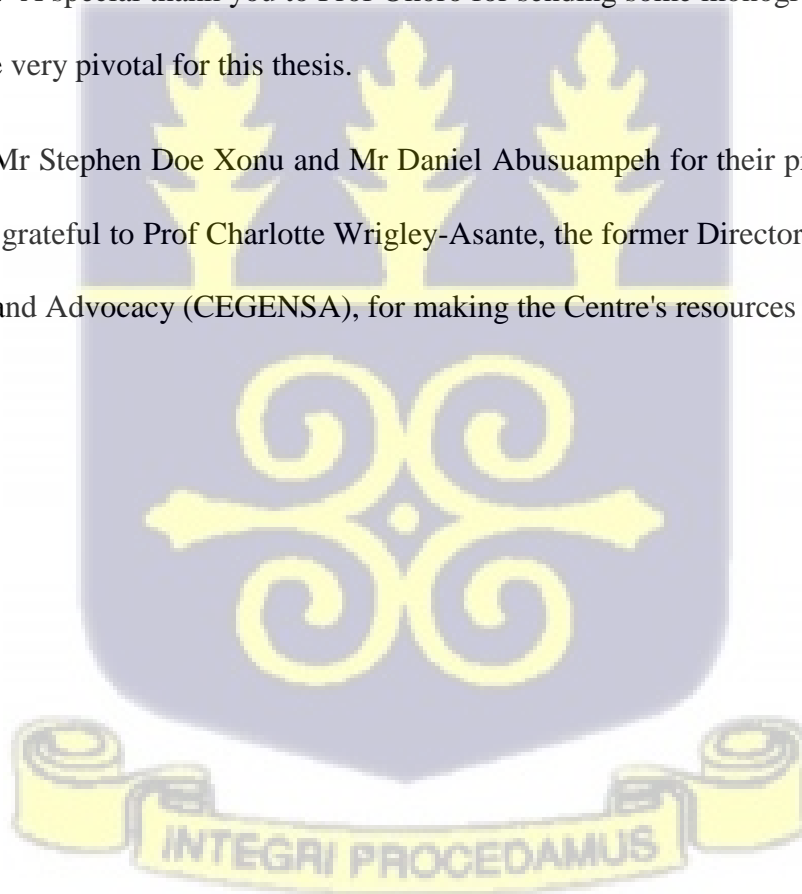


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## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

Interest in identity and identity politics by scholars on the continent of Africa peaked post-independence as many African nations went into a crisis of nation-building (Appiah, 2005; Chazan, 1982; D. Horowitz, 1985; Jega, 2000a; Keller, 2014; Mamdani, 1996; Young, 1976). Implementations of majoritarian democracy (a strand of liberal democracy) and its attending institutions were sporadic. However, where majoritarian democracy and its institutions seemed to have gained some traction, primordial ties dictated electoral processes, government appointments and distribution of state resources (Ekeh, 1975; Geertz, 1994; Okafor, 2006; Osaghae, 2006; Tordoff, 2002). Hence, a phenomenon was created where politics and political articulations were anchored on the different identities that make up a state. The significant identities usually whipped up for political gains in the African context are religious, ethnic and racial (Alumona & Azom, 2017, pp. 295–297; Mamdani, 1996; Schroven, 2019). These forms of politicking continually lead to violence, economic degradation, distrust among citizens, suppression of minority groups and military dictatorship. The genocide of Rwanda, and civil wars in Liberia and Sudan are examples of how grave the fallout with identity politics can be manifest in the world.

Identity politics in and of itself is not a negative phenomenon. However, the contention for most scholars is the way political elites or class use pre-existing identities in an antagonistic manner to gain political power at the expense of their people. What is more perplexing is their co-opting of many institutions of (majoritarian) democracy, such as political parties and the

judiciary, to facilitate their ascension cum retention to power (Elischer, 2013; Gyekye, 2013a; Osaghae, 1991b; Salih, 2003a).

Meanwhile, the negative strand of identity politics in Africa is traced to the advent of colonialism through its internal logic for dominance and superiority vis-à-vis exploitation which help sow discord among indigenous people by putting different ethnic nations together without recourse to the existing socio-political fault lines (Adu Boahen, 1987; MacKenzie, 1983). An artificial *adversarialism* was fashioned by colonialists who played favourites with the distribution of resources and social amenities among the different ethnic nations (Jega, 2000a; Mamdani, 1996). There was no intentional effort to establish cohesion among the subjects of the newly minted territories (Táíwò, 2009, p. 45). Thus, after independence, there existed a disconnect between the people and the emergent independent states; people still had more allegiance to their primordial ties than to the state (Ekeh, 1975, p. 9). Ekeh remarkably identifies that the public sphere is divided into two in postcolonial Africa: the primordial and the civic public. The primordial public, Ekeh explains, is primarily determined by primordial ties, groupings and sentiments. On the other hand, the civic public is associated with colonial structures and has no loyalty from the people whatsoever (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 92–93).

What has emerged as the postcolonial African state is a relic of imperialism. The structure of the state and the form of democracy adopted or practised are foreign to the African sensibility. Wiredu recognises this alienation and supports a 'return to the source' with the source being traditional African societies. For him, extracting ideas from these old societies may help modern African states (Wiredu, 1997). This practice of excavating ideas from traditional societies for usage in the postcolonial era is part of his larger project on decoloniality (Wiredu, 1998, 2002). To Wiredu, democracy is not alien to African sensibilities; nonetheless, the form of

democracy that was practised was one by consensus (Wiredu, 1997, p. 304). He grounds his assertion by scrutinising the Akan socio-political life. It is apparent in Wiredu's thesis that the destabilisation in Africa from identity politics is due to the advent of majoritarian democracy, which is a colonial importation.

Consensual democracy, for Wiredu, is a kind of democracy that operates under an assumed need for cooperation with the reconciliation of diverse opinions as an *idealised* goal (Wiredu, 1997). What consensual democracy seeks to do is eradicate the consolidation of power in the hands of a few political elites, as is common with majoritarian democracy. Consensual democracy advocates the disbandment of political parties since political parties serve as vehicles through which adversarial politics come to be. In effect, democracy by consensus rejects the idea that democracy is only attainable save in party politics (Lauer, 2012; Wiredu, 1997, 1999, 2001). For Wiredu, in place of political parties, there should be political associations. Their difference lies in the fact that associations do not actively seek the appropriation of power.

However, the ability to forge consensus within the colonially constructed state when practising consensual democracy would be difficult, if not impossible. Ani (2014a, 2014b, 2019) has shown that consensus becomes tenacious since different values may govern political associations. It would seem that when tensions rise even within political associations, a drift to primordial ties may occur, reified as negative identity politics. Thus, even when operating with Wiredu's political associations, a shift to primordial ties under colonial-inspired institutions hinders consensus along with prolonged negative identity politics. Yet, the bond among people within the primordial public in Africa supersedes whatever bond that could be within the civic public. The problems with consensual building arise because democracy by consensus is forcefully applied within colonial structures, which is antithetical to the *concept* in the first place.

Identity politics hinders the attainment of consensual democracy because the game is played in the civic public realm. The ethical and political structures of traditional Africa from whence the concept of consensual democracy is unearthed is ideologically opposed to the colonial systems it is applied through.

It would seem prudent that with consensual democracy, politics be articulated around the primordial public, which is moral and mimics traditional Africa, than the civic public, which is classified as amoral and ostensibly colonial (Ekeh, 1975). For consensual democracy to serve as a panacea to identity politics, there is the need for politics to be engaged in the public sphere where indigenous people feel connected. Consensual democracy, thus, cannot survive within the current postcolonial state unless a reconfiguration and restructuring is attained in alignment with the primordial public.

Perhaps consensual democracy could reshape the colonial state and fall back to what is familiar to its modus operandi outside of colonial structures and impositions; and forge in its stead a modern African state subject to African dialectics. The negative form of identity politics is an epiphenomenon of the colonial structure. It cannot be mitigated within the said structure with an indigenous theory whose institutions are diametrically opposed to the colonial. In other words, the colonial structure rooted in the civic public creates negative identity politics, and consensual democracy being rooted in primordial public cannot supplant the problems of negative identity politics if applied within the civic public milieu.

This thesis seeks to reconcile consensual democracy with the primordial public in order to mitigate the occurrence of negative identity politics. The thesis centres consensual democracy within a moderate communitarian framework that espouses non-adversarial politicking as a norm in African politics.

## Statement of Problem

Negative identity politics has hindered the rekindling of consensual democracy because consensual democracy is worked out within colonial structures and institutions. Consensual democracy's foundations are anchored in traditional African societies whose ethics and politics are rooted in the primordial public. However, the problem of identity politics vis a vis consensual democracy is due to the emphasis placed on colonial institutions captured in the civic public. The overemphasis on the civic public, which seeks to de-tribalise or de-ethnicise Africans in the postcolonial state, continuously fails because it is not rooted in culture and, for that matter, values—African values. The lack thereof of values creates the destabilisation present in identity politics and disrupts consensus. If consensual democracy were practised on a foundation purely indigenous like in pre-colonial times, it would seem counterintuitive to ask consensus to act within a structure that is antithetical to that of traditional Africa.

This study seeks to show primarily that consensual democracy is much suited to deal with the problem of identity politics in so far as the postcolonial state do away with colonial structures and forge a national politics within the primordial public sphere. In practice, this would mean breaking into ethnic federations and these federations competing nationally as political associations and not political parties.

## Research Question and Objectives

The fundamental questions of this study are as follows:

- a. Can Wiredu's consensual democracy deal satisfactorily with identity politics?
- b. What is the nature and character of identity politics in Africa?
- c. How are colonialism, the civic public and identity politics effectively linked?

- d. To what extent are the primordial public and consensual democracy synchronous?
- e. How does consensual democracy help in restructuring postcolonial African states?

These questions reflect the objectives of the study. Enumerated below are the fundamental objectives to be addressed in this study:

- i. Use consensual democracy to argue out identity politics
- ii. Examine the nature and character of identity politics in postcolonial Africa
- iii. Demonstrate the linkage between colonialism, the civic public and identity politics
- iv. Analyse the primordial public in relation to consensual democracy
- v. Employ the theory of consensual democracy to restructure postcolonial African states.

### **Stipulative Definition**

The study adopts stipulative definitions with regards to identity, identity politics and consensual democracy. In this study, identity means the various and peculiar ways individuals and groups define themselves or are defined by others on the premise of race, religion, ethnicity, language and culture.

Identity politics in this study is used to depict activities of individuals or groups in the political sphere seeking to use their unique social signifiers to gain economic, political, and social recognition. It is a phenomenon that arises when people of a particular race, ethnicity, gender, or religion form alliances and organise politically to defend their group's interests.

Lastly, consensual democracy in this study means a government of consent that adopts a less adversarial system that abhors sectional appropriation of political power and whereas decision making is mainly devised through rational dialogue with compromise and reconciliation as an idealised outcome.

## **Delimitation of Study**

The study seeks out a working way that consensual democracy can deal effectively with identity politics. It will not deal with primordial markers beyond ethno-cultural. It will also not concern itself directly with these specific issues<sup>1</sup> (metaphysical/normative/logistical) that make consensus difficult or make difficult any accompanying forms of deliberation and decision making.

## **Methodology**

This study will employ an analytical, historical and philosophical reflection on the issue being studied. However, the analytic-historico-philosophical method deployed is approached using moderate communitarianism, particularly Gyekye's moderate communitarianism, to examine the tensions between the two publics (primordial and civic) vis a vis consensual democracy. Moderate communitarianism is a middle ground against what is referred to as radical communitarianism and radical individualism.

Communitarians regard the person as a social being with a relationship with the community where the community's claim is prioritised over individual claims. Individualists (liberalists) on the other hand, prioritise the claims of the individual over that of the community. The individualists hold the individual relationship to the community as contingent and voluntary. In contrast, the communitarians hold the opposite view, where a person's relationship to the community is necessary and involuntary. Moderate communitarians strike a balance between the two, providing the individual and the community equal standing. This stance is referred to as the

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<sup>1</sup> Ani (2019), in *The Consensus Project and Three Levels of Deliberation*, lays out three levels of deliberation on which two types of issues (type one issues and type two issues) are peculiarly suited. Type one issues involve logistics, mathematical, logical and empirical matters. Type two issues involve matters like metaphysical, normative, interests, values and beliefs. Ani maps the two type of issues with corresponding levels of deliberation.

*equal moral standing thesis* (Kalumba, 2020, p. 138). This position suggests that no side is prioritised over the other. Rather, there is a balance of the two, making way for individuals to assert themselves in a manner that contributes to communal health, consciousness to the solidarity and the common good of the community while uplifting the individual simultaneously.

Identity politics sits on the polar end of radical individualism; however, its manifestation in postcolonial Africa acquires a mix of radical communitarianism manifesting as conflicts among people of different primordial ties and individualism manifesting as corruption in state institutions, for example. The moderate communitarian stance provides a sophisticated lens positing that communalism and individualism share equal standing in the primordial public realm and for that matter aligns remarkably with the spirit of Wiredu's consensual democracy.

### **Findings of the Study**

This study will provide some exciting outcomes. From this study, we will find out that:

- a. Identity politics (negative strand) continue to exist since colonial systems like majoritarian democracy allow political elites to exploit deeply ingrained identities for power appropriation.
- b. The civic public is a consequence of colonialism and operates with colonial structures that alienate citizens and promote adversarialism.
- c. The primordial public is synchronous to traditional Africa, whose political worldview is consensual and communitarian or communal, and for that matter, indigenous people identify strongly with it.

- d. Consensual democracy, if operating within the primordial public, will subvert the legitimacy of the civic public. Also, its utilisation of existing traditional structures within the primordial domain pushes these structures to the forefront, making them mainstream.
- e. Consensual democracy reduces the tendency for negative identity politics by effectively removing the hyper-politicisation of ethno-cultural markers.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The study uses the moderate communitarianism theory to establish within the primordial public a link between the individual's ethno-cultural identity and the community as well as the macro community (state) and draw a kind of agonism that values ethnic pluralism within Wiredu's framework. The study also establishes that if Wiredu's consensual democratic principles are practised within the primordial public, the negative strands of identity politics would be subverted or minimised, comprehensively rekindling the spirits of transparency, sincerity and solidarity in African politics. The study also adds to the literature on consensual democracy by introducing the concept of *the political* and the *equal moral standing thesis* in evaluating how political associations can facilitate consensual democracy in Africa and mitigate negative trends of identity politics.

### **Chapterisation Scheme**

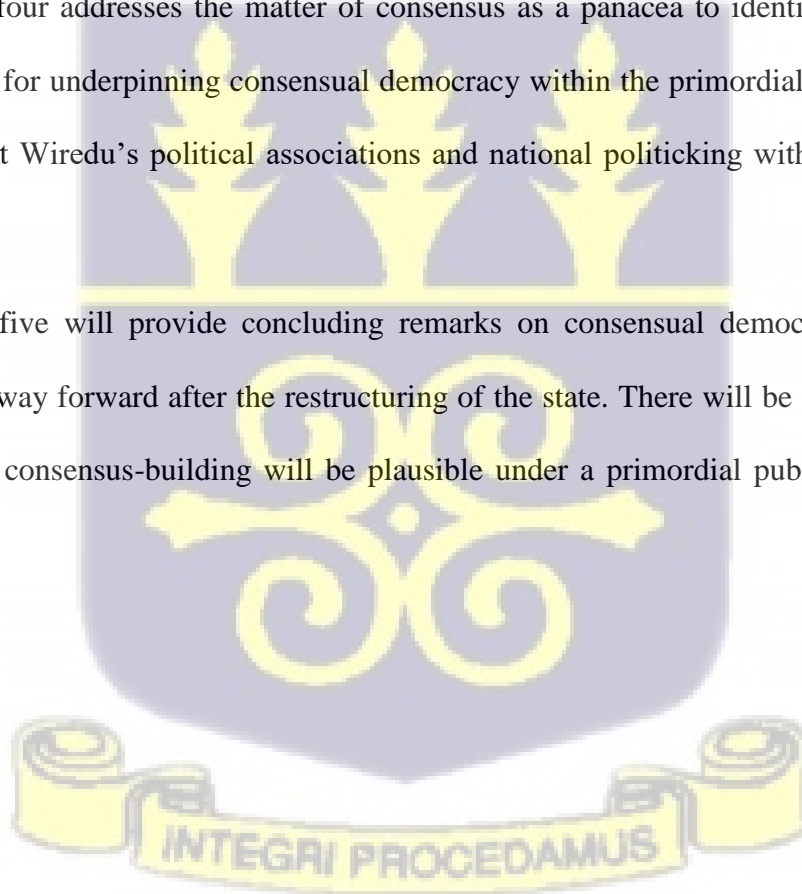
The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one will provide an introductory exposition of identity politics on the African continent. This chapter aims to present a clear picture of the political landscape and the various nature and character of identity and identity politics on the continent. A detailed presentation on the challenges the politics of identity has had on the continent will be pursued.

Chapter two will present the issue of colonialism, its link to the civic public and identity politics. It will take on colonialism as the main instrumental contributor to the incessant crisis of identity politics on the continent. The issue with colonialism, the civic public and identity politics will be grounded in Ekeh and Mandani's work.

Chapter three examines Ekeh's primordial public in relation to Wiredu's Consensual democracy. This chapter will include criticism of majoritarian democracy and the colonial institutions and structures as a whole. It will also show the inadequacy and limitations in mapping consensual democracy around colonial institutions or structures.

Chapter four addresses the matter of consensus as a panacea to identity politics. It will provide a rubric for underpinning consensual democracy within the primordial public. It will set out to reinterpret Wiredu's political associations and national politicking within a non-colonial structure.

Chapter five will provide concluding remarks on consensual democracy and identity politics and the way forward after the restructuring of the state. There will be a summary on the extent to which consensus-building will be plausible under a primordial public compared to a civic public.



## CHAPTER ONE

### Identity and Identity Politics in Postcolonial Africa

#### 1.0 Introduction

Identity as a socio-political concept, in Jega's view (2000b), has both individualist and political meanings. It has individualist meaning because it conveys one's sense of self, characterised by a capacity for authenticity—a way of being true to oneself (Sartre, 1992; Taylor, 1989). Also, it has political meaning since it establishes parameters on which similar identifying people can rally for an expected common goal. Accordingly, the complexity with identity suggests that it is not about individuality and self-awareness only, but it is intricately tied to "...identification and commitment to, shared values and beliefs in a social collectivity into which a person belongs" (Jega, 2000b, p. 14).

Identity may also be described as an individual's sense of belonging to a group often said to be "anchored on physiological givens and social roles" (Calhoun, 1994, p. 10; Jega, 2000b, p. 14). In relation to identity, physiological givens rudimentarily suggest those aspects like gender or age and social roles/sociological features suggest aspects like ethnicity or religion (Alumona & Azom, 2017, pp. 292–293). In short, identity defined sociologically is the various and peculiar ways individuals and groups define themselves or are defined by others on the premise of race, religion, ethnicity, language and culture (Alumona & Azom, 2017, p. 292).

Oftentimes, identity serves as the premise for social action within a society and influences state-society relations in the political sphere (Bernstein, 2005; Calhoun, 1994; Gamson, 2015; Schmitt, 2007). In situations of scarcity, especially over resources, collective demands are predicated on shared interests hinged on physiological givens or shared sociocultural markers (Jega, 2000b, p. 15). This shift signifies a form of political activity and

theorising deep-rooted in the experiences of shared injustices by members of certain social groups. Organising is, thus, solely done to secure the political freedoms of said groups. The politicking surrounding these identities to secure political freedoms is what is known as identity politics.

Hence, identity politics is tentatively the activities of individuals or groups in the political sphere seeking to use their unique social signifiers to gain economic, political, and social recognition. These recognitions may be in the form of resource allocation and socio-political rights and privileges (Jega, 2000b, p. 14). In other words, identity politics could be described as the interplay between the pursuit of material or social benefits and identities within the political sphere.

Generally, organising centred on identity is necessitated due to the flawed and unjust way resources and political freedoms are curtailed in the larger context of the state. However, in the African context, identity and the ensuing politics centred around it have had some debilitating effects on postcolonial African states (Ellis, 1999; Mamdani, 2003; Martinez, 2000; Turner, 2007). Negative forms of identity politics have destabilised many postcolonial African states and thrown them into chaos. Identity, in and of itself, has never been an issue in Africa. It is common to find peoples of Africa attach much importance to their identities. The core problem is that these identities have formed powerful currents on which the entire process of development is hinged (Deng, 1995; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2015). A situation is birthed where social groups are forced, almost always, to approach politics as a zero-sum game.

### **1.1 Formation of Identity in Africa**

In the aforementioned paragraph, political articulations are not done in a positive, cooperative manner but in an *us-them* fashion—a zero-sum game. There is the idea that there is

much to lose if power is consolidated in the hands of individuals subscribing to different identities (Maclure, 2003; Salih, 2003b). But before one delves into why these tensions exist, it is relevant for the purposes of this study to bring to the forefront the myriad ways identity comes to be in Africa.

Alumona and Azom (2017, pp. 292–295) comprehensively map out the myriad reasons behind the manifestation of identities in the current postcolonial African states. First, they allude to the ascriptive nature of African cultures. Many African cultures take as starting points for social classifications pre-determined factors like sex, age, kinship or birth: different societies accord meanings and social stratifications or hierarchies based on these pre-determinants. So rudimentarily, most African cultures already have an 'us' and 'them' discriminatory notion within their system. However, these self-perceptions are anchored on a high sense of in-group adhesion. This adhesion is based on familiarity and a presumed collective identity stemming from regional affiliation, common descent, or both.

Second, they specify the colonial legacy on the continent. Most modern African nation-states are remnants of colonial projects. These nations were forged out of a radical need to break free from imperialism. Imperialism had carved borders and divided indigenous peoples without regards to the socio-political fault lines that already existed, a direct consequence of the conference in Berlin in 1884 (Adu Boahen, 1987; MacKenzie, 1983; Pakenham, 1991). The scramble for Africa from 1884-1885 effectively silenced native resistance, robbing indigenes of their claim to sovereignty and solidifying colonial rule. Thus, through the machinations of colonialism, the groundwork for identity crisis was laid. Apart from separating kith and kin through arbitrary bordered lines and bringing together strangers, imperialists adopted *divide et impera* as means of controlling and pitting different ethno-cultural groups against each other

(Ahmann, 2013; Mamdani, 1996). The divide and rule tactics took many forms. For example, colonial administrators adopted different educational policies with respect to territorial or regional affiliation and ethno-cultural markers. Nigeria and Ghana are prime examples of colonial authorities giving different educational policies and implementations in southern and northern parts of the country (Alumona & Azom, 2017; Ibrahim, 2000; Miller, 1974). The amalgamation of the African state with different ethno-linguistic and cultural people with no intent on unifying them created distrusts among former ethnic (tribal) nations. Many people saw the distribution of resources or lack thereof as evidence of any ethnic nation's fealty to colonial power. The people affected sought to undo unfair favouring post-independence in the postcolonial state, which seamlessly led to the rise for the recognition of specific identities.<sup>2</sup>

Third, they cite the communal nature of Africa. Africa is known for its communalism, a system where the community's safety is of great concern. The community is usually seen as providing Africans with social and psychological security (Ikuenobe, 2018; Majeed, 2018). This principle serves as a safeguard of community identity. The community serves as space where people can develop and hone their talent and skills for their personal development, growth, and community. Simply put, there is no person without their community and no community without persons (Etta et al., 2016, p. 304).

Fourth, Alumona and Azom (2017) point to socio-economic inequality. Unequal access to state resources has been the reason for ethnic mobilisation in states like Rwanda, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, to mention a few (Mamdani, 2001; McCauley, 2014). When left to fester, these inequalities manifest as ethnic rivalries (Miller, 1974, p. 539). Sometimes they take the turn of regional rivalries where the actions of the central government marginalise specific territories.

