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**DISEMPOWERMENT, DEMOCRATIZATION  
AND THE QUEST FOR AN INCLUSIVE POLITICS IN AFRICA**

The article looks for a way of establishing an endogenous humanistic and inclusive democratic order. How can we make democracy more attuned to human dignity and well-being so as to surmount the obstacles of inequity, marginality and institutional dysfunction that plagues the nation state presently? How do manage the flux created by material poverty, economic dependency, high rate of citizen illiteracy, weak political culture, social disorder and instability as well as the stricture of dualistic foreign ideological (communist versus capitalist) control on African democratic experience? The work focuses on the study of those democratic principles that include joint actions, the abandonment of monopoly or domination and the creation of a humane system of values and ways of its representation. The author objects to the existing system in African countries, which does not allow the political power to be accountable for the common good, hinders citizens' access to broader opportunities and social amenities, as well as access to mechanisms for redress and justice. The author believes that foreign strategies impose top-down social engineering and the problem of marginalization.

Key words: inclusive politics, democratic values, marginality, African countries, social justice.

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**Демократизация, Африкадағы инклюзивті саясатқа  
ізденіс және демократизация**

Бұл зерттеу эндогенді гуманистік және жалпыны қамтушы демократиялық тәртіпті орнатудың жолдарын іздестіреді. Қазіргі таңда ұлттық мемлекетті бұзушы теңсіздік, маргиналдылық, институционалды дисфункция кедергілерін жеңіп шығу үшін адамдық құндылықтар мен жақсы тұрмысқа айтарлықтай бейімделген демократияға қалайша қол жеткіземіз? Африкандық демократиялық тәжірибені қадағалаушы (коммунистік және капиталистік) дуалистік шетелдік идеологиялық қатан бақылауға негізделген материалдық кедейшілік, экономикалық тәуелділік, азаматтардың сауатсыздығының жоғары деңгейі, осал саяси мәдениет, әлеуметтік тәртіп бұзушылық, тұрақсыздықтың үлкен тасқынын қалай басқаруға болады? Монополиядан үстемдіктен бас тарта отырып құндылықтардың адамгершілік жүйесін құрастырып соны таныстыру, осы сала бойынша бірлесіп жасаған іс-шараларға және демократиялық үрдістерге негізделген. Автор жалпы елдің жақсы күнкөрісіне қатысты ешбір жауапкершілікті алмайтын саяси билікке, азаматтарының кең әлеуметтік мүмкіндіктерге ие болуына, әділеттік пен шығындардың орын толтыруға механизмдерді пайлану мүмкіншіліктерін бермейтін Африкандық елдердегі орын алып отырған жүйеге қарсы. Автордың ойынша шетелдік стратегиялар жоғарыдан төменге әлеуметтік инженерия мен маргиналдану мәселесін қабылдауға мәжбүрлейді деп есептейді.

Түйін сөздер: инклюзивті саясат, демократиялық құндылықтар, маргиналдылық, африкалық елдер, әлеуметтік шынайылық.

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### **Демократизация, демократизация и поиск инклюзивной политики в Африке**

Это исследование ищет способ установления эндогенного гуманистического и всеобъемлющего демократического порядка. Как мы можем сделать демократию более приспособленной к человеческому достоинству и благосостоянию, чтобы преодолеть препятствия неравенства, маргинальности и институциональной дисфункции, которые в настоящее время поражают национальное государство? Как управлять потоком, создаваемым материальной бедностью, экономической зависимостью, высоким уровнем неграмотности граждан, слабой политической культурой, социальными беспорядками и нестабильностью, а также жестким контролем дуалистического иностранного идеологического (коммунистического и капиталистического) контроля над африканским демократическим опытом? Работа сосредоточена на изучении тех демократических принципов, которые включают совместные действия, отказ от монополии или господства и создание гуманной системы ценностей и способов ее представительства. Автор возражает против существующей системы в Африканских странах, которая не допускает ответственности политической власти за общее благо, препятствует доступу граждан к более широким возможностям и социальным удобствам, а также доступу к механизмам возмещения ущерба и справедливости. Автор считает, что иностранные стратегии навязывают сверху вниз социальную инженерию и проблему маргинализации.