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<sup>2</sup> More on colonialism will be explored in chapter two of this study.

Identities are formed from this cleavage and can metamorphose into successionist attempts by citizens feeling *othered* in relation to a hegemonic society.

The fifth and final reason that they give is the prevalence of bad leadership. Leadership has been one of the severe problems of postcolonial African states. It would seem that the end of colonialism actively removed the *climate of crisis* that spurred unity among citizens and the ruling elites (Okafor, 2006, p. 42). There was the clarity with the agenda among the nationalist leaders in the immediate aftermath of colonialism. However, parochial loyalties and interests seemingly clouded or obstructed the emergence of a tradition of bureaucratic impartiality. There has been a significant increase in corruption, a rise in militarised security, problems with democratic transitions, and more worrying, political engagements by political leaders continuously highlight differences rather than relationships in the state (Ibrahim, 2003; Okafor, 2006, pp. 40–52). It is not far-reaching to claim that postcolonial political leadership has failed to integrate, unify, and foster peace among citizenry (Alumona & Azom, 2017, p. 294). Abysmal leadership has created division among citizens on ethnic or religious lines through patron-clientelism (Isaksson & Bigsten, 2017, p. 623). Leaders seem to care more about their retention to power than the common good of the people, thus stoking fear, consequently leading to citizens retreating to primordial ties or identities.

## **1.2 Majoritarian Democracy and Identity Politics**

These reasons—the ascriptive nature of Africa cultures, the colonial legacy, the communal nature of Africa, socio-economic inequalities, and bad leadership—influence to some degree identity issues in Africa. Hence, political activities anchored on identities spring up often from these listed matters. Nevertheless, the politics of identity in the postcolonial African state has taken a negative turn largely due to the political system in place—majoritarian democracy.

What is majoritarian democracy? It is a form of democracy, i.e., a political system where the will of the people is expressed through the ballot while a majority represents, at least to an extent, the voice of the people (Gyekye, 2013b). It is championed as a participatory system with decision-making processes that affect people's lives grounded on the voice of the majority. On the political landscape in Africa, majoritarian democracy has dominated governance and political activities since independence even with the many military interruptions that have occurred on the continent (Salih, 2003a). The implementation of multi-party politics (somewhat), government institutions and the style of governance lean heavily on principles mirroring majoritarian democracy (Lijphart, 2012).

The very nature of the system—ceding power to the majority—makes identity politics a severe matter in the African context. Majoritarian democracy operates under the logic of *winner takes all* leading to direct negative consequences in the political sphere. Because the virtue of compromise is absent in this schema when matters in the political sphere bother vaguely or unequivocally on identity issues as discussed above, tensions are wrought, and aggrieved groups often rally violently against a violent majority as well.

Wiredu posits that majoritarian democracy has antagonism baked into the system, making it inept in dealing with problems occurring in postcolonial Africa's political landscape (Wiredu, 1997, 1999, 2001). Wiredu is correct in asserting that majoritarian democracy, with its negative tendencies, is the bane of Africa's democratic aspirations (Wiredu, 1997, 2001). However, what is implicit in Wiredu's articulation as the problems that inhere in majoritarian democracy is; the weaponisation of peoples' distinct identities through political parties for political power or gain. In short, the problems seen in majoritarian democracy are not merely because of the creation of a majority over a minority, but the privilege of certain peoples of particular identities over other

peoples of different identities through decision making. It is this that breeds violence and distrust amongst a populace. Thus, what is problematic with majoritarian democracy is the exacerbation of negative strands of identity politics through activities of political parties for remotely inclusive outcomes.

The unhealthy form of confrontation enshrined in majoritarian democracy's insistence on the competition by political parties is ubiquitous. Mainly because it is not uncommon to find *democracy* broadly construed as one of multi-party competition. E. E. Schattschneider echoes this sentiment when he writes, "...political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties" (Schattschneider, 1942, p. 1). But for postcolonial Africa, the histories of political party formation are different from that of the West. Colonialism, poverty, cultural and political practicality influence political undercurrents. While Western political parties trace their roots from parliamentary groups and electoral committees, African political parties emerged during despotic colonial rule (Salih, 2003b, pp. 4–9).

Since many Africans have strong ties to their identities given; the ascriptive nature of the culture, the colonial legacy, the communal nature of Africa, socio-economic inequalities and bad leadership; majoritarian democracy with all intents and purposes is well placed to manipulate these issues for political gain. This manipulation explains patrimonialism, prebendalism, corruption, and the gaping inequalities. Because political parties are not contingent on ideological movements, unions, parliamentary institutions and so on, it is conducive in the African context for majoritarian democracy to leverage and concentrate power in the hands of a few elites who profess to act on behalf of their social groups to the disadvantage of others. However, even though majoritarian democracy appropriates power to the majority, in actuality, it copiously concentrates power in the hands of a few elites (Cranenburgh, 2003).

### 1.3 Elites and the Politics of Identity

How do elites contribute to the crisis of identity politics? What is the extent of their influence? Before the end of official colonialism in Africa, a segment of the population who had been educated and trained in the West advocated for the independence of their nations from colonial rule (Adu Boahen, 1987; Rathbone, 2006). After independence and the waning of nationalism, many elites reverted to sub-nationalist politicking (Salih, 2003b). This shift in politics led to the proliferation of many ethnic-based political parties. For example, before the 1966 coup in Nigeria, the Northern People's Congress was open to northerners of Nigeria, although what constituted *northerner* was often contested (D. Horowitz, 1985, p. 292). Also, in the case of Kenya, the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) was predominately a Kikuyu and Luo alliance (Kwatemba, 2008, p. 80). In Ghana, the ethno-regional Northern People's Party and the Togoland Congress reflected the alignments of people of northern Ghana and people of former British Togoland, the Ewe people, respectively (Morrison, 2004, pp. 422–423).

These sub-nationalist politics led to many crises of identity politics like wars to genocide, successionist attempts and even political exclusion. The function of majoritarian democracy provided the perfect opportunity for elitist politics, masked as representative politics, to appeal to the emotions of kith, kin, ethnic or religious social groups for personal gain. Although there are few to no explicitly proclaimed ethnic political parties now, elites have sought the patron-client model to fuel adversarial relations (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002). Now, patron-clientelism is used to mask the ethno-cultural undercurrents behind political parties in postcolonial Africa.

Elites seem to be threatened by a truly open political system. The fear of relenting power pushes them to arouse ethnic nationalism to cling to the privileges that come with said power (Alumona & Azom, 2017, p. 293). So, elites' appropriation of power is made possible through

majoritarian democracy's concentration on the competitiveness of political parties. In short, political parties exist as ethno-religious mouthpieces for elite power accumulation (Osaghae, 1991b). Hence, the types of political affiliation in Africa and majoritarian democracy's propensity to seize and concentrate power for one group over the other fuel a lot of tension and conflict within a state and exacerbate the problems of identity politics.

#### **1.4 Identity Politics and its Challenges**

Given the political system, the elites and their manipulation of identities, claiming that identity politics is challenging in postcolonial Africa is not far-fetched. What is interesting, though, is the characteristics or form identity politics takes in postcolonial Africa. These characteristics help better understand the challenges faced by postcolonial African states.

To better decipher the nature and character of identity politics, it is worthwhile to situate Africa into three distinct historical epochs; the pre-colonial era, the colonial era and the postcolonial era (Alumona & Azom, 2017, p. 294). In the pre-colonial era, indigenes were divided into tribal structures and kingdoms with relatively homogeneous political systems (Besley & Reynal-Querol, 2014, p. 319). During this period (pre-colonial era), conflicts ensued based on tribal differences, political differences and the need for political (kingdom) expansion (Adu Boahen, 1987, p. 7) . Yet, though differences were recognised and inter-tribal and intra-tribal conflicts existed, there was relative peace and coexistence amongst people. However, in the colonial era, the colonialist created a deep divide amongst the people. First, they began their imperial exploitation of natural and human resources by questioning among different tribal nations the motives of their neighbours. When it was strategic enough, they began to carve out new borders, alienating kith from kin, while never bothering to take into question indigenous peoples' well-being, including their socio-political and religious life (Dirks, 1992, p. 16).

Colonialism, having adopted the mantra of indirect rule, purposefully set out to control and strategically pit different traditional powers against each other, causing a heightened aura of suspicion towards those of other primordial ethnic ties. The colonial administrators pursued differential developmental inputs that set the tone for educational, regional, economic and political imbalances in contemporary Africa (Jega, 2000b, p. 16). But it should be noted that even with these imbalances there was, in the years leading to independence, greater African solidarity against Western colonialists.

Nevertheless, devastating imperialist developments on the continent served as a precursor for strife in the postcolonial era. As nation-states gained independence and strived for nation-building, the imbalances laid out by the colonialists became apparent, and the history of identity politics took a different trajectory into ethnic and religious bigotry, which forestalled any real push towards equitable socio-economic development and led to a regrettable extent the loss of life and properties. The challenge in the postcolonial era has been to get the ethnic, religious and other cleavages to come together as one nation-state. At least four factors denote the character of identity politics in Africa: ethnicity, religion, racial dimensions, and political party affiliation (Alumona & Azom, 2017, pp. 294–298). I will delve briefly into these factors in the following paragraphs.

#### ***1.4.1 Ethnicity***

Any attempt to comprehend the dynamics of identity politics will have to contend with ethnic politics on the continent. Much of the disputes and conflicts stem from the contentions regarding state distribution of resources. Some ethnic groups have felt marginalised based on their identity due to being excluded from the wheels of developmental progress. Coincidentally, the history of ethnicity can be traced to colonialism (Alumona & Azom, 2017; Keese, 2016;

Mamdani, 1996; Rathbone, 2006). People from different ethnic nationalities were bound by an absence of deference to their new colonial institutions (Doorenspleet, 2003). There was no recourse to unify the indigenous people from different backgrounds. Instead, there was an incentive to fuel chasm amongst ethnic nationalities because colonialists needed collaborators to guarantee tax payment and forced labour (Keese, 2016, p. 5). This gaping gulf amongst the ethnic nationalists spewed into the post-independent era. In the arena of politics, political leaders or elites have used autochthony to mobilise against other elites of different autochthony to wield power for themselves and, to an extent, their ethnic kins.

It is not surprising that politics viewed from this standpoint is considered a zero-sum game where ethnic group interests must be accumulated as much as possible (Alumona & Azom, 2017). A severe variant of this kind of zero-sum game is the successionist tendencies evoked through ethnic nationalism (Mengisteab, n.d.; Miller, 1974; Young, 2002).

#### **1.4.2 Religion**

Durkheim (1915, p. 37) defines religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say to things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community of those who adhere to them". Thus, religious identity stems from a realisation and identification with sacred norms and practices defining who one is or how others represent them. Religion's rest on ethical and metaphysical beliefs serve as a solid basis for identity because of its shared communal benefit for adherents (Agbiji & Swart, 2015).

Political activities in Africa are sometimes centred around religious beliefs; hence people tend to choose political candidates based on religious affinity. Since most Africans are subscribers to world religions like Christianity and Islam, political contestation happens to be

reduced to the religion other political opponents subscribe to (Mu'azzam & Ibrahim, 2000). Political leaders employ religiously divisive rhetoric to garner support to win or gain political power. In essence, elites deploy religious fanaticism as appropriate tools for polarisation while gaining, but not limited to, political and socio-economic recompenses. Notably, an interesting dynamic resulting from religious identity in Africa is the tendency of ethnicity and religion to coalesce. Sometimes, there is difficulty in isolating one from the other because they seem to be intricately woven when determining the character of identity politics. This is mainly because particular ethnic groups in Africa share specific religious affiliations to some degree.

#### ***1.4.3 Racial Dimension***

Racial identity has played some significant political roles in some African states, even though ethno-religious identity is the primary strand on which the nature and character of identity politics in Africa are discussed. In South Africa, for example, racial politics engulfed political discussions. The apartheid regime was notorious for the subjugation of black Africans in South Africa. Ruled by the minority white, the nation provided reasons similar to that of colonialism for their vehement abuse of Africans, relegating them to nothing but subjects (Mamdani, 2001). Mamdani (1996, 2001, 2003) pointed out that colonisers racialised Rwanda in the 1930s. By classifying Rwandans as Tutsi or Hutu with distinctive racial dimensions, this form of identity led to many years of wars and conflicts, with the most devastating one being the genocide of 1994 (Eltringham, 2006; Straus, 2004).

#### ***1.4.4 Political Party Affiliation***

Political parties on the African continent in so-called democratic states are partly used as identity markers. The elites and the masses alike view political machinations around the political parties; however, political parties in Africa are not based on ideological differences. During the

preparation for independence, political parties sprung up as opposition to colonial mismanagement. Yet, after independence, decolonial nationalism declined, and elites fell to sub-national politics. Thus, ethnic parties came into being in opposition to other ethnic construed parties (Salih, 2003b, p. 5). Ironically, after the departure of the colonialist, political parties emerged as extensions of ethnic and religious identity; existing synchronously (Elischer, 2013, p. 2). Many members of political parties are not divided by ideological differences. This is also resulting from a lack of robust party ideology. Usually, factors such as race, religion, ethnicity serve as *raison d'etre* for party affiliation (Salih, 2003b, p. 5).

These characteristics and nature of identity politics show the challenges that postcolonial states have to deal with now. Because of their tenacious nature and the political system adopted, identity politics subverts the nation-state. There is mistrust among citizens of the nation. It is not easy getting a coalition in government, and when there is, it does not last. Some prime examples are the power-sharing deals in Kenya and Cote d'Ivoire (Mehler, 2009, p. 453). Ethnic particularism has funnelled many negative trends such as electoral violence, corruption, prebendalism and conflicts.

Thus far, we have seen what identity politics means in postcolonial Africa and the role majoritarian democracy through party politics plays in shaping identity politics on the continent. It is made clear that the majoritarian system gives undue advantage to a majority and muffles the voices of a minority. This eventually breeds animosity, usually among ethnic nationalities, because most party systems in postcolonial Africa are ethnic-based to some degree. Correspondingly, elites contribute to the hostility among people from different ethno-cultural and religious backgrounds because of their incessant need to hold on to power. Due to deep ties to

their identities, elites whip up ethnic, religious or racial sentiments among the people to gain power.

However, a common theme running through the exegesis on identity and identity politics is colonialism. The political system, the state institutions and structures are colonial relics masquerading as modernity. In the next chapter, I explore colonialism in detail in conjunction with its connection to the civic public and identity politics proper.



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Origins of Issues of Identity Politics in Postcolonial African States

#### 2.0 Introduction

The advent of colonialism served as the precursor to the induction of postcolonial African states into the so-called world systems. However, after end of formal colonialism, the dark clouds of imperialism continue to lurk behind these states and dictate to them their political and democratic aspirations. Identity politics in Africa and the negative issues that it perpetuates can be diligently traced to colonialism, its ideologies and institutions. Unfortunately, many postcolonial states have not taken seriously a decolonial project that will wrestle with and dismantle the colonial chains holding back their progress. In this chapter, I examine colonialism's historical trajectory in Africa and I will tease out the philosophical implications inherent in this phenomenon against the backdrop of the colonial and postcolonial subjectivity<sup>3</sup> of indigenous people.

#### 2.1 Colonialism: An Episode or an Epoch?

The history of the nation-state in postcolonial Africa is unambiguously a history of colonialism and imperial shenanigans. Consequently, colonialists thought it administratively prudent to draw up geographical boundaries—dividing ethnolinguistic groups—to prevent misunderstanding among other imperial powers (MacKenzie, 1983; Pakenham, 1991). These geographical boundaries were, in turn, ratified for practical reasons by newly independent African nations (Atuire, 2020, p. 533).

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<sup>3</sup> Subjectivity here is narrowly construed as individuals possessing perspectives, desires, beliefs and feelings; and also possessing agency. In this case, human agency.

In the aftermath of independence, scholars on the continent debating the debilitating effect of colonialism framed colonialism as an *episode* in Africa's history. The episode school emerging in the fifties were largely grounded on a counter-narrative to Eurocentric portrayal of Africa as without a past—Africa has no history (Osaghae, 1991a, p. 23).

The episode school's explanatory prowess on colonialism was limited, if not outrightly misguided. It gave no tacit explanation to the numerous devastations engulfing post-independence Africa. Peter Ekeh (1983) disputes the idea that colonialism was just a moment, a blotch in Africa's history. In contradistinction, he captures colonialism as an *epoch*, clarifying that it holds great significance to the history of Africa just as the industrial revolution or French revolution was to Europe (Ekeh, 1983, pp. 26–27). Ekeh takes as starting point George Balandier's succinct articulation of what he calls the *colonial situation*. The colonial situation for Balandier is thus;

“...the domination imposed by a foreign minority, racially (or ethnically) and culturally different, acting in the name of racial (or ethnic) and cultural superiority dogmatically affirmed, and imposing itself on an indigenous population constituting a numerical majority but inferior to the dominant group from a material point of view” (Balandier, 1966).

We see in Balandier's definition an obvious set of complex relationships between the coloniser and the colonised that is profoundly asymmetrical regarding components of European culture and Indigenous culture. Nevertheless, though seemingly adequate, this definition does not capture the contradictory elements and realities that make colonialism self-sustaining. So, apart from colonialism's palpable conflictual coloniser-colonised dichotomy, the system operates on the precepts of capitalist expansion and the oppression of pre-capitalist systems. Thus, moving away from Balandier's structural-functionalist definition, Ekeh encapsulates the epochal position thus:

“... colonialism may be considered as a *social movement* of epochal dimensions whose enduring significance, beyond the life span of the colonial situation, lies the *social formations* of supraindividual entities and constructs. These supraindividual formations developed from the volcano-sized social changes provoked into existence by the confrontations, contradictions and incompatibilities in the colonial situation” (Ekeh, 1983, p. 5).

Ekeh opines here about colonialism that, beyond the cultural impositions, this epoch raptured the connection between pre-colonial Africa and postcolonial Africa. Transformations that occurred during the period are now baked into social structures that have outlived the colonial epoch, becoming integral in Africa while simultaneously inducting Africa into the so-called ‘world system’.

Ekeh (1983) categorises into three distinctive forms the social formations emanating from the colonial epoch. He labels the first form as 'transformed indigenous social structures' that existed in pre-colonial times but have acquired new symbolism and meaning after formal colonialism. Some examples are chieftaincy and kingship. The second form is the 'migrated social structures', which were taken from European metropolises. Some examples are western models of democracy and bureaucracy. The third and final is what he calls the 'emergent social structures', which are neither indigenous nor imports from colonial centres. Instead, they emerged because of colonialism. They came to be because societal needs were not neatly addressed by the two aforementioned forms of social formation in the colonial milieu. The emergent social structures are primarily informal, unlike the transformed and migrated social structures that are considerably formal (Osaghae, 1991a, p. 28). Some examples are ethnic groups and the concept of ethnicity that have surfaced as modern remnants of tribe and tribalism.

Because of these various forms of social formations, the next paragraphs explore the relationship between colonialism and identity politics, mapping out the philosophical terrains that the institution of colonialism has had on the continent, its politics and democratic aspirations

## 2.2 Colonialism and the Two Publics

Peter Ekeh, in his seminal work, *Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement*, uncovers a unique configuration in postcolonial African states dictated by colonialism—the two publics. This configuration, he asserts, is a direct result of the mechanisms of imperial exploits. His analysis on postcolonial African states unravels two mutual yet distinct publics; the primordial public and the civic public (Ekeh, 1975, p. 92). Different moral codes influence these publics. For context, Ekeh begins with Wolin's (1960/2004, pp. 3–4) conception of the private and public realm delimiting the scope of politics. Usually, the private and public realms are characterised and informed by a common moral foundation (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 92–93). In other words, what is considered morally right in the private realm is indistinguishable in the public realm. Yet, in independent African states, the same cannot be said of their private and public realms. Through the machinations of colonialism, in Africa, there is not one but two public realms. One aspect of the public realm retains a familiarity amongst indigenous people, while the other aspect of the public realm acquires an alien feel. The public realm, familiar to indigenous people, Ekeh (1975) calls the primordial public while the other public realm seemingly alien to indigenous people he dubs the civic public. Nevertheless, these two publics—primordial and civic publics—are contemporaneous in the African public sphere.

Each public, i.e., the primordial and the civic publics, is distinct on the precepts of morality; the primordial public is considered moral, while the civic public is deemed amoral. The primordial public shares the same moral imperatives as the private realm; however, the civic

public does not possess that same moral imperative. I should note here that the moral imperative in Africa is one of communal ethics and person-centeredness. It is this specific ethical and moral outlook that Ekeh (1975) identifies as missing in the civic public and, for that matter, makes the civic public alien to indigenous people. The primordial public, Ekeh explains, is primarily determined by primordial ties, groupings and sentiments. These ties influence individual behaviours; hence the primordial public operates on the same moral signifier as the private realm. But, on the other hand, the civic public is associated with colonial structures. Therefore, this public has no moral link with the private realm and cannot claim the moral imperative in both the private realm and primordial public. The civic public includes civil structures like civil services, military, police and many more. The existence of the two publics has interesting political ramifications for Africa since the same political actors simultaneously operate in both public realms.

The unique configuration of the public realm in Africa begets two serious philosophical considerations: the development of two public realms and the conduction of politics within these two publics. The vital questions to ask are; how did this political configuration emerge, and how does the functioning of the publics affect politics in Africa? Ekeh unfolds these questions through a politico-historical lens and a sociological approach, respectively. He alleges that the formation of the two publics was indicative of a power struggle, which he classifies as *ideologies of legitimation* (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 93–96). The power struggle or ideologies of legitimation were between two critical bourgeois groups: the bourgeois of Europe (colonial administrators) and the African bourgeois (born from the colonial experience). Because of colonisation's pervasive attempt to legitimise itself as a benefactor to colonised people, the European bourgeois provided ideological justifications as bona fide reasons for helping colonised people attain the status of

civilisation. Furthermore, it involved the education of colonised persons, a brazen attempt to bring colonised people into the fold of civilised history, which inadvertently created the African bourgeois class. Thus, the drama of colonisation was between the coloniser and the emergent African bourgeois class.

The ideologies of legitimation espoused by the colonisers included but were not limited to Africans' backwardness, the lack of contributions by Africans to building Africa, the benefits of European rule, etc. (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 96–100). The African bourgeois ideology of legitimacy was formulated as a counter-narrative to colonial legitimacy ideology and a way to legitimise their authority over their own people. In other words, the African bourgeois produced anti-colonial ideologies and post-colonial ideologies of legitimation. Anti-colonial ideologies included independence strategies and promise of independence, while post-colonial ideologies included education as a guarantee of success and ethnic domain-partition ideology (Ekeh, 1975, pp. 100–105).

The anti-colonial ideologies espoused by the African *l'hommes de lettres* or elites maintained colonial principles. They sought to replace only the white colonial administrator and not the colonial ideas as such. While articulating anti-colonial ideologies, African bourgeois took on strategies to hurt the colonial administrations. Tax evasion was encouraged, lateness to work were considered protests, strikes within every public sector were deemed heroic for the cause. However, because they did not seek to do away with colonial principles but instead show that they could manage their affairs, after independence and liberation, taxes continued to exist, working hours did not reduce, making ordinary people perplexed. Ordinary people had come to see the civic public space as alien to them. Taxation was theft; overbearing working hours were cruel, just as the African elites had told them pre-independence. Thus, many people grew an

apathy towards the civic public, which has continued to this day. The civic public became that which needed no personal protection. Duty is to one's primordial public only and not to the civic public (Osaghae, 2006). Ekeh captures this sentiment eloquently, drawing a dialectical introspection between the two publics, when he writes:

“The unwritten law of the dialectics is that it is legitimate to rob the civic public in order to strengthen the primordial public” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 108).

But a decade and half before Ekeh made this remarkable statement, Chinua Achebe had echoed these sentiments in *No Longer at Ease*;

“In Nigeria/[Africa], the government was ‘they’. It has nothing to do with you or me. It was an alien institution and the people’s business was to get as much from it as they could without getting into trouble” (Achebe, 1960, p. 33).

Thus, showing vividly that the disjunction between the state and society is exacerbated by ordinary people’s inability to claim ownership of the civic public as they would of their primordial public.

Ethnic domain-partition ideology gained traction as division ensued within the African bourgeois class along primordial ethnic lines. The problem here stems from the unfortunate inability of the new African bourgeois class to do away with the coloniser's separation and partition of colonised people along ethnic and other arbitrary lines. The African elites sought to exploit colonially constructed ethnic categories as a basis for claiming power on behalf of the people, leading to the continued schism between the state and the people. Ake averred on the lack of elite cohesion stating emphatically that;

“[p]oliticization changed to political ethnicity when the nationalist movement, which was united mainly by common grievances, started to disintegrate on the verge of independence as its leaders manoeuvred to inherit power. In a situation in which class consciousness was rudimentary, those leaders who came from

numerically large ethnic groups could not resist the temptation of using an ethnic ideology to consolidate a substantial political base” (Ake, 1993, p. 3).

This is the more reason why the civic public is seen as alien. To help one’s primordial public, one must gain power on behalf of their primordial tie to distribute resources to benefit those belonging to that specific primordial public (Ake, 1993, p. 4). The consequence of the two publics has been ethno-cultural politicking and pervasive corruption.

This consequence obtains because the colonisers with intention divided up colonised people and used that division to stock up fears, suspicion and developmental inequalities along ethno-cultural lines. Even after independence, this suspicion, fear, and developmental disparities continued to exist and dictated African politics, which always took place in the civic public. Thus, because of colonialism, the psychological oscillation between the civic and the primordial public continues to this day.

### **2.3 The Social Formation, the Two Publics and Identity Politics**

The extant two public spheres are symptomatic of the social formations that occurred during the epoch of colonialism and the spill-over effect in the post colony. By rapturing the pre-colonial past from the postcolonial now (and future), the collective sense of ethical behaviour within the private and public sphere developed divergent peculiarities. The difference in morality for both primordial and civic publics reveals itself through the social formations. When Ekeh says;

“On the other hand, there is a public realm which is historically associated with the colonial administration and which has become identified with popular politics in post-colonial Africa” (Ekeh, 1975, p. 92);

he is making a connection to the migrated social structures such as the rule of law, western type democracy and bureaucracy, to mention a few, that are copied and applied in modern African

states. Unlike in Europe, these institutions have lost almost, if not all, the moral imperatives associated with them. The form of these Western institutions is upheld, but the complementary character is abandoned. So, the moral or ethical charge evident in the West concerning these institutions and which gives a strong imperative for redefining and restructuring the institutions for societal gain is amiss in postcolonial Africa. This amorality places the migrated social structures within the civic public.

The transformed indigenous social structures and the emergent social structures fall in the category of the primordial public. Though the transformed indigenous social structures have taken on new symbolism, they have arguably not attained the same form of moral apathy that informs dealings with the migrated social structures. While transformed indigenous social structures do not hold the same importance as they did in pre-colonial society, they have not lost much of the awe and reverence that people give these structures. For example, chieftaincy has transformed from what it was in pre-colonial times due to its breakdown by indirect rule; it still holds some importance in the lives of many indigenous people. The moral imperative in the private realm and towards this social formation is no different. Chiefs and the accompanying sub-chiefs and councils are duly respected. However, chieftaincy does not wield much authority, as is the case for a Member of Parliament or Senator emerging from the migrated social structures.

Also, the emergent social structures are within the universal set of the primordial public. Since they are neither pre-colonial nor colonial imports but rather born out of the colonial experience, their uniqueness boils down to the ingenuity of the people to find solutions to their problems due to the complexity and contradictions that came with colonialism and the new colonial environment. This largely informal structure navigates between two worlds—modernity

and tradition (Osaghae, 1991a, p. 28). The complexity of the emergent structures, i.e., imbibed with modernity and tradition coupled with the corrosiveness of colonialism, essentially informs the irreconcilable detraction in the political sphere in post-colonial African states.

The immutability of the migrated social structures, which are ostensibly colonial, creates the avenue for emergent social structures like ethnicity and ethnic groups to evoke loyalty from members. Although emergent social structures have served as vehicles for redress to problems and protection of social and political rights of members, the arena for social and political engagement is concentrated with rules associated with the migrated social formations which emanate from the civic public. Herein lies the problems faced with identity politics. In addressing the lapses embedded in the colonial-inspired migration social structure, the emergent social formations must contend within an arena deemed modern (civic public) to protect desires and aspirations broadly construed by the migrated social structures as traditional (primordial public). As a result, the schism between that state and the people invariably is a tale of the postcolonial state working outside what can be termed 'traditional' with rigid 'modern' tools that are not equipped to resolve the problems of the said traditional.

One may ask, does this suggest somehow that African people are anachronistic and therefore cannot modernise? Are the African States failing because the people hold on to primordial ties? Is the emergent social structure, besides its positive aspect, withholding Africa's bid to modernise? It would seem the dichotomy—tradition and modernity—projects a sense of backwardness or backwards-looking versus forwardness or forward-looking. However, understanding these concepts in this manner obfuscates the underlying history behind the emergent social structures. As already averred, this particular social structure is not indigenous. Neither did it migrate from colonial epicentres; nevertheless, it is an attempted effort to deal with

situations chronically invisible to the indigenous and migrated social structure. Ironically, the emergent social structures are evidence of attempts at modernising.

It should be noted that emergent social structures such as ethnic groups and ethnicity were colonial creations with the sole aim to control indigenous populations administratively. So, the idea of an ethnic group could be as new as the idea of the African-nation state. Osaghae captures this here;

“... everyone recognises that the notion of ‘being a Nigerian’ is a new kind of conception. But it would seem the notion of ‘being a Yoruba’ is not very much older” (Osaghae, 1991a, p. 28).

Okoro corroborates Osaghae in his pointing out that;

“Prior to colonialism in Africa, there were no such pan-group consciousness as [P]an-Igboism, [P]an-Yorubasim, or even [P]an-Africanism. Pan-group consciousness in Africa arose either to rebuff colonialism, as it is with [P]an-Africanism, or to fight for ethnic interest within the new state structure foisted upon Africa” (Okoro, 2011, p. 34).

However, even though imperialist powers made up the notion of ethnicity and ethnic groups, they did not function in the way colonialists envisioned. Colonial actors needed a guarantee of tax payment, forced labour and an establishment of native justice (Rathbone, 2006, p. 5). Nevertheless, Africans revolted against this imposition disguised under indirect rule. Instead, they marched towards modern forms of living that their indigenous social structures were inadequate at giving, and the migrated social structures resolved to curtail and dislodge. For this was not modernity as prescribed by the West. Nonetheless, if the move by the emergent social structures were accepted as a march towards modernity, it would disrupt colonialisms internal logic of supremacy, and the legitimacy of the colonial enterprise would be undermined.

Therefore, it is undoubtedly that the emergent social structures are modern, if we consider modern to mean a 'commitment to subjectivity' (Táíwò, 2009, p. 25). Taiwo spells out what he means by 'commitment to subjectivity' when he writes;

“If the colonial authorities truly believed in the principle of subjectivity and in its applicability to the colonized, then they would have required the consent of the colonized to be governed. But rule by consent could not have been an instance of colonialism.

.... embracing the subjectivity of the colonized would have meant allowing the colonized to choose not just whether they wished to be ruled by their colonizer but also what they would like to keep and what to expunge of their customs, institutions, and practices and what to accept or reject of the new customs, institutions, and practices brought by colonialism—and how both of those processes were to be executed. This would have had to have happened at both the empirical and ideational levels” (Táíwò, 2009, p. 24).

Following Taiwo's submission, it suffices to say that the emergent social structures are a reminder of African agency in light of the repressive colonial environment that has persisted despite the assimilation of colonial institutions and structures. An inner dialectics transpires in which a phenomenon where disproportionate wealth existing in the hands of a few (the colonialists) and extreme poverty ravaging a section of the population (the natives) is driven beyond those set limits and against dichotomies such as; noble-peasant, ruler-ruled, coloniser-colonised. This revolt—an outward push—against the boundaries instilled by colonialism characterises modernity's modulations: equality, fraternity and liberty (Táíwò, 2009, p. 33). The emergent social structures imbibe these inflexions of modernity.

What is then meant by the claim that the emergent social structures have imprints of both modernity and tradition? Well, the emergent structures begin from a position rooted in indigenous structures, i.e., kinship, clan, tribe but moves in ways similar to the European understanding of class, i.e., mobilisation of peoples connected by particular circumstances.

Consequently, the emergent social structures meander between both spaces because they do not have legitimacy within the colonial institutions or migrated social structures or indigenous structures. Thus, unlike the migrated social structure, it is an informal social structure that has to fashion itself within the civic public, a public that illegitimatises the emergent social structures by construing it as backwards yet capitalises on its merit in an instrumentalist manner for power appropriation by elites. This results most often than not in mythmaking on these ethnicities (Oluwaseyi, 2020) by elites to score collective consciousness of sympathy and angsts leading to a vicious cycle of patron-clientelism within the civic public (Abdulai & Hickey, 2016; Adebani, 2017, p. 76; Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002, pp. 10–20; Osaghae, 1991b, p. 51).

#### **2.4 Elites, Ideologies of Legitimations and Social formations**

Given the ubiquity of the migrated social formations in almost all public spheres in postcolonial African states, one may ask; why is the migrated social formation pervasive even after independence? Ekeh's (1975) politico-historical perspective lends some understanding to the ubiquity of the migrated social formations. As already indicated, the advent of colonialism effectuated the rise of two bourgeois groups—the colonial administrators and African bourgeois (Ekeh, 1975, p. 93). The colonial administrators, according to Ekeh, put out what he calls imperial and colonial ideologies of legitimation. The imperial ideologies of legitimation were couched to rationalise imperialism to taxpayers of European nations and justify imperialism as beneficial to citizens even though ordinary citizens of European nations gained less ( Ekeh, 1975, p. 96). The incentive to propagate the imperial ideologies relied on the interest of a new class of European elites, drawn from a rising bourgeois class, whose wealth and burgeoning power were not tied to aristocracy.

The European bourgeois propelled itself into being through its obsession with capitalism and wealth creation via industrial expansion. Even though the imperial project was done in the name of respective nations and their nobles, the quest for expansion was directly proportional to the insatiable desires of the rising bourgeoisie class of Europe. The origin story of the European bourgeoisie is captured here:

“The central inner-European event of the imperialist period was the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie, which up to then had been the first class in history to achieve economic pre-eminence without aspiring to political rule. The bourgeoisie had developed within, and together with, the nation-state, which almost by definition ruled over and beyond a class-divided society. Even when the bourgeoisie had already established itself as the ruling class, it had left all political decisions to the state. Only when the nation state proved unfit to be the framework for the further growth of capitalist economy did the latent fight between state and society become openly a struggle for power” (Arendt, 1973, p. 123).

This newfound privilege by a section of the European population led to the bourgeoisie's exploitation of ordinary citizens in the European nation-state. Thus, imperialism was their appropriation of power, culminating in the kinds of propaganda advanced to benefit themselves.

Arendt avers this sentiment writing:

“Imperialism was born when the ruling class in capitalist production came up against national limitations to its economic expansion. The bourgeoisie turned to politics out of economic necessity; for if it did not want to give up the capitalist system whose inherent law is constant economic growth, it had to impose this law upon its home governments and to proclaim expansion to be an ultimate political goal of foreign policy” (Arendt, 1973, p. 126).

So, the lobbying for the expansion and imperial conquest was not one of political ambition per se; instead, it was based on business speculation interwoven into political rhetoric for the continuation of capitalist production and parochial interest.

In order to keep this charade going in the colonies, the European bourgeoisie formulated the colonial ideologies of legitimation to justify to colonised people that they had the interests of colonised people at heart and colonisation was bringing them into the fold of modernity. Taiwo (2009) refutes this in his philosophical profile of colonialism. He argues that if colonisers believed in and adopted their justifications for colonisation, they would have encouraged modern inflexions in the colonies when they started to show up in the way of resistance to oppression, formation of trade unions and the native push for ideals like equality and liberty. Instead, many of these developments were punished by the colonial state (Táíwò, 2009, p. 45). Consequently, these ideals purported to be exported into the colonies were stifled, a paradox, if colonialism as purported was a promise of a new order of *being* (Adebanwi, 2017, p. 70). A West African example about changing social forms and its stifling by colonial administrators is the Fante Confederation formed in 1868 in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana). The Fante Confederation experimented in modern constitutional fields. The confederation adopted a constitution in 1871 which stipulated the officials and positions for members. The officials were made up of the king-president, elected mainly by kings and vice presidents, secretary, and other positions comprised of 'men of education and position' (educated people). These other positions' task was to advise the king-president on all matters. The confederation had particular objectives laid out in its constitution. They were put forward as:

“(i) To promote friendly intercourse between all the kings and chiefs of Fanti, and to unite them for offensive and defensive purposes against their common enemy.

(ii) To direct the labours of the Confederation towards the improvement of the country at large.

(iii) To make good and substantial roads throughout all the interior districts included in the Confederation land according to article 26, these roads were to connect ‘various provinces or districts with one another, and with the sea coast’, and each road was to be ‘fifteen feet broad, with good deep gutters on either side’.

(iv) To erect school-houses and establish schools for the education of all children within the Confederation and to obtain the service of efficient school-masters.

(v) To promote agricultural and industrial pursuits, and to endeavor to introduce such new plants as may hereafter become sources of profitable commerce for the country.

(vi) To develop and facilitate the working of the mineral and other resources of the country” (Adu Boahen, 1987, pp. 10–11).

These objectives were undoubtedly progressive and modern. They are evidence of the native's subjectivity and human agency. They show ingenuity and a thirst for change, even under colonial rule. Unfortunately, however, the confederation and their ultimate dream were stifled under unnecessary bureaucracy and red tapes. In Adu Boahen's words, "[t]he confederation itself had been killed stone-dead by the British by 1873" (Adu Boahen, 1987, p. 12).

The stifling of indigenous people's agency leads to what Taiwo posits as *sociocryonics*.

He defines sociocryonics as:

“... the ignoble science of cryopreserving social forms, arresting them [these social forms] and denying them and those [indigenous people] whose social forms they are the opportunity of deciding what, how, and when to keep any of their social forms” (Táíwò, 2009, p. 11).

The cryopreservation of social forms speaks to the tactical effort by the European bourgeois to forestall any movement towards economic and political emancipation by indigenous people. Latent in their justification for claiming to respect the indigenous way and articulating this as a moral obligation on their side to keep indigenous people tied to their ways, lie racist Hegelian and Kantian<sup>4</sup> philosophical outlooks of non-white people dovetailed seamlessly with the capitalist expansionist rational (Adebanwi, 2017, pp. 70–71). Sociocryonics invariably re-

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<sup>4</sup> Hegel and Kant's view on race gave credence to what many Europeans viewed at the time (and even now) as a dispassionate scientific enquiry into the species of human beings and their rational capabilities. Some of their writings on the topic of race appears in Eze's 1997 edited book compilation titled; *Race and Enlightenment* (Eze, 1997b).

enacted racist tropes about indigenous people to finance the colonial administrators and put them within the corridors of power. Indirect rule, hence, was the euphemised term denoting the concept of sociocryonics. It (indirect rule) was sociocryonics in practice. It grounded the façade of cultural preservation while socially punishing any emergence of social transformations.

So, the colonial project in and of itself was not a mere political endeavour to promote western ideals. Instead, colonialism was an attempt by the emerging European bourgeois to consolidate economic power in the Euro-nation state and, with that leverage, acquire political power. The crux of the matter is that imperial and colonial ideologies of legitimation were a disguise, a ruse, by colonial administrators to seek political emancipation at home through the veil of capitalism. It is the very reason why sociocryonics was adopted. For to allow indigenes to evolve their social forms threatened their economic bargaining chip and ultimately their political aspirations back home. Arendt shows the tension between this new European bourgeois and the home officials. She writes:

“The conflict between the representatives of the "imperial factor" [i.e., the home government] and the colonial administrators [i.e., gotten from the bourgeois class] runs like a red thread through the history of British imperialism” (Arendt, 1973, p. 133)

From my viewpoint, introspectively, the imperial and colonial ideologies of legitimation were pervasions of truth laid down by burgeoning European bourgeois committed to capitalism’s expansionist outlook while securing political legitimacy at home at the expense of natives or indigenes. Nothing about formal colonialism suggests otherwise.

On the other hand, the African bourgeois also formulated their ideologies of legitimation. Their ideas were counterarguments to the ideologies promulgated by the imperialists. When the colonisers claim to be on a civilising mission that benefitted the colonised, the African bourgeois

would dispute this and iterate that it would be more beneficial should they hold the helm of affairs. Ekeh (1975) breaks the African bourgeois ideologies of legitimation into two: the anti-colonial and post-colonial ideologies of legitimation.

The anti-colonial ideologies of legitimation served as a source for independence strategies and struggles. They usually hyped African standards as just as equal as the coloniser. In effect, it was used as a tool to arouse in citizens the glorious promise of independence and the end of exploitation. Conversely, the post-colonial ideologies of legitimation resulted in the legitimisation of the African bourgeois as the right people to take over from colonisers. Nevertheless, this bourgeois class promoted two sets of ideologies that have had dire effects in the post colony. They promoted the idea of education as a guarantee to success and the ethnic domain partition ideology. The first idea, i.e., education as a guarantee to success, led to an increasing number of educated people looking to the government for employment. As there were less educated people at the time, when one got an education, there was an available governmental administrative job ready to be filled. This was evidently not sustainable as time went on and unemployment began to surge. An alternative was to point out that education was not an end in itself but a platform from which individuals could harness and hone skills that will be used for job creation. The second idea, i.e., the ethnic domain-partition ideology, emboldened ethnic politics. It was a characteristic of the African bourgeois' need for amassing power through downplaying traditional legitimacy and holding western-styled education as a baseline for political legitimacy. Ethnic domain-partition ideology led to a serious division among the African elites or bourgeois. The bourgeois played into ethnic sentiments already set up by the colonisers, which led to fractures among the bourgeois leading to consequences like ethnic political parties and negative identity politics.

It is important to note that the African bourgeois had no basis of legitimacy independent of colonialism. As already mentioned, the African bourgeois was drawn out of the colonial experience. To uphold this legitimacy to the masses, they built a narrative that positioned chieftaincy as not democratic. They very well-revered the kings, chiefs and generals of the past but were not enthused about the descendants of these kings, chiefs or generals. Rathbone recounts this succinctly by writing, "[t]hese enthusiastic modernisers [the African bourgeois] were assuredly not in the business to resurrect the powers of chiefs and kings" (Rathbone, 2006, p. 48). Instead, the bourgeois, who also doubled as the intelligentsia of the time, felt tasked with re-telling the history of Africa. Thus, they became nationalists constructing a national past for newly formed colonies, thereby aiding in the invention of nations. Hence, in keeping up with the anti-colonial idea, which eventually metamorphosed into a movement, the nationalist elites presented themselves as "the legitimate heirs to a much longer tradition of resistance" (Rathbone, 2006, p. 50).

However, their disdain for the aristocratic order was exacerbated by the colonialists seeking the alliance of the descendants of these kings rather than them. Interestingly, the African bourgeois promoted the idea that the *ancien regimes* were relics doomed for extinction by the forces of history. These ideas cemented them as saviours to take over from the coloniser. However, deficient in their assertions were their uncritical retention of colonial ideals and principles, falsely misconstrued as the gateway to modernity and modernisation of which they were the bearers.

The retention of colonial ideals and principles led to a rift between the people and the new self-appointed saviours (elites) of the post colony. The promises echoed by these saviours during the struggle for independence did not match their reality. Duties and obligations that were

promised to be reduced surprisingly did not go away when independence was attained. As a matter of fact, citizens felt that the duties and obligations such as taxes became more burdensome. The anti-colonial strategies under the anti-colonial ideology sought to undermine the colonial administrators, but the problem with the African bourgeois strategy was their inability to articulate counter ideals or principles against the colonial ones. Implicit in their independence strategy was an assimilation of all western and colonial principles. They, the bourgeois, meant to maintain the migrated social structures of the colonial metropolis because they were educated and trained in and from these western systems. Ultimately, their legitimacy hinged on their ability to prove, unquestionably, that they could hold the helm of affairs just as the colonial administrators. Therefore, it is not surprising that their rhetoric was about being adept as the colonial administrator (Ekeh, 1975, p. 103).

The choice to maintain colonial systems rather than reinvent, restructure and reposition themselves and the new nation contributed to the sociocryonics of indigenous structures. Consequently, the transformed indigenous structures retained their ceremonial yet ineffectual character long after the end of formal colonialism because of the new elites (African bourgeois) who did not find it expedient to revive the aristocracy. Thus, the intellectual bankruptcy of the independence strategy begotten from the retention of colonial principles led to the civic public being the only arena where social, political and economic deliberations could formally and legitimately stem.

The ethnic domain-partition ideology, a derivation from the post-colonial ideology, is an example of how unchecked colonial principles went on to create a division among the elites along primordial ties. Rather than complete reflection and spirited debate on ideas outside the western paradigm, pontification resulted in politics being a zero-sum game. Instead of

comprehensive alliances and cooperation, elites made alliances only for the purposes of power appropriation. As the emergent social structures gained traction among the masses as means of social organising, the elites saw an opening to take advantage and use rhetoric to maintain power while manipulating the masses based on ethnicity. This unholy mix, i.e., the elite's capitalisation of the emergent social structures like ethnicity and the masses' desperate need for assistance, divulges into the many political crises facing the postcolonial African states post-independence.

## 2.5 The Civic Public and the Native-Settler Question

Mamdani affirms Ekeh's postulation on the coloniser's partition of colonised people into ethnicities (Ahmann, 2013; Mamdani, 1996, 2001, 2003). He asserts that the colonial state (i.e., before independence) used laws to distinguish race and ethnicity. Civil law governed the affairs of races and, for that matter, civil society. However, native people were described in terms of ethnicities and governed by customary laws under indirect rule. Non-natives had no ethnicities; thus, they were under the domain of civil law and, for that matter, described in terms of race (Mamdani, 2001, p. 654). This explains why the civic public construed by Ekeh (1975) is considered alien and approached as amoral by ethno-cultural groups.

The domain of rights was reserved of non-natives, i.e., non-black people; natives, in contrast, were to live by customary law, which the colonisers falsely construed as the sole authority of chiefs alone. This construal created an atmosphere that was despotic in many traditional communities. Most of what the chiefs were mandated to do were colonialists' bids under the guise of customary traditional authority. The drama for independence and the subsequent surges of nationalism in colonial states were the struggle for natives to be recognised as a race, i.e., to transcend their status as mere ethnicities and be seen as *Africans*, thereby gaining admission into the domain of rights and civil society.

However, the emergence of the post-colonial states brought some dilemmas, namely; the tendency for indigeneity to be used as a criterion for rights, the test for indigeneity morphing into a requisite for justice and also the propensity to view colonially constructed customary laws as authentic African tradition (Mamdani, 2001, p. 657). More problems ensued as independent African states decided to locate which ethnic groups were indigenous and which ones were not. The effect was hyper ethno-cultural politicking, where the state was seen as the only vehicle to which justice, recognition and resources could be allocated to aggrieved ethnic groups. Therefore, the elites played a politics similar to that of the colonialists, a native-settler narrative, where rights were to be given to those ethnicities who are thought to be indigenous to the land. Instead of non-nativism as a requisite for the acquisition of rights as dictated by colonialists, post-colonial states make ethnicities indigenous to the land a requisite for rights acquisition. Here the customary realm is uncritically addressed as authentic tradition creating a deficiency in the civic realm, which is continually viewed as foreign.