Ключевые слова: Инклюзивная политика, демократические ценности, маргинальность, африканские страны, социальная справедливость.

#### **Introduction and problem**

This study looks for a way of establishing an endogenous humanistic and inclusive democratic order. This compels us to examine the critical values of respect for basic rights, distributive justice, a culture of rational dialogue, satisfaction of social needs in the light of the shortfalls earlier identified in the theory and knowledge? How can we make democracy more attuned to human dignity and well-being so as to surmount the obstacles of inequity, marginality and institutional dysfunction that plagues the nation state presently? Democracy is run by human beings and their institutions, so how can we tackle the problems arising from the empirical social conduct of agency so that it deals responsibly with social and economic problems arising from Africans living together for the common good? The work focuses on the democratic values featuring cooperative actions, rejection of monopoly or domination and establishing a humane value-system and its modes of representation. It objects to the current system that disallows the responsibility of political authority to the common good, prevents access to greater opportunities and social amenities for citizens, as well as access to mechanisms of redress and equity. These questions are important in the face of recent evidence of the substantial weakening or failure of the core values

of a democratic system that can guarantee security and social infrastructures.

A shortfall of the liberal democratic view of society is the conflict between the affirmation of formal political freedom and its tolerance of socioeconomic inequalities which breeds alienation and contradicts the human dignity and freedom. This makes us to question the inequality and imposition of selective humanism and exclusion strategies underlying the liberal democratic practice due to problems of agency and ideology. The problem of a liberal capitalist democratic system is that it conceives of humanism and inclusion in ways that trigger institutional marginality and bad governance due to shortfalls in pursuing the values of social justice and economic empowerment as core democratic characteristics. The reality of dehumanization and disempowerment focuses on key gaps in a complicit liberal capitalist value-system that pursues exploitation, lack of rule of law and structural discrimination as core values of the bad governance of African rulers arising from a political culture of neocolonial state-centralism, foreign imposed top-down social engineering and other strategies of marginalization. The weakness of this view is seen in the “declining capacity of the African state to ensure personal and economic security” (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1997:13) due to nation-state problems complicated by gaps in governance and participation in democratic politics (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996:9).

### **Disempowering tendencies of an ideological and formalistic democracy in Africa**

The worrisome assumption that placing a value on personal autonomy as the fundamental good, triggers the construction of a society in which individuals can pursue the good as he or she defines it (Douglass 1996:135, Macridis 1989:22, Heywood 1997: 41) reflects a faulty existential belief that causes problems for the vulnerable peoples all over due to an ideologically false humanism that privileges a few over the many, affirms the domination of superior ability and power that yields immense gains in control and wealth that is disdainful and adverse in its teleology on other human beings. The justice and empowerment gaps in the tripartite theories of liberalism, capitalism and colonialism are highlighted by their shared values of alienation, exploitation, repression, intolerance, dehumanization and inequality of workers, aborigines and the vulnerable, although they employ different logical paths to this end; political, economic and cultural.

Consequentially, differentiation, oppression and hegemony over others, will inevitably breed “control and place others in positions of submission and powerlessness” (Nielsen 1988:30). According to Amin (2000:28) “triumphant liberal ideology reduced society to a collection of individuals and, through this reduction asserted that the equilibrium produced by the market both constitutes the social optimum and guarantees, by the same token, stability and democracy.” How can a liberal view that endorses freedom and exercise of genius, also tolerate outcomes and relationships that permit huge discrepancies in wealth, possessions and opportunities (Marx and Engels 1990:426)? Such problems have led to the struggles for redistribution and social justice within ideological frameworks that seek to define capitalism as the only reliable socio-economic mechanism for generating wealth, and a desire to distribute wealth, in accordance with moral, rather than market principles or considerations that push for egoism which serves the interest of the self (Hospers, 1973:600). We must try to discover alternatives to exogenous ideas that have not worked to the African advantage given that “through individualism, liberalism made some people rich, but did not wipe out insecurity and poverty” (Beland 2000:144). We must ask: can any democratic method or system arise from such substrate without absorbing their core values?