The civic public is characterised by civic law that did not include natives. However, there emerged a group of natives—urban-based natives—who were neither bounded by customary laws (indigenous social structure) nor by civic laws (migrated social structures). This group of natives wallowed in judicial limbo. This is what characterises the emergence of emergent social structures. The issue presented in Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* is the latent but raging manner that colonialism, even after its formal reign on the continent, continues to ravage the African nation-state. The so-called collapse of institutions in postcolonial African states is, in fact, the collapse of colonial institutions. Effects of indirect rule like the reconfiguration of African traditional and customary authorities as

despotic and; the over-reliance by the elites on colonial principles and ideologies led to the disintegration of postcolonial states (Mamdani, 1996, pp. 73–77).

Because of the normalisation that the need to be recognised as a race can be effected only by civil law and, for that matter, within the civic public, after colonisation, the civic public (civic law) continued to be the only space where discussions of indigenous peoples' rights were had. However, the twist in the African context was the inability of nationalists or African elites to systematically and ideologically expunge colonialist's categorisation of natives into ethnicities. Instead, they effectively changed ethnicity (an emergent social structure) into political identities so ethnicity could be well captured and manipulated in the civic public (Ahmann, 2013; Mamdani, 2001, p. 661).

The desire to place ethnicity within the purview of the civic public cannot be divorced from the legacy of colonial segregation, which did not give natives rights. However, the decision to try and use ethnicity as a litmus test for rights come with accompanying dilemmas in postcolonial Africa. First, it follows the same script as the coloniser and using ethnicity or indigeneity as a grounding to declare people as right-bearers denote the similar strategy of the colonial rule. Because in retrospect, colonial rulers stipulated race as a legitimate fulcrum for the acquisition of rights to the exclusion of ethnicities. Second, this outlook on indigeneity or ethnicity as proof to acquire rights also touches on issues of justice—the distribution of justice. Suppose ethnicity is calibrated as foundational to rights. In that case, it also presupposes a fundamental disposition to getting *just* outcomes for specific ethnicities for injustices of the past since ethnicities cannot be divorced from their histories. The argument lends itself to understanding ethnicities as colonially construed that have had to bear the brunt of colonial discrimination. Implicit in this line of thought is the idea that other groups benefitted from

colonialism. This thus makes the provisioning of justice tenacious. One question that arises is; is indigeneity sufficient for allocation and distribution of justice and entitlements? In actual fact, there were indeed no winners under colonial rule. This point is usually overlooked in postcolonial states leading to severe repercussions. The third dilemma is the tendency to hold onto colonially constructed customary values as the genuine and authentic African tradition. The epoch of colonialism sufficiently changed and reconfigured most pre-colonial traditions. Colonial administrators targeted them to coerce natives into following their programme hence the inception of indirect rule. So, the core of the native-settler dilemma is the uncritical reproduction of colonially inflected customary laws and values as authentic African tradition, which usually leads to the exclusion of many people in the post colony (Mamdani, 2003, pp. 658–662).

## **2.6 The Postcolonial Dilemmas, the Civic Public and Identity Politics**

The postcolonial dilemmas pointed out above, namely; indigeneity or ethnicity as proof for rights, ethnicity as proof for justice and colonially constructed customary law viewed as authentic African tradition; have a sense of bearing on the way the civic public (civil law) continues to alienate people, create unfair systems and entrench despotic beliefs. As already shown in this chapter, the emergent social structure is informal and seems to operate with problematic outcomes in the civic public. The postcolonial dilemma provides a clearer picture of what is ensuing in the postcolonial states. These dilemmas are a direct consequence of the uncritical retention of colonial institutions. The catastrophes occurring in postcolonial states are, in metaphorical terms 'the toppling of colonial institutions'. The inadequacy of the civic public in dealing with the emergent social structures like ethnicity in conjunction with the retention of colonially constructed thoughts on ethnicity is what has divulged into negative identity politics.

Mamdani's solution is to detribalise and de-ethnicise natives to bring harmony to the civic public. However, unfortunately, it seems a bit far-fetched to claim that the indigenous people be de-ethnicised. Ethnicity is more dynamic if viewed outside the lens of the civic public than in the primordial public. It would seem that Mamdani wishes to hold on to civil law while attempting decolonisation, which to him would mean that in the political realm (civic public), cultural identities should not attain any political inclinations. This is because "[o]nce the law makes cultural identity the basis for political identity, it inevitably turns ethnicity into a political identity" (Mamdani, 2001, p. 661). Mamdani's solution appears impractical because while it is analytically possible to divorce cultural identities from political identities, it is practically impossible to do so. Suppose identity reflects who and what a person is and is understood as the combination of things like beliefs, values, language etc., that come together to define a person. In that case, it is not possible for one to engage in politics without these components having some proportional relation to the kind of politics and decision they espouse. Mamdani may be seeking individuals who are a shell of themselves in the political arena.

However, what is missed here is the fact that the civic public may not be a suitable space for politics in postcolonial Africa. The civic public is a space that undermines indigeneity and other social forms that do not historically fit the colonial prescribed principles and social forms. The result within this public is antagonistic; zero-sum politicking harnessed only by those in power.

## 2.7 Conclusion

I have shown in detail why the epochal school of thought espoused by Ekeh provides a unique understanding of the verifiable effects of colonialism on postcolonial Africa. Colonialism's maximum effect, as argued here, resulted in the existence of two public spheres—

the primordial and civic public. Also, colonialism resulted in creating three social formations, with the third social formation, i.e., the emergent social formation, being incongruent with the civic public yet usually deployed by elites for power appropriation. The evidence of this particular social formation is teased out in Mamdani's exposition on the discrimination meted out by civil law and the despotic nature of customary law (also a colonial imposition). During colonial rule, civil law excluded natives. However, a growing number of natives who were urban-centred were in judicial limbo for neither being captured by the civil nor customary law.

I have also pointed out that colonialism used sociocryonics to systematically refuse indigenous people from adapting to modern forms of living. This systematic attempt is reemphasised by the infamous indirect rule adopted by colonial administrators through their ideologies of legitimation. I showed that counter ideologies of legitimation by African elites did not hold strong independent principles except in terms similar or close to colonial principles. The intellectual bankruptcy in their ideology created the space for the flourishing of colonial political and institutional systems. The debilitating effects in the post colony is, to some extent, the capitalisation of the emergent social structures like ethnicity leading to the negative strands of identity politics in Africa.

Nevertheless, what was missing with the African bourgeois by means of supplanting colonial principles and systems, Kwasi Wiredu provides through his writings on decolonisation with his conceptualisation of consensual democracy. In the next chapter, we dive into his conception of this democracy and what makes it unique and closely African relative to other European models.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Socio-Political Context of Wiredu's Democracy by Consensus

#### 3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have shown how colonialism has affected the political space resulting in negative identity politics in the postcolonial African nation-state. Two kinds of elites, the colonial administrators and the African bourgeois, connected by the colonial venture set the tone of modern African politics. But, before the despotic endeavours of Europeans on the continent, and the carving of African lands and peoples, what was the socio-political scene like?

This chapter explores the socio-political system that existed among indigenes before European invasion. There existed both centralised and non-centralised governments among natives in Africa. Nevertheless, *consensus* was a thread that run through both types of government in traditional Africa (Wiredu, 1997, pp. 304–305). But, given the catastrophe of colonialism and imperialism on the continent, many nation-states born from the colonial experience adopted and adapted colonial institutions from migrated social formations such as liberal democracy (majoritarianism) and bureaucracy. And this has had dire consequences on the postcolonial African nation-states.

The devastation that befell African nation-states post-independence influenced Kwasi Wiredu's formulation of consensual democracy as a panacea to the political ills on the continent. His conceptual decolonisation project (Wiredu, 1998, 2002) begets consensual democracy as a shift from Eurocentric normative—political—models, an ideal theory with political and social expediency including historical legitimacy.

This chapter seeks to explore the idea of consensual democracy through its socio-political context while providing in attendance a comparative analysis between it and majoritarian democracy. The chapter will also indulge in some debates over the past three decades on Wiredu's consensual democracy and seek to resolve some tensions embedded in Wiredu's thesis pointed out by scholars like Matolino and Ani. Conversely, in the latter part of the chapter, I will focus on the nexus between consensual democracy and what Peter Ekeh (1975) calls the primordial public.

### 3.1 Traditional Consensus by Wiredu

In traditional Africa, especially among the Akans, Wiredu postulates that consensus was self-evident in everyday communal relations among people (Wiredu, 1997, p. 303). Consensus was not an ostensibly political phenomenon; instead, it was a shared value among people when discussion or deliberation ensued (Wiredu, 1999, pp. 34–35). In the body politic, the value of consensus was brought to bear on matters deliberated upon by the council of elders and their chiefs. During these deliberations, any form of resolution was preferred save in terms of reconciliation (Wiredu, 1997, pp. 303–304). Reconciliation suggested that there existed an array of opinions that were streamlined to gain an acceptable stance comfortable to all persons involved rather than "...the mere abstention from further recriminations or collisions" (Wiredu, 1997, p. 304). In essence, consensus presupposes a diversity of opinions *ab initio*. However, Wiredu notes that there are resolutions to disputes without recourse to reconciliation.

Reconciliation, and by extension consensus, does not mean identifying with other parties' moral and cognitive opinions. Rather, a *will* to consensus promulgates decisions on agreed actions instead of agreed notions (Ani, 2014a, p. 312; Wiredu, 1999, p. 35, 2001, p. 304, 2012, p. 1057). Specific issues will undoubtedly pose challenges to consensus, and this may not lead to

unanimity on decisions made. Wiredu acknowledges that these problems may arise, but for him, even amidst the starkest challenges, the matter is overcome by "...the willing suspension of disbelief...on the part of the residual minority" (Wiredu, 2001, p. 304). Does this mean that decisions can be arrived at with a rudimentary majority-minority stratum? That is not the case in Wiredu's formulation. When such an impasse occurs, the decision accepted is not the majority's view over the minority's because "...the majority prevails not over, but upon, the minority" (Wiredu, 1997, p. 310). This suggests that the minority is not forced or coerced into accepting the majority's proposition but is genuinely persuaded to accept what has come to be agreed upon. Notably, the feasibility of Wiredu's view borders on the presumption that in traditional African systems of the consensual persuasion, one group of persons were not consistently the minority. Hence, based on issues, different people's opinions might make them minorities to the matter at hand.

In the traditional setup, the chief is selected and enstooled as the head of the community; he also doubles as the connection between the people and their ancestors. Wiredu clarifies that the ancestrally authorised leader is not autocratic. The chief's position does not align with western monarchical categories like messianic nor benign dictatorship (Lauer, 2012, p. 44). But before the chief is selected and enstooled, he must be a descendant of a particular lineage. It must be noted that "[t]he lineage is the basic political unit among the Ashantis" (Wiredu, 1997, p. 305) and the Akans to a considerable extent. Every unit requires a head who is a member of the communities' governing council, popularly labelled as the council of elders. To qualify as unit head of a lineage, one must be senior in age, be an upright member of the community, gain traction as one with wisdom and possess rational persuasiveness. After they have been selected and appointed, the lineage heads are to hear on the issues or matters affecting the lineage; also,

they represent the lineage in meetings concerning the municipality. Now these matters affecting the lineage are gotten only in consultation with other senior members of the lineage before it is brought to the notice of the governing council or council of elders, should this matter be beyond the confined powers of the lineage head.

The chief is also selected along the same characteristics associated with selecting a lineage head. But, Wiredu strongly avers that the chief is usually chosen due to his prowess for rational persuasion of ideas. He (the chief) does not assert his will, but that of his people through the council of elders who deliberate with him then come to a consensus on what is to be done. The chief's official decision is often the consensual agreement of his council, who are representatives of the people from the different clans. These councils come into consensus primarily based on their awareness of the rock bottom interest that they all share (Wiredu, 1997, p. 306). Wiredu opines that these rock bottom interests, coupled with the prowess for rational persuasion of ideas, bring about a desired result—reconciliation and/or compromise, leading to consensus.

The awareness of rock bottom interest is often obfuscated by the different opinions that parties begin. He opines on this in the following paragraph;

“Now, this adherence to the principle of consensus was a premeditated option. It was based on the belief that *ultimately* the interests of all members of society are the same, although their immediate perceptions of those interests may be different. This thought is given expression in the art motif depicting a crocodile with one stomach and two heads locked in a struggle over food. If they could but see that the food was, in any case, destined for the same stomach, the irrationality of the conflict would be manifest to them. But is there a chance of it? The Ashanti answer is ‘Yes, human beings have the ability eventually to cut through their differences to the rock bottom identity of interests.’ And, on this view, the means to that objective is simply rational discussion. Of the capabilities of this means the Ashantis are explicit. ‘There is,’ they say, ‘no problem of human relations that cannot be

resolved by human dialogue.’ Dialogue, of course, presupposes not just two parties (at least), but also two conflicting positions...” (Wiredu, 1997, pp. 306–307).

So, through dialogue and deliberation, it becomes apparent to the parties involved about their shared interests and their seemingly overlapping stances (Wiredu, 1997, pp. 306–307). In part, dialogue, including open and honest deliberations, help cut through the noise, laying bare to all the suitable courses of action.

Tied to the traditional understanding of consensus is the concept of representation. Traditional consensus concerns giving ordinary people proper channels to have their voices heard and not stifled under a majority. For this reason, as already stated, a simple majority agreement to decision-making is not encouraged. Instead, traditional consensus takes matters of representation seriously. Thus, in the traditional setting, institutionalised is the formal and substantive concept of representation. Formal representation exists primarily because substantive representation is integral in the traditional African setup. Without substantive representation, there can be no formal representation.

Consequently, substantive representation from the Ashanti perspective, according to Wiredu, is a “... fundamental human right” (Wiredu, 1997, p. 307). Substantive representation refers to the people’s will represented by the representative elected or selected to the council. This representative takes cognisance of minority views and expresses them in council but also making minorities be “...in counsel in any matter relevant to his or her interests or those of their groups” (Wiredu, 1997, p. 307).

For substantive representation to prevail, especially in a highly populous polity, there is the need for a representative to be in the stead of people with similar interests who cannot all represent themselves in council. Therefore, formal representation is the solution, and it refers to

the representation of a constituency in council. There is the possibility of a formal representation void of a substantive correlate; however, traditional consensus avoids this pitfall because of the disaffection it breeds. It goes counter to the moral and ethical outlook of traditional societies that are communal in structure.

The absence of parties as understood in modern polity is evident through Wiredu's elucidation on what traditional consensus is. This absence, however, should not be mistaken as a lack of robust check and balances and critique systems in place. Wiredu posits that this evidence or lack thereof of parties show to a great extent that traditional spaces were widely non-party polities. Meaning the community, municipality, or polity business went on without a form of adversarial party-system in place. The forms of parties that existed were what we might label as civil society groups such as the *Asafo* (warrior groups), women groups, etc. that served as vehicles of concerns for members and had some relative effectiveness. Wiredu opines that if this model of democracy existed in the not-so-distant past in Africa prior to colonialism, then it is incumbent that modern African states find ways of incorporating some germane aspects (Wiredu, 1997, p. 311).

### **3.2 Adaptation of Traditional Consensus to Postcolonial African States**

The shortfall with the democratisation processes in many African nations signified an essential reappraisal of what form of democracy should be adapted if democracy is a *good*. Guided by epistemic decolonisation, Wiredu pushes for the adaptation of traditional consensual democracy in postcolonial African states. From Wiredu's standpoint, democracy, i.e., majoritarian democracy as adapted by most African nation-states post-independence, have failed to live up to its presupposed promise. Instead, political life is characterised exclusively by power struggle and sectional appropriation of power among political parties (Wiredu, 2001, p. 232).

This struggle terminates any form of genuine discussion and participation in the political process. Thereby alienating some people perpetually from the corridors of decision-making (and power) (Wiredu, 2001, p. 230). In Africa, this sometimes follows with the loss of human life (D. L. Horowitz, 2001, pp. 212–220; Wiredu, 2001, p. 232). Moreover, there is a substratum of irrationality in majoritarian democracy's insistence on adversarial politicking as the only plausible way of engaging in politics.

Wiredu holds that traditional consensus can and should replace majoritarian democracy challenging Fukuyama's (1992) declaration of liberal (majoritarian) democracy as the end of history. Consensual democracy is less confrontational in the sense that it short-circuits the adversarial tendencies that inhere in majoritarian democracy. Moreover, it incorporates a better formal and substantive representation which is deficient in the majoritarian scheme. With formal representation, the people are represented in councils or on boards by others selected for that specific task. Here consensual democracy and majoritarian democracy share some similarities. Yet, on the second aspect—substantive representation—it is the true *will* of the constituents that is represented. That is, the representatives do not represent any political parties' interests over the will of the people. One sharp distinction between majoritarian and consensual democracy lies in the fact that consensual democracy does not represent constituents through political parties (Wiredu, 1997, p. 310).

Political parties within the majoritarian schema incentivise political actors who double as representatives of a constituency to provide in council the view of the majority and, in most extreme cases, the party's interests to the disadvantage of their representees. Usually, the interests of minorities are the most affected. Also, the minorities often view their role as obstructionist leading to the decay of socio-political life in the body polity (Afolayan, 2013, p. 54). In effect, it

is reasonable to foresee that formal representation devoid of the substantial backing of the will of the people breeds antagonism. It is to be noted that the ethnic stratification of African states politically marginalises many smaller ethnic groups under the majoritarian scheme and goes further to institutionalise their underrepresentation (Wiredu, 2001, p. 233). Thus, consensual democracy is radically different and poses to the body politic what true representation is. Wiredu captures this sentiment when he writes;

"If the system in use is such as to cause some groups periodically to be substantively unrepresented minorities, then seasonal disaffection becomes institutionalised.

....any system of politics that is seriously dedicated to this aim [substantial representation] must be institutionally different from a system based on the sway of the majority..." (Wiredu, 1997, p. 307).

To successfully practice consensual democracy, the nation-state must eradicate multipartyism and embrace what Wiredu calls non-party politics. Non-party politics deals not with political parties but with political associations. Political associations, consequently, will serve as the fulcrum for political articulation and engagement. Associations will champion pluralism without falling into the pitfalls of adversarial politics. Since associations will be more in tune with ideology rather than mere power appropriation, substantive representation will be achievable with the interest of the people put forward for the attainment of decisional consensus.

How does Wiredu conceive his non-party polity? As already indicated, Wiredu disavows political parties. He conceptualises political associations as a replacement for political parties. He delineates the difference between the party and association in his comment:

"All the parties to any group deliberation that produces consensus are party to the decision reached. This contrasts sharply with majoritarian decision-making. Here the decision is the wishes of one group or group of groups as *opposed* to another. In politics this usually means the majority party. They are the winners, and the others

are the losers. The notion of *party* has occurred three times in this paragraph. In its first occurrence it means an individual or group of individuals with an interest or concern in a given issue or project. In the second it is used adjectivally to mean being a participant in a decision, and in the third it is used in the well-known political sense in which a party is a group of people, basically of like mind, organized with the aim of winning governmental power” (Wiredu, 2001, p. 238).

He goes on in the text to give subscripts to the different meanings of party. The first, party<sub>1</sub> refers to his notion of political associations where groups or individuals sharing the same interests converge to push for their common concerns. The second, party<sub>2</sub> connotes his adjectival use of the word ‘party’ to mean being included in decision making. And third, party<sub>3</sub> connotes his understanding of political parties as groups with the sole priority of attaining governmental power.

Wiredu posits that the character and nature of consensual democracy eschew the politics of party<sub>3</sub>, i.e., oppositional politics. Because party<sub>3</sub> focuses on winning government power, the need for rational dialogue and proper deliberation is subverted for propagandism, money politics, electoral malpractice and theft. Party<sub>1</sub>, as is conceived by Wiredu, allows for the clustering of people over shared or common interests but is concerned in being party<sub>2</sub> to decision making through rational dialogue and deliberation. Thus, Wiredu’s notion of non-party polity is, in actuality, advocacy for a non-party<sub>3</sub> polity. Why does Wiredu make room for political associations (party<sub>1</sub>) in his conceptualisation? He writes:

“On the other hand, there will always be parties<sub>1</sub> wanting to be party<sub>2</sub> to decisions that affect them. From this standpoint, a party<sub>1</sub> is an association of citizens interested in promoting preferred political ideas and policies. Any one [sic] who tries to take liberties with the citizen’s right form or belong to a party<sub>2</sub> of his choice is trifling with one of the most fundamental of human rights, namely, the right of free expression, association being a form of expression. In a consensual dispensation, then, there will be parties<sub>1</sub> but no parties<sub>3</sub>. Obviously, a set of political conventions or constitutional provisions that envisages a consensual system of politics will not include a rule that mandates that the party<sub>3</sub> that is victorious at the

polls gets into governmental power to the exclusion, normally of other parties<sub>3</sub>, since there will be no such parties in that system. But since, there will be parties<sub>1</sub> in the given state, it will not be a non-party<sub>1</sub> state. The advocacy of a consensual polity, then, is the advocacy of a non-party<sub>3</sub> form of government but not a non-party<sub>1</sub> type of state. The crucial factor here is the absence of the rule of the sectional appropriation of power” (Wiredu, 2001, pp. 238–239).

The quote clarifies why Wiredu allows for party<sub>1</sub> or political associations in his conceptualisation of consensual democracy. Traditional consensus sees it as a right for constituents to have substantive and formal representation in all deliberative bodies or councils. This means that consensual democracy upholds the rights of people to associate and have their interests heard. To adapt this into the modern nation-state would mean making provision for ordinary people to converge over similar interests and have those interests put forward by a selected representative in a council or deliberative body.

What does this conceptualisation mean for opposition in government? How is opposition couched within Wiredu’s framework? Matolino (2013, p. 146) understands Wiredu’s supplication as an advocacy for no oppositional party in the polity. He gains this insight from a passage in Wiredu’s exposition on party<sub>3</sub> and its relation to power.

“The power of this rule, which invests triumphant parties<sub>3</sub> with the prerogative of forming the government, is well nigh magical. It is the root of virtually all the evils of party<sub>3</sub> politics. It is this that makes general elections into life-and-death struggles among contending parties<sub>3</sub>. Dispensing with it will result in the radical transformation of existing parties<sub>3</sub>. They will cease to be machines for the conquest of power. Their multi-faceted quest for money to lubricate the machine will subside. The mutual hostility among parties<sub>3</sub> too will most certainly abate. With these, one can expect an increase in the civility of political discussions and an upgrade in the sensibilities of political leaders” (Wiredu, 2001, p. 239) .

Matolino registers Wiredu’s displeasure for party<sub>3</sub>. He observes that Wiredu reduces most of the political problems that inhere in the body politic in Africa to the political chess games that parties<sub>3</sub> adopt in the majoritarian schema. Matolino commenting on the quote above, writes:

“The preceding quote clearly shows Wiredu’s deep scorn for what he characterises as parties<sub>3</sub>, as he only sees them as geared towards generating trouble in all their activities” (Matolino, 2013, p. 144) .

He concludes from Wiredu’s argument that there are:

“Firstly...certain parties that are allowed to thrive under consensual democracy. These parties are characterised as party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>2</sub>. Secondly, sectional appropriation of power, by political parties<sub>2</sub>, is impermissible. This appropriation of power is said to be responsible for the evils exhibited by political parties that are allowed to function in majoritarian democracies. The evils stem mainly from open competition for power where the winner takes all the power. Thirdly, a one-party state does not obtain under consensual democracy since consensual democracy does not stifle free political association that is organised by parties<sub>1</sub>. Further, a one-party state cannot obtain under consensual democracy since such a state can only obtain when a combination of parties<sub>1,3</sub> comes to effect” (Matolino, 2013, p. 145).

Matolino seems unconvinced with the conclusions Wiredu renders. He foresees that people may be very committed to their party<sub>1</sub> such that they may not come to be party<sub>2</sub> to decision. Given the eclectic ideologies that many a party<sub>1</sub> are beholden to, they may be matters that they will not come to be party<sub>2</sub> to—decisional consensus (Matolino, 2013, p. 147,149). Matolino echoes Ani’s (2014a) reservations on having agreed actions without agreed notions. An example to drive home this point is how to treat same-sex couples; a practical matter; however, the decision anchors heavily on the moral commitment of the parties<sub>1</sub> involved.

Back to the question of opposition in consensual democracy, Matolino points out, poignantly, that it is plausible that not all decisions will benefit all parties equally. Hence, should some parties refuse to agree with the going proposition agreed by others, they may be dubbed anti-establishment (Matolino, 2013, p. 150). Thus, to him, consensual democracy has the tendency to coerce agreement among party<sub>1</sub> groups. Ajei disagrees with Matolino’s assertion and posits that Matolino does not take into consideration Wiredu’s claim that consensus does not entail the absolute identity of moral or intellectual opinions nor unanimous agreement. Ajei

asserts that “...rather, it presupposes preceding diverse positions, and seeks to reconcile these ‘such that the decision reached will be agreeable to all or, at least, not obnoxious to any’” (Ajei, 2016, p. 457).

I should note that opposition in the majoritarian sense involves party<sub>3</sub> factions competing amongst themselves. For Matolino, it would seem that he still has the majoritarian framework in mind when talking about consensual democracy. Because in thinking of Kwasi Wiredu’s democracy by consensus, two underlying assumptions underpin the conception. The first assumption is the persuasiveness of ideas put forward; the second is a communalism theory of ethics and personhood indigenous to African societies. With this assumption in perspective, it is easier to see why an idea of an oppositional party is alien to the conception of consensual democracy.

The absence of oppositional parties does not translate as the void of pressure for the implementation of what has been agreed—social action. Since all parties<sub>1</sub> have a stake in what has been agreed upon, there is pressure from all sides to properly implement what has been agreed. These parties<sub>1</sub> do what would traditionally be done by parties<sub>3</sub> in majoritarian democracy, and that is, keeping the government in check. Hence, the notion of an opposition party in the majoritarian democratic schema need not be transferred into the consensual democratic schema. If the function of the opposition is to keep the governing party in check, then this same function of checks is performed within the consensual democratic framework. The difference here is that all parties are involved in checking the government and ensuring that what needs to be done is done as agreed by all participating parties.

What might be the reason behind Matolino’s assertions on oppositional parties in consensual democracy? Matolino interprets Wiredu’s conception of *party* (party<sub>1</sub>, party<sub>2</sub>) as one

that does not formulate the notion of an oppositional party. He avers that Wiredu's party does not live up to our understanding of the role of political parties and points out that Wiredu's equation of party<sub>2</sub> to that of party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub> is not conceptually sustainable. This is because both party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub> refer to actual political parties i.e., associations people join that reflect their political ideologies, beliefs, values etc. On the contrary, party<sub>2</sub> is not any of that but rather it is "...effectively a moment of conversion, a desirable outcome of dialogue expressed in adopting a position that many parties<sub>1</sub> agree with" (Matolino, 2013, p. 146). Therefore, one cannot be a part of party<sub>2</sub> like how one is part of party<sub>1</sub>. He goes on to say;

"The method and content of agreement between different parties<sub>1</sub> does not equate that notion of being party<sub>2</sub> to a decision to the substantive party<sub>1</sub>. While it would be correct to describe party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub> as institutions in a polity, it is hardly plausible to see the dialogical nature of party<sub>2</sub> as an equal institution to party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub>" (Matolino, 2013, p. 146).

I think Matolino was making an ontological argument about the very nature of party<sub>2</sub> in contrast to party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub>. It cannot be said that parties that come to a consensus have a new values system or belief; instead, it is appropriate to claim that concerning a particular issue, compromises are made. Thus, it would be absurd to claim that after consensus has been reached the parties<sub>1</sub> involved have somehow metamorphosed into party<sub>2</sub>. When people reach a consensus, they go back to their respective parties<sub>1</sub> till the next issue that needs deliberating upon comes up. This, therefore, makes fraught Wiredu's conception with party<sub>2</sub> but more so questions his distinction accorded party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub>. Therefore, the conception of parties may have tipped Matolino to hold such a view. But as argued, as much as party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>2</sub> don't reflect the idea of an opposition party, party<sub>1</sub> plays the role of a watchdog on governmental business. For example, they hold the government to decisions reached during deliberations that all parties<sub>1</sub>

were party<sup>2</sup> to. This may not be adversarial, but holding the government accountable should be the case in any democratic dispensation and this inheres in consensual democracy.

### **3.3 Eze's Objections to Wiredu's Consensus and its Adaptability**

Emmanuel Eze, one of Wiredu's most forceful critics, takes issue with the adaptability of traditional consensus to modern independent African states. His first issue is with the verifiable fact that modern postcolonial African states are far more eclectic, plural and diverse than the traditional polity from which Wiredu unearths his concept (E. C. Eze, 1997, p. 314). To his mind, the homogeneity of these pre-colonial societies may have aided with the viability of consensus during that epoch. Shared sacred, ancestral and mythological visions grounded the legitimacy of the leaders of the time; hence rational persuasion alone, as contended by Wiredu, was not the singular axle on which legitimacy was sought.

In response, one can arguably claim that Wiredu does not categorically insinuate that these myths and other shared common beliefs did not add to some extent veritable political legitimacy. What is clear from Wiredu is that these features stated by Eze were not sufficient for producing legitimacy. If that were the case, chiefs and heads of clans need not meet other criteria besides the shared myths and accompanying prowess for other ceremonial functions. However, these were not the core of the political legitimacy of the chief. Matolino argues that it is the substantive function of the chief, that is, his ability to apply with rigour, logical analysis and persuasion to reach consensus, that secured his political legitimacy (Matolino, 2009, pp. 37–40). Invariably, what was critical to the selection process, was the rational, persuasive ability that an individual possessed. Thus, rational persuasion is critical for one to assume political leadership irrespective of myths or sacraments. Hence, for the adaptability of traditional consensus, this

criterion is relevant and attainable in the modern African milieu, given its eclectic and plural composition.

One may ask, what is rational persuasion anyway? Does this not make this form of democracy too elitist? Is it not the case that educated ones are to be the ones with rational persuasion? Well, rational persuasion is understood here as the logical and convincing manner a submitter makes concerns known to others. By logical, I do not mean a strict influx of Aristotelian logic, but rather, a coherent and well put together thought or reason infused with clarification and contextual appraisal. What is considered logical does require classroom learning. For example, it is common in African traditional settings where oral traditions exist for coherent knowledge to be passed on. This knowledge put through orations is passed on from generation to generation in a reasonable logical sequence, whether oral history, proverbs and meanings, religious and other metaphysical or epistemological positions. And it is in this same manner that people put forward their concerns to their lineage head, which in turn did the same in the council of elders. As a result, many young generations benefitted and understood the relevance of rational persuasiveness as not beating about the bush. Whatever interlocution could be mixed in aphorisms or proverbs but this was done in accordance with reason.

The logical sequence helps with remembrance and also cogency of the narrative. If this was the case in traditional milieus, then it may be uncontroversial to speak of rational persuasion in the modern context without recourse to elitism. In consensual democracy, the people selected put forward submissions on behalf of their representatives. However, the chosen person does not go to council to put forward their parochial interest but the interest of the people, interests already discussed and established in town meetings. There are many educated persons that do not possess rational persuasiveness, nor have they cultivated it. This, thus, rejects the idea that only

educated people have the purview of rational persuasion. Which in turn suggests that some uneducated people possess and have cultivated this skill. Therefore, anyone deemed fit irrespective of educational background could be selected to stand in for the group should they possess the skill of rational persuasiveness and the ability to articulate a groups plight or concerns adequately.

The second issue is derived from the first critique on the pluralism of modern African states; Eze seems dissatisfied with the assumption that there exists a rock bottom interest that all humans share but are seemingly oblivious to (E. C. Eze, 1997, pp. 318–320). He points out that human experiences are individuated, so even in principle, it will be hard to categorically show rock bottom interest or identical interest of people for that matter. He further establishes that such talks about identical interests are illusionary though conveniently put forward by those who reap more by espousing that their interests are everyone's.

Well, it is undeniable that human interests vary and are diverse compared to one another. However, Eze does not entirely refute Wiredu; rather, he lends more credence to Wiredu's assertion that the starting point for consensus is diversity in positions or interests (Wiredu, 1997, p. 304, 1999, p. 34). What Eze may have missed concerning Wiredu's argument is that it may be the case that interests may overlap or appear a bit congruent. This similarity or overlapping of interest leads to consensus only upon dialogue and deliberation on actions that are to be taken—social action. Wiredu clarifies elsewhere that his idea of compromise and reconciliation that lead to consensus is not over cognitive or normative issues (Wiredu, 1999, p. 36, 2001, p. 235). Matolino (2009, pp. 40–41) comments on Eze's critique and accepts it as potent but proceeds to reformulate Wiredu's position of rock bottom interests.

Matolino's position holds that dialogue is not meant to make apparent rock bottom interests. On the contrary, dialogue is a serious activity that illuminates the other party's position. This illumination gears towards evoking an understanding of the aims and contents of the countering party and ultimately bridging the divide between or among opposing opinions. Consequently, the role of dialogue is to reach consensus yet not consensus based on an identity of interest but on the realisation that disparate interests outside of a consideration of each other's interests yield no promotion of interests at all (Matolino, 2009, p. 41). Simply put, all parties involved may lose since no one pays attention to what the other requires. He goes further to provide two interventions; first, a need for the institutionalisation of the wills of participants to prevail, ultimately aimed at all participants accepting the outcomes post dialogue. Second, interlocutors enter the dialogue in good faith, i.e., principles of fairness, justice, and equality must feature during the process of deliberation and dialogue.

From my viewpoint, Matolino does an excellent job at illustrating the need for openness and honesty in dialogue for the purposes of reaching consensus. But he mistook Wiredu's articulation of people having rock bottom interests to mean all possess a singular interest or *mono-interest*. Yet, he goes on to reiterate Wiredu's already established position on the need for free and open dialogue and deliberation on the hope of getting on common ground. However, on reading Wiredu, it appears to me that he addresses the need for political associations to cater to groups' diverse interests, suggesting *prima facie* that there exist arrays of interest in his conceptual schema. What Wiredu meant by rock-bottom interest was the illumination that rational dialogue and deliberation sought to have on the matters at hand by showing to all parties involved where many, if not all, their interests aligned as issues deliberated upon, become much clearer. Matolino disputes that rational dialogue leads to a realisation of similar interests. Instead,

for him, it rather shows that; "...[i]f I am to successfully pursue my interests, I ought to take sufficient regard of others' interests" (Matolino, 2009, p. 40).

Hitherto, it does not follow from the preceding quote that rational dialogue detracts from attaining similar interests. If we consider others' interests and discuss at length to find common ground, does this 'common ground' not prove an attainment of similar interests? If the attainment of 'common ground' is not equatable to a similar interest that all participants can share in, how could there be 'common ground' in the first place? A common ground leading to a joint agreement that is not obnoxious to all parties involved in deliberation presupposes that parties' interests have aligned or converged concerning the matter at hand. This alignment might have been obscure at the beginning if both parties held very stringent and radically opposing interests. Rational dialogue prepared the grounds for them to see eye to eye. It might not satisfy all parties fully but at least shows them what they are willing to allow, which may not have been an option prior to dialogue.

The third issue for Eze was on Wiredu's understanding of democracy. He accuses Wiredu of using one particular understanding of democracy—consensus—and by effect committing a category mistake by using that particular aspect to eliminate other *kinds* of democracy as not being democratic enough. Democracy rudimentarily calibrated by Eze's understanding reflects a system where society accepts rules due to pluralism and diverse interests on how to govern; however, governing is to be done through appropriate institutions (E. C. Eze, 1997, pp. 320–321). Matolino catches onto Eze's conceptualisation here by pointing out unequivocally that Eze's formulation is just one expression of democracy and thus not exhaustive on all other forms of democracy. Essentially, Eze commits the mistake he accuses Wiredu of—a category mistake. Wiredu's formulation was an attempt to show how his conception was a better-suited *democracy*

worthy of adaptation. He was not claiming, as Eze may have insinuated, that consensual democracy was the *only* gold standard of what democracy should be. Instead, I think Wiredu views his formulation as closer in spirit to the *form* or concept or ideation of democracy (whatever it is). I think his consensual democracy is an abstraction closest to the universal *form* of democracy<sup>5</sup>. Hence majoritarian democracy is one of consent without consensus; conversely, consensual democracy is consent with consensus (Matolino, 2018, p. 36).

### 3.4 Rationality in Traditional Consensus

Wiredu's interpretation of traditional consensus privileges rationality. He asserts that rational dialogue, deliberation and persuasion of ideas are unambiguously the precise ways to get consensus right (Wiredu, 1997, p. 304, 1999, pp. 39–40, 2001, pp. 232–234, 2012, pp. 1057–1061). By all intents and purposes, traditional consensual rationality was geared rather sharply towards matters of practical concerns than on speculative issues (Matolino, 2016, p. 54). Matolino avers that in the traditional setting, participants deliberating issues possessed the property of rationality. The property, he claims, was manifest and exercised through the varying reasons participants gave for their positions during deliberations of matters.

Ani disagrees with Wiredu and Matolino's (2016) assertions; he claims that purely rational deliberation has nothing to be desired. It is quite impossible for such a kind of deliberation to exist (Ani, 2014b, p. 347). He proceeds to make the case that people tend to ascribe to the source of the information truth or falsity based on the perceived trustworthiness of the person conveying the information (Ani, 2014b, p. 350). This echoes Eze's concerns on the moral and religious outlook that may influence decision-making and legitimacy. However, this

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<sup>5</sup> Here Plato's iconic 'world of forms' is employed to address the difficulty in providing a concise definition of democracy. Thus, even though we know what democracy may mean, it is hard to define because any attempt to define remains inadequate (Macintosh, 2012; Silverman, 2003).

argument reeks of the logical fallacy known as appeal to pathos (emotion). It is for this reason, Wiredu stressed the engagement of discussion on rational grounds.

Contrary to Ani's speculation (and to some extent Eze), Wiredu is not naïve about the fact that some interlocutors may possess charisma, charm and authority (power) and may want to use these subtle but potent possessions to skew opinions or decisions. However, we need to be reminded that in his presentation on the eligibility of the chief, aside criteria such as moral grounding, lack of senile decay, and many other assessments, the ultimate task was to assess how much rational, persuasive prowess he possessed. I understand Wiredu as pointing out that these qualities mentioned outside of rational persuasion are *proto-qualities*. They are, in fact, basic conditions upon which societies, especially communal ones like the Akans, believe all persons should possess or ascribe to possess. Any person in line to be chief who failed at these proto-qualities were never even considered, but if they were, their lack of these proto-qualities was the basis for disqualification. And if the chief lost these proto-qualities during their rule, they were dethroned.

How does this translate in the modern political space? Proto-qualities remain relevant in the modern political space. In applying consensual democracy, especially in an eclectic and plural polity, the elimination of propagandism or reducing it to the bare minimum is an appreciated goal. Rational dialogue provides an avenue for recognising political schemers and con artists. Since the ethics of consensus democracy espouses neighbourliness, it reinforces having rational dialogue and deliberation in good faith. Thus, there is an incentive, especially among those on the board of council, to submitting their positions without undue recourse to charisma or charm.

A possible objection that can be raised is, what if they are good orators or naturally charismatic? The issue is not about being charismatic or better at public speaking. These in themselves are good qualities that may have contributed to the selection of the individual as a representative of their political associations. Nevertheless, when one decides to use just those qualities as grounding to gaslight other participants into accepting their position rather than allowing the reasons they put forward to speak for themselves, it raises eyebrows. If this occurs, it is viewed as an act of manipulation against the deliberative body. This sort of manipulating and propagandising is far too common in majoritarian democracy. Therefore, for Wiredu, it is to be shunned in consensual democracy.

Ani (2014b) might go on to disagree with me by pointing out that on matters of credibility, three things come to play, namely; (1) the character or moral status of the participant, (2) the logical force of her argument and (3) the emotional or attitudinal side of herself. The first thing to note here is that no political association will select just any person to represent them. This means that certain qualities are looked for before selection is made; thus, (1) and (3) are already calibrated for during the search for a representative. Following my argument, this presupposes that (1) and (3) are *proto-qualities* that candidates must already possess before they are considered as representatives of an association. If *proto-qualities* (1) and (3) are missing in an individual, this may surely hamper their selection for the representative position. If one is shy, or cannot speak in public and think on their feet, what good would that person be as a representative? The political association already looks at these *proto-qualities*. Hence a person who ends up as representative substantively represents her political association on a board of council. She is there to articulate in council the interest of her people and she is there based on her prowess for logical submission of arguments. It is assumed that the same occurs in other

political associations' procedures before representatives come onto the council or deliberative panel. Hence, at that level, i.e., at the council level where deliberations take place on behalf of others, the only source of credibility, if need be, is the (2) logical force of her argument on behalf of her people.

The second thing worth noting is that when Ani (Ani, 2014b) evokes credibility as something that may mar consensual democracy if care is not taken, he unintentionally advances his argument foregrounded in an adversarial schema. His argument lends credence to Wiredu who sees the western liberal strand of democracy and institutions as irrational (Wiredu, 2001, p. 232) and inevitably a space where political con artists and power hustlers thrive. The checks and balances in this schema may lead to occasional consensus but not in the way envisioned by Wiredu. In this chapter, I have indicated that Party<sub>1</sub> provide a system of checks and balances. And this is because party<sub>1</sub> is party<sub>2</sub> to the decision agreed upon. Because all parties<sub>1</sub> have a stake on what is to be done, they make sure that the information on which they base their decision is credible and not deceptive or unreliable. So, as precautionary as Ani's concerns are, it seems that Wiredu's democracy by consensus has in-built capabilities to deal with said problems.

### **3.5 Consensual Democracy and the Primordial Public**

Wiredu's discourse on democracy by consensus reveals that the formulation of the concept for adaptation has an inherent weakness in its interpretation that has not been addressed and may be the very reason for the many sceptical outlooks by some scholars<sup>6</sup>. For the most part, many tend to ignore that the adoption and adaptation of this theory are incongruent with the existing social structures. Of course, Wiredu is aware of colonial structures or institutions that

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<sup>6</sup> Scholars such as Ani (2014a, 2014b, 2018), Fayemi (2010) and Masaka (2019), to mention a few, have been critical of Wiredu's conception.

survived after colonialism. But he also gives off a subtle insinuation that his formulation can work alongside some colonial institutionalised relics. But I think, the theory, though not explicitly stated, seeks application within the primordial public. Ekeh (1975) posited that the civic public is associated with colonial administration and vastly considered amoral, while the primordial public is antithetical to the civic public. I think understanding consensual democracy as one adaptable in the primordial might assuage the scepticism levelled against the theory.

One such misinterpretation and scepticism is seen in Olanipekun's (2020) argument. He claims that consensual and majoritarian democracy share the same difficulties but also share positive similarities. He posits that consensus is possible within the majoritarian democratic schema, what he calls 'majoritarian consensus'. He adopts Christoph Haug's<sup>7</sup> four (4) classifications of consensus: imposed consensus, acclaimed consensus, basic consensus and deliberative consensus (Olanipekun, 2020, p. 4). Haug delineates these four categories as;

"These four types of consensus vary in their degree of openness towards dissenting voices. In an imposed consensus, it is simply claimed (e.g. by the meeting chair) that consensus has been reached with no opportunity for the meeting participants to oppose this claim. In an acclaimed consensus, ... there is an explicit opportunity for participants to express their views, but its official purpose is not to express dissent but consent. In basic consensus participants are explicitly asked if there is anyone who disagrees and a stretch of audible silence passes before the consensual decision is confirmed. Deliberative consensus, finally, not only gives participants the opportunity to express dissent, but actively encourages that dissent is articulated in order to make sure that no one is silenced" (Haug, 2015, p. 556).

Olanipekun takes the first three delineations i.e., imposed, acclaimed and basic consensus, to justify his conclusions about the possibility of 'majoritarian consensus'. Furthermore, he goes on to argue that since Wiredu allows for incomplete unanimity in his conception, then it follows that

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<sup>7</sup> Haug (2015) examines consensus as a preferred mode of decision-making in organisations. He establishes that consensus is a model of decision-making with different ways of coming to it. He delineates four distinct ways of coming to a consensus.

there is no real distinction between consensual democracy and 'majoritarian consensus' because there will always be a minority that will agree with the decision that is being made in the long run (Olanipekun, 2020, pp. 7–8). He concludes that there is no analytic distinction between majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy. And for that matter, logically democracy and consensus are not mutually exclusive.

Olanipekun, I think, misses an opportunity to thoroughly engage Wiredu's proposed concept. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Wiredu's conception thrives if one engages his theory through the lens of the primordial public. This public shares the same moral outlook as the private realm; thus, in the private realm and primordial public, the rules are communalistic ethics and people centeredness. The need to make sure all persons are thoroughly heard during deliberation is the hallmark of the primordial public because it is an extension of the African moral outlook on personhood (Gyekye, 1987; Menkiti, 1984; Wingo, 2006; Wiredu, 1996). If I am right, then consensual democracy under the primordial public doesn't give primacy to Haug's first three categories of consensus: imposed, acclaimed, and basic consensus.

The primordial public encourages the ethics of cooperation which is fundamental to the ethos of consensual democracy. However, Olanipekun disregards the foundational presuppositions of majoritarian democracy, which includes individualism and adversarialism. These fundamentals tolerate the majority rule under Haug's first three types of consensus, thus keeping in line with the outlook of majoritarianism. Therefore, if there are occasional bouts of consensus under majoritarian democracy, it does not in any way redefine majoritarianism. Put simply; exceptions do not exactly define the rules.

Furthermore, Olanipekun quite conveniently ignores the fourth classification of consensus, i.e., deliberative consensus. Deliberative consensus accurately captures what Wiredu's

consensual democracy is about. It is not a crude attempt at agreement or compromise or reconciliation; rather, it is a system that prioritises thorough deliberation and inclusivity that ultimately leads to agreement, compromise and reconciliation. If 'majoritarian consensus' engendered inclusivity, it would have discarded the first three definitions of consensus (imposed, acclaimed and basic consensus), because all these forms of consensus are coerced or imposed with disregard to dissent whatsoever. Here consensus is just performative, so no one disagrees even if there exist underlying dissent. Usually, participants are encouraged to let go should deliberations appear to have gained a simple majority. In retrospect, this 'tyranny of the majority' is the very thing Wiredu rages against. Consensus is not reduced to the "...mere abstention from further recriminations or collisions" (Wiredu, 1997, p. 304). What is sought after is everyone involved agreeing—agreeing on what is to be done. This position borders on the communalism theory of ethics and personhood (Ajei, 2016, p. 457) through the primordial public.

This is not to say that deliberative consensus does not occur in majoritarianism, as stipulated by Haug. On the contrary, there have been situations or occurrences of this in majoritarianism. In fact, in Africa, emoluments for parliamentarians, ministers or public officials are hardly ever matters of strict disagreement. Usually, the degree of unanimity in parliaments on these types of issue are high. But the crux of the matter here is; majoritarianism does not make consensus the norm in its orientation. On this backdrop, imposed, acclaimed, and basic consensus; are allowed even if it would mean some others may not be satisfied. Conversely, consensus is the norm in consensual democracy and not the exception. Therefore, the voice of the minority matter under consensual democracy.