This makes us to disagree with those who argue that democracy can be discussed non-ideologically. “Is the multiparty system which is an integral ele-

ment of the Western democratic culture, the panacea for Africa’s political problems?” (Teffo 2006:448). At the practical level the problem of alienation, imposition and egoism in a representative African democratic space is seen in the god-father politics of selection of candidates based on anointing rather than merit, authoritarianism and a lack of internal democracy in the party system, gender bias, intolerance of criticism and the unethical breach by the incumbent government of written and unwritten agreements on a rotational formula for sharing political office among competitors have contributed to the current instability in democratic consolidation. The incapability of government and its key agencies to uphold security of life and property, basic rights and the rule of law, is real hence causing violations of social and political freedoms, occasioned by using the Police and Army whose principles of brutality and discrimination against people were inherited from the colonial era, to pursue self succession and aggrandizement of the regime and its acolytes and clients. In addition, there is the real problem of the socioeconomic disempowerment and marginalization of a broad group of Africa’s vulnerable citizens.

The vulnerable peoples include rural dwellers, the low income earners, politicians and business people disfavoured by the current government, medium and low level government workers, women, pensioners or retired workers, rural peoples, uneducated people, physically challenged persons, destitute children, the mass of unemployed and underemployed youth. This marginality is instructive in its implications for the failure of existing strategies of liberal model of social welfare. Youth restiveness accounts for insecurity fueled by the poverty of the economy is seen in its mono-logical primary raw material producing nature and a lack of a strong manufacturing base and thence productivity triggers an ensuing poverty and struggle for survival that is easily seen in the fact that a warped democratic participation is possible. People can transfer their votes for material things as trivial as loaves of bread, 500 gram bowls of rice, and the lowest denominations of the local currencies equivalent to about 3 or 4 U.S. Dollars. The existential material poverty of the masses and the mental poverty of creative thinking of the intellectual and political elite to build up an endogenous culture of democracy is seen in the easy gullibility, susceptibility, imperviousness and worrisome ignorance of the masses of voters and other egoistic, narcissistic players in the so-called African political order that operates as a replicator of the less endearing values of the global neoliberal capitalist order. How do we construct a more participatory,

empowerment oriented, humanistic and inclusive democratic system? The research problem is: How do we address the fundamental issues of human dignity and justice that have not been fully defined and resolved hence triggering further challenges to just and inclusive democratization?

### **Issues in the quest for inclusive and empowering democracy**

There are conceptual and empirical gaps in imbuing humaneness and inclusiveness in the theory and practice of democracy in Africa. Ake (1996:7, 1992:2-3, 1994:1-23, 2001) who is renowned for his analysis of the largely adverse effects of the liberal capitalist tradition on the quest for democracy in Africa has rightly pointed out that since Africa's state structures are susceptible to abuse, thence they are detrimental to development and democracy due to foreign ideological predispositions. Owing to the consolidation of immense state power in an adopted presidential system, the capitalist and neocolonial political and economic control of an African state nurtures and accredits a form of politics imbued with highhandedness, insensitivity and lawlessness. According to Ake (1996) such a society "democratizes with no separation of powers, all powers having been vested in an imperial presidency. There is hardly any rule of law, no plausible system of justice, and no transparency. The coercive institutions of the state are above the law, the civil society is below it, ordinary people are out of sight, far beyond its protection" (Ake 1996:6).