Subsequently, Olanipekun does not convincingly show the similarities and challenges that both majoritarianism and democracy by consensus share. Nevertheless, he is right in

asserting that democracy and consensus are not mutually exclusive—a sentiment very much shared by Wiredu (Wiredu, 1997). Still, Olanipekun need not mistaken some occurrence of consensus in majoritarian democracy to mean it is the very same thing occurring in Wiredu's consensual democracy. Consensus in majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy are of different kinds and operate under different foundational presuppositions. The former being adversarial and individualistic, whereas the latter being civil and communalistic. Admittedly, both consensual and majoritarian democracy operates in two different publics, the primordial and civic public, respectively.

It must be noted that majoritarian democracy is a form or kind of democracy (universal concept) where consent on rules of engagement must be established for all who may participate in the system. It is not a stand-in for democracy broadly speaking; thus, when Olanipekun shows the challenges both consensual and majoritarian democracy face, such as representation and achieving unanimity in decisional consensus and concludes that majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy are virtually similar, he may have been unwittingly defining consensual democracy in terms of majoritarian democracy—using majoritarian democracy as a comparative lens in lieu of democracy proper (universal concept).

### **3.6 Emergent Social Structures, the Primordial Public and Consensual Democracy**

In the previous chapter, discussion on social formation established that the emergent social structures which includes, but not limited, to ethnicity and ethnic groups are an informal structure that is tied to the primordial public. It was further argued that the elites through majoritarian democracy take advantage of this structure and use it in an adversarial manner for power appropriation.

The emergent social structure holds the communalistic ethics and view of personhood because it mirrors the same moral imperative operative in the primordial public. If what is true of the primordial public in terms of its moral imperative is equally true, *mutatis mutandis*, for consensual democracy and the emergent social structure, then it follows that consensual democracy can adequately cater for politics of the emergent social structure.

Consensual democracy eschews the hyper-politicisation of identities; this suggests that within the consensual schema, ethnicity will not be a polarising issue; instead, it provides the grounds for articulating grievances and keeping in line with its ethics remove the obstacles that tend to breed animosity. With its non-party system, no one group will be ostracised from decision-making. Wiredu affirms this when he writes;

“...in the consensual non-party system, no one group, ethnic or ideological, will be afflicted with the sense of being permanent outsiders to state power. That should suffice to forestall some, at least, of the unhappy conflicts that have bedeviled African life on to our own times” (Wiredu, 1997, p. 311).

Wiredu alludes to the problematic ways that majoritarianism had forestalled instability in Africa and contrasted that with the hope of a new era should consensual democracy gain traction. I think this new era, envisioned by Wiredu, will succeed if pursued within the primordial public. The communal ethics of personhood, the core adhesive in consensual democracy, operates in the primordial public. This is because indigenous people hold dear communalism and espouse to be neighbourly as possible to one another. When Ekeh (1975, p. 92) posits that the civic public is amoral, he is expressing the apathy that indigenes have towards it but, at the same length, the traditional African moral imperative that the civic public lacks. Even though the civic public in conjunction with the migrated social structures exudes a moral imperative—usually contiguous on Christian ethics—in the European metropolises, that same sense of moral imperative has been

difficult to plant in the colonial institutions and structures within post-colonial Africa. So, whatever moral imperative accompanies the migrated social structures in Africa within the civic public is ignored mainly due to the effects of colonialism and imperialism.

Colonialism already caused a schism between the state and the people. People were not party<sup>2</sup> to decision making. Leadership was approached from a top-down paradigm which was antithetical to indigenous people's worldview. Yet, when formal colonialism ended, elites decided to embrace and use these top-down approaches, making the state more alien and incredibly susceptible to corruption and many governmental and bureaucratic misdeeds. Indeed, the only way out for most people was to clutch on the amorality of the civic public and harness the "legitimation of the need to seize from the civic public in order to benefit the primordial public" (Ekeh, 1975, p. 110). Imagine if this need to hedge funds from the civic public to the primordial public is curtailed by operating the body politic from the primordial public with a democratic system that mirrors its moral imperative. The need for bribery and corruption and other vices such as negative identity politics will reduce drastically.

Why will identity politics and its negative-strand decline under this public and the adaptation of consensual democracy? As argued in the second chapter, the emergent social structures were a modern response to colonialism and colonial impositions. However, this social formation does not neatly fit into the transformed indigenous social structure, neither does it in the migrated social structure. The problems post-independent African states faced concerning the emergent social structure were brought about because of elites move to stifle these structures at the beginning years of the newly independent states. The reason for eschewing ethnic politics was commendable, but the approach was weak and ill-thought. Soon, one-party states became the norm, and virtually all dissent, curtailed.

Nevertheless, the emergent social structure that resisted imperial imposition continued to resist elite oppression. When curtailing did not work accordingly, elites found ways of manipulating the emergent social structure within the migrated social structure through multipartyism. These manipulations divulged into open ethnic clashes and loss of life and properties. The interventions to these clashes maintain that solutions should derive from the migrated social structures in the form of liberal democracy (majoritarianism being popular strand), bureaucracy (to prevent bribery and corruption), etc. Yet, this solution is blunt and creates the conditions viable for the perpetuation of the same problem. Thus, a never-ending cycle continues in the African subregion concerning socio-political life.

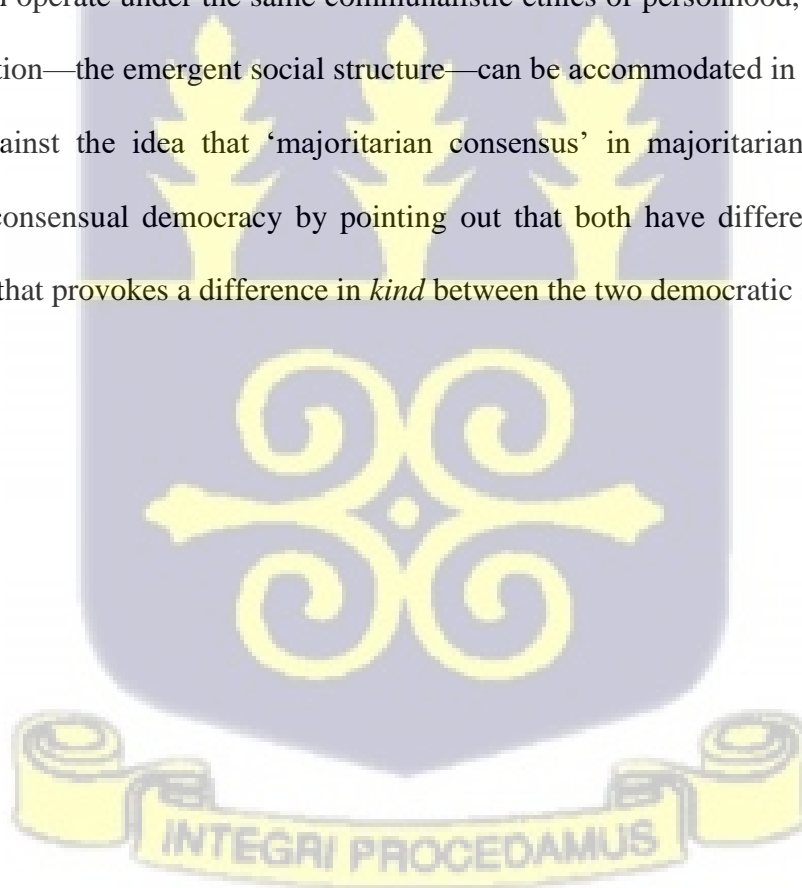
Consensual democracy provides reasonable grounds for politicking, particularly those concerning the emergent social structures in a civil, less apprehensive and manipulative manner within the primordial public. The concept of political associations can serve as a pivot for less adversarial politicking devoid of manipulations between different groups. In the next chapter, an exploration of political associations will be undertaken, eventually showing what that would mean for emergent social structures like ethnicity.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have tried to show the socio-political context from whence Wiredu's consensual democracy is unearthed. Throughout the chapter, I employed a comparative lens to illuminate consensual democracy against majoritarianism and showed how traditional consensus and its insistence on rational persuasion of ideas are the main credible axes on which agreement on what action to take revolve.

Also, I argued that rational persuasion suffices; however, concerns about character and confidence are not dismissed in the consensual schema. Instead, these qualities/characteristics—*proto-qualities*—are accounted for during the search for who will represent the political association. I argue that *proto-qualities* are basic requirements that are vital to a communalist inspired polity. Yet, in the end, it is one who possesses acumen for rational persuasion who gets selected as representative of the people. Thus, during deliberation in the council, it is the soundness of positions that is of priority.

In addition, I show a nexus between the primordial public and consensual democracy, arguing that both operate under the same communalistic ethics of personhood, which means that the social formation—the emergent social structure—can be accommodated in Wiredu’s schema. I also argue against the idea that ‘majoritarian consensus’ in majoritarianism is similar to ‘consensus’ in consensual democracy by pointing out that both have differential foundational presuppositions that provokes a difference in *kind* between the two democratic systems.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Politics in Consensual Democracy

#### 4.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I pursued a comparative analysis of majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy, revealing the viability of consensual democracy against majoritarian democracy. It was established that traditional African societies—centralised or not—practised consensus. In addition, the argument showed that consensual democracy should be adapted and practised within the primordial public where the moral imperative for indigenes is similar in the private sphere.

Consequently, this foregoing argument lends itself to questions regarding the type of nation-state suitable for the viability of consensual democracy, the role of political associations in the primordial public, the kind of politics within this public, and what ramifications—good or bad—this will have on the negative politics of identity on the African continent.

Thus, taking all these concerns seriously, this chapter examines Gyekyes's conception of nationhood and the sort of politics that should be within the primordial public through political associations. First, I engage with Gyekye's notion of meta-nationality, drawing arguments from William Abraham's cultural essentialism and Kwame Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism to argue for a re-configuration of the postcolonial nation-state divorced of colonial importations. Second, I will engage with Carl Schmitt's concept of the political, using it as a mirror to assess Wiredu's political associations and the political climate of adopting consensual democracy. Third, I will also determine the place of the emergent social structures within consensual democracy. Next, the role ideology plays (in the task of social engineering) will be tackled. And

finally, all these investigations will create insights into how negative strands of identity politics can be curbed under consensual democracy.

#### 4.1 Gyekye's Conception of Nationhood

The comparative analysis undertaken in the third chapter<sup>8</sup> of this thesis reveals that the current political system in almost all postcolonial African states is not conducive in facilitating the successful operations of consensual democracy. The system—colonial structures, institutions and ideologies—that enable majoritarian democracy are antithetical to the foundational presuppositions that undergird consensual democracy. Politics and the political structure in pre-colonial times were underpinned by social classifications that were pre-determined by factors like sex, age, kinship or birth and guild. Yet, these social classifications were bound by a common ethical system, communalism, acknowledged by all. This communal system is lacking in the current western-styled postcolonial nation-state.

Thus, the daunting question here is; is the current political system truly representative of traditional African politics? Do political parties and politicians' interests align with the interests of the individuals and communities within the state? The current system does not represent traditional African politics, nor do the interests of political parties and politicians align with the masses. Wiredu shows that the political parties (and politicians) are interested in the co-opting of power for parochial interests. The masses are considered only in so far as they can be manipulated to meet these parochial goals. There is thus the need to reconstruct and change the existing colonial structures and institutions to facilitate and enhance the function of consensual democracy. If consensual democracy's foundational presuppositions are ontologically divergent from liberal democracy (majoritarianism), then supplanting consensual democracy into the

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<sup>8</sup> The comparative analysis between majoritarian democracy and consensual democracy.

existing system is fraught, if not naïve. Hence, how can the current African new states be deconstructed or re-configured to facilitate the practice of consensual democracy, which is safeguarded from parochial interests? Given the diversity of ethnicities in the current postcolonial nation-states, how can we create unity out of plurality?

Kwame Gyekye (1997) recognised the multi-ethnic/cultural backgrounds of all postcolonial African nation-states resulting from imperial imposition. These multi-ethnocultural backgrounds, according to him, pose some problems for nationhood. Therefore, he breaks down nationhood to rudimentarily mean an ethnocultural community that is tied by, but not limited to, language, culture, history and common ancestry (Gyekye, 1997, p. 80). Nationhood, therefore, requires a common culture, yet possessing a central government or sovereignty or well-defined territorial boundaries is not necessary to understanding nationhood (Atuire, 2020, p. 535; Gyekye, 1997, p. 80). In contrast, statehood suggests “...the idea of a concentration of sovereign power at the center” (Gyekye, 1997, p. 81). So, nations can exist within states. For example, one can reference the Ewe nation in Ghana and Togo and the Kurdish nation in Syria, Iraq and Turkey.

Gyekye denotes nationhood as ethnocultural communities symbolically as  $N_1$  and suggests that  $N_1$  be regarded as a sociological rather than a political concept. The moment  $N_1$  moves into the realm of sovereign power concentrated at the centre with loyal citizens recognising such power and authority, the nation becomes a nation-state—denoted by  $N_2$ .  $N_2$  thus becomes a conglomeration of many ethnocultural communities or nationalities. Thus,  $N_2$  is represented symbolically as  $N_2 = \sum N_{1a} + N_{1b} + N_{1c} + N_{1d} \dots N_{1n}$  (Gyekye, 1997, p. 82). All  $N_{1i}$ s become sub nations in the new political and legal entity that is  $N_2$ . The challenge that arises here is the ability to build a nation in the  $N_1$  sense from the myriad of sub nations or ethnocultural

communities. This nation-building from the plethora of  $N_1$ s results in the formation of a heterogeneous nation-state ( $N_2$ ); but,  $N_2$ 's aspirational goal is to pursue social, moral and cultural virtues that unify all sub nations. In short,  $N_2$  is to be built to become analogous to  $N_1$ .

Gyekye (1997, p. 87) goes on to prescribe a nation that transcends the parochial ethnocultural interests that belie  $N_2$  and achieves what in his own words he describes as "...a reasonable measure of social, cultural and political unity and cohesion and a sense of common national identity" represented as  $N_3$ . This normative nation  $N_3$  is formulated as:  $N_3 = \sum n_{1a} + n_{1b} + n_{1c} + \dots + n_{1n}$ . The use of 'n' in the lower case in the equation symbolises the idea that  $N_1$  particularities are deemphasised in  $N_3$ . In the equation for  $N_2$ , sub nations— $N_1$ s—still retain their ethnocultural peculiarities making  $N_2$  just an amalgamation of ethnocultural communities into a whole,  $N_2$ , with no recourse to unify the ethnocultural communities.  $N_3$ , on the other hand, is the attempt at unifying the diverse ethnocultural communities ( $n_1$ ), thus projecting a sense of common national identity amongst all ethnocultural communities. However, the project of nation-building is incomplete at this stage. Gyekye notes that  $N_1$  sub-loyalties continue to fester. Thus, for a true multinational state, political power must be shared satisfactorily among constituting ethnocultural communities.

This multinational state is an open society that allows for the varied ideological frameworks to compete for the intellectual allegiance of the people. On the matter of power-sharing in the multinational state, the policy of decentralisation must be carried out vigorously. So, the multinational nation-state that becomes an open society encourages decentralisation of power and accepts vigorously other national developmental projects, metamorphoses into a meta-national nation-state. In effect, Gyekye's vision of a meta-national nation-state is one where cultural identity is not coextensive with ethnic identity. Gyekye wants to retain culture but is not

keen on holding onto ethnic identity because it sabotages the meta-national nation-state. He conceptualises the meta-national nation-state as  $N_4$  with the equation:  $N_4 = \sum v_1 + v_2 + v_3 + v_4 \dots + v_n$ . (where  $v_1$  stands for individual). At  $N_4$ , cooperation among people is at the individual level rather than at the group level. Hence for Gyekye (1997, p. 103), our fundamental humanity rather than ethnicity should constitute the identity and composition of his meta-national nation-state.

#### 4.2 Culture, Meta-nationality and Consensual Democracy

Gyekye's meta-nationality ( $N_4$ ) is a conception of nationhood that divorces itself from the parochiality and particularity of ethnic nations or ethnocultural communities, hence, his meta-nationality takes as grounding the moral worth of the individual (Gyekye, 1997, p. 103). The microscopic lens of meta-nationality is focused on cultural identity and the maximisation of common cultural, moral, social and political values across the populace of the  $N_4$ . The cultural identity that it seeks to uphold is anchored on the understanding of the shared humanity of every person within the meta-national nation-state ( $N_4$ ). Thus,  $N_4$  can be said to uphold African cultural values, which is by extension a cultural humanism. Across the various ethnocultural communities or nations ( $N_1$ ) on the African continent, the common thread in all these communities is the communal values (communalism) that serve as moral grounding. Elsewhere, Gyekye makes a vital revelation when he asserts that;

“[a]fricans recognise the dignity of the human being and in consequence, hold a deep and unrelenting concern for human welfare... Recognition for humanity is intrinsically linked with recognition of the unity of all people whether or not they are biologically related. This deep appreciation for humanity is reflected in such communal social structures as clan, the extended family, and complex social networks of social relationships...” (Gyekye, 1996, p. 23).

This deep communal appreciation of humanity is what Gyekye extrapolates as the cultural identity for the grounding of the meta-national nation-state (N<sub>4</sub>). This removes focus from the particularities of the ethnic nations but celebrates the shared cultural imports that are present in the diverse ethnocultural communities.

It should be noted that meta-nationality's (N<sub>4</sub>) moral worth of the individual is not to be conflated with metaphysical individualism nor moral individualism. The former sees the individual as self-sufficient and independent of social relationships, while the latter sees the starting point of socio-political institutions as catering to the intrinsic interest of the individual. However, the moral worth of the individual, as expressed in Gyekye's N<sub>4</sub>, is the recognition of individuality in the social conscious human being; that is, recognising her personal will and identity even within her complex social networks. Both communal and individualistic values are appreciated within the African milieu and can thus exist contemporaneously although precariously (Gyekye, 1996, p. 50).

Culture thus is essential and the adhesive to N<sub>4</sub>'s success. Abraham (2015) sees culture essentialism as the binding force that holds society and from whence the distillation of appropriate ideology for application and practice flows. Essentialist views from Abraham's standpoint engender integrative cultures. With regards to Africa, the essential view of people as human beings imbued with dignity and deserving of respect and social welfare spearheads integration that reconciles with Gyekye's N<sub>4</sub>. That is, Abraham's thesis firmly agrees with N<sub>4</sub>'s presupposition that our humanity rather than our particular ethnic backgrounds should constitute nation-building. Hence generally, African cultural values are not antithetical to Gyekye's formulation of N<sub>4</sub>. On the contrary, the African cultural outlook of the human provides essentialist integrative instruments for the realisation of N<sub>4</sub>.

Abraham (2015, pp. 16–22) posits four things about culture that points to its integrative nature. The first is the fact that culture serves as the vehicle for uniting people through common attitudinal beliefs and civic beliefs that lie beyond the reaches of state intervention; hence it makes cooperation seem natural among citizens. The second, which flows directly from the first point, is that culture waters the grounds for the formulation of shared destiny and garners support in pursuing it religiously. Third, culture provides a lens through which national development can be approached, and for that matter, national problems can be identified and rectified. In this sense, as understood in political theory, institutions are not universal but relative, especially in their applicability. The fourth and also the last point that Abraham posits is the unilateral understanding that culture controls change. The proliferation of many foreign influences may come to bear in society; thus, the cultural phenomenon within the society negotiates the adaptation, institution or disregard of what may be deemed foreign. The material culture is easier to adapt to; however, the immaterial aspect of culture may need many a negotiation to determine what is best for the society moving forward. However, the immaterial aspect of culture, which comprises ethics, negotiates material culture such as technologies.

These four integrative natures of culture show clearly how essential culture is and, to an extent, how essential the presuppositions of culture guide the outlook of a society in terms of cohesion, development, critical introspection and the general welfare of all. Simply put, the starting point of every society depends on the agreed-upon metaphysical, moral and epistemological grounding that essentially thrust the society on a particular trajectory. Regarding  $N_4$ , as espoused by Abraham, cultural essentialism brings to bear the integration of all the ethnocultural communities superseding the mere composition of nation-states ( $N_1$ ) as previously understood.

N<sub>4</sub> challenges the current composition of the African nation-state in the postcolonial era. These nation-states in the postcolonial era are just an amalgamation of ethnic nations with recourse to genuine integration. Hence the current postcolonial African nation-state is an example of an N<sub>2</sub> nation-state. Most have centralised governments that are not really an integration of all ethnocultural communities. Only a few African nation-states are entirely within the realm of N<sub>3</sub>, with an accurate representation of common value, common language and a genuine interest to view all groups of people with respect but simultaneously creating a common identity among citizens. The one that readily comes to mind is Mauritius. Mauritius<sup>9</sup> has been judged to be practising full democracy; however, bits of subnational loyalties exist. Other African nation-states project a pseudo-multinational nation-state (N<sub>3</sub>) through their provision of a constitutional republic yet fall on the matter of integration and heightened ethnocultural politicking.

This pseudo-multinational nation-state in postcolonial Africa is incumbent on the retention of colonial structure and institutions that continue to ravage the solidarity that should have occurred in Africa post colonialism. Kwame Nkrumah (1964) diagnoses the continuous retention of colonial structures in the African as malignant schizophrenia, which is caused by the confusion of having the Euro-Christian tradition, the Islamic tradition and the traditional African way of life competing violently for adherents. Thus, the result is a lack of culture—a direction—that will help chart a path to real liberation and construction of a society that mirrors what he calls the 'African personality'. Like Abraham, Nkrumah holds culture as the starting point from whence the proper distillation of values and creation of a comprehensive ideology can be formed. Thus, seeing the competing values within the African continent, he formulates his idea

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<sup>9</sup> (*Democracy Index in Sub-Saharan Africa, by Country 2020, 2020*)

of philosophical consciencism. He articulates philosophical consciencism as; "...the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 79).

Nkrumah's consciencism is advanced to elevate and project the communalism, humanism and egalitarianism of traditional African society and prune ideas that are in conflict with these values (Kwesi, 2017, p. 187). These values—communalism, humanism and egalitarianism—are the common denominator on which the Euro-Christian and Islamic values are judged. Echoing Abraham's cultural essentialism and his view (fourth point on culture) on culture as that which serve as a control against the influence upon the material and immaterial culture of a society, Nkrumah's standpoint; i.e., philosophical consciencism serves as the philosophical and ideological basis of Gyekye's meta-national nation-state (N<sub>4</sub>). The collapse of colonial institutions altogether with the propagation of camaraderie amongst the people is advanced in Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism leading to the restoration of the African personality (and the society). Of course, the core assumptions of Nkrumah led him to believe that socialism was the best developmental tool and closely akin to communalism; however, this is not the point of my argument here<sup>10</sup>. What is of relevance here is that cultural humanism, which is the bedrock of African societies across the board, is averred as the right starting point for building nationhood of the N<sub>4</sub> persuasion. The two (2) basic assumptions in Nkrumah's project, namely; the harmonisation of the three African conscience<sup>11</sup> and the beholden of African communalist values as the foundation on which harmonisation may proceed; provide a clear picture for the

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<sup>10</sup> I speak to Kwame Nkrumah's linkage of communalism to socialism in the section entitled 'the role of ideology'. However, here I am sticking to the emancipatory locution embedded in Nkrumah's project.

<sup>11</sup> These are the Euro-Christian tradition, the Islamic tradition and the African tradition

actualisation of  $N_4$  through cultural essentialism, thereby leading to the proper operation of consensual democracy.

Consensual democracy then operates under  $N_4$  devoid of colonial importation and influence but subject to evaluation on the merits of action plans such as national development, cohesion, etc. In this thesis, I argued that consensual democracy thrives under the primordial public where the primordial public is shown as distinct from the civic public, which is largely colonial. Once  $N_4$  operates on the foundational presuppositions of communalism, then *ceteris paribus* operation in the primordial public has begun, and thus consensual democracy can operate as envisioned by Kwasi Wiredu.

#### 4.3 The Concept of the Political

With the ground set for consensual democracy within  $N_4$ , another crucial matter from my viewpoint to look into is the conception of political association and its role within the consensual schema. Matolino (2018, pp. 149–157) raises concerns that the overall commitment to political associations distinct from political parties is not clear. He opines that the distinction Wiredu gives for political associations and political parties, with the latter seeking sectional appropriation of power and the former abhorred to that, as not a deep enough ground. He goes on to say this distinction is merely a practical one rather than some deeply metaphysical distinction; therefore, conceptually, party<sub>1</sub> and party<sub>3</sub> are the same. From Matolino's point of view, I am inclined to see that the available distinction between political associations and political parties is not substantive enough. Also, claims that political parties and associations engage within the different political systems do not seem, *prima facie*, a good enough explanation. Thus, I proceed in the following few pages to add substantively to Wiredu's distinction.

Political parties and political associations serve as vehicles through which ordinary people voice their concerns. In other words, they both serve as mouthpieces of the people. However, the adjective 'political' added to the term 'party' or 'association' connotes a relation to government or politics. What then is the relationship between political associations and politics within consensual democracy? What gives rise to politicking within the consensual schema? In other words, what is the concept of *the political* in consensual democracy?

Politics within a body polity is engaged due to myriad interests and the search for remedies for these various interests. People come together to form coalitions or groups if their interests align so as to voice these interests in one uncompromising way. In a liberal democracy, political actors are served by being a part of a political party. Wiredu's consensual democracy provides political associations as an alternative. However, the differences in political actions and motives among parties that necessitate their formation against each other are similar to what necessitates political associations. This political difference or distinction in motives and actions is what Carl Schmitt (2007) calls *the political*. For Schmitt, the political is that very distinction that makes one group different from the other. According to Schmitt, the only way to be acutely aware of this distinction is if political actors and their motives are viewed through a 'friend and enemy' prism (Schmitt, 2007, p. 26). The '*friend-enemy*' paradigm assists the various groupings to know, as it were, where the other coalition is coming from, why their interests differ and what they truly seek from the government (Roskamm, 2015).

The enemy is to be understood as something existentially different to the *other*. Schmitt writes;

“The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with

him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party” (Schmitt, 2007, p. 27).

What Schmitt articulates here is the fact that the political enemy is the *other* in relation to a political group. This difference that both groups inhabit from the viewpoint of each group does not signify grave animosity such that it leads to physical violence only. It is a difference that signifies a departure of sorts which may be ideological or something else. However, beneath this difference, the possibility of conflict exists, and the conflict is ever-present from the day-to-day political interactions among groups. Yet, what is more, pressing is that each group defines which group is antithetical to themselves. This distinction cannot be made by some other entity, neutral or otherwise. The gravity of not being able as a group to make such a 'friend-enemy' distinction is expressed in Schmitt's submission below;

“...as long as a people exists in the political sphere, this people must, even if only in the most extreme case—and whether this point has been reached has to be decided by it—determine by itself the distinction of friend and enemy. Therein resides the essence of its political existence. When it no longer possesses the capacity or the will to make this distinction, it ceases to exist politically. If it permits this decision to be made by another, then it is no longer a politically free people and is absorbed into another political system” (Schmitt, 2007, p. 49).

Schmitt insinuates that any lack of politically defining the 'friend and enemy' leads to political annihilation from the above quote. Meaning the group ceases to be autonomous and free to determine what their political project will be. Thus, in the political sphere, the independence to articulate the 'friend-enemy' distinction is paramount.

But where does *the political* come from? Schmitt holds that the political originates from the numerous human endeavours (Schmitt, 2007, p. 38). Thus, it can emerge from social

relations: moral, ethnic, religious, economic and/or other (Mouffe, 1995, p. 262). So, every religious, ethnic or other kind of social relation can be transformed into a political one insofar as it is strong enough to group humans effectively along the lines of friend and enemy. Meaning the interests of human associations could be religious, economic or ethnic and can effect political motives, which must be catered for in a democratic dispensation.

#### **4.4 Ramifications of the Concept of the Political**

Schmitt's conception relies on the most extreme possibility of war among human life to determine the political tensions (Frye, 1966, p. 822). Ultimately, politicking fundamentally for Schmitt is non-rational, implying that what a group finds as rational for group preservation is not universal and hard to determine. So, any endeavour at eliminating differences, i.e., an attempt at the universal for all groups, must, in the end, lead to local genocide of all internal groups. This is the mark of state totalitarianism, and if this elimination of difference exceeds the boundaries of the state and engulfs other states, that becomes regional totalitarianism.

If Schmitt's idea is anything to go by, it suggests that the political and, for that matter, politics has to do with strife among other groupings; thus, there is a dimension of antagonism present in all political projects or endeavours. Simply put, there is an ever-present possibility of an 'us-them' or 'friend-enemy' relation. This carries a dimension of antagonism that fuels the need for political groupings with different interests and ideologies which must 'fight' for political recognition and power (Hountondji, 2016; Richter, 2019; Taylor, 1994).

The concept of the political explains majoritarian democracy's party system and the antagonism that exists among political parties. The 'friend-enemy' distinction is present in the party system, thereby influencing the form of politicking seemingly acceptable in the majoritarian schema. The crucial question now is, what is the concept of the political in the

consensual democratic schema? Does antagonism disappear with consensual democracy's insistence on political associations instead of political parties?

To begin to answer the questions above, one must start by asking how political associations come to be? It appears that political associations emerge from the many human or social relations that exist. And it is this that gives Wiredu's political associations or party<sub>1</sub> their political dimension. As indicated already, the political derives its inclination from numerous social standpoints. But what gives any of these relations, religious or economics or other, their vitality is their ability to pull together people who share converging interests that motivate them into a coalition (Schmitt, 2007, p. 37). If this is the case for political associations, then their formation is no different from political parties. However, we are reminded of Wiredu's insistence that political associations are not interested in the sectional appropriation of power (Wiredu, 2001, p. 231). Yet, if we take Wiredu's stance to be legitimate, it does not negate the creation of an *us-them* dichotomy that comes about from forming a political association or by identifying with a political association. Hence, from Schmitt's point of view, a dimension of antagonism is present. Any creation of identity is relational and, by virtue, affirms a distinct *difference* in relation to an *other* (Derrida, 1992). Hence, understanding this relation to the *other* explains why the dimension of antagonism exists. Suppose this antagonism is present and political associations define themselves in exclusionary terms, i.e., existentially different in relation to the *other*. How then is antagonism dealt with and sectional appropriation of power curbed?

It must be noted that denying the presence of antagonism does not in any way make this dimension disappear from political life in the body polity. On the contrary, Chantal Mouffe iterates that refusing to come to terms with the ineradicable character of antagonism in *the political* "...only leads to impotence in recognising its different manifestations and in dealing

with them [appropriately]” (Mouffe, 1995, p. 263). The political is thus present in the formation of political associations since an *us-them* relationship is established against other political associations motivated by radical differences in interests, be it religious, ethnic or other. The task for any democratic project then would be to formulate, establish and ensemble practices and discourses that will adequately manage human coexistence given that eclectic interests are potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of *the political*, a sentiment Eze (1997a) held.

Liberal democracy and, for that matter, majoritarian democracy tries to contain the dimension of the political by allowing the creation of political parties. These political parties try to maximise the interests of their members in the political sphere. Political parties view their role in an instrumentalist manner in order to get the maximum satisfaction possible. With rules of engagement stipulated, liberal democracy (majoritarian democracy) holds the view that all views are legitimate and need to be aired out, and in the long run, the electorate decides which interests as at the moment should be pursued (Connolly, 1991, pp. 64–70). Liberal democracy relies on concepts of universalism and rationalism as the basis of democratic ideals (Habermas, 1998b, p. 189, 1998a, pp. 50–60; Mouffe, 1995, p. 259). These concepts are anchored on metaphysical monism that relies on the negation of pluralism, i.e., the other (Okoro, 2011, p. 40). Thus, the concepts play out in the concrete world in forms such as the electoral rules of engagement, trusting in the rationality of people to uphold these rules whether they win or lose. This goes back to negate the foundational assertions that all views are legitimate and must be aired because in the long run, only one particular view is upheld all the same, and those on the other end of the fence are left to lick their wounds. In effect, for liberal democracy, a rational agreement on the principles of winning or losing should be sufficient to manage the pluralism of modern societies.

But this manner of managing plurality and multiplicity in society does not consider the level of marginalisation that it leaves in its stead. By pretending that the rules of engagement once agreed should be enough, it fails to subsequently deal effectively with the dimension of the political that could be disruptive, i.e., the backlash from the minority in the long run. The task, if taken seriously, is to envisage a way to defuse the tendencies of potential antagonism ever-present in human relations. The liberal/majoritarian model instead exacerbates the dimension of antagonism because, more often than not, it creates dissatisfied minorities and institutionalises the continual marginalisation of people. If left to fester, it erupts into civil unrest as has been the case in postcolonial Africa (Wiredu, 1997, p. 310, 2001, p. 230, 2012, p. 1055) and in the West; the rise of populist politics (Mouffe, 1995, p. 265).

There is, thus, a need for a kind of democratic project that deals with but not wishes away the presence of the political. Does democracy by consensus do that? The foundational principles of consensual democracy are communitarian in orientation; its ethic and cultural standpoint is tilted towards the community rather than the individual. Whereas liberal democracy (majoritarianism) is invested in the individual, her interests and their (the interests) maximisation, consensual democracy is interested in the community, their interests and the community's interest's maximisation while meeting the interests of the individual synchronously. Hence, consensual democracy is collectivist in orientation. It is my position that consensual democracy grasps the dimension of antagonism present in human social relations based on its foundational principle—communalism or communitarianism.

We are by now aware that consensual democracy allows for pluralism through political associations. The creation of any political association is an affirmation of *difference* between itself and an *other*. However, what is unique about political associations are that they are not

rigid so as to restrict members who may also identify with other associations based on where their interests intersect. This is so because, in the African communitarian viewpoint, identities are sort of a constituting process—a process that is realised as one of permanent hybridisation and nomadization. These moments of permanent hybridisation and nomadization are made apparent with reference to the concept of personhood in Akan cosmology, where one *becomes* a person, signifying a continuous progression to personhood (Gyekye, 1987; Wingo, 2006; Wiredu, 1996). This progression maps out the African idea of degrees of personhood. Here it reveals the many identity costumes that one may inhabit over a lifetime at any given time, environment, social relation etc. So, in relation to personhood, a father is one who is responsible to his children; he (the father) can, in turn, be part of the leaders of the *Asafo* (warrior group) based on his bravery towards the community in times of war. So, at different times, environment or social relation, the human possesses identities signalling their move towards achieving or attaining personhood.

To extrapolate this in terms of identities in the modern sense, one could be a trader but also a mother and a women's fellowship leader. These different costumes that she inhabits may determine her political associations in relation to herself and others. She could be in a market traders association, a widow's association, and a Muslim women's coalition association. All these associations differ in their interests; thus, in a Schmittian sense, a dimension of antagonism is wrought by their very existence. This tension, though in existence, is domesticated or defused by the different relational standpoints that the individual inhabits in the political sphere. Unlike in political parties where one is simply a Democrat or Republican and nothing in between, thereby raising the stakes in the political sphere, political associations diffuse this tension and proclivity to hostility by acknowledging the nomadic manner of human identities and interests.

A possible pushback to my assertion above may be that being in a political party such as Democrat or Republican does not entirely negate the possibility for said party members to be members of the associations mentioned. That is, one can be Republican and be part of the Muslim women's coalition, for example. I do not disagree with this; however, such an argument runs the risk of false equivalence or fallacy of inconsistency. The argument is that in consensual democracy, identities are easily democratised such that one can fit into different political associations. Yet the majoritarian scheme, one exclusively becomes a member of one political party. Clearly, associations and political parties within the majoritarian schema are mutually exclusive. Therefore, associations within the majoritarian schema are not the same as parties.

Thus, one can be part of a party and be part of an association but never a part of another party. For example, one cannot be part of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and be a member of the Convention People's Party contemporaneously. Yet, being a member of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) does not prevent one from being a member of the Muslim women's coalition. To be consistent, the argument I put forward renders that if one is a political party member, they are restricted from associating with any other political party. This, I argue, does not occur in consensual democracy, with political associations forming the main fulcrum of political activities.

Hence, what occurs in consensual democracy through political associations is a transformation of the dimension of *the political* from antagonism into agonism. Hence, unlike majoritarian democracy that operates under a politics of antagonism, consensual democracy upon democratising identities and embracing pluralism operates a politics of agonism. By accepting that conflicts are bound to occur in the political arena, consensual democracy allows for pluralism with conflicting interests. Still, it connects political actors in a milieu of communal

ethics that breed *agonistic pluralism* rather than an *antagonistic pluralism* which must almost certainly lead to the destruction of the opponent. In *agonistic pluralism*, there is a struggle but a struggle nonetheless where different "...demands can find political expression" (Dreyer Hansen & Sonnichsen, 2014). Within this milieu, the starting point for politics is dissensus, yet upon deliberation, decisions agreed upon are not made to eviscerate an opponent but to enhance the good of all. So, disagreements are not side-stepped and are not viewed as obstructionist; rather, they are seen as something to contend with, ponder on and reconcile with, in the end.

This sentiment is underscored by Ani's (2014a, pp. 317–318) example from Wesolowska's case study on three groups of parents brought together to discuss the introduction of sex education to their wards. With the first two groups, irreconcilable differences lead to no consensus in one group and partial consensus in the other group. The third group, however, got a complete consensus. This group is of interest to me because, like the first two groups, they consisted of liberals and Catholics, suggesting a difference in values. Yet, the third group overcame their differences because they were able to find commonality (Ani, 2014a, p. 318).

Ani spells it out;

"The third (consensual) group struck a note of commonality among them (the commonality that they were all women and uniformly concerned about their daughters' futures). From this common position, they discussed their value differences, which seemed to be nevertheless overridden by the compelling force of the common ground they had found. Thus, they struck a common agreement about the moral fates of their daughters at a certain very crucial moment in a girl's development, her moment of pubescence, and this led to the general agreement that sex education should begin very early before this moment" (Ani, 2014a, p. 318).

Now the common grounds they found are grounded on their identity as mothers whose interests lie in protecting their daughters from predators. The participants' identities as catholic or liberal signified the dimension of *the political* during deliberation. The presence of the political, it

would seem, was not managed in the first two groups but more so in the group where no agreement whatsoever was reached. But in the third group, where consensus reigned, they managed to diffuse the dimension of antagonism present in their values that accompanied their identities as catholic or liberal by also realising that they embodied other than being just catholic or liberal another identity; motherhood. It was easy now to not view each other from a 'friend and enemy' prism by recognising this identity. Hence, we see a transformation from antagonism to agonism. An epiphany dawned on them, understanding that they had not only conflicting values and reasons but also shared maternal instincts that were well-intentioned for their children. This epiphany makes them take into serious consideration during deliberations each other's views and make practical concessions until consensus was reached. This is evidenced in Ani's exposition on their coming to consensus when he notes;

“The common ground for the third group was apparently that a girl should become too knowledgeable by her pubescence to fall prey to sexual predators, and differing values were resolved on the platform of this common ground. To be sure, participants in the ‘consensual’ group expressed their differing value concerns, but Wesolowska noted that these were presented and accepted with respect and reciprocity (p. 673), which eventually paved the way for the collision between different values to be defeated by common concern. Importantly, many participants had to give up (or witnessed a transformation of) fragments of their respective values and beliefs, due to important points made by other participants serving the located common identity (womanhood) and common interest (protecting their daughters’ wellbeing)” (Ani, 2014b, p. 318).

My point is that consensus was possible, albeit difficult when identities were allowed to be democratised and truly pluralised. When rigid relational points in social and human relations were not pre-established, and people were not boxed up into just liberal-conservative (catholic), left-right, or capitalist-marxist; they could inhabit other varying degrees of identities and, in doing so, found degrees of commonalities. Therefore, even though their inhabiting of different

identities (catholic/liberal) created an *otherness* in relation to themselves, the willingness to possess other identities contemporaneously opened common identities that might otherwise be closed off.

And this opening of identities or democratisation of identities is made possible in consensual democracy through political associations. Wiredu states elsewhere that political associations can be thought of like civil society organisations that already abound in the political sphere in postcolonial Africa (Wiredu, 2012, p. 1065). Thus, signifying his desires for the plurality of political associations and embracing pluralism allows for the expression of conflictual interests and values. In turn, it allows for the possibility of concessions when it comes to choosing between real alternatives. Wiredu's formulation contends with the political and eventually reduces the emergence of various forms of populism articulated around ethnic, religious or other issues.

#### **4.5 Political Association and the Emergent Social Structures**

In the second chapter, I demonstrated how the emergent social structure came to be through the machinations of colonialism. In the third chapter, I argued that the emergent social structures are accommodated in the consensual schema since they work within the primordial public. And upon the end of formal colonialism and the adoption of majoritarianism as a viable means of politicking, many elites used these emergent social structures in instrumentalist ways to gain power, stoking fear and maximising animosity amongst the different ethnic groups.

In the previous section, we saw how crucial political associations are for politics in consensual democracy. Nonetheless, it was established that political associations could be formed on a wide range of human and social relations; thus, ethnicity qualifies since ethnicity's very existence automatically defines itself in exclusionary terms. Moreover, ethnicity comes with

contestation about the boundary of the group. Here ethnicity satisfies the 'friend-enemy' notion in Schmitt's concept of the political and, by so doing, attain a political undertone.

So, in my view, emergent social structures can be a legitimate basis to fashion political associations. But, these political associations, i.e., those based on ethnicities, as it were, are not the only kind; bear in mind that other associations are not borne from the emergent social structures. And members in an emergent social structure political association may also be members of other political associations. But, as I laid out, this uniqueness in the consensual schema interrupts the dimension of antagonism that is present in the formation of identities via political associations. This is because, unlike in majoritarianism, where if one were, say, Dagomba, politics were articulated on this axle to gain governmental power against, say, Akans, with consensual democracy, politicians are unable to manipulate this primordial tie for political gain. This is underscored by the fact that political culture is not one enthused with power-grabbing. Thus, there is a considerable appreciation for the complexities of the human experience and the social relations that all are bounded by. Hence, one can be a member of the 'Dagomba people's association' at the same time a member of the 'small scale farmer's association', which houses other members from, say the 'Akan political association'.

One possible objection to this would be to suggest that even in majoritarianism, political parties are made up of people from different primordial ties (emergent social structures). Therefore, what I claim to be acceptable in consensus democracy is inherent in majoritarianism. People already take up many different identity spaces and navigate that in their political life.

It is undeniable that people who make up political parties are from diverse arrays of life, and this is a cherished practice in the majoritarian scheme. I will add, however, that this is not the same as what I pose. The point here is that with consensual democracy, there is a significant

place for the permanent hybridisation and nomadization of identities. This means that it is alright to affirm and acknowledge the different relational points with reference to the identity that an individual finds herself. Thus, there is no subordination and suppression of identity for another identity to take hold. In the majoritarian schema, joining a political party (identity) requires subordination of other relational identities. One is in service to the party, its interests and its values. Other identities that an individual inhabits are only relevant if they serve the higher identity, i.e., the political party. For example, if it is expedient to take a particular religious bend for the sake of winning, then these identities are capitalised upon. But their use is only instrumentalist insofar as it will get them to gain political or governmental power. It is for this reason why negative identity politics is rampant in the majoritarian schema. Other identities are realised in the political sphere only when it is expedient.

Unlike the majoritarian schema, the consensual democratic schema allows for the thorough expression of all these relational identities and provides the opportunities for the establishment of political associations for these identities. There is no reason for the manipulation of identities through political associations because the political sphere encourages the independent expression of all identities by allowing a myriad of associations, but more importantly, the political sphere is intolerant to the sectional appropriation of power. The lack of political associations for the many democratic identities may lead to dissatisfaction with the political system and lead to populism. Also, there is respect for the plurality of associations because of the communal nature and the ethics of personhood that consensual democracy imbibes.

A follow-up objection that can be laid against this idea could be that; there will be too many political associations and therefore, the political sphere will find it difficult to contain

them. First, I think any form of restriction on the creation of political associations based on the fear that there may be too many political associations is a remnant of a totalitarian expansionist ideology. Consensual democracy upholds pluralism, and thus it is interested in democratising political power and, for that matter, the political sphere rather than restricting the people from partaking in power.

Second, it would be naïve to think that political associations will pop up indiscriminately. To go back to a concept at the heart of this chapter, political associations are viable only insofar as *the political* is present in its construction. To satisfy the conditions for the creation of political associations, a people must be united and ready to defend their existence, independence and freedom and must be emanating from the myriad human endeavours such as religious, economic, ethnic etc. (Schmitt, 2007, pp. 38 & 46). This political outlook precedes questions bordering on the nature of their organisation and their viability in the political sphere (Schmitt, 2007, pp. 46–49). Suppose the political association can derive its presence from the myriad human and social relations or endeavours, and there are people ready to fight for the association's existence. In that case, the dimension of the political is present. The presence of the political suggests the existence of antagonism against a clearly defined adversary. With the dimension of the political established, then this political association functions in the *agnostic pluralism* associated with consensual democracy's political practice. Thus, if a clear definition of a group and an 'enemy' is absent, political associations cease to exist.

#### **4.6 The Role of Ideology in Consensual Democracy**

In the second chapter, ideology played a significant role in the days leading up to independence and the after independence. I pointed out how the ideologies of legitimation of the African bourgeois impacted the swift rise of African nationalism and the calls for African

independence across the continent and how the porosity of these ideologies impacted the newly minted African nation-states. This by far reveals that ideology is important and necessary for any democratic dispensation since the goal of democracy, in the long run, is to meet the needs of the people that inhabit the nation-state.

It is indisputable that human societies comprised of both conscious and rational beings require development—development underpinned by a set of goals. And that these goals, if set must reflect and be part of the values of that society (Gyekye, 1988, p. 19). This very criterion is what the African bourgeois fell short of. The critical question that needs asking is, what is ideology? Okoro succinctly defines ideology as: “...the practical and pragmatic way by which the entire principles of philosophy are made relevant to the task of .... development” (Okoro, 2011, p. 38). Okoro goes on, touching on Gyekye’s point on the need for ideology reflecting the values of a society, by writing; “[i]t [ideology] usually encompass the entire range of systems of ideas and theories of beliefs present in an era or in a society” (Okoro, 2011, p. 38).

From the above, it is quite clear that the possibility of a society is anchored in the core values of its members, which grounds their continual existence, stability and smooth functioning. Hence, ideology is to be harnessed and applied as a 'science of ideas' to the socio-political conditions of a society for the continuous improvement of its members. In short, the viability of any society depends on a clearly defined set of values which is channelled and applied in the concrete and real-world (Gyekye, 1988, p. 22). Thus, the purpose of ideology is to make explicit the values of the society and bring to fruition a society’s vision of the *good*. But this can come about only if ideology;

“...clearly spell[s] out a consistent and comprehensive theory about society, man, mind, cognition... which serve as anchor programmes that are economic, political, social, educational, cultural, legal and so on” (Okoro, 2011, p. 38).

And by so doing, this would lead ideology to;

“.... identify the problems confronting a particular society and proffer solutions; ... identify the resources of the state, human and material, and what the state lacks; ... specify how a state can go about to surmount her economic limitations and at the same time proceed on the effective management of her resources for the good of all...” (Okoro, 2011, p. 38).

Consensual democracy, as already argued, operates well within the primordial public, which reflects the African communalistic worldview. Thus, it provides a suitable condition for developing ideologies inflected by African values that can affect the material reality of indigenous people. Unlike the African bourgeois of the independence era who went abroad to shop for ideologies (Gyekye, 1988, pp. 23–24; Okoro, 2011, p. 40), that which consensual democracy incurs on African intellectuals and intelligentsia is an invitation to reflect and compile ideas that are African. This does not mean the rubbishing of foreign ideas; rather, this is an invitation to take up ideas where ever they may be from and critically analyse and adapt for application within the African communalist ethos. This also implies that in trying to dig up and unearth gems from African tradition, we do not enter into the realms of the absurd where we ascribe any downright silliness to African tradition like African nationalists did on the political stage to subvert political oppositions thereby debasing the word ‘African’ (Ohene, 2021).