Nzongola-Ntalaja (1997:15) says that the threat to contemporary Africa comes from "democratic formalism or democracy in form rather than content, exemplified by multipartyism without democracy, instead of having a truly representative government and the rule of law, arbitrary rule by the military and civilian dictators, the logic of neopatrimonialism pervades the entire system." Put simply state building was "conceived in anti-democratic terms reminiscent of colonialism, arbitrariness took precedence over the rule of law [showing] the fundamental contradictions between the basic needs of the population and the narrow class interests of the rulers" (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2006:4-9). This is an old problem. Azikiwe (1965:447) drew our attention to the incompetent management of the election machinery, undemocratic electioneering campaigns, violence and lawlessness as trademarks of African elections. Things have not changed. Azikiwe (1979:494- 503) argues that democracy attempts to spread power to the people rather than a few. The

truth is that African leaders are self seeking and not interested in the public welfare so they utilize the logical and empirical gaps in liberal democracy such as the lack of social equity and justice, illiteracy and poverty of the masses, natural and man made division among groups, fear of opposition and criticism as well as contest and contention among political parties to create sociopolitical disorder.

Busia (1967:24-25) holds that democracy is when people are allowed to participate in decisions that affect their lives, express opinions and criticisms of the rulers and public life. Busia (1967:97-100) observes that democracy makes sense only when others can have a right to choose to be different as such the state ought not monopolize all powers and interests over the citizens. We can say that there are still "many parts of the African continent where prevailing realities are still a far cry from some of the precepts of human centered development, including transparency of governance, socio-political legitimacy, the rule of law and widespread popular empowerment" (Ninalowo 2003:9). This type of politics can only be put in the service of personal aggrandizement, nepotism and the breeding of the cult of personality. These attitudes are clearly guiding principles that are contrary to the rule of law as a democratic way of life. We agree with Gyekye (1997:197) that the lack of an efficient or adequate legal and institutional framework explains the widespread incidence dislocation and disorientation as seen in corrupt behaviour, inadequate institutional checks and ineffective law enforcement capabilities that have typified democratic practice in a developing society.

To escape from the colonial trappings of multiparty majoritarian democracy Wiredu (1995:58-59, 1997: 304&306) proposes the principle of consensus as a cardinal rule of democratic participation. He objects to democracy as majority rule or majoritarian democracy because it pursues consent without consensus thereby creating a 'winner takes all' situation where "the party that wins the majority of seats or the greatest proportion of the votes is invested with governmental power" (Wiredu 1995:58). This form of participation is faulty because there is a winner through the rule of law but there is no consensus borne out of managing the frustrations and interests of other ethnic and political groups. This is why there seems to be instability in most African countries. Therefore, "adherence to the principle of consensus 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. The pursuit of consensus was



a deliberate effort to go beyond majority opinion” (Wiredu 1995:57). Wamala (2006:440) adds that the party system “destroys consensus, replaces the people” makes them a commodity to be used and dumped during and after elections thus leading to alienation and dehumanization as the traditional hallmarks of liberal multipartyism. From the above

Wiredu proposes a non-party approach to democracy where the role of the individual citizen will be paramount rather than the party system (Wiredu 1995:61). The problem with this radical view is that it pushes us to another extreme of the debate. How will we organize the millions of citizens of such a big complex country into a politically conscious force or system that can participate effectively in much of African politics so as to install the right values and reform existing institutions? Is this another path to alternates like a one party state or socialist system interrogated by Nkrumah, Nyerere and Senghor? How do we manage the flux created by material poverty, economic dependency, high rate of citizen illiteracy, weak political culture, social disorder and instability as well as the stricture of dualistic

foreign ideological (communist versus capitalist) control on African democratic experience? It means that we still need to work on a formula for effective inclusive and humanistic democratic participation that can uphold human dignity, basic rights and the rule of law to expand the social rights of dignity of work and economic self determination (Amin 1998:167). Busia (1967:162-164) argues that if the Africans are to overcome the current challenges of disempowerment then we must go beyond political equality to economic equality by looking for “measures which will ensure steady increase in the nation’s wealth, and in its equitable distribution, check corruption, make education an urgent concern” (Busia1967:163-166). Awa (1993:44-46 &55) summarizes it all by insisting that “democracy must assure social justice to the people, acquire understanding of the needs of people [as] there can be fundamental differences in the view held by the rural people, workers and the *lumpen* proletariat and those held by the elites.” There is a need for a restructuring of economic wealth and social opportunities and a philosophical orientation of the leaders.

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