The mistake of past African nationalists was the wholesale adoption of foreign ideologies and, even in certain circumstances, drawing similarities that never existed between certain indigenous ideas and foreign ones. An example is a false equivalence that was drawn between African communalism and western socialism (Táíwò, 2004, pp. 254–255). There were many courted efforts to show that socialism was the modern transfiguration of communalism. Thus, in

the new Africa entering the modern space, socialism was its birthright (Nkrumah, 1964, pp. 56–70). This simplistic overview did not take seriously the nuances that existed in many communalist communities. For as Molema put it;

“[n]o race or society is really entirely communistic [i.e., communal], and so we find that even among the Bantu, private property—such as cattle—existed side by side with communal property, such as land” (Molema, 1920, p. 115).

Amplified in this quote is the complementary manner in which communal communities like those in Africa allowed for private enterprising while forging a communal enterprise serving remarkably as safety nets for all. Certainly, the socio-economic relationship dominant in traditional Africa was one of mutuality and pluralism (Okoro, 2011, p. 19). But what may have been the utmost mistake by the emergent African nationalists (bourgeois) was the failure to see communalism as a 'socio-ethical' doctrine, unlike socialism that was purely an economic doctrine (Gyekye, 1988, p. 25). If this was properly diagnosed, it would have been clear from the very start that African traditions gave credence to capitalism and socialism; they were not mutually exclusive. And, thus, the task ahead was to determine the mean between these extreme doctrines, which is African spirituality because "[e]nsconced in the African spirituality [i.e., the mean between capitalism and socialism] is the temperament of pluralism that enabled communalistic existence” (Okoro, 2011, p. 42).

It is my take that as African nation-states adopt consensual democracy, this will go hand in hand with well-crafted and inspired ideologies that pertain uniquely to the African experience. Okoro suggests that the emblem of every traditional African socio-politico-economic structure reflects;

“(i) Division of labour and sharing for enshrining discipline, responsibility and commitment;

- (ii) Communalistic individualism which is the basis of humanistic capitalism; and
- (iii) Spirituality that forms the anchor of corporate socialistic existence” (Okoro, 2011, p. 42).

This tripological structure and its concerted effort at embracing pluralism must inform the actors within the consensual democratic ethos in formulating an ideology that will steer clear from metaphysical monism. Thus, the role of ideology will inevitably stir up a kind of national politics guided by cultural humanism (Mba, 2018), which is communalism by extension. This will help shore up any ambition that is against this national programmatic.

#### **4.7 Consensual Democracy as a Panacea to Identity Politics**

So far, we have seen the role ideology will play in consensual democracy. However, the big question is, given all that has been said, can consensual democracy reduce the negative strands of identity politics? I think, by virtue of the fact that they subvert the dimension of antagonism into agonism, the use of political association makes consensual democracy well suited to take on negative identity politics and transform them. In consensus, power is not consolidated in one person or group, but rather, power is dispersed. This is due to the communal socio-ethical ethos on which consensual democracy grounds itself. Hence, political associations that serve as the vehicle for the people's expression do not compete for power, but they cooperate with one another for the realisation of the *good* of society.

By forming political associations, *the political* is present; however, because consensual democracy allows for the multiplicity of identities to be represented insofar as there are people willing to define said group identity, true pluralism is realised with relational identities established among different political associations. Given this, when one is in political association A, there is no rule preventing such person from joining into political association B, C or D insofar as there is a shared identity regarding the individual and the political associations.

Hence, the strict competitiveness that is evidenced in majoritarian democracy's political parties is defused. Issues on the table can be looked at from different perspectives with no recourse to a 'do or die' syndrome. But would this not amount to a conflict of interests, one may ask since the same people get to sit in different political associations? The task of consensual democracy is to in one way streamline interests upon deliberation and rational dialogue to find the appropriate thing to do, i.e., what is to be done. Since one individual can occupy many different relational identities and, for that matter, be part of different political associations pertaining to those relations, there is a unique atmosphere that increases the chances of consensus, as exemplified with Ani's (2014a, p. 318) example of Wesolowska's third group where womanhood opened the door for consensus. Also, taking seriously the backdrop on which consensual democracy is hinged, should be at the forefront of all discussion. And this backdrop is the fact that in this milieu, politics is not a zero-sum game. Therefore, what may seem as something that may cause a conflict of interest may very well help as a dialogue starter about the intersectionality of interests and go on to help prune interests further and facilitate consensus.

In my formulation of consensual democracy, I hold that ethnicities also serve as a starting point for formulating political associations. Since they function as a way of demarcating, excluding and defining a group, they hold currency in people mobilisation, thus, creating an 'us-them' dichotomy relevant to the conception of *the political*. If defining oneself involves the exclusion of others, then by Schmitt's standard it contains the dimension of antagonism. But as already indicated, consensual democracy adopts agonism rather than antagonism. In this vein, ethnic political associations are not a threat to the political ecosystem within the consensual democratic schema.

Ethnicities emerged out of a need to subvert the colonial order and provide members with a sense of belonging and comradery. Thus, its emergence was political, and attempts at depoliticising ethnicities by de-ethnicising members may be futile and by extension, naïve. If African values give fuel to consensual democracy, then ethnic values come from the same place and thus will operate under the same socio-ethical lens of communalism and cooperativeness (Afolayan, 2013, pp. 55–56). Claude Ake sounds the alarm on the mistaken idea that ethnicity is problematic. He writes;

“[o]ur treatment of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness reflects this tendency to problematise the people and their culture, an error that continues to push Africa deeper into confusion” (Ake, 1993, p. 5).

“[i]t is not clear that ethnicity by itself generates conflict or that it is inherently threatening. One may prefer one's kinsfolk or one's own community without being antagonistic to others. It is odd that those who consider ethnicity as a manipulable instrument are also the ones who regard it as a problem. If ethnicity is manufactured at will and manipulated to serve any number of selfish purposes, then it is only an 'object', the case for calling it a cause of the numerous problems regularly attributed to it would not be sustainable. Conflicts arising from the construction of ethnicity to conceal exploitation by building solidarity across class lines, conflicts arising from appeal to ethnic support in the face of vanishing political legitimacy and from the manipulation of ethnicity to divide colonised people, are not ethnic problems but problems of a particular political dynamics which just happens to be pinned on ethnicity. By the same token, solutions to these problems must address the political dynamics in question, not ethnicity” (Ake, 1993, p. 4).

Thus, political associations formed on an ethnic basis under consensual democracy are not destabilising but rather an acknowledgement of injustices that have been meted out to ethnicities either institutionally or legally (Hagg & Kagwanja, 2007, p. 26). The respect for cultural diversity and the inclusive democratic processes that inhere in consensual democracy will

mitigate the antagonism among ethnicities, thereby addressing negative identity politics in the political sphere.

How will this be forged, given that there are other political associations not based on ethnicity? Are these other political associations competing with ethnic political associations? I hold that the African nation-states must break themselves into ethnic federations for ethnic political associations to function. The ethnic federations are represented in the political sphere by political associations whose identities stem from ethnicity. These ethnic political associations are for the purposes of national-level politics only. This means that in every ethnic federation, many political associations are allowed to exist—they petition and hold deliberations at the federation level for their needs and what is to be done. Should what the political associations seek is beyond the bounded capacity of a given ethnic federation, then they are taken up by the representatives of the ethnic federations i.e., the ethnic political association to be presented at the national level. The politics at the national level would concentrate on logistics and empirical matters concerning the ethnic federations. Here I am talking about things like budgets for roads, schools and other logistico-empirical concerns. Upon deliberation on the allocation of national resources to the various federations, it is the task of the several political associations within specific federations to achieve the kind of society *good* that fit their cultural, metaphysical and epistemological values.

One may suggest that the break into ethnic federation subverts Gyekye's N<sub>4</sub> society or meta-national nation-state. We are reminded that Gyekye's prescription revolves on cultural identity and not ethnic identity thus the thrust of his conception relies on our shared humanity instead of particular ethnic background. I suppose my critics will brand the division of the

nation-state into ethnic federations as contradictory to  $N_4$ . I seek to clarify this confusion in the subsequent paragraph.

The break in to ethnic federations is a practical decision based on the fact the in  $N_4$  decentralisation of power is celebrated. In order not to hold power at the centre which in turn can exclude ordinary citizens from the corridors of power, the nation-state must be divided up into feasible sections where the material realities of the people can adequately be met. This breakdown into ethnic federation in my opinion is the most feasible outcome. However, what of the worries about ethnic particularist interests taking centre if we go by this division.

First, the ethnic federation to my mind and as argued for, contain political associations that are welcoming to all people within that particular ethnic federation. Hence, it is my argument that the ethnic federations operate in  $N_4$  fashion. Every ethnic federation have cultural identities that instil common values easily tapped into by all citizens within the federation. Hence, the moral worth of the people as against their affinity to ethnicity is what binds all political operations within the federation. This is an important point because there are many people who may migrate to different federations that are not necessarily where they were born or grew up. What this means is that one does not have to be from or have some 'blood and soil' connection to be a part of an ethnic federation.

Second, the general atmosphere for cultural identity and a fixation on building a shared-culture elevates the ethnic federation into  $N_4$  society. This denotes that in ethnic federation assumes the spirit of Gyekye's meta-nationality ( $N_4$ ). Thus, particular ethnic federations can be denoted as  $N_4 = \sum v_1 + v_2 + v_3 + v_4 \dots + v_n$ . What then becomes of the nation-state itself? The nation-state that houses all the ethnic federations for the purposes of differentiation can be represented as  $N_5$ . The equation thus will be represented as  $N_5 = \sum n_{4a} + n_{4b} + n_{4c} + n_{4d} \dots n_{4n}$ . The

use of 'n' in the lower case in the equation symbolises the idea that  $N_4$  particularities are deemphasised in  $N_5$  however the practicalities of having the federation is maintained.

First, my critics may maintain that the deemphasis on ethnic particularities should naturally lead also to the abrogation of the ethnic federation. Second, the question of where allegiance is owed may come up if ethnic federation takes centre in the nation-state. I will tackle the second critic, which will invertedly answer the first as well. On the issue of where allegiance can be owed in my prescribed  $N_5$  nation-state broken down into ethnic federations, it should be noted that the break down into ethnic federations allows for the decentralisation of political power.

In  $N_5$ , allegiance is to the state; however, the nation-state comprises individuals from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds. The acknowledgement of this fact by the state with its adoption of the communitarian outlook of persons within its jurisdiction causes no conflict at all. The ethnic federation becomes a microcosm of the universal nation-state ( $N_5$ ) itself. The perspective within the ethnic federation would be one of communitarianism, similar to the universal  $N_5$  (nation-state). It should be remembered that, as stated earlier, the nation-state will deal with logistico-empirical concerns such as budget allocation for schools, roads and the like. The ethnic federations, i.e.,  $n4a$ ,  $n4b$ ,  $n4c$ ..., deal with what is *good* from the viewpoint of their cultural, metaphysical and epistemological values. This is not a push for allegiance to the ethnic federation but a systematic acknowledgement of the shared values of all within the nation-state and the divergent values that some peoples with affinity to specific ethno-cultural backgrounds may deem as proper ways of dealing with their material realities.

On the first critique, the deemphasis on ethnic particularities is not analogous to de-ethnicising the people. The cultural imports of the people may very well be accepted and, to

some extent, appreciated, for that is what makes them who they are. The colonial nation-state tried to de-ethnicise indigenous people. Hence the establishment of the ethnic federation is a revolt against an imperial understanding of modernity and development. The deemphasis of ethnic particularities is geared towards the negative and often ill understanding of ethnicity as one being superior to another. Within the consensual schema, ethnicity is seen as an extension of the human person but not the ultimate. The cultural, epistemological and metaphysical foundations that are espoused among ethno-cultural groupings are one of brotherliness and community. This positive rendition of community and brotherliness is appropriate for establishing the ethnic federation because development cannot be achieved in a vacuum since culture plays such a role. Thus, in the consensual democratic schema, the deemphasis of ethnic particularities relates to the pruning of negative tentacles associated with ethno-cultural politicking but embracing the cultural and metaphysical values for development.

In closing, I think should society and politics be ordered in the manner that I have argued for in this section under consensual democracy; it will mitigate all (or at least most) tendencies toward the negative strand of identity politics that has engulfed the African continent and imprisoned almost all African nation-states.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

The problems of identity politics are exacerbated by the continual insistence on working within majoritarianism to reduce its incursion. This has been futile not because people are not interested in curbing it but because the foundational principles of majoritarianism are antagonistic, adversarial and exclusionary. This chapter explored nationhood from Gyekye's perspective and argued that his meta-national nation-state (N<sub>4</sub>) is congruent with the communal

position embedded across all African cultural values. It was established that consensual democracy's operations are secured when the  $N_4$  adapts as its foundational standpoint, cultural humanism.

Also, I examined Carl Schmitt's concept of the political vis a vis consensual democracy. I argued that the ever-presence of antagonism that accompanies the political is subverted within consensual democratic ethos, basically because Wiredu's conception is anchored on communalism—a socio-ethical value—that embraces the democratisation of identity and the dispersion of power among the people.

Furthermore, Wiredu's political associations were shown to be less rigid compared to majoritarianism's political parties. Hence, people can stay members of different political associations insofar as the associations reflect their interest or whatever they identify as. This helps practically to diffuse the dimension of antagonism present in any formation of identity or political association and lead to agonism—the differences in interests are acknowledged impressing on us that the starting place of rational dialogue is dissensus.

Additionally, ideology and its role in consensual democracy were highlighted with significance given the need to craft the right kind or sort of ideology embedded in the rich reservoirs of African cultures for practical use. This distilling of metaphysical, epistemological and cultural ideas must be focused on both the people's spiritual and material needs. However, consensual democracy provides a great atmosphere for the articulation of African ideologies which embraces cultural humanism.

The embrace of cultural humanism is shown by the allowance of the emergent social structure like ethnicity to be one of the axis on which political association can be formed.

However, I argued that the same values that underpin consensual democracy are the same that underpins ethnicity. Thus, if that is the case, there is no need for the negative strands of identity to erupt, given that communalism runs through both.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Conclusion: Consensual Democracy and Beyond

#### 5.0 Summary

The preoccupation of this thesis was to formulate a sustainable way that the negative aspects that come with identity politics can be foiled in postcolonial African nation-states. The malaise of negative identity politics was diagnosed as emanating from the type of democracy that has enthralled the consciousness of African people and, by consequence, besieged the manner of politics in postcolonial Africa. This kind of democracy is (liberal) majoritarian democracy. To understand how (liberal) majoritarian democracy came to be mistakenly and uncritically construed as bone fide democracy in African nation-states, I traced this historically to the advent of colonialism. Thus, the problems of identity politics were a problem of colonial structures and their institutional decay in contemporary Africa.

In the first chapter, I lay bare about identity and identity politics and contextualised this investigation as one emanating from the African experience. We saw that the reasons behind the manifestation of identity on the continent were based on the ascriptive nature of African cultures, the colonial legacy, the communal nature of Africa, socio-economic inequalities, and bad leadership. Given these reasons behind the formation of identity in Africa, it became clear that the favoured political system—majoritarian democracy—and its insistence on party competition as the only appropriate avenue to exercise power exacerbated the politics of identity. Majoritarianism being a colonial importation dovetailed with the elites sub-national politicking, threw most postcolonial nation-states into political disarray while concentrating power in the hands of elites who controlled the majority of the masses through divisive rhetoric. Thus, pointing squarely to the challenges of identity politics on the continent.

The implication of the first chapter is essentially the effects of colonialism on the continent of Africa. Thus, the second chapter took an historico-philosophical exegesis on colonialism and its derivatives. I argued that colonialism was an epoch that ruptured indigenous peoples' ties to their pre-colonial institutions and forced cultural impositions upon indigenous people. These impositions were ways of trying to deculture Africans. Yet, the contradictions of colonialism prevented colonial administrators from allowing indigenous people to embrace modernity. Instead, their goal was to keep African people subservient. Following Peter Ekeh (1983), colonialism brought about three social formations; the transformed indigenous social structures, the migrated social structures and the emergent social structures. I argued that the emergent social structures were indigenous peoples' attempts at modernising, but this form of modernity was curtailed for the logic of domination inherent in colonialism. Ekeh's (1975) remarkable diagnoses of the effect of colonialism on the public sphere resulting in two publics, namely, the civic and primordial public, reinforces the interpretation of alienation felt by indigenous people that colonialism and colonial structures have had on the postcolonial nation-state.

However, the African bourgeois borne from the colonial experience, having studied in Western institutions, were engrossed with self-rule. But they held colonial institutions and ideologies as the right for their respective nation-states; thus, upon independence, they adopted liberal democracy (majoritarianism) as the appropriate tool for politicking within the civic public, immediately alienating most of their countrymen. Unfortunately, since colonial ideologies were maintained, the ethnic question was never dealt with, which led to vicious politicking, a zero-sum game that has ended up behind the problems of identity politics. Showing clearly that politics in the civic public ebbs the participation of indigenous people therefore, the adoption of majoritarianism also meant that some, if not most, ethnicities were perpetual

minorities in the body polity. Thus, demonstrating the link between colonialism, the civic public and identity politics.

I went on in the third chapter to provide Wiredu's critique of majoritarianism and continued with a comparative analysis on his proposed consensual democracy against majoritarian democracy. It was discovered that both concepts, majoritarian and consensual democracy, work under diametrically opposed presuppositions. Majoritarianism's foundational presupposition was built on the atomic individual's concept, which is inapplicable in Africa (Oduor, 2019). Whereas consensual democracy's underlying presupposition is communalistic and thus intersects with the African orientation. This unfamiliar orientation in majoritarianism explains the inability of the concept to take root in Africa because it did not emanate from Africa's culture, nor was it tailored to suit the pre-existing culture. The consequence thus is a bifurcation of the public sphere into the civic and primordial public. The civic public is characterised by everything that is colonial and unfamiliar to indigenes, and the primordial public is characterised by everything that is indigenous and familiar. The ramifications of having these publics interplay in the body polity are the so-called heightened politics of identity characterised by the appetite for the appropriation of what can be gotten for oneself and one's community—the ethnic group (Ake, 1993, p. 7).

Additionally, an introspection into Wiredu's proposed type of democracy was undertaken to underscore its viability in contemporary African political spheres. I argued that Wiredu's consensual democracy is viable if applied within the primordial public. The vast loyalties to primordial ties such as ethnicity in Africa substantiated this. It was further established that the primordial public works under the same fundamentals or foundational presuppositions that

anchors consensual democracy. If this was the case, it followed that the primordial rather than the civic public should be the appropriate plane in which consensual democracy should play out.

In chapter four, I took up the issue of nationhood and argued for a reconfiguration of the postcolonial nation-state divorced from colonial institutions and structure clutches. It turns out that Gyekye's meta-nationality (N<sub>4</sub>) provide a remarkable ground for the adaptation and application of consensual democracy through its insistence on being grounded upon African cultural values like communalism and cultural humanism. This groundbreaking insight into N<sub>4</sub> by Gyekye showed a commitment to Nkrumah's philosophical consciencism and thus a break away from colonial structures and institutions in whatever shape or form.

The matter of how politics would be conducted in this sphere was also addressed. I asserted that Wiredu's political associations were similar to political parties in terms of their formation. It was not enough for Wiredu to contend that political associations were different because they did not try for the sectional appropriation of power. To further establish why political associations do not seek power for its sake, I posited that political associations were not rigid like political parties in terms of membership. Political associations allow people who identified with as many associations to join since each association may be meeting an interest that the very one they occupy might not. I further argued that contrary to the idea that this will lead to a conflict of interest, this instead opens the door for rational dialogue on issues due to the many levels of commonality that may be found and thus increase the possibility for consensus.

What becomes of ethnicity in this reconfiguration that I suggest? In this thesis, I argue that ethnicity forms part of the human relations on which political associations can be formed; therefore, any attempt at stifling any political association based on ethnicity would, in essence, be violating the right to association but, more importantly, be reminiscent of totalitarianism.

Accordingly, ethnicity or ethnic groups are allowed to form associations but with the caveat that the nation-state is divided into ethnic federations. I posit that the ethnic federations are represented by the ethnic political associations responsible for national politicking on matters bordering on logistics and empirical issues like allocation of budgets to the various federations, tax allocations etc. All the other problems that affect specific federations are dealt with in the multiple federations by the political associations within those very federations. In no way do ethnic political associations deliberate on issues accruing within the federation itself. The ethnic political associations, instead, deliberate on issues with other ethnic political associations at the national level based on what has been debated or deliberated by the respective political associations within the respective federations.

I go on to argue that if this becomes the case, i.e., consensual democracy working within the primordial public, political association allowed to be formed on a myriad of human and social relations and ethnicity becoming a site for national deliberation, then the issues of negative identity politics are diffused. In short, if consensual democracy is anchored on communalistic orientations and in African culture and the peoples of Africa are allowed to join and form many a political association as pertaining to their interests, there is a significant possibility that the negatives of identity politics that have bedevilled Africa will be curbed and rendered null.

### **5.1 Contributions to knowledge**

This thesis contributes to knowledge by employing Carl Schmitt's concept of the political to understand the dimension of antagonism that burgeons in every creation of identity (political association) and explains how within the consensual milieu, this dimension of antagonism is truncated and metamorphosed into agonism. The agonism dimension only exists if consensual democracy is worked out within the primordial public. This study adds to the existing literature

on the transformation of nationhood by adopting Gyekye's meta-nationality (N4) and repurposing it as N5 for the thriving of consensual democracy in a decolonised postcolonial African nation-state.

Subsequently, further enquiry can be sought to investigate the nature of power within the consensual schema and also crucial is the question of what roles indigenous languages would play within this schema and the nation-state.

## **5.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

In light of the progression of some of the themes and information that have been interwoven in this study, the following recommendations are offered. First, as argued in this thesis, the adoption of consensual democracy is essential for mitigating the tendencies for negative identity politics. Second, Kwesi Wiredu's model that I advance here in conjunction with the adaptation of Gyekye's meta-nationality opens vistas of inquiry and is consonant with the thoroughgoing argument.

First, philosophers can turn their attention to the roles that indigenous languages can play in the N5 nation-state. Since the nation-state would be made up of ethnic federations, the role of indigenous languages must be factored into the development discourse surrounding the viability of consensual democracy.

Second, philosophers should consider the nature of power within the consensual schema and governance in a modern nation-state that adopts consensus as to its *modus operandi*. This is crucial to providing practical and theoretical clarification to the consensus discourse.

Third, introspection into agonism within the African communitarian and consensual democracy would be significant in helping clarify power, governance and the practicality of conflict

resolution within the consensual schema. This inquiry will go on to improve discourse on identity politics in Africa.

Last, a postmodernist philosophical inquiry into consensual democracy is needed, especially in a vastly evolving Africa caught between the influx/influence of western dichotomies and the reinterpretation and reimagination of Africa's value systems to suit the times. There is the need to study not just humanity as it historically was constituted in Africa but to grapple with humanity and its paradoxical relation to modernity and postmodernity in the African context. There are sites of new problems that may require inter/multidisciplinary collaborations with feminism, queer and ecological discourses.

### 5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the negative aspects of identity politics are strong and alive in the postcolonial African nation-state because of the lack of will and imagination to overthrow the remnants of colonialism and neo-colonialism. The way around this problem is to acknowledge the existence of colonial institutions and to collaborate to effectively channel communal and society energy into reformulating the rules and institutions in favour of African cultural and institutional values. This thesis sought to do that and add to scholarship on envisioning a new Africa that is conflict-free. Consensual democracy, in my opinion, is the way to rescue Africa from oblivion and the abyss of perpetual conflict and political and economic stagnation.



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